

Watching a show at the Colosseum

Games at the Colosseum were free to attend. All Romans had their own ticket with assigned seating. Each ticket would tell them what gate to use to enter and what sector their seats was. Gates were called vomitoria: they were built so that large numbers of people could leave swiftly, just as if the Colosseum was 'vomiting' them out!

Overview



The Cavea was the area of the Colosseum where the spectators sat. It was divided into five sectors, and seats were assigned: the best seats were for the most important citizens, such as the senators and of course the Emperor. These seats were the closest to the arena as they offered the best view of the games. The lower your social status was, the further up you'd sit with the lowest social classes of all being all the way up at the very top (no lifts at the time! You'd had to walk all the way up!). Sources are not clear on the exact number of spectators in the Colosseum but they report numbers between 40,000 and 70,000. The Colosseum hosted several types of shows

Munera

Gladiator Fights, the most popular type of show

Venationes

Hunts, with animals from near and far, some brought here from Africa (like hippos!)

Naval battles

These were not common, but ancient sources tell us they happened at least once

Executions

Executions also happened in the Colosseum, in front of the public as a way to scare people into abiding the law

Did you know?

A day at the Colosseum was long and busy. The day would start with the animal hunts (venationes) and would then go on with the executions and finally the Gladiators games (Munera). People would go to the Colosseum like we go to the stadium and would have snacks and drinks to carry them through the day. They also of course went to the bathroom: the Colosseum has public bathrooms that you can still see!