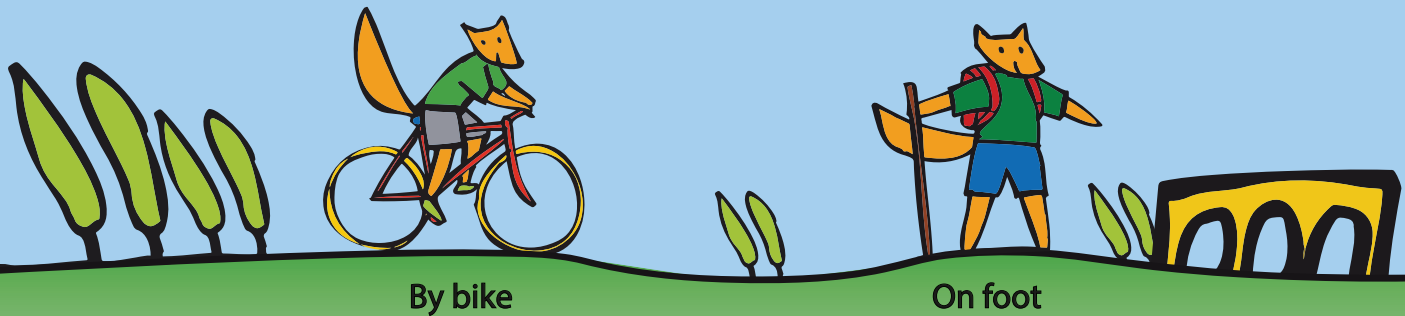


The Appian Way 1

from Porta Capena to the Mausoleum of Caecilia Metella (Miles I-III) - Inside the Walls



This section of the Appian Way, called “the urban section” because it was part of the city in antiquity, starts from the central archaeological area, in front of the Circus Maximus and near the Baths of Caracalla. This is where the ancient Porta Capena (Capua Gate), the original departure point of the Appian Way and the Latin Way dating back to the Republican period, was located. The urban section ends at the Porta S. Sebastiano (St. Sebastian Gate), part of the walls built in the reign of the emperor Aurelian in the 3rd century AD.

The monuments described along this section are currently not included in the Appia Antica Regional Park, which begins at Porta S. Sebastiano. Nevertheless, the monumental complex of the Appian Way represents a coherent context which must be described holistically beginning in the monumental center of Rome.

1) Porta Capena

The Capua Gate was part of the earliest wall of Rome, called the “Servian Wall” because its construction was traditionally attributed to the sixth king of Rome, Servius Tullius, in the middle of the 6th century BC. The most recent studies confirm the existence of a wall circuit in cappellaccio tuff that can be associated chronologically with Servius Tullius, which was later restored and enlarged in the first half of the 4th century BC.

The Appian and Latin Ways both started from this gate, which was located in front of the curved end of the Circus Maximus, and then separated in the area of the large square currently dedicated to Numa Pompilius. When the emperor Aurelian built the new city wall, the section of the Appian Way between Porta Capena and Porta S. Sebastiano became the urban section of the road.

2) Church of St. Mary in Tempulo

This deconsecrated church is located on the left side of the Archaeological Walk along today’s Via Valle delle Camene. It preserves the remains of an interesting Romanesque bell tower datable to the 12th century. The church was subsequently incorporated into a farmhouse called “Vignola Mattei” which was recently restored by the City of Rome and is used for the celebration of civil marriages.

Authority: City of Rome

3) Baths of Caracalla

The Baths of Caracalla, one of the largest and best-preserved bathing complexes of antiquity, were probably planned under the emperor Septimius Severus (r. AD 193-211) but were inaugurated in AD 216 in the reign of his son Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Bassianus, called “Caracalla.”



Even in ancient times the complex was famous as one of the seven wonders of Rome for the richness of its decorations and the works of art that adorned it.

In some places the walls are still preserved to a height of more than 30 m.

The grandiose building consisted of two symmetrical wings linked by a circular central body. The bathing facilities were accompanied by vast exercise courts, a basilica for meetings and walks, and a large open-air pool. The extensive network of underground tunnels contained the service structures, the plumbing, and the furnaces forming the heating system. Of particular interest is a mithraeum (shrine for the worship of Mithras) discovered at the beginning of the 20th century in the northwestern sector of the underground level, the largest one found in Rome to date.

Authority: Archaeological Superintendency of Rome

Reference web site: <http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/archaeological-site/baths-caracalla>

4) Church of Sts. Nereus and Achilleus

This church, situated on the right side of the Archaeological Walk, in front of the Baths of Caracalla, was founded at the end of the 6th century. Partial reconstructions and restorations were carried out in the 9th century, and again in the 15th century; its current appearance derives from interventions executed in the 17th century under Cardinal Cesare Baronio.

5) Church of San Sisto Vecchio (Domenico and Sisto)

This church stands on the left side of the Archaeological Walk, at the corner with Via Druso. The 18th-century façade conceals the original 5th-century core, which has a nave and two side aisles preceded by a four-sided portico; the small bell tower dates to the 13th century.

6) Shrine in Piazzale Numa Pompilio

At the point where the Latin Way branched off of the Appian Way, in today's Piazzale Numa Pompilio, there is a Medieval shrine in the form of a small circular tower dating to the 11th or 12th century. It stands on the site of a much earlier compitum, which was a shrine dedicated to divinities protecting places and travelers who were known as the Lares compitales.

7) Pallavicini House and Oratory of the Seven Sleepers

After Piazzale Numa Pompilio, on the left side of Via di Porta S. Sebastiano (No. 7), lies the Pallavicini House, which incorporates the remains of a two-story Roman house from the second half of the 2nd century AD. Between the 11th and the 12th centuries the first floor of the Roman structure was converted into the building known as the "Oratory of the Seven Sleepers"; its paintings illustrate the legend of seven boys from Ephesus who were walled inside a cave during the persecution of Decius (249-251) and then, two centuries later, miraculously found still alive.

Authority: private property

8) Church of St. Caesarius

On the right side of Via di Porta S. Sebastiano there is the 12th-century Church of S. Cesareo de Appia. Several black-and-white mosaics depicting marine scenes found under the floor belonged to a 2nd-century AD bath building, perhaps the Baths of Commodus. The church, renovated on several occasions, was restored at the beginning of the 17th century by Cardinal Cesare Baronio.

9) House of Cardinal Bessarione

At the fork of the Appian and Latin Ways, at Via di Porta S. Sebastiano No. 9, there is a Renaissance-era suburban villa attributed to Cardinal Bessarione, the bishop of Tuscolo between 1449 and 1468. Two tombs of the late Republican period made of tuff masonry were recently discovered in the foundations of the building; a later house was built against them. This house was used as a small hospital at the beginning of the 14th century; afterwards it became a monastery, and in the middle of the 19th century it housed a country inn.

Authority: City of Rome

Reference web site:

http://www.sovrintendenzaroma.it/i_luoghi/roma_medioevale_e-Moderna/beni_architettonici/la_casina_del_cardinal_bessarione



10) Tomb of the Scipios

On the left side of the Via di Porta S. Sebastiano, at No. 9, is the Tomb of the Cornelii Scipiones, one of the most renowned patrician families of Republican Rome.

The tomb, carved out of a natural outcropping of cappellaccio tuff, was built in the first decades of the 3rd century BC by the founder of the family, Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, consul in 298 BC, whose sarcophagus in peperino tuff (a copy, since the original is preserved in the Vatican Museums) enjoys a dominant position facing the entrance.

The tomb is square in plan, with a corridor along each of the four sides and two perpendicular corridors in the middle; there was space for 32 sarcophagi along the interior walls.

The monumental façade, arranged by Scipio Aemilianus in the 2nd century BC, consisted of a high podium with three symmetrical entrances and three niches which housed statues representing the poet Ennius, Scipio Africanus, and Scipio Asiaticus. Another room was added on the right side of the tomb in the 1st century AD by the Cornelii Lentuli, a secondary branch of the family, which used the tomb for cremation burials.

The archaeological area also contains an Imperial-era structure, a catacomb, and a 1st-century BC columbarium (structure housing multiple cremation burials and resembling a dovecote).

Authority: City of Rome

Reference web site: http://www.sovrintendenzaroma.it/i_luoghi/roma_antica/monumenti/sepolcro_degli_scipioni



11) Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas

This brickwork columbarium, discovered in 1831 by Pietro Campana, a learned antiquarian and collector, is located in the public garden behind the Tomb of the Scipios, not far from the Aurelian Walls and along the route of a secondary road (diverticulum) that linked the Appian and Latin Ways. The entrance is at Via Latina No. 10. It originally belonged to Pomponius Hylas and his wife Pomponia Vitalis, with its construction dating to the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius (AD 14-54).



12) Columbaria in Vigna Codini

In a former vineyard of the Codini family, just behind the Aurelian Walls between the Appian and Latin Ways, three columbaria were found between 1840 and 1852 (Via di Porta S. Sebastiano No. 13; current entrance Via di Porta Latina No. 14). They were built between the Augustan and the Tiberian periods (31 BC–AD 37) and used until the 2nd century AD. The first columbarium consists of a brick-faced rectangular underground hall, with a podium faced in the reticulate technique (small tuff nodules set in a net pattern) and a central pillar supporting the ceiling. All of the walls, the central pillar, and a brick stairway running along the walls are entirely covered with semicircular niches which contained the cinerary urns, for a total of about 500 burial cells; the name of the owner was inscribed or scratched on a panel located at the foot of the niche. The second columbarium consists of a square room with reticulate facing containing 300 arched burial cells, each containing two cinerary urns. The walls preserve conspicuous remains of ornamental paintings and colored stucco work, while the floor, made of *cocciopesto* (crushed ceramic set into mortar) with marble inserts, sports a mosaic inscription recording a dedication by two members of the funerary society who oversaw the structure's restoration.

The third columbarium, U-shaped in plan and the largest of the three, is characterized by richer decoration than the previous two: the burial cells, larger (to contain marble urns and busts) and rectangular in shape, are often covered with marble slabs and alternate with numerous shrines and *arcosolia* (arched recesses). The highest cells were reached via wooden scaffolding supported by brackets protruding from the walls.

Authority: Archaeological Superintendency of Rome

Reference web site: <http://www.060608.it/it/cultura-e-svago/beni-culturali/beni-archeologici/colombari-di-vigna-codini.html>

13) Aurelian Walls

The decision to provide the town with a new circuit of defensive walls was made by the Roman Senate after the repulsion of the third invasion of the Alemanni, a Germanic people who had crossed the Alps, by the emperor Aurelian in AD 270-271. The wall, built hastily with a brick facing and rubble core, was completed by Aurelian's successor Probus in AD 279.

The walls measure 4 m in thickness, 8 m in height, and 19 km in perimeter, and they enclose an area of 1372 hectares (3400 acres) including all seven hills of Rome plus the Transtiberim (Trastevere) neighborhood. There is a square watch-tower every 30 m, and numerous gates open along the route where the major roads exited the city. During the reign of Maxentius (AD 306-312) the walls were restored and partially raised, while a century later emperor Honorius had the entire circuit restored (AD 401-403), increased the height of the walls, and added an unroofed sentry corridor above the one built by Aurelian.

Authority: City of Rome



14) "Arch of Drusus"

The so-called Arch of Drusus, which stands just before Porta S. Sebastiano, was originally one of the three triumphal arches mentioned by the ancient literary sources at the beginning of the Appian Way. It was later incorporated into the Antonine Aqueduct, created by Caracalla to supply his bath complex, at the point where the aqueduct crossed the Appian Way.



During the restoration of the Aurelian Wall under Honorius the arch and the Porta S. Sebastiano were joined in a sort of defensive castle.

15) Porta S. Sebastiano/Porta Appia – Museum of the Walls

The gate created in the Aurelian Wall for the Appian Way, at the southernmost point of the city, originally bore the name Porta Appia (Appian Gate). In the course of the Middle Ages it acquired a new name, Porta S. Sebastiano, because it led to the famous catacombs of that martyr.

Restored and transformed more than once over the centuries, Porta S. Sebastiano owes its current appearance to the restoration carried out by the Byzantine generals Belisarius and Narses when Rome was besieged during the Gothic War (AD 536). At the



beginning of the 5th century, during the reign of Honorius, the gate had been reduced to a single arched entrance, and the square, marble-lined footings that surround the semi-cylindrical brick towers had been added. In this phase the gate was connected to the “Arch of Drusus” by two curved walls, forming a protective inner courtyard.

The monument can be visited and houses the Museum of the Walls.

Authority: City of Rome

Reference web site: <http://en.museodellemuraroma.it/>

Outside the Walls: from Porta S. Sebastiano to the Mausoleum of Caecilia Metella

This section, the “road among the vineyards” described in the famous 1748 map by Giovanni Battista Nolli, is characterized by the walls surrounding the suburban properties of post-Renaissance Rome. Here the road is no longer accompanied by its sidewalks, which have been absorbed by the adjoining private properties; columbaria, tombs, and monuments are often hidden behind the boundary walls.

1) First Milestone

A copy of the first milestone of the Appian Way, which commemorates the restorations sponsored by Vespasian in AD 76 and Nerva in AD 97, stands in the right-hand boundary wall 100 m after Porta S. Sebastiano. The first mile terminated here, 1478 m (5000 Roman feet) from Porta Capena. The original column, found in 1584, stands at the right end of the balustrade of the ramp on the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill).



2) Structures beneath the Via Cilicia Overpass

Both sides of the road contain the remains of a series of columbaria and tombs that can be dated from the Republican era to the 4th century AD. On the left side of the road there are tuff blocks belonging to Republican-era structures which have been interpreted as the ruins of the Temple of Mars, one of the oldest sanctuaries in Rome, located by the literary sources between the first and second miles of the Appian Way.

Authority: Archaeological Superintendency of Rome

3) Tomb of Horace

Just beyond the Via Cilicia overpass, on the left side of the road at No. 19, a 16th-century farmhouse has taken over the cement core (originally covered with travertine blocks)

of an ancient mausoleum dating to the early Imperial period, incorrectly identified as the “Tomb of Horace” as a reminder of the poet’s famous journey along the Appian Way.
Authority: private property

4) Latina Paper Mill

At No. 42 stands the Latina Paper Mill, flanked along its entire length by the Almo River which ideally joins the Appian Way to the Via Cristoforo Colombo.

The industrial facility ceased operation in 1986, and the machinery belonging to a few production lines is still preserved here. Since 1998 part of the structure has served as the headquarters of the Appia Antica Regional Park, which sponsored its recovery and opened it to the public.

Today, the multi-functional Latina Paper Mill complex boasts two rooms (Nagasawa and Appia) for exhibitions and temporary events, a conference room, a meeting room, a library (dedicated to Fabrizio Giucca), a hands-on learning space (Dì Natura) for activities involving school groups and the general public, a well-equipped outdoor green space that hosts the Urban Kitchen Garden, an area dedicated to teaching the traditions of the Roman countryside, and a rest area.

The collective work “Art for Article 9,” a permanent exhibition on the history of this place, greets visitors at the entrance and starts their journey of discovery

The presence of the Almo River has had a profound impact on this territory from the Middle Ages through the 20th century, giving it a strongly artisan character.

The presence of facilities for the fulling (cleansing and thickening) of wool can be traced as far back as 1081. In the 15th century they were called gualcherie or valche, from the Lombard word walkan (“to roll”).

When Rome was struck by the plague in 1656, the fullery at Aquataccio, located at the point where the Almo crossed the Appian Way, was used to disinfect mattress wool.

In December 1804 the Aquataccio fullery was producing vallonea, a powder created by grinding acorns of the Mount Tabor oak species and used for tanning leather. In 1823 it was producing “mortella,” common myrtle, used in the preparation of medications. In 1875 the facility was adapted for the grinding of colored pigments used in the ceramic industry. The structure became an industrial paper mill in 1919, with a steam-powered boiler and three electric motors generating a total power of 67 amperes.

In September 1923 the “Appia Paper Mill” joint-stock company was formed, which in January 1931 became the “Latina Paper Mill Joint-stock Company.”



5) Tomb of Geta

At No. 41, on the left side of the road, stands a tower-like cement structure consisting of plinths superimposed in the form of a pyramid and surmounted by a small square building with a pyramidal roof.

The tomb, which was originally covered with marble, is known as the “Tomb of Geta,” the younger son of the emperor Septimius Severus who was assassinated by his brother Caracalla in AD 212. In reality, the attribution of the tomb to Geta is completely baseless.

See also the augmented-reality reconstruction of the tomb on Layar – Parco Appia Antica.
Authority: private property



6) Church of St. Mary in Palmis ("Domine Quo Vadis?")

At the junction of the Appian and Ardeatine Ways there is, on the left side, the small church of S. Maria in Palmis, also known as "Domine Quo Vadis?" The chapel is a 17th-century rearrangement of the original 9th-century structure.

Its alternate name is linked to Jesus' legendary apparition as a traveler to the apostle Peter, who was leaving Rome to escape the persecution of Nero (AD 64). When Peter asked Him, "Domine, quo vadis?" ("Lord, where are You going?"), Jesus answered, "I'm going back to be crucified again." These words caused the apostle to return and face his martyrdom. The church houses a copy of a marble slab with two footprints, an ancient pagan ex-voto (dedication) giving thanks for the successful conclusion of a journey, probably related to the nearby sanctuary of the god Rediculus. Popular devotion considered them to be Jesus' footprints (the original is preserved in the Basilica of St. Sebastian).



7) Tomb of Priscilla

In front of the "Domine Quo Vadis?" church, where the Appian and Ardeatine Ways fork, stands a tomb that tradition attributes to Titus Flavius Abascantus, an influential freedman of the emperor Domitian who built the tomb for his wife Priscilla, whose funeral is described by the poet Statius (Silvae V.1).

The tomb's square base, originally covered with travertine blocks, contained the funeral chamber in the shape of a Greek cross, which housed the sarcophagi; over it stood a cylindrical structure articulated into thirteen niches. The original entrance, located on the side opposite the Appian Way, is currently rendered inaccessible by an early 20th-century farmhouse which was used until recently as a "caciara," a facility for making cheese. In the early Middle Ages a watch-tower made of bricks and fragments of re-used marble was built above the tomb.



Authority: City of Rome

8) Catacombs of St. Callixtus

This is the largest underground funerary complex in Rome, representing the union of several different nuclei of tunnels on four levels. Its name derives from the banker Callixtus, who became a deacon and then pope, to whom Pope Zephyrinus entrusted the management of the cemeteries owned by the Christians, placing them under the direct control of the Church.

The oldest part, consisting of the "Crypts of Lucina", a group of underground spaces occupying the section of the complex closest to the Appian Way, dates between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD and was enlarged until the end of the 4th century. The so-called "Crypt of the Popes" also belongs to the earliest period: nine popes who succeeded Callixtus are buried here.

The "Gaius-Eusebius region," whose name derives from the burials of Popes Gaius and Eusebius, developed between the end of the 3rd and the first half of the 4th century. The regions called "Soter", "liberian," and the "labyrinth" (a section planned in a particularly incoherent manner) date to the latest phase of the complex, between the middle of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century AD.



There are three different entrances to the complex. The first entrance is located at the intersection of the Appian and Ardeatine Ways. The second is on the right side of the Appian Way, just before the Catacombs of St. Sebastian. The third is on Via delle Sette Chiese. In July 2015 a new museum was inaugurated in a small tower inside the complex (Museo della Torretta); the selection of precious sculpted and inscribed artifacts from the 3rd and 4th centuries provides an important contribution to the history of the Christianization of Rome in Late Antiquity.

Authority: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology

Reference web site: <http://www.catacombe.roma.it/en/index.php>

9) Chapel of Reginald Pole

At the junction with Vicolo della Caffarella stands a circular chapel made of yellow and red bricks, built in 1539 by the English Cardinal Reginald Pole. The chapel represents an ex-voto for his having escaped an ambush by killers hired by King Henry VIII of England: the Cardinal, who had been sent to Rome by the king to plead the case for his divorce, sided instead with the Church of Rome and the Pope.

10) Columbarium of Augustus' Freedmen

On the left, just beyond the Chapel of Reginald Pole, are the remains of a columbarium built by the freedmen of the emperor Augustus (r. 31 BC–AD 14), which have been incorporated into a farmhouse currently used as a restaurant. The tomb, made of brick and consisting of three adjoining and connected rooms with vaulted ceilings, contained about 3000 burial cells for cinerary urns along the walls and very many inscriptions.

11) Hypogeum of Vibia

Inside the 17th-century Villa Casali, on the left side of the Appian Way, with entrance at No. 101, is the Catacombs of Vibia, a pagan underground cemetery consisting of eight different hypogea (underground spaces) excavated at different levels and dating between the 3rd and the beginning of the 5th century AD. The most famous hypogeum, after which the complex is named, belonged to Vincentius, a priest of Sabazius (a god of vegetation from Thrace or Phrygia), and his wife Vibia. The interior is decorated with famous paintings dating to the 4th century and representing the rape of Persephone/Proserpina by Pluto, the judgment to which Vibia was subjected before passing into the afterlife, and her husband Vincentius among seven devout priests reclining at a banquet.

Authority: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology

12) Tombs of the Calventii and Cercennii

On the left side of the Via Appia Pignatelli (No. 1), at the junction with the Appian Way, stand two funeral monuments made of brick which were given names in the 16th century by the architect Pirro Ligorio on the basis of inscriptions found in the vicinity. As a matter of fact, the two tombs probably pertain to the underlying Catacombs of Praetextatus, representing the aboveground part of that complex.

The Tomb of the Calventii is a circular space with six semi-circular apses and a domed ceiling and preceded by a rectangular vestibule.

The Tomb of the Cercennii is square in plan with niches in the shape of a Greek cross and a cross-vaulted ceiling. The two structures can be dated by their features and building technique to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century AD.

Authority: private property

13) Catacombs of Praetextatus

On the left side of the Via Appia Pignatelli, after the junction with the Appian Way, are the Catacombs of Praetextatus. The complex is articulated on several levels and in several sections around a pre-existing tunnel, perhaps originally a hydraulic conduit, called “Spelunca Magna” (Big Cave) in the Middle Ages. An exceptional collection of sarcophagi dating to the end of the 2nd and the 3rd century AD was found here. The initial nuclei of the catacombs date to the 3rd century, but the main development occurred in the following century, when most of the paintings were created.

Authority: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology

14) Jewish Catacombs in Vigna Randanini

On the left side of the Appian Way, at No. 119, just after the junction with the Via Appia Pignatelli, inside a vineyard of the Randanini family, lie the best-preserved catacombs of the Jewish community that flourished in Rome mainly in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. The current entrance is on the Via Appia Pignatelli, at No. 4. The access consists of a stairwell leading to a vestibule from which depart two tunnels, which further separate into different branches.

Besides the usual chambers with arcosolia, there are kokhim (oven) tombs of Phoenician origin in which narrow and deep cavities are carved perpendicularly into the walls of the ambulatories to house multiple superimposed, but separate, burials.

Authority: private property



15) Catacombs and Basilica of St. Sebastian

The complex of St. Sebastian is located on the right side of the Appian Way, immediately after Via delle Sette Chiese. The term “catacomb,” derived from the expression “ad catacumbas” (“near the cavities”), originally indicated the depression between the second and third miles of the Appian Way (between the Catacombs of St. Callixtus and the Mausoleum of Caecilia Metella) created by the ancient pozzolana (volcanic sand) quarries in the area. The Catacombs of St. Sebastian was one of the few that remained accessible throughout the Middle Ages, so that afterwards, by extension, the term came to designate any kind of underground cemetery.

The first nucleus of the early Christian complex consisted of a funerary building featuring a large courtyard with brickwork counters along the walls, called “triclia,” where the bodies of the apostles Peter and Paul were buried during the persecution of Decius (AD 250). The cemetery, known as the “Memoria Apostolorum” (Monument of the Apostles), was built – with a considerable artificial raising of the ground level – over columbaria, mausolea, tombs, and structures of indeterminate use dating from the second half of the 1st century AD onwards.

At the same time, since the number of Christians who wanted to be buried near the two apostles increased, the underground cemetery grew larger and larger, with a total of 12 km of tunnels. Later, in the 4th century, a “circiform” basilica was built over the “Memoria Apostolorum”: in plan this basilica resembled a Roman circus, with a central nave and two side aisles, around which developed a large cemetery with numerous mausolea.



In the 8th century the basilica was dedicated to St. Sebastian, the martyr killed in the reign of the emperor Diocletian. Its current appearance derives from a restoration sponsored by Cardinal Scipione Borghese at the beginning of the 17th century.

Authority: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology

16) Commemorative Column of Pius IX

In the small square in front of the Basilica of St. Sebastian stands a column capped by a cross. The base bears an inscription commemorating a project for the recovery and enhancement of the Appian Way sponsored by Pope Pius IX in 1851. The project was executed by the archaeologist Luigi Canina, who created a kind of prototype for an archaeological park with a highly cohesive context by restoring the monuments and recovering numerous artifacts which were inserted into purpose-built façades located along the road.



17) Complex of Maxentius

The monumental complex, conceived with a unified architectural and ideological vision, consists of the Mausoleum of Romulus (son of the emperor Maxentius), a circus for chariot races, and an imperial palace. The mausoleum, built by the emperor at the beginning of the 4th century for himself and his family, probably contained only his son Romulus, who died in AD 309 at the age of seven.



What is left of the original building today is the circular base, surrounded by a four-sided portico and abutted by the 18th-century Casale Torlonia.

The mausoleum was a grandiose two-story structure in the form of a temple, with a domed ceiling and a colonnade in the front. The ground floor, still accessible today, was the crypt for the sarcophagi, a circular corridor wrapped around a central pillar. The upper floor, which is not preserved, contained a cult space for the worship of the deified emperor.

The southeastern side of the portico surrounding the mausoleum abuts a pre-existing tomb, known as the "Tomb of the Servilii," dated between the end of the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD

The remains of the circus, 520 m long and 92 m wide, include the two towers that stood at the ends of the twelve gates from which the horses started, the walls supporting the stands which could hold up to 10,000 spectators, and the spina ("spine"), the 296-m long raised platform around which the chariots ran their seven laps.

In the middle of the spina stood an obelisk, which was moved to Piazza Navona by Pope Innocent X in 1650 to adorn Bernini's Four Rivers Fountain.

The pulvinar, or imperial tribunal, located on the northern side, was connected to the palace via a portico-lined corridor which allowed the emperor to watch the games in the circus without leaving his residence.

The imperial palace featured enormous spaces equipped with apses and heating systems. Only a section of the semi-circular apse of the wide "Palatine hall," where the emperor received his guests and held court, is preserved. A portico extended along the entire front length of the palace, acting as a sort of monumental façade and a connection to the circus below. The imperial residence was built over a 2nd-century AD villa which had been the property of the Greek politician and orator Herodes Atticus, who in turn had built his villa over a Republican-era villa belonging to the Annii family.

Authority: City of Rome

Reference web site: <http://en.villadimassenzio.it/>

18) Mausoleum of Caecilia Metella and Caetani Castle

On the left side of the Appian Way, just after the complex of Maxentius, stands the Mausoleum of Caecilia Metella, the most famous tomb on the Appian Way and the very symbol of the “Regina Viarum.” A cylindrical drum 30 m in diameter sits on a high square cement base now lacking the travertine blocks that used to line it.

The drum is covered with travertine slabs imitating full blocks; near the top of the drum runs a frieze in Greek marble decorated with ox heads alternating with garlands – thus in the Middle Ages the area acquired the name

“Capo di Bove” (“Ox Head”). On the side of the building facing the Appian Way, under a trophy of arms recalling the family’s martial glories, is a dedicatory inscription for Caecilia Metella, daughter of Quintus Metellus Creticus (conqueror of the island of Crete) and wife of Marcus Licinius Crassus, who won many victories in Gaul under Julius Caesar. The monument dates to the beginning of the Imperial period, between 25 and 10 BC.

The funerary chamber, a circular brick-lined room that occupies the full height of the mausoleum, held the cinerary urn of the deceased, which was probably plundered even in antiquity.

The mausoleum was originally covered by a mound of earth, similar to the one on the Mausoleum of Augustus in central Rome. The mound was still present in the 11th century when the structure, having become property of the counts of Tuscolo, was incorporated into a fortified village.

At the beginning of the 14th century, under Pope Boniface VIII (Benedetto Caetani), the mausoleum became property of the powerful Caetani family, who built an aristocratic palace in tuff blocks abutting its southern side. The drum was capped with the Ghibelline (swallow-tail) crenellations that characterize it still today.

The castrum (fortification), which extended along both sides of the Appian Way, served to control the commercial traffic coming into and going out of Rome.

After the Caetani family, Capo di Bove became property of the Savelli, Colonna, and Orsini families.

Authority: Archaeological Superintendency of Rome

Reference web site: <http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/archaeological-site/mausoleum-caecilia-metella>



19) Church of St. Nicholas

The small church in front of the tomb of Caecilia Metella, in the garden partly delimited by the wall of the castle, was the parish church for the fortified village of the Caetani family. It was dedicated to St. Nicholas of Bari in 1303. Today the roof is completely missing, while the side walls with lancet windows still stand thanks to the eight buttresses per side. The church represents an interesting example of Gothic architecture that recalls the Cistercian abbeys of Europe.



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