

# Traces of Ancient Rome in Our Modern World

## INFRASTRUCTURE

**1 Roads**  
The Romans built about 50,000 miles (80,000 km) of roads. The roads were used primarily by the military, but also by merchants and citizens. Today, we build roads the same way the Romans did and our highway systems replicate their road systems.

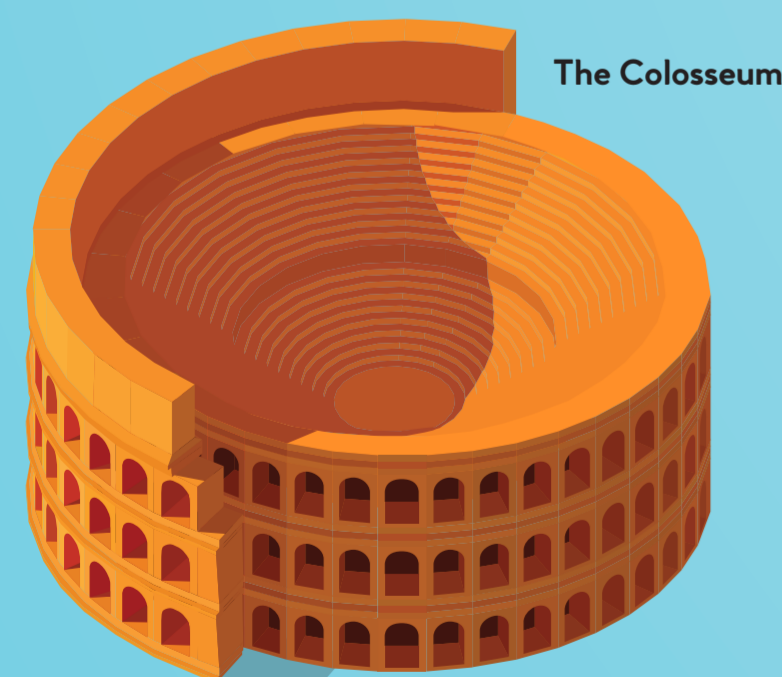
**2 Tunnels**  
Tunnels were built mainly to transport water, diverge rivers, and to open mountains to roads. Today, we use many of the engineering techniques the Romans used but modern machines and tools allow tunnels to be built faster, safer, and under water.

**3 Bridges**  
The Romans transformed the building of bridges through their use of arches. The use of arches made the structure strong and stable. Today, modern bridges often reflect the form and structure of the Roman bridges.

### Water Systems

Ancient Rome was famous for its water systems. Today, our water systems are more complex than those of the Romans, though they are constructed in similar ways. Aqueducts brought water to the city of Rome. They provided water for the 1,000,000 Roman residents. Some aqueducts, or tunnels, were built underground so enemies could not tamper with them. Once the water was in Rome, they used settling basins as filters for the water. The basins slowed the water down and unloaded impurities. The water flowed into and was held in large cisterns. Then it flowed through lead **4 pipes** to public baths, fountains, and private villas. Some historians claim the lead pipes led to the decline of the Roman Empire. **5 Wastewater systems** were drainage pipes that expelled waste from bathrooms, baths, and homes into the Tiber River. The system, built about 28 centuries ago, still exists today. **6 Fountains**, **7 public baths**, and drinking water were the primary uses of water that flowed into Rome. The supply of water was so constant in Rome that it was considered one of the cleanest cities in the ancient world.

**Buildings** were often municipal projects that Roman emperors sponsored. Architecturally, the Romans followed the Greek style of buildings with minor changes to columns and the use of arches. **8** One of the most famous kinds of Roman buildings was the **stadium**. The Colosseum is an example of a stadium. Modern stadiums use the shape and form of the Colosseum. Like modern stadiums, the Colosseum was used for entertainment and sporting events. Over 50,000 people would crowd into it to watch gladiators fight, view contests, and wild animal hunts.



**9 Concrete** used during Roman times was stronger than concrete used today. It consisted of volcanic ash and rock. Seawater reacted with the concrete to form crystals and fill holes, which made the concrete even sturdier. Today, scientists hope to replicate this concrete to make our buildings stronger and more stable.

**10 Health care** was important in ancient Rome. The Romans performed cataract surgery, developed artificial legs, and even drilled into the skull to relieve pressure on the brain. While Roman medicine was considered advanced, most households used herbal cures to treat illnesses similar to the homeopathic medicine practiced today. Romans believed in a healthy body and healthy mind.

## GOVERNMENT

**11 Justice System**  
The justice system provided a set of rules and procedures for Roman citizens to live by. It began with the writing of the Twelve Tables in approximately 451-450 B.C. These presented a series of rules that governed issues such as crimes committed against citizens, punishments for debts, and rules for handling contracts between people. The Romans also created a standard practice for trying legal disputes, where a plaintiff called a defendant to court, presented their case before a magistrate, and if the trial was allowed to proceed, then made their argument to a *judex*, or a prominent laymen who decided the verdict.

**12 Senate**  
The Senate was made up of prominent individuals in Rome, called senators, who were appointed to office. They debated issues relating to the Roman city and state. For any policy to become law in Rome, it must be presented to the Senate for debate. The senators would debate the issue and then make recommendations for supporting or opposing the policy. It was the **magistrates** and the **popular assembly** that would vote to make laws official. Senators could also issue emergency decrees when they felt the need to protect the republic, such as appointing a dictator for a term of six months.

## CULTURE

**13 Education** during Roman times was important and even the poor learned basic skills of reading and writing. The educational system was patterned after the Greeks'. Children were taught Latin and basic reading and writing at home. Then at age seven, boys were sent to school. Parents paid a small fee for them to attend. Girls mostly did not attend school and were taught domestic skills, but Greek slaves might tutor girls from wealthy families. Their schools were often rooms in public buildings only separated by a curtain, and students could be caned for making mistakes. Our current education system is different from the Roman system in subjects taught and that it is public and free, paid for by the government.

**14 The Roman alphabet** is the basis of many modern languages known as Romance languages, including French, Spanish, and Italian. The Roman alphabet consisted of 23 letters compared to the 26 in modern English. Today, it is considered the most widely used writing system in the world.

**15 Libraries** were considered a cultural gathering place in ancient Rome. The city of Timgad had one of the largest libraries in ancient times. It had a full library system and about 3,000 scrolls.

**Communication** in ancient Rome happened in many different ways. Citizens using Roman roads sent letters and messages. **16** Rome developed early **newspapers**. Information was carved on stone tablets and the tablets were displayed in town centers for the citizens to read. **17** Rome had a **mail system** called "cursus publicus." Official messages and communications were sent using a relay system of messengers. Today, newspapers are online as well as printed. Our postal delivery system delivers letters and other communications to our homes, much like ancient Rome's. However, advances in technology, like cellular phones and the Internet, have changed how we communicate with one another in the modern world.

