

Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli

Notes for talk to the U3a Archaeology Group – Fri 16 Nov 2018

PP Slide 1 - Title

Good morning

Many thanks for giving me this opportunity to share my experience of visiting Hadrian's Villa in Rome. The express tour around the site was led by an archaeologist and lasted for about an hour and a half.

The talk today will be the first of three sessions I have offered to speak about Rome in our meetings here. The second session will be on 'Palatine Hill and the Forum', and the third one on 'Other Architectural Monuments in Rome'.

Some of you may know ... I am quite trigger happy with my little camera and take countless pictures. You will see nearly 100 of them today.

May I ask how many of you have been to Hadrian's Villa?

It is a testament to Hadrian's activity, power and interests. It is an UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1999. Four of the aqueducts to Rome passed through Tivoli ensuring good water supply.

Wonder if any one else went to see a special exhibition on Hadrian in the British Museum ten years ago (2008). I remember they had a 3D model of the villa.

First, a few things about Hadrian

He had a beard and made it fashionable.

PP Slide 2

[At the end of the slide]

He was a keen architect himself and had some original ideas. In the design of the villa, he incorporated features from the Roman Empire – Greece and Egypt. I believe another architect at that time criticised his plans for the Villa ... and a few days later they found that the architect had committed suicide.

PP Slide 3

[At the end of the slide] ... Google Map view from the satellite

I find this application from Google great ... it is free.

You can have an overview of the site and get a broad view of the structures and their relationship with each other. I will indicate the sequence of our virtual tour.

[Go through each unit being covered].

We can now cover one section at a time ...

1. PECILE

After a long walk from the reception area **[Slide 1]** past the pine trees and olive trees, we come to an area called **Pecile**.

Slide 3a There is a huge wall and the various layers are interesting. They are built from stones and bricks. **[Wonder if Trump ought to see it....]**

When you go past the wall, this is what you may have seen in Hadrian's times. It provided an all-weather space for the daily walk. Long covered walkways in a garden with a piscina (pool) in the centre.

The athletic emperor could carry out the Roman equivalent of the daily workout. It was a 330-foot-long rectangular pool. The court doctors had advised the emperor that he should walk two miles every day after lunch, which he could achieve by completing six rounds of the portico surrounding the pool.

Slides up to 10.

Slide 11

2. THE HUNDRED CHAMBERS

The western side consisted of four stories of rooms with wooden floors accessible from wood balconies connected by concrete stairs. The rooms provided storage spaces as well as living quarters for the villa's service staff and slaves.

Estimates of the number of rooms vary between 125 and 200. The lowest level included a latrine. It led to a service corridor leading all the way to the Vestibule and the adjacent baths.

3. ANTINOEION

Slide 12: Adjacent to the Hundred Chambers is a sanctuary dedicated to Antinous, Hadrian's younger friend who died by drowning in the Nile in 130 AD.

Slide 13a: Currently there is a special exhibition about Antinous in the Ashmolean in Oxford.

Antinous was a boy-favourite of the Emperor Hadrian. After his drowning, the emperor founded a city in middle Egypt in his honour called Antinopolis or 'Antinous City'. A striking portrait of the boy was created by a great court sculptor, and this image was widely reproduced around the empire. More than eighty busts and statues survive. There was an empire-wide cult as a hero and god.

Slide 13b and 14: It is a sacred precinct with two temples with white marble facing. The two temples faced one another across a plaza, in the middle of which is a base that probably supported an obelisk. There was a **colonnaded hemicycle** with a central room. Date palms were planted in the open areas.

Slide 15: There is a passageway for important visitors arriving by horse or wheeled conveyance.

4. VESTIBULE

Slides 16,17 : The Vestibule served as the entrance to the villa.

5. THREE EXEDRAS

Slides 18,19: We move on to an area called 'Three exedras' designed to impress the visitors. Considered to be Hadrian's original idea in the shape of a clover – a rectangular base with three curved sections called garden exedras.

Slides 20, 21: Rectangular section had a large fountain around which were 12 statue bases.

Slide 22: Left

Slide 23: Middle

Slide 24: Right

Slide 25: View from the right

Slides 26, 27: State of some of the columns

Part of the building was probably used as a dining hall.

6. SMALL BATHS

Slides 28 , 29, 30

There are two Baths, the Small and Large Baths. A recent interpretation assigns the Small Baths to high-ranking visitors and members of the court and the Large Baths to the service staff.

We did not go into the baths just around their periphery.

Small Baths ...

[A bath is built around three principal rooms:

- a warm one called the tepidarium
- a hot one called the caldarium, where slaves would rub their masters all over with perfumed oil and then scrape it off with a knife called a strigil
- a big cold bath called the frigidarium to swim in.]

Slides 31: You can see the staircase and passageways between the two bathsmainly for the staff.

7. LARGE BATHS

Slides 32-37: You will see the other side of these baths later. There was a doubling of each section in the large baths ... suggesting a division of the building by sex. The larger ones are assumed to be reserved for males.

8. CANOPUS

Slide 38: Then we come to Canopus ... which is featured in many guidebooks and picture postcards.

It is a terraced garden (ca. 160 m) with a canal (119 x 18 m). Around the canal ran a colonnade, which was curved on the north side, single on the western side, and double on the eastern side.

Slides 39, 40, The pool represents a branch of the Nile ... with models of statues from the Roman Empire – Greece and Egypt. At the far end is the entertainment area for banqueting.

Slides 41, 42, 43:

Some of the original statues have been moved to a museum and you can see copies of them in situ.

Slide 44 : In the middle of this side there are six statues instead of columns.

Slide 45: The end ones are **two Sileni** ... (**decorations on the stage of the Theatre of Dionysus**)

The middle four are **"Caryatids"** ... **as in** the Porch of the Maidens of the **Erechtheion on the Acropolis**

[You will see copies of these also in London in a Greek Church virtually opposite Euston Station, and of course one of the originals, No.2, in the British Museum. Incidentally, the Greek Erechtheion was featured in the current TV Series 'The Little Drummer Girl' – in the romantic night scene set in Acropolis. Did any one see it?].

Slides 46,47 and 48: Statues on the rounded northern side included two Amazons (types: Sciarra and Mattei), a Hermes, and a Warrior.

Slide 48b: This is just to show that I was there. There is a statue of a crocodile as well establishing a link with Egypt.

Slide 49: A live tortoise

The Canopus was an open-air museum providing a feast for the eyes of banqueters dining in the Serapaeum. They held night time banquets there.

Slide 50 The guide holding up a picture of the Serapium.

9. SERAPEUM

The Serapeum had a waterfall.

The front of the structure is dominated by a half-dome. Under that was a semi-circular seating area on which banqueters reclined in the open air while enjoying the view of the Canopus canal in front and the sound of cascading water from the waterfall behind.

Slide 51: This is the view that the guests would have had.

Slide 52 - 55: Some details surrounding the seating area

10. PRAETORIUM

Slide 56: We move on to the area of Praetorium and the other side of the baths.

The Praetorium was the guest house. Had four floors.

Slides 57, 58, 59 : The upper rooms were lavishly decorated with Doric marble columns.

The lower level rooms were for storage and perhaps dormitory rooms for the service staff.

They had a nice garden in the back.

11. The other side of the baths Slides 60 to 70

12. BUILDING WITH FISH POND [WINTER PALACE]

Slide 72: We enter the Winter Palace and what they call as a building with Fish Pond

This building was used as the emperor's residence during cold weather (hence the name "Winter Palace")

Slides 73, 74, 75: The quadrangle around a large pool (length: 28 m) decorated with statues in the 24 niches. It was used in the warm months both for bathing and walks.

Slides 76, 77 : The pool was surrounded by a colonnade composed of **forty fluted white marble columns**.

Slides 78, 79: Some simple mosaic.

13. DORIC PILLARS

Slide 80: This impressive space had an uncertain function. It was adjoining the Imperial Palace.

In view of its design, décor, and proximity to the Imperial Palace and Piazza d'Oro (we didn't visit that part), the hall may well have been used for imperial meetings and audiences.

14. IMPERIAL PALACE

We went swiftly through the Imperial Palace ... at this stage, we were beginning to rush.

Slides 88 to 92

And then various other buildings and passage ways.

Slides 93 to 95

Until we came to the two Libraries

15. LATIN LIBRARY

Slide 96: The Latin Library has two floors – in contrast to the three floors of the Greek Library.

16. GREEK LIBRARY

Slides 97, 98 : Scholars generally agree that the building was used for leisure activities such as banquets.

Slide 99: We then pass the **Garden of Libraries** and head towards [Slides 100, 101) the last building called Maritime Theatre

17 MARITIME THEATRE

Slide 102: Sadly it was under renovation ... supposed to be one of the best spots in the complex.

Slide 103: It is a 35 room complex. Had a marble-lined canal from a circular colonnaded enclosure paved in white mosaic.

This is a photo of the poster there. The rectangular section on the right is called the Philosophers Hall.

Slides 104, 105: There are "island" rooms accessible by means of two retractable wooden bridges.

There was a small bath complex, latrine for one person etc. It is thought to have been dedicated to Hadrian's personal use.

The tour then came to an end ...

Just a few points to summarise:

The vast residential complex was almost always teeming with people: members of the court, guests, and, of course, an army of servants.

The servants' lodgings, and the way they moved around the complex, were ingeniously designed so that the villa's residents barely noticed they were there.

Staff lived in hidden rooms, and moved around the site through a series of service tunnels, in order to distribute food or access the ovens that heated the baths.

Later emperors made use of the villa as a kind of Roman "Camp David," but the decline of the empire left it vulnerable to looters. The complex was sacked by the Ostrogoth King Totila in A.D. 544, its massive monuments abandoned and later demolished for their stones.

Because of its sheer size and location, however, many treasures passed unnoticed at the site for centuries. Pope Alexander VI found artworks there in the late 1400s. You can see some of them in the Vatican Museum.....

That brings my presentation of Hadrian's Villa to the end. **Many thanks for your attention.**