

In September of 2022, I was lucky enough to travel for a week to Rome. It was an incredible experience (despite the heat and the need to walk around 30,000 steps a day), and has gifted me a great understanding of not only Rome itself, but also the way in which its monuments form part of its social and urban landscape. For a CAAHist, there was truly no better trip!

On my first day in Rome I visited both the Colosseum and the Roman Forum, as well as the Column of Marcus Aurelius. The Colosseum was a fascinating space to visit, both due to its colossal size and the quality of preservation. It was easy to imagine various spectacles and gladiatorial fights occurring, though I have to admit I could think of nothing worse than being a Roman gladiator. The Roman Forum was an equally fascinating visit. I particularly enjoyed seeing the Arch of Septimius Severus and the Arch of Titus, as well as the Arch of Constantine - my tutors' obsession with them finally made sense.

Among other sites, I also had the opportunity to visit the Vatican Museums, whose collection of classical material was immense. I was particularly impressed by the Sarcophagus of Jonah and the Prima Porta of Augustus, as well as the famous statue of Laocoon and His Sons. The Ara Pacis was equally impressive, as were the Hadrianeum and the Pantheon, the latter of which was situated next to a sandwich shop that I loved so much I bought a hat with its name on! In true student form, I visited countless museums, including the Museo Nazionale Romano, the Capitoline Museum, the Museum of Imperial Fora and the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme. Each one had incredible displays, including the bronze Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius and the Fasti Praenestini, but my favourite thing to see was the wall painting from the Villa of Livia in Prima Porta. With its rich detail and striking colour and composition, it is a finely preserved example of the finest Roman wall painting of antiquity.

On my last day, I travelled to Hadrian's villa at Tivoli. This site is central to many of my final honours school papers, and seeing the extent of preservation as well as the sheer vastness of the site was fascinating. I particularly enjoyed seeing the remains of mosaic floors, specially designed to fit with the dynamism of space, as well as Hadrian's Pecile - the suitability of the ancient use of water as a focal point to enhance leisure was certainly impressed upon me. One could almost imagine Hadrian reading philosophy while walking around his 'Maritime Theatre', enjoying his life of *otium*. Whilst I too found *otium* in the villa, the absence of a bus to take me back to Rome and a three hour wait for a bus that took me to the wrong station was rather the opposite.

Regardless of this small hiccup, visiting Tivoli was the perfect way to end my week. I enter my third year now understanding more about Rome and the ancient world than I would have ever thought possible, and remain inspired to continue my study of antiquity.

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