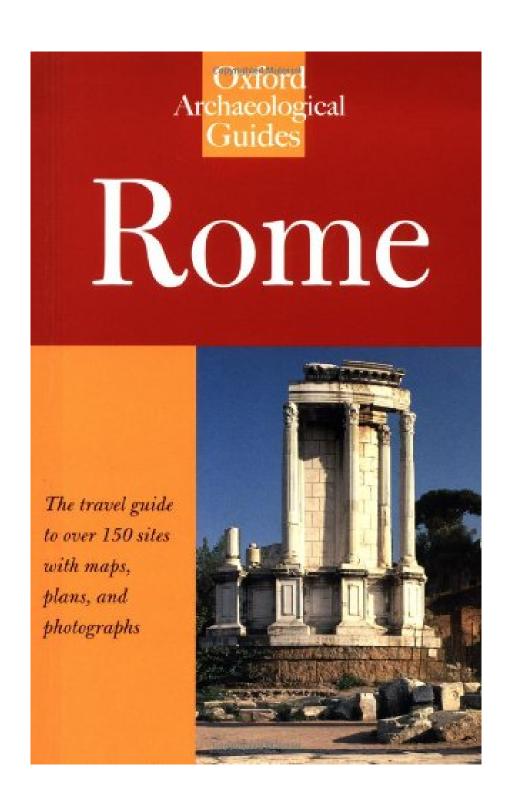


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The city of Rome is the largest archeological site in the world. If your idea of a good Roman holiday is uncovering the archeological mysteries of the Roman Empire, then Oxford Archeological Guides: Rome is your ideal guidebook.

For such a detailed guide, this book is remarkably readable. Of the Field of Mars (Campus Martius), Claridge writes, It is the one part of Rome which continued to be quite densely inhabited after the C9 AD, becoming the center of the late medieval and Renaissance city, and is still densely inhabited today, an extraordinary blend of past and present even for Rome. The Stock Exchange occupies a Roman temple, the boiler-rooms of the offices of the Senate are set in the ruins of Roman thermal baths, a modern theatre nestles in the shell of a Roman theatre. Many of the streets are on the lines of ancient streets, and the walls of the buildings on either side of them are often balanced directly on top of Roman walls. Among this Oxford guide's special features are 200 site plans, maps, diagrams, and photographs; a cultural and historical overview; a chronological overview; and a glossary of essential terms. It uses star ratings to help you plan your days and divides Rome into 12 main areas: the Roman Forum, Upper Via Sacra, Palatine Hill, Imperial Forums, Campus Martius, Capitoline Hill, Circus Flaminius to Circus Maximus, Colosseum Valley and Esquiline Hill, Caelian Hill and the Via Appia, other sites, museums, and catacombs.

Shaded sidebars add anecdotal interest, covering issues such as the Seven Hills, Jupiter's Dining Room, Tomb of Bibulus, the "Province" Reliefs, Madam Lucretia, Nero's New Palace, and Gladiatorial Shows. -- Kathryn True

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# About the Author

Amanda Claridge was formerly Deputy-Director of the British School at Rome and is currently attached to the Archaeology Department at Oxford University. She has lived and studied in Rome for many years and has developed an intimate knowledge of the archaeological sites in Rome and the surrounding area.

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Most helpful customer reviews

29 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

Unique guide for the archaeology minded traveler to Rome

By suetonius

The little known Oxford Archaeological Guides series provides information that you cannot find elsewhere. This guide was written by Amanda Claridge in 1998 and gives information about many of the archaeological sites of Rome. Sites are described in great detail with an emphasis on how the site might have looked in ancient times and changes occurring over centuries. Famous artifacts that were once part of these sites are described and their present locations are mentioned. You learn where in the baths of Caracalla the famous Farnese Hercules and Farnese Bull were located and you learn how they came to be in the archaeological museum at Naples. There are little known sites like the tomb of the Scipios as well as places as familiar as the Piazza Navona and the Colloseum. Obscure but fascinating information is given: the great brick reinforcing wedge on the southeast side of the Colloseum was built in 1807: I have not seen this information anywhere else. The oval Piazza Navona is built on the site of the Stadium of Domitian of 86 AD; the stores that line its periphery are built on top of the ancient seating. This book would not be suitable as the only guidebook to take with you on a trip, the information provided is far too specialized. I'd recommend taking along the Michelin Green guide or the Knopf guide for Rome as well. Some minor drawbacks: the drawings and maps are not as detailed as they could be and the few photographs that are provided are black and white and of poor quality. These complaints are not critical flaws; the book would still be invaluable even if it didn't contain a single illustration.

20 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

Great Archaeological History of Rome

By clwinter

Claridge's Oxford Guide to Rome is probably the best out there today among the many, many ancient guides to Rome. The guide is steeped in research and archaeological evidence which is perfect for the first time visitor to Rome.

The maps and plans that she includes are extremely helpful to the visitor since some of the sites are merely a pile of rocks and might be difficult to visualize in their ancient glory. The plans and cross-sections of buildings and areas of Rome are essential to understanding the ancient city when it was complete.

This guide also comes in handy when visiting the Roman Forum and the Imperial Fora as the buildings are not extremely well marked nor do they have much information to provide for the visitor. If you ever go to the Forum you MUST have Claridge with you because it is the only way you can begin to comprehend the complexity of the Forum. Claridge's details and historical facts that she adds to each building are essential.

As difficult as it is for the untrained visitor to try and extricate the buildings and monuments that were built at the same time or before and after one another, Claridge does a good job in trying to convey the urban growth of Rome. She does this but her clear descriptions and helpful plans.

Essential to any visitor to Rome, especially any history or archaeological buff.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent Guide to Ancient Rome

By R. Alessi

I just returned from Rome, using this book as my primary guide. We were able to identify almost every random bit of ancient archaelogy sticking out of the ground as we walked about the city, and if you've been to Rome, you'll understand how impressive that is.

A major shortcoming that I noticed is that the book treats the ancient-era churches very lightly: while the myths of gods such as Pollux and Castor are frequently referenced in relation to the ancient sites, the C1 AD story of Saint Clement is inexplicably left out of the section on the church of San Clemente constructed by Constantine. Also, as the author states in the beginning, the intent of this guide is to detail ancient Rome only. If you are interested in medieval, Renaissance, or ecclessiastic history, you will certainly need a supplemental guide.

Now, for the advantages... The guide systematically presents every ancient structure in Rome (we were never disappointed), providing a very good map at the beginning of each chapter for a major area (e.g. the Palatine, Field of Mars) to help you identify what you are looking at. The site is laid out in a sort of walking tour format and if you begin at the point suggested, you can follow the chapter page by page as it logically guides you through the region. We did find that writing in page references for each location on the map at the beginning made the book much easier to use. For more complicated buildings, additional diagrams are provided in the appropriate subsection where it is further detailed. The Baths of Caracalla are a superb example of this.

While Claridge delves a bit too thoroughly into the exact type of marble used in the facing and floors of each building, you find yourself recognizing the materials and envisioning the baths, basillicas, and forums as they might have looked clad in Phyrgian red and Numidian yellow marbles. With frequent referencing, we soon became familiar with Caracella, Domitian, and Nerva as we viewed the great construction projects they enacted. The author presents quite clearly the historical origin and significance of each site as well as its original appearance (if known) and the many refurbishments it went through with the frequent fires of Rome.

For our trip, we opted out of taking any tours, and we didn't feel we missed anything. We were often surrounded by tours and gained more information from our book than the guide was sharing with his group. You never know how reliable a guide really is, and with this book, you can be assured of Amanda Claridge's credentials. The trip became a bit of a mystery adventure for us as we excitedly reconstructed the ruins around us into the elegant structures they once were.

Even if you do decide to go with a more mainstream guide book for your trip to Rome, you will find this one to be an invaluable supplement for all those tidbits that the major guides just don't have time to cover.

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