

ROMA IN SCENA

For participants in RomaConfluenze FITA, in collaboration with AITA-IATA

Three historical and artistic walks through the places, bodies and audiences of Roman performance.

ROMACONFLUENZE

FESTIVAL INTERNAZIONALE DEL TEATRO E DELLE ARTI

Ministro per lo Sport e i Giovani
Cofinanziato con Risorse del fondo per le politiche giovanili

Promosso e organizzato da:

Con il Patrocinio di:
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ROMA
Assessorato alla Cultura e al Coordinamento delle Iniziative Ricreative
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CIFTA

THE GUIDING IDEA - Not a list of monuments, but three storytelling walks.

Essential historical information introduces each stop; links lead to official sources for further reading, opening times and visiting conditions. The added value lies in what you notice as you walk: traces, detours, details and curiosities.

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Rome behind the scenes of history

Thoughtful suggestions for theatrical walks

Foreword

RomaConfluenze brings performances, artists and different approaches to the theatrical experience to Rome from all over the world.

Our suggestions for exploring the city take the opposite journey: for those of you arriving in Rome with the eyes of people who live and breathe theatre, we begin in the present and cross the city in search of ancient forms of performance.

We therefore propose three itineraries, each with a different connecting theme: the stage, the actor and the audience, plus a fourth, an excursion beyond the city gates, as our ancestors would have called it, devoted to Ostia Antica: the one Roman theatre here that you can still physically walk through, rather than simply imagine.

But remember: none of these routes is simply a journey from point A to point B. From the Theatre of Marcellus to Largo Argentina, or from the Colosseum to the Circus Maximus, there is much more to discover along the way: a fountain with a story of power, a tower concealing an ancient portico, an island shaped like a ship. In Rome, such things can easily go unnoticed amid so much beauty that, paradoxically, it risks making them invisible.

That is why we point them out along the way, even when they do not, strictly speaking, belong to the theatrical thread you are following: so that nothing is missed, and every detour and unexpected pause remains part of the story.

Above all… slow down, take your time, enjoy the city.

The theme is theatre, but the whole of Rome makes every single step unique.

Enjoy your walks, and enjoy the theatre.

Fiammetta Fiammeri
Artistic Director

Our thanks to Monica Falconi, a graduate in Theatre, Cinema and Media, who prepared the following content, suggested these routes and captured, in a few illuminating lines, the richness of the relationship between Rome and theatre.

The project

Three routes retain the project's original structure - THE STAGE, THE ACTOR, THE AUDIENCE - while becoming genuine guided walks. Each itinerary offers a narrative thread, the main stops, things worth noticing between them and a few hidden gems chosen especially for those who see Rome through the eyes of theatre.

How to use this guide

• IN BRIEF - why this stop belongs to the theatrical story.

• WHAT TO LOOK FOR - a specific detail to seek out on site.

• HIDDEN GEM - an anecdote or a less obvious feature, checked against institutional sources.

• ALONG THE WAY - the walk between stops is part of the experience: Rome keeps telling its story.

• FIND OUT MORE - official or institutional links, rather than lengthy historical descriptions.

DAY 1 - THE STAGE

Where theatre began, how the stage changed, and how the city preserves what can no longer be seen.



Theatre of Marcellus

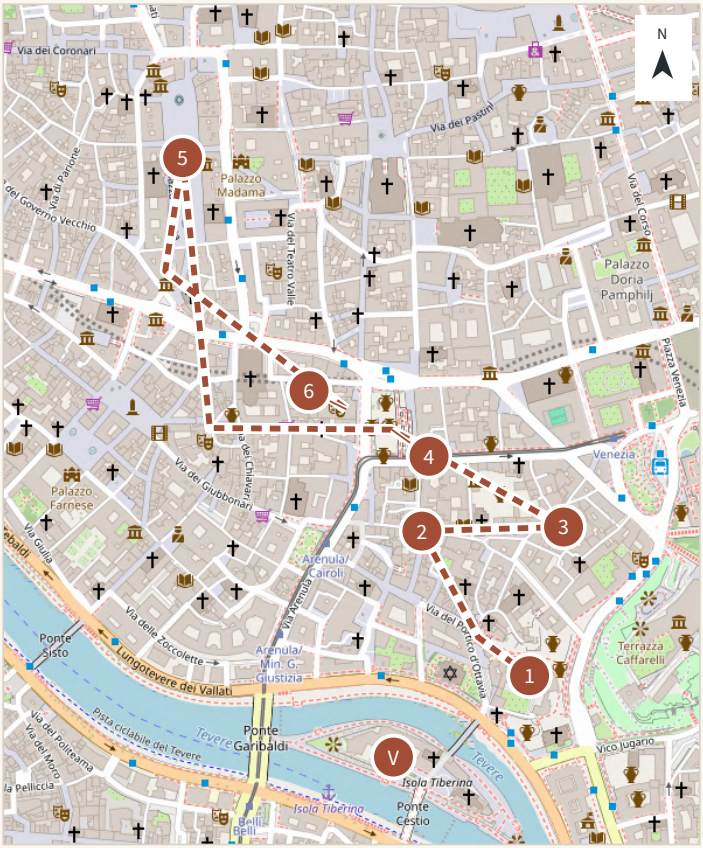
Suggested route: Theatre of Marcellus → Portico of Octavia and Jewish Ghetto → Piazza Mattei → Piazza Margana → Largo di Torre Argentina → traces of the Theatre of Pompey → Piazza Navona and Pasquino → Teatro Argentina

DURATION: About 2½ to 3 hours as a walk. The Teatro Argentina Museum requires advance booking and should be treated as an optional extension.

FIND OUT MORE: Sovrintendenza Capitolina - Talking statues

Stops along the walk

Schematic connections: these are not pedestrian routes.



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1 Theatre of Marcellus

2 Piazza Mattei

3 Piazza Margana

4 Largo Argentina / Theatre of Pompey

5 Piazza Navona and Pasquino

6 Teatro Argentina

V Alternative: Tiber Island

1. Theatre of Marcellus - the stage that endures

IN BRIEF. This is the natural starting point: it stands in an area of the Campus Martius traditionally devoted to theatrical performances. Begun by Caesar, the project was completed by Augustus and dedicated to his nephew Marcellus.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. Look beyond the arches: notice how, over the centuries, the ancient theatre became a fortress and then part of a residential complex. The Roman stage is not an isolated ruin: it has been absorbed into the city.

> HIDDEN GEM: The theatre could hold around 15,000-20,000 spectators and was covered by an awning, or velarium. Nearby are the remains of the temples of Apollo Sosianus and Bellona: performance, worship and public life stood side by side.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Theatre of Marcellus

Along the way - the layers of the Jewish Ghetto
From the Theatre of Marcellus, enter the area around the Portico of Octavia and the streets of the Ghetto. Here, the passage between eras is immediate: Roman structures, medieval streets, later palaces and everyday life share the same space. This is exactly the kind of 'scene change' this itinerary aims to reveal.

2. Piazza Mattei - a fountain with a story of power

The Turtle Fountain makes a brief but perfect stop: a small urban stage, designed to be viewed up close.

> HIDDEN GEM: The fountain was originally planned for Piazza Giudea. Muzio Mattei secured its placement in front of his own palace, undertaking to improve and maintain the surrounding area. The famous turtles were added later.

FIND OUT MORE: Sovrintendenza Capitolina - Turtle Fountain

3. Piazza Margana - a medieval change of scene

A detour of just a few minutes leads to a surprisingly quiet Rome. The square and Torre Margana almost suggest a small medieval village hidden in the heart of the capital.

> HIDDEN GEM: The tower incorporates fragments of an ancient Roman portico. Chronicles also record that, in 1480, Pietro Margani was killed outside its entrance during a feud with the Santacroce family. Here too, Rome layers different eras and stories against the same backdrop.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Torre Margana



Turtle Fountain

4. Largo Argentina and the Theatre of Pompey - the invisible theatre



Sacred Area of Largo Argentina

Here the game changes: the Theatre of Pompey does not appear as an intact monument. It must be 'read' within the city. The outline of its seating area survives in the curved shape of Via di Grottapinta and in the buildings erected over the ancient structures.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. The curve of the streets and buildings: the theatre's ground plan still shapes today's Rome. For a theatre group, this is one of the project's most evocative images: the stage disappears, but leaves its shape behind.

> HIDDEN GEM: The area is also associated with the Curia of Pompey, where Julius Caesar was assassinated: theatre, politics and history literally meet on the same city block.

FIND OUT MORE: Sacred Area of Largo Argentina - Admission €8.00

5. Piazza Navona and Pasquino - performance and the city's voice



Piazza Navona

Piazza Navona is an especially fitting stop for THE STAGE: its shape still preserves the perimeter of the Stadium of Domitian, inaugurated in AD 86 for athletic contests. The area also hosted public entertainment and, in later centuries, the square remained a venue for festivities, games and performances.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. Before looking at the Baroque fountains, notice the square's long, curved shape: the ancient stadium still defines the modern space. It is another example of Rome preserving a structure built for spectacle even when the ancient building is no longer visible.

> HIDDEN GEM: PASQUINO, THE STATUE THAT SPOKE. Just off Piazza Navona, at the corner of Palazzo Braschi, stands Pasquino, Rome's most famous talking statue. From the 16th century onwards, anonymous satirical verses against the powerful were posted on it, hence the term 'pasquinades'. The ancient sculpture, probably once part of a group depicting Menelaus and Patroclus, is traditionally linked to the decoration of the Stadium of Domitian. For a theatrical walk, it is a perfect stop: a statue becomes a character and literally lends its voice to the city.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Piazza Navona

FIND OUT MORE: Sovrintendenza Capitolina - Pasquino

THE OTHER TALKING STATUES. Pasquino was not alone: with Marforio, Madama Lucrezia, Abate Luigi, Babuino and Facchino, he formed the famous 'Congress of Wits'. Romans anonymously posted verses, satires and protests against the powerful on these statues. At times, the statues even seemed to converse, exchanging questions and answers across the city.



Pasquino

Marforio, now in the Capitoline Museums, was regarded as Pasquino's main 'straight man'; Madama Lucrezia is the large bust near Palazzo Venezia; Abate Luigi, in Piazza Vidoni, depicts a Roman in a toga; Babuino is the Silenus fountain in Via del Babuino; Facchino, in Via Lata, represents a 16th-century water carrier. Together they turned Rome into a city-wide theatre of popular satire, with the statues symbolically giving citizens a voice.

FIND OUT MORE: Sovrintendenza Capitolina - Talking statues

6. Teatro Argentina - from the ancient stage to the modern stage

The route ends in a theatre that is still alive. Opened in 1732, the Argentina takes us from archaeology to the modern history of Roman performance.

NOT TO BE MISSED: The small Teatro Argentina Museum holds material on the building's history, decorations, curtain designs, costumes and images of actors and dancers. Group visits require advance booking, making it an ideal organised extension to the walk.

FIND OUT MORE: Teatro Argentina Museum - Turismo Roma

Tiber alternative - the island as a ship



Tiber Island

For a more scenic route, walk from the Ghetto to the Tiber embankment and Tiber Island before heading back towards Largo Argentina.

> HIDDEN GEM: According to tradition, during the plague of 291 BC, the serpent sacred to Aesculapius identified the island as the site for a new sanctuary. The island was later given the architectural form of a ship, with a prow, a stern and an obelisk as its mast.

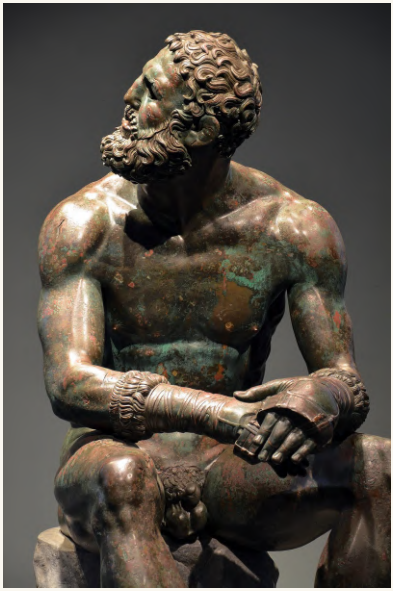
FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Tiber Island

DAY 2 - THE ACTOR

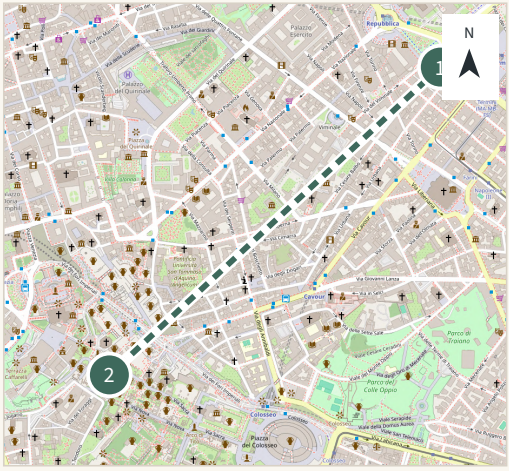
Face, body, gesture, representation: long before the modern actor, there was a whole culture of image and presence.

Suggested route: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme → transfer towards the Roman Forum → the Forum as a space for public performance

DURATION: 3 hours for a selective visit. A detailed visit to Palazzo Massimo and the Forum takes longer; to keep the route short, choose a few key works in the museum.



Boxer at Rest · Palazzo Massimo



© OpenStreetMap contributors

1 Palazzo Massimo · 2 Roman Forum

1. Palazzo Massimo - face and body

Do not approach the museum simply as a general collection. For this itinerary, look above all for faces, bodies and images that can speak to an actor.

The face: portrait, memory, mask
The portrait gallery reveals the transition from Greek idealisation to Roman realism. The museum itself links the origins of realistic Roman portraiture to the tradition of wax funerary masks moulded from the faces of the dead.

> THEATRICAL PROMPT: What does a face do when it becomes an image? How much of the person remains, and how much becomes a 'character'? It is a simple way to turn a museum room into a question about the actor.

The body: gesture, energy, model
Choose a few emblematic sculptures - such as the Lancellotti Discobolus or the Boxer - and read them not only as artistic masterpieces, but as bodies caught in a particular state: tension, rest, effort or anticipation.

Performance depicted
The painting and mosaic collections also include images of circus entertainment, including a mosaic of a charioteer and a panel showing a circus scene: an ideal bridge to the third itinerary, devoted to the audience.

INFORMATION AND TICKETS: Palazzo Massimo - National Roman Museum website - Admission €15.00

2. Roman Forum - Rome as a stage



Roman Forum

Here we deliberately broaden the idea of theatre. The Forum was not a theatre building, but a space where Roman citizens witnessed and took part in speeches, ceremonies, processions, public funerals, celebrations and rituals.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. Imagine not only the buildings but also the movements: who speaks, who watches, who crosses the space, who occupies its centre. This is a director's reading of urban space.

> KEY IDEA: An actor is more than someone performing on a stage. In Roman public culture, the bodies of the orator, magistrate, priest and general became a spectacle in the presence of the community.

INFORMATION AND TICKETS: Colosseum Archaeological Park - Roman Forum and Palatine Hill - Admission €15.00

DAY 3 - THE AUDIENCE

From the seating tiers to the crowd: who watches, how they are arranged, whom they support and which rituals they share.



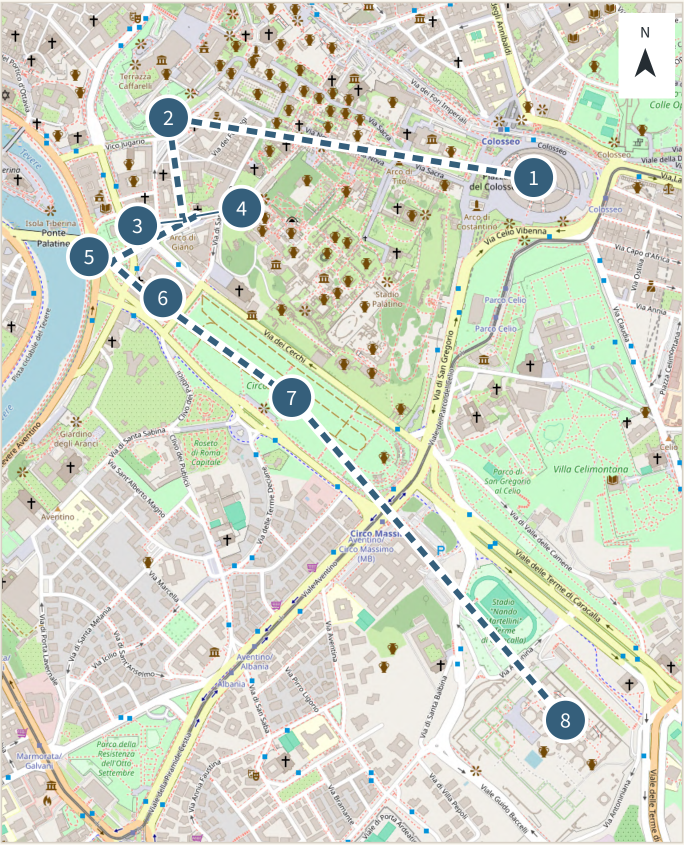
Colosseum

Narrative route: Colosseum → Palatine area / view towards the Tarpeian Rock → Velabrum → Arch of Janus → San Giorgio al Velabro and Arch of the Moneychangers → Temple of Hercules Victor → Mouth of Truth → Circus Maximus → Baths of Caracalla

DURATION: The outdoor walk can take about 3 hours. With full visits to the Colosseum/Forum-Palatine and the Baths of Caracalla, allow half a day or more.

From amphitheatre to baths

Schematic connections: these are not pedestrian routes.



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1 Colosseum

2 Tarpeian Rock / Velabrum

3 Arch of Janus

4 San Giorgio / Moneychangers' Arch

5 Temple of Hercules Victor

6 Mouth of Truth

7 Circus Maximus

8 Baths of Caracalla

1. Colosseum - the audience as a mass

The point is not just the amphitheatre: it is the scale of the audience. The architecture organises thousands of people, separates sections and routes, allows an enormous crowd to enter and leave, and turns spectacle into a collective experience.

> GUIDING QUESTION: What changes in a performance when its audience is an urban mass, rather than a room of a few hundred people? The Colosseum introduces the relationship between architecture, power and the spectator.

INFORMATION AND TICKETS: Colosseum Archaeological Park - Opening times and tickets - Admission €15.00

2. From the Tarpeian Rock to the Velabrum - myth, trade and monuments

On the way to the Circus Maximus, take time to use the landscape to tell the story of Rome's earliest days. From the Capitoline Hill and the memory of the Tarpeian Rock, descend towards the Velabrum, the valley between the Palatine and Capitoline hills, once a low-lying area prone to flooding by the Tiber.

> HIDDEN GEM: THE BASKET OF ROMULUS AND REMUS. According to tradition, the basket carrying the twins Romulus and Remus came to rest in the Velabrum before the she-wolf found and suckled them. The site brings together the city's topography and its foundation myth.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Forum Boarium and Velabrum

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - San Giorgio in Velabro (the Velabrum, Romulus and Remus)

3. Arch of Janus - a misleading name

The great four-faced arch in the Velabrum is traditionally called the 'Arch of Janus', but was not dedicated to the god Janus. The name dates from the Middle Ages; the late-antique monument has been associated with the Arcus Divi Constantini and the memory of Constantine.

> HIDDEN GEM: TWO MISLEADING ARCHES. The 'Arch of Janus' is not an arch dedicated to Janus; a little further on, the 'Arch of the Moneychangers' is technically not an arch at all, but a lintelled gateway. Two familiar names show how the city can change monuments' identities and meanings over time.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Arch of Janus

4. San Giorgio al Velabro and the Arch of the Moneychangers

Beside the church of San Giorgio al Velabro stands the so-called Arch of the Moneychangers, erected in AD 204 by the moneychangers and cattle merchants of the Forum Boarium. Part of it is now incorporated into the church: once again, Rome preserves antiquity by physically absorbing it into later buildings.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. The monument's reliefs and inscriptions, and above all the way it adjoins the church: a perfect detail for understanding the city's layers.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - San Giorgio in Velabro

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Arch of the Moneychangers



5. Temple of Hercules Victor - the supposed 'Temple of Vesta'



Temple of Hercules Victor

The circular temple in the Forum Boarium is still often wrongly called the 'Temple of Vesta'. It is actually dedicated to Hercules Victor. Its round shape has fuelled the misunderstanding for centuries.

> HIDDEN GEM: It is the oldest surviving marble building in Rome. Its remarkable preservation also owes much to its conversion into a church during the Middle Ages.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Temple of Hercules Victor

6. Mouth of Truth - when an object becomes a performance



Mouth of Truth

The great marble face now takes centre stage in a tourist ritual: put your hand into its mouth and challenge the legend. Its ancient function, however, was probably far more practical.

> HIDDEN GEM: The mask, about 1.80 metres in diameter, is generally thought to be an ancient drainage feature, perhaps a manhole cover connected to Rome's sewers. The legend of the mouth that punishes liars came later.

> THEATRICAL PROMPT: An object changes meaning through storytelling and a gesture repeated by its audience. It is almost a small urban performance born of a legend.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Mouth of Truth

7. Circus Maximus - cheering is already part of the show



Circus Maximus

This is the ideal place to discuss the audience as a community of supporters rather than a passive presence. Chariot races were among the most popular spectacles, and charioteers could become genuine popular idols.

> HIDDEN GEM: The racing teams had their own colours - green, blue, red and white - and spectators were divided according to the factions they supported. Cheering was part of the spectacle itself.

The Circus also hosted processions, celebrations and other public events: once again, entertainment, religion and politics were closely intertwined.

FIND OUT MORE: Turismo Roma - Circus Maximus

An innovative augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) project offers a new way to explore the Circus through every phase of its history. It uses interactive visualisation technologies never before employed in an outdoor area of this scale. CIRCO MAXIMO EXPERIENCE brings the life of the ancient valley before your eyes, constantly moving between past and present. The experience lasts around 40 minutes and is available in six languages: Italian, English, French, German, Spanish and Russian.

INFORMATION AND TICKETS: Circo Maximo Experience and official website / ticket booking. Admission €12.00

8. Baths of Caracalla - social life after the show



Baths of Caracalla

The baths close the route by extending the theme of the audience to social life and otium. Roman citizens did more than attend performances: leisure encompassed the body, meeting others, exercise, strolling, study and conversation.

> KEY IDEA: The Colosseum and Circus show an audience gathered for an event; the baths show the same society meeting and building relationships in its leisure time. It is the passage from crowd to community.

INFORMATION AND TICKETS: Baths of Caracalla. Admission €10.00

OPTIONAL EXTRA - OSTIA ANTICA

A theatre you can still walk through.



If the programme allows half a day outside the centre, Ostia Antica is the project's most compelling extension: here you do more than look at the traces of a theatre; you physically enter the seating area, orchestra and stage.

Roman Theatre of Ostia

Built in the late 1st century BC and enlarged in the late 2nd century AD, it came to hold around 4,000 spectators.

HIDDEN GEM 1: APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEPTIVE - The theatre's remarkably clear form is partly due to major 20th-century reconstruction. In the 1920s, parts of the supports and seating tiers were rebuilt to make the building usable again. Its present reconstructed capacity is smaller than in antiquity.

HIDDEN GEM 2: WATER SHOWS - In late antiquity, the orchestra could be sealed off from the seating area and flooded for aquatic performances. The Park also notes surviving marble stage decorations, including theatrical masks.

HIDDEN GEM 3: A THEATRE STILL ALIVE - In 1927, the restored theatre began hosting performances again. It still presents a summer theatre programme today: the relationship between the ancient stage and contemporary performance is therefore more than symbolic.

FIND OUT MORE: Ostia Antica Archaeological Park - The Theatre

RESTORATION HISTORY: Ostia Antica Archaeological Park - Restoration of the Theatre

Practical note

Ostia Antica should be treated as a separate half-day experience, rather than just another stop. Before distributing the guide, check the Park's official website for up-to-date opening times, tickets and entry arrangements.

OFFICIAL WEBSITE: Ostia Antica Archaeological Park - Admission €18.00

The Park's official website

Scan the code or tap the link.



Roman Theatre of Ostia

The thread connecting the three days

- THE STAGE helps you recognise theatre in urban space: what remains visible and what survives only in the shape of the streets.

- THE ACTOR shifts attention to body and face: from memory preserved in portraiture to the public presence of the Roman citizen.

- THE AUDIENCE turns to those who watch, take part, cheer and share their leisure: from the Colosseum to the Circus Maximus and the baths.

The result is not a general tour of ancient Rome. It is a selective reading of the city for people who come to Rome to make, watch and discuss theatre.

ADVANCE BOOKING IS RECOMMENDED FOR ALL THE SITES SUGGESTED

Sources and practical checks

These pages offer a selection of suggestions, rather than a tourist guide, for those wishing to discover Rome during the festival through less obvious routes and places often left out of standard itineraries. Before planning your visit, please check official websites for opening times, prices, availability and any booking requirements. Advance booking is recommended in any case.

NOTE ON TIMINGS: Durations are approximate and depend on admissions. Full visits to museums, the Colosseum/Forum or archaeological sites require half a day. The 2-3 hour version refers to a possible storytelling walk with selected stops.

• Turismo Roma - Theatre of Marcellus

• Turismo Roma - Torre Margana

• Turismo Roma - Tiber Island

• Turismo Roma - Teatro Argentina Museum

• National Roman Museum - Palazzo Massimo

• Colosseum Archaeological Park

• Turismo Roma - Mouth of Truth

• Turismo Roma - Circus Maximus

• Ostia Antica Archaeological Park

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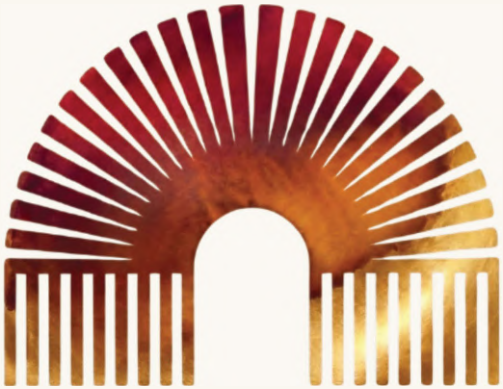
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www.fitanazionale.eu/romaconfluenze