

The Temple of Vesta

The Roman Forum is one of the most famous historic sites in all of Rome, visited by millions of people per year. The forum was constructed and put to use in 500 BCE during the founding of the Roman Republic. However, according to legend, the Roman Forum was connected to Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome. After Romulus defeated his brother Remus and became the king, he began an alliance with his rival, Titus Tatius, and created the Roman Forum as a neutral meeting zone.

The forum is located in the center of Rome, between the Tiber river and the Colosseum, two other famous Roman attractions. It sits in the middle of hilly terrain, surrounded by the Capitoline hill, Palatine hill, and more. The bordering terrain provides a grand entrance to the amazing architectural manifestation that is the Roman Forum.

The architecture of the Roman Forum is composed of Greek, Etruscan, and traditional Roman design. During the Roman Republic, Roman architecture was greatly influenced by the Etruscans, a group of people from the Etrurian region of the Italian peninsula. The Etruscans contributed to the Roman Forum by building the temple of Jupiter, and introducing architectural designs such as vaults and arches to the Romans. Roman architects were also influenced by classical Greek architecture, such as the Corinthian columns found in the Temple of Castor and Pollux.

Though the Romans incorporated other cultural designs into their Forum, they also created their own traditional structures, such as domes and basilicas.

The Roman Forum served as a public area serving many purposes, where religious, political, social, and economic activities occurred. The forum had a diverse range of uses; A place where civic and political announcements were made, as well as less tasteful things such as prostitution.

Needless to say the forum was very crowded and chaotic, and still is to this day with tourists eager to look at the preserved archeological wonders.

Some of the famous structures in the Roman Forum are: The Senate House, which served as the council house for the senate and a site for political events; the Temple of Saturn, built in honor of Saturn, god of agriculture, and was also Rome's treasury; The Arch of Titus, constructed by the Emperor Domitian in 81 A.D to honor his brother Titus; The Rostra, a

platform where speeches were made; The Temple of Castor and Pollux, dedicated to the Roman twin demi-gods by the same names; The Sacra Via, the main road running through the forum that served as a path for ceremonies and processions; And the Temple of Vesta, my chosen structure to elaborate on.

The Temple of Vesta, also known as the Temple of the Vestal Virgins, was one of the earliest structures to be built in the Roman Forum, standing on the east end of the forum. The temple was built by Numa Pompilius, Rome's second king. It features a unique design, as the temple is round, not rectangular like most other temples from the time. Though the temple now mostly ruins, archeologists have discovered what it most likely looked like in all its glory. Around the exterior laid twenty fluted columns, topped with a Corinthian capital, and the temple itself was propped up on a high platform with wide steps leading to its entrance.

The temple was built in devotion to Vesta, the Roman goddess of the hearth, and the Vestal Virgins who presided over it. The Vestal Virgins were a group of six priestesses who tended to the Vesta, and served the goddess and temple for thirty years beginning in their youth. They lived in the House of Vestal Virgins near the temple, and had specific duties to attend to. In honor of the goddess, the Vestal Virgins would grow sacred grain to burn in the hearth of the temple. Romans believed that the fortunes of their city relied on the sacred flame of Vesta, and without it, Rome would fall. Though most of the Vesta has fallen over the centuries, the three remaining columns continue to lure visitors to the goddesses' temple to this day, to admire its beauty.