

PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

SUMMARY

- PRESS RELEASE
- INFO SHEET
- CREDITS
- INSTITUTIONAL TEXT
- INTRODUCTION TO THE ITINERARY
- AN ITINERARY BETWEEN MYTH
AND HISTORY
- THE NATURALISTIC ITINERARY
- MAP
- GUIDE INFO SHEET



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PRESS
RELEASE

ROME, JUNE 21 2018

After eighteen years the path along the slopes of the Palatine descending towards the Circus Maximus is reopening. **A walk through greenery spanning more than 1500 years of history and almost one kilometer long.**

The Archaeological Park of the Colosseum further increases the spaces open to visitors in the archaeological precinct, regenerating a highly symbolic itinerary: the hillside where Romulus founded the city in 753 BC and where, even earlier, according to the myth, the she-wolf suckled the twins.

Along the way you will pass the imperial residences, from the House of Augustus to the Severan complex of the 3rd century AD. And it is precisely the mighty arches of the Severan palace that strongly mark the urban landscape of the capital and characterize the profile of the southern slopes of the Palatine. Later, in the Renaissance, the gardens known as the Horti Farnesiani extended to this point. A particularly representative place in ancient times, according to the Virgilian legend relating how Aeneas, after escaping from Troy, crossed these slopes to climb the hill and be welcomed by the aging King Evander. On the highest point stood the Temple of the Magna Mater (the Great Mother), today marked by imposing holm oaks.

The itinerary, now reopened, winds through an utterly fascinating natural landscape.

Acanthus bushes, their serrated leaves reproduced on the Corinthian capitals of the monuments, the broom shrubs dotting the hillside, the climbing dog roses, mallow, rosemary and mint, emanating their scents, and capers today, as in the distant part, all line the path shaded by pines and cypresses. The recreation areas with their amenities are ideal for resting in glades offering striking views.

Myth, history and nature accompany the visitor along a path that finally unites the valley of the Roman Forum with the outermost front of the Palatine: the Murcia Valley separ-

ating it from the Aventine. The route takes a broad circuit inside the Park, as well as restoring the historical character of the green areas. The landscape is an integral and characteristic part of the whole archaeological area. And for the first time, the focus is not only on the trees but also the shrubs and herbaceous plants.

This initiative is part of the plan of progressive openings initiated by the Archaeological Park of the Colosseum since its inauguration last January by the Director Alfonsina Russo, with organizational and promotional support provided by Electa, the concession-holder for valorisation services.

The reopening of the Farnese Aviaries has taken place in recent months, followed by the establishment of the S.U.P.E.R. ticket, which allows visits to a series of monuments of particular importance, which had been closed for some time. *“Our great commitment the regeneration of the landscape along the southern slopes of the Palatine,”* explains Alfonsina Russo, *“marks an important further step towards the total return to public use of the central archaeological area in the heart of Rome.”*

With this project, the Palatine restores to the public that fascination that, already in the 1950s, had bewitched Albert Camus, as well as other notable intellectuals.

His words are the most exciting invitation to a visit: *“It is in this way that Rome weighs, but with a light and sensitive weight, you carry it on your heart like a body of fountains, gardens and domes, you can breathe under it, a little oppressed but strangely happy.... and then that marvelous hill of the Palatine, whose silence nothing spoils, peace, a world always nascent and perfect. I began to find myself again...”*

A guide to the itinerary is published by Electa for the occasion with useful guide maps and texts explaining the archaeological monuments in the various sections. Further insights are devoted to the botany of the hill explored in historical terms.



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE

Paths in the green
on the slopes of the Palatine

VENUE

Rome, Palatine
via di San Gregorio, 30

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO

June 22, 2018

PROMOTED BY

Parco archeologico del Colosseo

DIRECTOR

Alfonsina Russo

ORGANIZATION AND PROMOTION

Electa

OPENING HOURS

from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m

TICKET

Full € 12,00; reduced € 7,50
(reductions and gratuities
according to current legislation)
The ticket, valid for 2 days, allows
one entrance at the Colosseum
and one entrance at the Foro
Romano-Palatino

INFORMATION GUIDED TOURS PRESALES

www.coopculture.it
phone +39.06.39967700

PRESS OFFICE

Electa
Gabriella Gatto
phone +39.06.47497462
press.electamusei@mondadori.it



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

Parco archeologico
del Colosseo

Direttore
Director
Alfonsina Russo

Segreteria del direttore
Director's Office
Gloria Nolfo
Luigi Daniele
Fernanda Spagnoli

Funzionario archeologo
responsabile del Palatino
Archaeologist responsible
for the Palatine
Paola Quaranta

Progetto scientifico
Scientific project
Alessandro D'Alessio

Progetto paesaggistico
Landscape project
Maria Maddalena Scoccianti
Gabriella Strano

Servizio Giardini
Garden Service
Maria Maddalena Scoccianti

Carlo Basili
Tommaso Cellamare
Iolanda De Noni
Raffaella Raponi
Gabriella Strano

Servizio di valorizzazione
Promotion service
Martina Almonte

Ines Arletti
Daniele Fortuna
Donatella Garritano

Servizio Comunicazione,
relazioni con il pubblico,
la stampa, i social network
e progetti speciali
Service Communications,
relations with the public, press,
social networks and special projects
Federica Rinaldi

Francesca Boldrighini
Elisa Cella
Giulia Giovanetti
Andrea Schiappelli
Giovanni Pellegrini Raho
Simonetta Massimi

Servizio fotografico
Photographic service
Patrizia Fortini

Bruno Angeli

Electa

Organizzazione
Organization
Anna Grandi
Camilla Musci
Giorgia Santoro

Comunicazione e promozione
Communication and promotion
Gabriella Gatto
Aurora Portesio
Stefano Bonomelli (digital)

Editoria
Publishing
Carlotta Branzanti
Nunzio Giustozzi

Immagine coordinata
Coordinated image
Studio Leonardo Sonnoli

Traduzioni
Translations
Richard Sadleir

Progetto di riqualificazione
paesaggistica
Landscaping enhancement
project
Agrifolia Studio Associato
Gianfilippo Lucatello
Daniele Dallari
Luca Catalano

Responsabile della sicurezza
Head of Security
Fabio Quintino Pitrelli

Direttore dei lavori
Works manager
Apollodoro Studi e Ricerche Srl
Prof. Arch. Ruggero Martines

Direttori operativi di cantiere
Executive directors of works
Arch. Giacomo Martines
Arch. Cristina Piccione
Arch. Leonardo Amerise

Realizzazione interventi
di riqualificazione
Implementation
of enhancement projects
BG Ambiente
Vivaio Torre Gaia

Realizzazione
dei supporti grafici
Creation of graphic supports
SpSystema

Guida e pannelli didattici
Guide and didactic panels

Testi
Texts
Roberta Alteri [RA]
Daniela Bruno [DB]
Alessandro D'Alessio [AD]
Giulia Giovanetti [GG]
Gianfilippo Lucatello [GL]
Andrea Schiappelli [AS]
Gabriella Strano [GS]
Maria Antonietta Tomei [MAT]

Fotografie
Photographs
Bruno Angeli
Giulia Giovanetti
Andrea Schiappelli

Disegni
Drawings
Agrifolia Studio Associato
Giulia Giovanetti
Andrea Schiappelli



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PATHS IN THE
GREEN ON THE
SLOPES OF THE
PALATINE.
MYTH, HISTORY
AND NATURE

The Palatine has always been viewed and experienced by the Romans and by travelers from around the world as a place with a special charm, immersed in an unrivaled harmony between nature with a thousand nuances, evocations of life reborn each spring, and archaeological monuments with rarely expressive ecclesiastical complexes.

Perhaps the Palatine itself offers one of the most extraordinary views of the Eternal City, with its light at sunset, warm, welcoming, intoxicating, such as few cities in the world can show.

And the clearest expression of this magical presence of the Palatine, its poetry, appears in the words of Goethe, who during his visit to Rome on November 10, 1786 visited the Palatine Hill at sunset: "Here I am now living with a calmness and a serenity to which I have for a long while been a stranger... Every day offers some new, wonderful object; fresh images every day, great, rare, and of a whole that I had long dreamed of yet never succeeded in imagining. Today I went to the pyramid of Cestius, and towards evening on Mount Palatine, where the ruined walls rise of the palace of the Ca-

esars. It is not possible, I believe, to find the a view equal to this one."

After almost two centuries, in the fifties of the last century, Albert Camus, in his notebooks, wrote of Rome and the Palatine: "It is in this way that Rome weighs, but with a light and sensitive weight, you carry it on your heart like a body of fountains, gardens and domes, you can breathe under it, a little oppressed but strangely happy... After so many years in a city without light, and many awakenings in the fog, I nurture myself unceasingly with this line of trees and skies that from Porta Piniana stretches as far as Trinità dei Monti, and behind which Rome unfolds its domes and its disorder... and then that marvelous hill of the Palatine, whose silence nothing spoils, peace, a world always nascent and perfect. I began to find myself again... The light of Rome is round, bright and soft. It makes one think of bodies..."

And for those who are working today on the Palatine, preserving this harmony, also with the nature path now laid out on its slopes and which unfolds between myth, history and art, is an overriding duty towards all those who love Rome.

Alfonsina Russo
Director of Parco archeologico del Colosseo



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

INTRODUCTION TO THE ITINERARY

CULTURAL, LANDSCAPE
AND ENVIRONMENTAL
VALUES OF THE NEW
ITINERARY

A journey in space and time. This is the spirit with which the modern visitor can take the path that winds along the southern and western slopes of the Palatine (*Palatium*). Starting from the massive Severan arcades to the east (3rd century AD), the last extension of the sumptuous imperial palace, walking under the front of the palace (1st-2nd century AD) and above the Circus Maximus, in short tracing history backwards (from the 1st to the 8th century BC), we reach the southwest slopes of the hill (*Cermalus*), where Romulus founded the Eternal City and where Augustus, Rome's first emperor, lived and spent the most splendid years of his life. And from here again, continuing along the western side of the hill, we retrace time with the sanctuary of Cybele and *Victoria* (*Palatine acropolis*), from the *domus Tiberiana* looming

above and the Farnese Gardens, as far as the medieval church of San Teodoro. Finally passing into the *horrea Agrippiana* ("warehouses"), our path brings us into the Roman Forum, behind the *basilica Iulia* (from which you can also take the tour in the reverse direction).

The path is not only of archaeological interest but also a fascinating itinerary through one of the most striking and unusual places in Rome, so close to the city, *present and living*, yet far from the noise of the urban traffic. A path immersed at times in complete silence, in an almost dreamlike atmosphere, where clusters of flowers and grasses, dense shrubs and stands of trees, a lush, spontaneous vegetation, form a setting rich in sights and scents that enhance the powerful remains of an archaeological site that is unique worldwide. [AD]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PATH I

THE SOUTHERN PALATINE IN ITS URBAN SETTING

The south side of the Palatine Hill, directly connected to the *memorials* of the birth of Rome and always inhabited by the Roman aristocracy, offered (and partly still does) an immense scenic vista of the surrounding urban landscape, retaining a profound, continuous symbolic bond with it: from the Valle Murcia below, occupied by the Circus Maximus, to the Aventine, the hill opposite and famous as the preserve of the common people and foreign cults, as far as the Tiber, the Forum Boarium and the Ara Maxima (Great Altar) of Hercules, the southwest vertex of the furrow traced by Romulus around the Palatine at the city's foundation. [RA]

THE SEVERAN ARCADES AND THE *SEPTIZODIUM*

The imposing arches (substructures) on the southeast slopes of the Palatine, laid out on several planes and levels, were built by the emperor Septimius Severus (193-211 AD) to enlarge the surface area of the building on the hill, already occupied on this slope by the great palace built by the Flavian emperors in the 1st century AD.

Further down, at the corner of the Palatine Hill, the *Septizodium* was built at the same time. This was a monumental, three-story, sce-

nic backdrop of niches and columns designed to impress those arriving in Rome from the Via Appia. Destroyed in the 16th century at the behest of Sixtus V, the building is documented by the Severan marble plan and some Renaissance drawings. [AD, GG]

SEVERAN ARCADES AND MAXENTIUS'S EXPANSION: BUILDING TECHNIQUES

The imposing substructures (about 20 m high) built in the Severan age to extend the imperial residence, are a clear example of the grandeur of Roman architecture.

In building them, the works in concrete (mortar and stone rubble) were used in the inner core of the walls, and brickwork (bricks and mortar) in the curtain walls. For roofing, the concrete was poured on curved and removable wooden structures (centering), previously covered with square tiles (*bessales*), some of which are still preserved on the intrados. In the cross vault of the lower chamber bricks can be seen embedded in the concrete to give greater stability to the vault itself.

The row of outermost chambers, in which we find ourselves, dates back to the period of Maxentius (306-312 AD). We can identify the point where the new structures, added for static reasons and to expand the palace, are laid against those of the Severan period. [GG]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PATH II

BATHS OF MAXENTIUS, THE SO-CALLED STADIUM AND *DOMUS AUGUSTANA*

Looking eastwards, you will see the baths that Maxentius (306-312 AD) built over the Severan substructures, which he expanded. The dating is based on stamps on the bricks (seals with inscriptions) found in the structures and written sources, which recall how the emperor *thermas in Palatio fecit*. The heated rooms were canonically placed to the southwest: a large window of the *tepidarium* (a room for bathing in warm water) is clearly recognizable.

Continuing to the left, in front of the so-called Stadium, preserved to a considerable height, we see some rooms, one with a coffered ceiling in the apse, while further west is the curvilinear facade of the *domus Augustana*. [AD, GG]

SO-CALLED *PAEDAGOGIUM*

Among the structures added to the imperial palace during the Flavian period (AD 69-96) was a brick building with rooms facing onto a porticoed courtyard, including a central apsed space. In the rooms built up against the slope of the hill, better preserved, some fragments of the frescoes survive, some original and others dating to the Severan period (AD 193-211). The graffiti scratched into some walls with drawings or the names of slaves, followed by the word *paedagogium* (school) date to the same period and suggest that this was a school where the palace servants were trained. [DB, MAT]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PATH III

BEFORE ROME

Thanks to its elevated position above the unhealthy swamps below, the Palatine Hill was always the ideal home for the village communities. From this corner of the hill (called *Cermalus* in antiquity) it was also possible to control the ford across the Tiber, facilitated by the Tiber Island: a strategic point in the network of commercial and military roads, especially in the early stages of the city's life (8th century BC), when the other side of the river was Etruscan territory. The earliest signs of human presence on this slope date from the Middle Paleolithic (100,000 years ago) and continue until its settlement with a village of huts in the early Iron Age (c. 830 BC). [AS]

THE AUGUSTAN COMPLEX

The written sources recall that Octavianus, who was born in a *domus* near the northeast corner of the Palatine, after defeating Caesar's assassins at Philippi in 42 BC and then over Pompey's son at Naulochos in 36 BC, decided to buy some houses to build his own residence. This has been identified as the complex on the southwest side of the hill, partly visible from here. It developed abutting onto and along the hillside, with the main chambers in the sector that can be visited today, arranged around

a peristyle and preserving paintings of the highest quality. In the place near the house where a thunderbolt fell prodigiously in 28 BC, a temple was dedicated to Apollo Actiacus. The residence of the *princeps*, which took the form of both public and private spaces, included the cult of Vesta. The place chosen by Octavian Augustus for his residence, in an area rich in memories associated with Romulus, established an ideal and highly symbolic bond between the founder of Rome and that of the Empire. [GG]

S. ANASTASIA AND THE PALATINE CHURCHES

The oldest church on the Palatine is S. Anastasia, recorded at least since the 4th century and built above an *insula* with *tabernae* facing the Circus Maximus. Restored several times through the centuries, it acquired its current appearance in the 17th century through the work of Pope Urban VIII Barberini.

With the decline of the Roman empire, the Palatine hill did not lose its aura of prestige and, although it was no longer in the center of the city, it remained for a long time a coveted place of power. After S. Anastasia, between the 7th and 12th centuries, the churches of S. Cesario, S. Maria Antiqua, S. Teodoro, S. Maria in Pallara, S. Antonio de Inferno and S. Maria de Manu were built on the hill and its slopes. [AS]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PATH IV

THE ORIGINS OF THE CITY AND THE *PALATINE ACROPOLIS*

The southwest corner of the Palatine (*Cermalus*) is one of the most ancient and sacred places in Rome. Dedicated to the celebration of the city's origins, the area hosted the *monumenta* of the foundation and other memorials of Romulus: from the *Lupercal* (the cave where the she-wolf suckled Romulus and Remus) to the *casa Romuli* and the *tugurium Faustuli* (the hut where Faustolo and Acca Larenzia raised the twins), from the *fossa-ara/mundus* of the *Roma Quadrata* (containing the sacrificial objects used in the city's foundation and inaugural ceremony) to the *curia Saliorum* (ancient college of priests). There were also traces or memories of other "contexts" related to the pre- and proto-urban structure of Rome (the 5 Sacraia of the Argei), next to the *scalae Caci*, a survival of one of the most remote access paths to this side of the hill. And here again were the ancestral deities of the first occupation of the Palatine Hill, the very ancient female and fertility cults (*Iuno Sospita*) then assimilated to the Greek and Oriental counterparts (the temples of Victory and the Magna Mater/Cybele). A complex system of memories, in short, which gave the place that character as the *Palatine acropolis* that it would retain until the end of antiquity. [AD]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PATH V

THE FORTRESSES OF THE FRANGIPANE

Between the 11th and 13th centuries the Frangipane, a Roman family of ancient origin, established their supremacy on the Palatine, controlling the main access routes and building a series of fortresses close to those monumental remains that were strategically placed at the four summits: the Arch of Titus, the *Septizodium*, the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina and the southwest corner of the hill, on the edge of the Velabrum. Here two sections of a wall of fortification are preserved, characterized by different revetments (curtain wall in chips of marble on the south side and in tuff fragments and reused materials on the north side), probably belonging to the Palazzo dei Frangipane mentioned by the sources. [AS]

THE GEOLOGY OF THE PALATINE

The Palatine Hill is the product of the alternate layers of fluvial phenomena and volcanic eruptions, progressively overlapping, starting in the Middle Pleistocene (700,000-120,000 years ago), over the extensive marine deposit of blue-gray clays dating from the Lower Pliocene (5.3-3.6 million years ago). At various points on the west side of the hill, due to the erosion that has threatened it since ancient times, making it necessary to build massive retaining walls, it is now possible to observe the outcropping of the main geological levels. In the archaic period, the lower slopes of this hillside were exploited as tuff quarries, mainly affecting the geological unit termed Prima Porta. [AS]

CHURCH OF SAN TEODORO

At the foot of the *domus Tiberiana* facing the Velabrum stands an Orthodox Christian church with a circular plan, built from the 15th century onwards on the site of an earlier diaconia dedicated to the Greek saint Theodore of Amasea and attested from the late 8th century. Archaeological excavations inside the church have revealed the presence of a basilica hall dating to the 5th century, perhaps the first diaconia, and further below the remains of a private residence with an atrium dating to around the 1st century BC opening onto the *vicus Tuscus*, now Via di San Teodoro. [DB, MAT]

DOMUS TIBERIANA, HORREA AGRIPPIANA AND VICUS TUSCUS

Along the west flank of the Palatine are the substructures (about 20 m high) that support the *domus Tiberiana*, the first imperial palace built to a unified architectural project. Erected in the 1st century AD, it was progressively expanded and transformed until the late-ancient period. In the middle of the 16th century the area of the *domus* was covered by the Farnese Gardens, laid out by Alessandro Farnese, nephew of Pope Paul III. Below, abutting on the Forum, are the remains of a large building, the *horrea Agrippiana*, consisting of a courtyard surrounded by rooms (*tabernae*) on two floors. These were the grain warehouses built during the Augustan age by Agrippa on the *vicus Tuscus*, in the Velabrum area, occupied by shops of various kinds. [RA]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

WITH PLINIO
ALONG THE
SOUTHERN
SLOPES OF THE
PALATINE

The new archaeological-naturalistic itinerary, of great scenic beauty, overlooks the Murcia valley and the Circus Maximus, extending across the slopes of the Palatine hill to the valley of the Forum.

This route has long been closed to tourists, and nature has been able to take back its own spaces. The perception and excitement that derives from it is related to that of the Grand Tour, where natural beauties are united with the immense archaeological heritage. The native vegetation accompanies the visitor on a route through time and history to admire the great monuments of the past and the vegetation fused into a marvelous whole. And for the first time, not only are trees the major feature of interest, but also the shrubs and herbaceous plants growing wild, the *potential natural vegetation* that tends to spread in a given place depending on the geological and bioclimatic characters, soil and landforms of the present.

Of the present but very ancient: Pliny the Elder in his treatise on *Natural History* mentions all the plants seen along the way and describes their healthful or harmful properties and medicinal uses. He applied the term *her-*

bae surdae, meaning silent, without fame, to those herbs eaten every day that prove more useful than costly medicines brought from exotic countries. Pliny also recorded that the plants of the Mediterranean scrub were certainly the first used in religious rites; at the time of the Trojan war only cedar and lemon twigs were burnt on altars; rosemary, by its intense aroma and purifying virtues, was often used to replace incense, despite being a common shrub, easy to find, unlike exotic and expensive incense.

The Roman historian Livy describes (*Ab Urbe condita*, I:24 and 33) the ritual for declarations of war by the college of fetial priests, in which tufts of a herb were used: it was called *sagmina*, a term associated with the meanings of *sacer* (sacred, consecrated). These may have been bundles of verbena, since they were called *verbenae*, and the priest who wore them was called the *verbenarius*.

The ancient texts of the agricultural *ars*, the poetic or technical descriptions that have come down to us, are an indispensable source for the knowledge of our historical botanical heritage. [GS]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

DOG ROSE

The dog rose is a very ancient wild plant. It emerged more than forty million years ago, as shown by fossil finds. It is defined as a “species”, i.e. its fundamental characteristic is its ability to transmit its distinctive features unchanged to its descendants.

Pliny the Elder mentions it as *Rubus caninus*. In his *Natural History*, VIII:146-156, he relates that this plant is a useful remedy against rabies transmitted by dog bites and describes the healing of a soldier suffering from rabies by a decoction of dog rose, whose thorns resemble dogs’ teeth. Its false fruits, called rosehips, are the most interesting part of this plant, because they are rich in various active ingredients, and make a very useful herbal medicine. The Romans used it for ornamental and therapeutic purposes and extracted essential oils from it for perfumes and ointments. Legend has it that the god Bacchus fell in love with a nymph who fled terrified until she tripped over a bush. Bacchus coupled with her and, to thank the bush, turned it into a rose bearing beautiful flowers of the delicate pinkish color of the nymph’s cheeks. [GS]

MALVA SYLVESTRIS

Mallow was widely used by both the Greeks and Romans. Pythagoras (570-495 BC), a renowned philosopher, mathematician and astronomer of ancient Greece, considered it sacred. Of the enormous virtues of this herb, he wrote: “Sow mallow, but do not eat it; it is such a great good that it should be reserved for our fellows, rather than making use of it selfishly for our own advantage.” In Rome it was well known and prized: the mallow’s tender shoots were always present on Cicero’s table. The name mallow derives from Latin and meant “soft,” referring to its emollient properties. Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* (XX:222-230) stated that: “[223]... It makes every soil fertile in which it is planted. [224] Other wonderful things are also told of it, but

above all, if someone drinks half a cup (*cyathus*) of its juice every day, they will be free from all diseases”. And he notes its efficacy against all wounds from thorns and especially the bites of scorpions, wasps and shrews. Martial recommended mallow as a remedy for hangovers after the parties fashionable at the time. Thanks to its properties, in Italy around the 16th century mallow was called *omnimorbia*, because it was considered capable of curing all ills. [GS]

IRIS OR GLADIOLUS

The name “iris” derives from the Greek word for “rainbow”, like the Greek goddess Iris who in flight ascended rainbows as the messenger of the gods.

The Romans gave the flower the Latin name *gladiolus* for the elongated shape of the leaves similar to a *gladius*, the sword used in battle. The Roman poet Virgil relates in the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas abandoned Dido, she slew herself with his sword and her soul was transported by Iris to the kingdom of the dead “Dewy Iris, with crocus-colored feathers, in the sky drawing a thousand different colors from the sun, descends and hovered over her head.” This is the reason why purple irises were placed on the graves of family members. The flower, described by the writer on agriculture Columella as a *terrestrial star*, like other bulbs bearing colorful hues, was used in the *viridaria* or gardens of Roman patrician houses as an ornamental plant or votive offering to the Lares, the spirits of the deceased ancestors who, according to Roman tradition, watched over the family. [GS]

BROOM

Broom was a plant much appreciated by the Greeks and Romans, who cultivated it to attract bees and make honey. According to Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXIV, XL:65 - its flexible shoots were used for making bindings,



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

and he quotes the popular belief that its ashes contained gold, probably because of the color of its flowers, which seen in sunlight resemble the color of gold. Depending on the various species, the fiber of the roots of various kinds of broom was used to produce heavy and very tough fabrics or the material for ropes used on ships. Traditionally the plant represents modesty and humility and the ability to ward off evil influences and demons. It was used in pre-Christian religious rituals, at the time reviled and persecuted, so that some Sicilian legends hold it was cursed by Christ because the rattling noise it makes when shaken by the wind attracted the attention of the soldiers searching for him in the garden of Gethsemane. In spring the Palatine hillsides towards the Circus Maximus, covered with flowering broom, recall the poem by Giacomo Leopardi: "Here on the barren ridge of the formidable mountain ... Your solitary clusters you scatter, scented broom...". [GS]

DANDELION

The dandelion, *antirrhinum* or *anarrhionon*, is mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*, XV:80 by the name *lychnis agria*, a plant similar to flax, without roots, with a flower like that of the hyacinth and a seed similar in shape to a calf's muzzle. And he relates what the wizards said: "people who rubbed themselves with this plant improved their physical appearance and no noxious substance or poison could harm them if they wore it like a bracelet". It is among the plants mentioned by Columella among "the colorful flowers" in his manual, *De re rustica*, a fundamental text on techniques of cultivation and preparation of produce in ancient agriculture. At this point we should add: Do not pick the flowers along the path! [GS]

RUE

Described as the herb par excellence *de fuga demonis*, for driving away devils, in this

the equal of garlic and artemisia, consecrated to the warrior god Mars. Aristotle already recommended its use against spirits and spells. Pliny, *Natural History*, XX:131-143, considers it among the most important medicinal plants, for man and domestic animals. He distinguishes cultivated rue from wild rue, the latter being more prickly but more effective, and he describes its many uses in antiquity. Columella, a Roman writer on agriculture, in his *De re rustica* (XI:3, 38) speaks of the difficulty of weeding rue because of the excoriations and the great itching it produces on the hands. The Medical School of Salerno stated that its use "in a man cools Venus and in a woman kindles it, and sharpens the wit". [GS]

CORNELIAN CHERRY

The cornelian cherry is a fruit tree that grows wild. The name derives from the Latin *cornus* (animal horn), because its wood is as hard as horn. It was used for making weapons. The ancient Persians, Greeks and Romans used it for javelins and spears. It is also said to have been used for the spears of the Macedonian phalanx.

According to the legend recounted by Plutarch (a Greek biographer and philosopher in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD), the spear that Romulus hurled from the Aventine on the Palatine to trace the boundaries of Rome was made of cornelian. He adds that "the point penetrated so deeply into the ground that although many tried to pull it out, no one succeeded..." and "it took root" in the fertile soil of the hill. The Romans guarded it and venerated it as a good omen for the city of Rome. Plutarch says (*Life of Romulus*, 20) that it grew near the house of Romulus and near the steps of Cacus. Its name also recalls the carrion crow, a bird sacred to Apollo which, as Ovid says, feeds on the red fruits of the cornelian cherry. And, again, Homer recounts that the sorceress Circe fed cornelian cherries to her pigs, the companions of Ulysses whom she had transformed with a spell. "And they had the



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

head and voice and hairs and the whole body of pigs, but their minds were intact, as before. So weeping they were penned up, and Circe threw them acorns of holm oak and common oak and cornelian cherries" (*Od. X:230-243*). [GS]

ACANTHUS

Vitruvius in *De architectura* (IV:8-10) says that it was the Athenian sculptor Callimachus, with his refined art, who first sculpted some acanthus leaves that he saw growing from the tomb of a young girl. A basket with the ornaments of the deceased had been placed on the tomb, and the acanthus wound sinuously around its sides. Pleased by the unusual elegance of its form, imitating the slenderness of girls, in Corinth he modeled some columns on them, carving acanthus leaves on the columns.

Probably the acanthus of the Corinthian style was *Acanthus spinosus L.*, typical of Eastern Europe, with a prickly spike of light purple bracts, at least forty centimeters long, which is very showy in July. In Italy *Acanthus mollis* is more common, having soft, rounded foliage

and a lighter green color.

Its leaves, with broad jagged edges and very pronounced ribs, are of great decorative effect and this is why the plant found a wide use in ancient architecture, both Greek and Roman (capitals of the "normal" Corinthian order, composite and figured Corinthian).

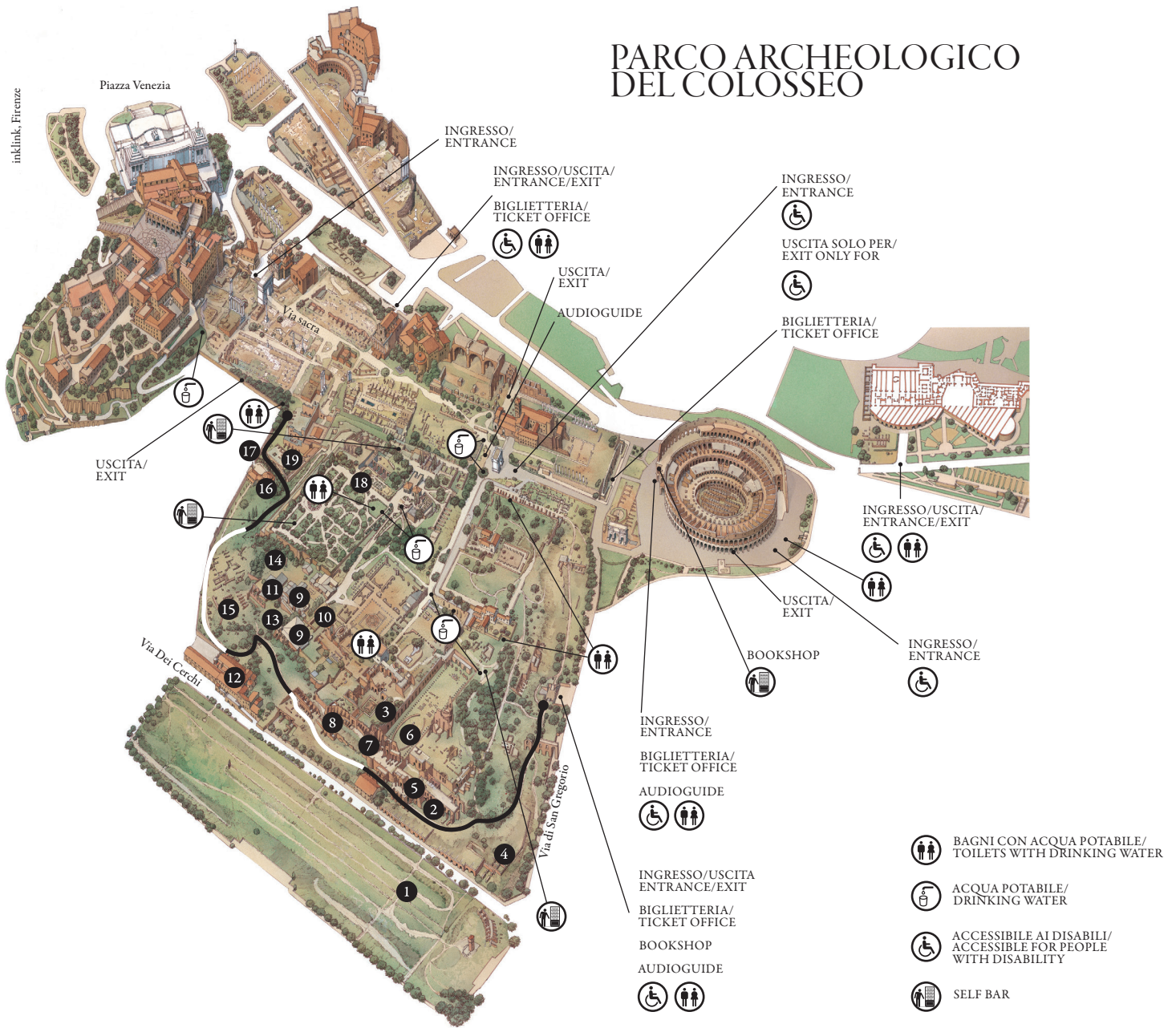
Acanthus leaves were also adopted in Christian architecture, in Gallo-Roman capitals and sepulchral monuments to symbolize the Resurrection, drawing on the evident symbolism of the girl's immortality.

The acanthus is a plant of Mediterranean origin, whose name derives from the ancient Greek word *acanthòs* meaning thorny flower. Here we find *Acanthus mollis* (the common acanthus) growing mainly in shady, cool places in meadows, on roadsides and amid ruins. It is a perennial herbaceous species of considerable size that, besides the characteristic leaves, has a dense cylindrical inflorescence spike with whitish corollas with purple veins that rise from the center of the leaves from April through June. It is cultivated in gardens for the remarkable beauty of the foliage and the grace of its flowering. The emollient properties of the flowers and leaves inspired the symbol of Sweetness. [GL]



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO DEL COLOSSEO

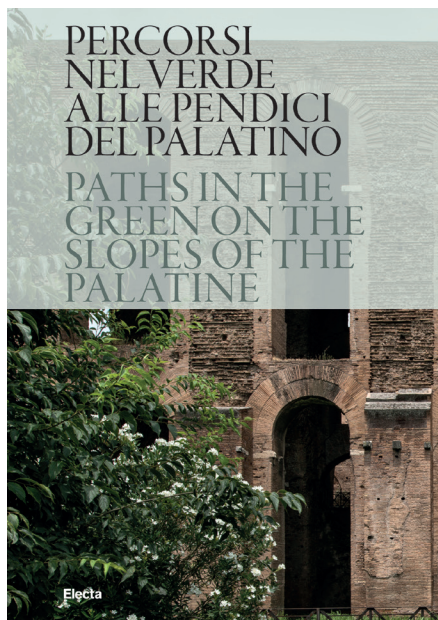


- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 CIRCO MASSIMO/
CIRCUS MAXIMUS | 7 FACCIATA DELLA <i>DOMUS AUGUSTANA</i> /
<i>DOMUS AUGUSTANA</i> , FACADE | 14 TEMPIO DELLA MAGNA MATER/CIBELE/
TEMPLE OF MAGNA MATER/CYBELE |
| 2 ARCADE SEVERIANE/
SEVERAN ARCADES | 8 C.D. <i>PAEDAGOGIUM</i> /
SO-CALLED <i>PAEDAGOGIUM</i> | 15 FORTEZZA FRANGIPANE/
FRANGIPANE FORTRESS |
| 3 PALAZZO DEI FLAVI
(<i>DOMUS AUGUSTANA</i>)/
FLAVIAN PALACE (<i>DOMUS AUGUSTANA</i>) | 9 CASA DI AUGUSTO/
HOUSE OF AUGUSTUS | 16 S. TEODORO |
| 4 <i>SEPTIZODIUM</i> | 10 TEMPIO DI APOLLO/
TEMPLE OF APOLLO | 17 <i>VICUS TUSCUS</i> |
| 5 AMPLIAMENTO MASSENZIANO/
MAXENTIUS'S EXPANSION | 11 CAPANNE ROMULEE/
ROMULEAN HUTS | 18 <i>DOMUS TIBERIANA</i> |
| 6 C.D. STADIO/
SO-CALLED STADIUM | 12 S. ANASTASIA | 19 <i>HORREA AGRIPPIANA</i> |
| | 13 <i>SCALAE CACI</i> | |



PERCORSI NEL VERDE ALLE PENDICI DEL PALATINO

GUIDE INFO SHEET



Author: Various authors
Format: 12,5 × 18 cm
Pages: 96
Illustrations: 50

Price: 10 euro
Edition: bilingual ita/eng
Publisher: Electa

The guide accompanies the visitor, through detailed texts and illustrations as well as guide maps, on an itinerary across the slopes of the Palatine, which, with their monumental remains, are now open to the public after many years.

The itinerary, in five stages, is charged with a strong symbolic value for the city: these are the places of the myth of the foundation of Rome and its history, with the sumptuous imperial residences, from the house of Augustus to the Severan palaces. An architectural scenario that over the centuries has become a fascinating natural landscape. Further insights are therefore devoted to the flora of the hill investigated not only botanically but also in historical and literary terms.

