**Colosseum Rome**

## **About The Colosseum**

The Colosseum is a site like no other. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, nothing represents the sheer power and magnificence of the Roman Empire like this stunning piece of ancient architecture.

## **History of the Colosseum**

The Colosseum, or ‘Colosseo’ in Italian, was once the largest amphitheatre in the Roman Empire. It was built in the 1st century AD by the Emperor Vespasian as a place for the people of Rome to enjoy. Originally named the Flavian Amphitheatre after Vespasian’s family name, the man who brought the Roman Empire back from the brink would not live to see its completion.

The construction of the Colosseum was very much a symbolic gesture to create a clear distinction between Vespasian and his predecessor, Nero. Nero had committed suicide after suffering military coups, partially a result of his extravagance, which included building the opulent Golden House and a vast statue of himself. By contrast, Vespasian was building the Colosseum for the citizens of Rome. As if to emphasise this point, the Colosseum was built in the former gardens of Nero’s palace over the site where Nero’s colossal statue had stood.

Completed in 80 AD, the Colosseum was opened with great fanfare by Titus, Vespasian’s son and successor. He marked the opening of the Colosseum with one hundred days of games, including stunning battle recreations on artificial lakes of water. The fact that the Colosseum was completed by this date was particularly impressive considering the building’s incredible complexity, vast size and the fact that Vespasian only came to power in 69 AD.

Even despite the short timescale of the build, the result was spectacular. Not only was the Colosseum able to take up to 50,000 spectators, it was also perfectly symmetrical, ornately decorated in marble and stone and an incredible feat of engineering.

The Colosseum remained the amphitheatre of Rome until the end of the Roman Empire. This was the place where gladiators, lions and those accused of crimes were put to the test, often fighting to the death.

Since the fall of the Roman Empire, the Colosseum has suffered from various destructive forces, including extensive pillaging of its stone and marble as well as natural disasters such as earthquakes. In fact, its materials contributed to many famous Roman buildings such as St Peter’s Cathedral and the Palazzo Venezia. Yet, even though a third of the Colosseum has been lost over time, this magnificent structure remains one of the most fascinating and beautiful historic sites in the world.

## **The Colosseum today**

A visit to the Colosseum offers a great insight into the lives of Roman citizens and those who had the misfortune of fighting there, and for many, it’s synonymous with the power, theatrics and brutality of Ancient Rome. In particular, it is now possible to tour the underground hallways and corridors where the gladiators of ancient Rome would prepare to fight and ponder their mortality. Also recently opened are the higher areas of the structure, from where you can take in views of the Roman Forum.

There is a museum within the Colosseum with a wealth of interesting artefacts and information and audio guides are available in a number of languages.

The Colosseum receives around 7 million visitors a year: it’s worth booking your tickets online and visiting earlier or later in the day to avoid the worst of the crowds. The Terrazzo Belvedere (top 3 floors) and hypogeum are accessible via guided tour only, which must be booked in advance. Guided tours are also available for the main building. Security is unsurprisingly tight. The site is closed at weekends.

# 10 FACTS ABOUT THE COLOSSEUM!

**1)** The Colosseum was built between **72 A.D** and **80 A.D** under the **Emperor Vespasian**, in the heart of Ancient Rome.

**2)** Made from **stone** and **concrete**, this magnificent monument was built with the man power of tens of thousands of slaves.

**3)** The Colosseum is the largest **amphitheater** (meaning “theatre in the round”) in the world! Oval in shape, it measures 189m long, 156m wide and 50m high (about the height of a 12 story building). This ancient sporting arena could easily fit a modern day football pitch inside!

**4)** This brilliant building had **80 entrances** and could seat approximately **50,000 spectators** who would come to watch sporting events and games. These events included gladiatorial combats, wild animal hunts and, believe it or not, ship naval battles!

**5)** Free for all! At the Colosseum’s major events – often those organised and paid for by the emperors themselves – there was no entry fee. And **free food** was sometimes served, too. Bonus! Emperors would use this as a way to gain popularity and support from the public.

**6)** The event at the Colosseum were seriously brutal, though – during certain games held by the emperors around 10,000 animals were killed in a single day.

**7)** The first games ever to be held were in 80 A.D, under **Emperor Titus** (the son of Vespasian), and they ran for 100 days straight. Games continued to be held for centuries to come – gladiatorial games until the fifth century and animal hunts until the 6th century.

**8)** To protect the spectators from the blistering sun and heat of Ancient Rome, there was the **velarium** – an awning that could be pulled over the top of the seating area to provide shade. Clever, eh?

**9)** Below the Colosseum were numerous rooms and **underground passages**. Here is where the animals and gladiators were kept, waiting to meet their fate in the arena above. There were also **36 trap doors** in the arena for special effects!

**10)** Although two-thirds of the colosseum has been destroyed over time – mostly the result of vandalism, earthquakes and fires – it is today a popular tourist site, attracting thousands of people every year!

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| **Colosseum** | |
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| [The Colosseum is located in Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roma_Plan.jpg)    The Colosseum  The Colosseum  Shown within Rome | |
| [Wikimedia](https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_Terms_of_Use) | © [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright)  The location of the amphitheatre today Click on the map to see marker | |
| **Location** | [*Regio III Isis et Serapis*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regio_III_Isis_et_Serapis), Rome, Italy |
| **Coordinates** | [41°53′25″N 12°29′32″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Colosseum&params=41_53_25_N_12_29_32_E_type:landmark) |
| **Type** | [Amphitheatre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphitheatre) |
| **History** | |
| **Builder** | [Vespasian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vespasian), [Titus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titus) |
| **Founded** | AD 70–80; 1942 years ago |