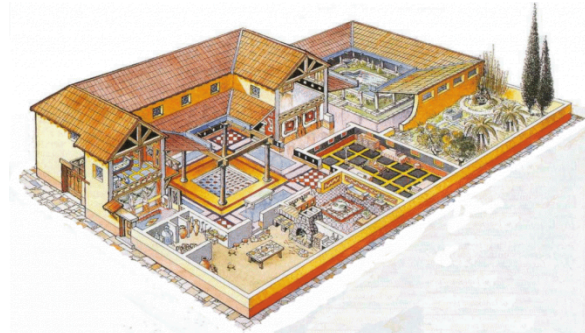


Daily Life

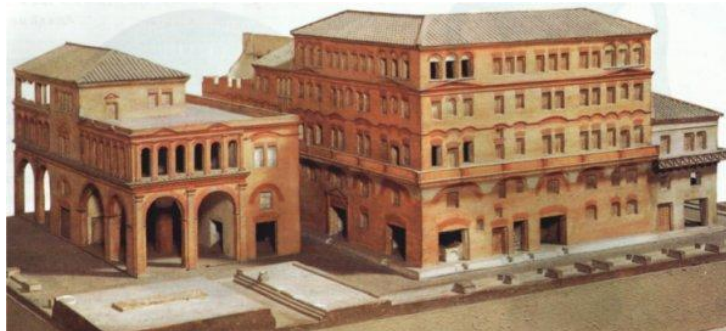
In the early years of the empire, about 1 million people lived in Rome. It suffered from many of the same problems as cities of today. There was too little housing. The air was polluted. There was crime in the streets. The cost of living was high. Many Romans could not find jobs and had to pay taxes on almost everything.

A rich person in Rome lived in a **domus** (dō' muhs), or house, with marble walls, colored stone floors, and windows made of small panes of glass. A furnace heated the rooms, and pipes brought water even to the upper floors.

Most Romans, however, were not rich. They lived in apartment houses called *islands* that were six or more stories high. Each island covered an entire block. At one time, there were 26



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blocks of islands for every private house in Rome. The ground floor of most islands was given over to shops. These opened onto the street from large arched doorways.

Rents were high in Rome. They varied according to the apartment floor—the higher up the apartment, the lower the rent.

The Family In Rome, the family was all-important. The father was head of the household. His word was law. He arranged the children's marriages to improve social position or to increase wealth. Cousins were expected to help one another politically.

Until they were 12 years old, most Roman boys and girls went to school together. Then, the sons of poor families went to work, while the sons of rich families began their formal education. They studied reading, grammar, writing, music, geometry, commercial arithmetic, and shorthand. When they were 15 years old, they entered a school of *rhetoric* (ret' uhr ik), or speech and writing, to prepare for a political career. Some went to schools in Athens or Alexandria for philosophy or medicine.

Girls received a different kind of education. When they were 12 years old, their formal education stopped. Instead of going to school, the daughters of the rich were given private lessons at home. As a result, many Roman women were as well as or better informed than Roman men. Some women worked in or owned small shops. Wealthy women had enslaved people to do their housework. This left them free to study the arts, literature, and fashions, or to ride chariots in the countryside for a day's *pig-sticking*, or a type of hunt.

At Leisure At home, the Romans enjoyed gambling with dice. They met friends at public bathhouses where they could take warm, cold, or steam baths. The bathhouses of Rome, however, provided more than baths. Some had gymnasiums, sports stadiums, and libraries. There, the Romans could watch or play games. They also could listen to lectures, see musical shows, exercise, or just sit and talk.

The Romans had no team sports to watch. Instead, they flocked to see free public games, which often ran from dawn to dusk. Under the republic, the games had generally been staged by politicians who were looking for votes. Under the empire, the games were staged by the government. The games included circuses, chariot races, and gladiatorial games. The most exciting chariot races were held at the Circus Maximus, an oval arena that could seat more than 200,000 people.

The people who fought animals and one another in arenas were called **gladiators** (glad' ē ā tuhrz). Most were enslaved people, prisoners of war, criminals, or poor people. They were



trained by managers who hired them out. A few gladiators were upper-class Romans who wanted excitement and public attention.

The night before they were to fight, gladiators would appear at a feast. There, they could be looked over by fans and gamblers who wanted to bet on the outcome of a match. When the gladiators entered the arena on the day of the games, they would walk past the emperor's box and say, "Hail Emperor, those who are about to die salute you."

Many gladiators did die. Those whose fighting pleased the crowd became idols of the people. A few won their freedom. Those who gave a poor performance were killed, even if they survived the fight.

All kinds of animals were used in the public games. Some animals pulled chariots or performed tricks. Most, however, fought one another or gladiators. Sometimes, as many as 5,000 wild animals were killed in a single day. In some cases, such as that of the Mesopotamian lion and the North African elephant, whole species were eventually wiped out.



