

ROME: A VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE ANCIENT CITY A-Z GLOSSARY

This glossary explains some of the words and phrases that we use in the course. It's a work in progress, so if there's anything you think is missing, let us know in the comments and we'll add them to the document for next time.

Name	Description
Aeneas	refugee from the sack of Troy, and legendary founder of the Roman people.
Aetiology	the study of how things came to be the way they are; for example, explaining how a particular temple or sacred site gained its significance.
Aggrandise	make more splendid.
Annona	the grain supply of ancient Rome; also used of the handout of free or subsidised grain to the people.
Antiquity	the ancient past.
Aurelian	dating to the reign of the Roman emperor Aurelian (reigned AD 270-275). In this course, refers to the brick and concrete city wall circuit that he began.
Augurs	a group of Roman priests who interpreted signs from heaven, especially the patterns made by flying birds.
<i>Balneae</i>	smaller Roman bathhouses, run as private commercial businesses (unlike the great imperial <i>thermae</i>).
Borromini	Francesco Borromini (1599-1667), an Italian baroque architect who built several important churches in Rome.

Bernini	Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598 – 1680), an Italian baroque sculptor and architect.
Cambered	the downward curve of a road surface, which enables rainwater to run off.
Chasm	a hole in the ground.
Citadel	the fortified upper part of an ancient town.
Civic	relating to the city as an official community.
Colonnades	a row of columns as part of a building.
Columbaria	literally 'dovecot' or 'pigeon holes' – used of a communal tomb structure with numerous niches to hold the ashes of people who could not afford a grand tomb of their own.
Consecrated	dedicated to a god; made holy.
Consular	relating to the consuls, the chief magistrates of the Roman state.
Desecrating	damaging or disrespecting a sacred site.
Deified	made into a god after death; an honour given to some of the more successful emperors.
Deities	gods; divine beings.
Earth rampart	a sloping bank built to support a wall.
Epochs	ages or periods of history.
Etruscan	the civilisation of Etruria, Rome's neighbour to the north and for a while its rival.
Frieze	the continuous band of carving above the columns of a temple.
Gaius Gracchus	a politician of the late second century BC who, with his brother, tried to introduce measure to advance the cause of the common people, but who was killed.
Gazetteer	a geographical list or index.
Gnomon	the pointer on a sundial.

Grandstanding (politicians)	playing to the public, showing off.
Hellenistic	relating to the Greek east in the period of rule Hellenistic kings, successors to Alexander the Great (conventional dates: 323-31BC).
Hinterland	the area around a city that belongs to its territory or provides it with the goods it needs.
Honorifics	acts of honour or prestige offered to an important figure; the titles of (for example) an emperor.
Lacus Curtius	a sacred site in the Roman Forum, believed to be the spot where a brave Roman offered himself as a sacrifice to heal up a huge chasm that had opened in the earth.
Lordly sovereignty	ruling like an aristocrat or king.
Lupercal	the cave under the Palatine Hill where Romulus and Remus were raised by a wolf.
Mercantile	relating to trade or merchants.
Mithraeum	a shrine to Mithras, a mysterious eastern saviour-god whose secretive cult became popular in Rome.
Monumentalisation	the act of commemorating an event, person, or phenomenon with a monument.
Numinous	relating to the sensation of religious awe one might experience in a holy place.
Nones of June	The 5 th of June. The Romans did not number the days of their months, but counted from certain key days in each, the Kalends, Nones, and Ides.
Obverse	The portrait side of a coin.
Papacy	the rule of the Christian Popes, in succession from St Peter.
Praetor	a Roman magistrate.
Peribolos	the outer structure surrounding (for example) a Roman bathhouse.

Plautus	a Roman comic playwright of the third to second century BC.
Pomerium	the ancient sacred boundary of the city of Rome.
Porticoed	having a portico, a porch with columns.
Principate	the rule of Rome by emperors who, having no official title of 'emperor', claimed at first to rule as <i>princeps inter pares</i> or 'first among equals'.
Prohibitions	bans on certain acts, substances, or behaviours.
Propinquity	closeness, nearness.
Provincials	the inhabitants of the provinces of the Roman empire.
Publius Clodius	a late republican gang-leader and populist politician; enemy of Cicero.
Pullulating	teeming, densely populated.
Pyre	the stack of wood on which a body was cremated at a funeral.
<i>Rostra</i>	the speaker's platforms in the Roman Forum; named after the captured enemy bronze ship's beaks which decorated it.
Sesterces	a basic unit of Roman coinage. One sestertius was worth a quarter of a denarius, and might buy a couple of loaves of bread. Roman soldiers were paid one denarius a day in the first century AD.
Siphon	a system for allowing water in (say) an aqueduct to flow downhill, then rise up again under pressure to reach a point at or below the hydraulic gradient. Useful for crossing a steep valley.
Soothsayers	individuals who interpreted the future from portents, the entrails of sacrificed animals, horoscopes, etc.
Spoils and booty	the treasure captured in wars of conquest and brought back to Rome.
(Hill) Spurs	fingers of Rome's hills, part of a plateau partly eroded away by streams flowing down to the river Tiber.
Synoecism	the process by which villages gather together to form a city-state.
<i>Thermae</i>	the large imperial bathhouses of Rome.
Thickets	dense clusters of trees or shrubs.
Topography	the natural features of the terrain (or their study).

Trapezoidal	shaped like a trapezoid, a four-sided shape whose sides are not parallel.
Vedius Pollio	a notoriously cruel Roman aristocrat of the late first century BC, famed for his luxurious villa and unpleasant personality; sometime friend of the emperor Augustus.
Vis-à-vis	relating to.
Vistas	Views.
Waystations	places that mark stages in a journey, and offer facilities to travellers.