

# Roman 1: The Roman Empire



## The Roman Empire

Rome was a city in modern day Italy that ruled lands all around the Mediterranean Sea and as far north as Britain. Founded in 753 BC it became a republic in 509 BC ruled by the Senate. It conquered many lands through it's military prowess and became an empire in 27 BC with Augustus, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, the first emperor.



The Roman Empire at it's greatest extent AD 116

In AD 285 the empire was split into two, West and East. The Western Roman Empire was conquered in AD 476 and the Eastern Roman Empire in AD 1453.



The Roman Empire was a multi-cultural society with Latin spoken in the West and Greek in the East. Roman rule fostered a sense of *Romanisation* by building public monuments and communal spaces such as forums, amphitheatres, racetracks and baths.



A rectangular plaza, the forum was for centuries the centre of Roman life. **The Forum** would hold criminal trials, elections, public speeches and triumphal processions. (Pictured left are the ruins of Rome's Forum).

Amphitheatres such as this one at **El Djem** in Tunisia were large oval or round arenas with raised seating for holding gladiator combat, animal slayings and executions. They were a key component of providing entertainment in the Roman world.



Baths were provided for communal bathing and was an integral part of Roman life. The largest, the **Baths of Diocletian**, could hold 3000 bathers.

Roman roads were vital to the maintenance of the empire, allowing armies, officials and trade to flow across the provinces.



## Roman Society

There were either citizens or non-citizens in the Roman Empire. Roman law was adjusted over time to reflect the society it became. Slaves were not citizens but if freed they could apply for citizenship. Women citizens for centuries could not own property or hold public office.

Roman citizenship granted privileged political and legal status with regard to laws, property and governance, Granting citizenship became a valuable tool in making conquered people feel part of the system, even slaves could be freed and gain a form of citizenship.



Many slaves were acquired through warfare but also through piracy and trade. Slaves were bought and sold at markets in most towns and their roles included household duties, manufacturing and agriculture. As many as 20% of the population of the empire were slaves.

The Romans believed in many gods and also allowed cults from the provinces to flourish such as *Isis* from Egypt. They also promoted the cult of the Emperor to reinforce his position. Christianity, which had previously been persecuted, was made the official religion of the Roman empire in the fourth century AD.



## Further study

Find out more about the Roman Empire by looking in more detail at some of the key monuments they built.



### The Colosseum

The largest amphitheatre ever built.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/colosseum\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/colosseum_01.shtml)

### Pont du Gard

Aqueducts were built to bring water into the towns to provide water for the public baths, toilets and private households.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/344>



### Pompeii

Roman town buried under ash when Mt. Vesuvius erupted in AD 79.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/pompeii\\_portents\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/pompeii_portents_01.shtml)

### The Pantheon

The best preserved Roman building, now a church.

<http://www.rome.info/pantheon/>

