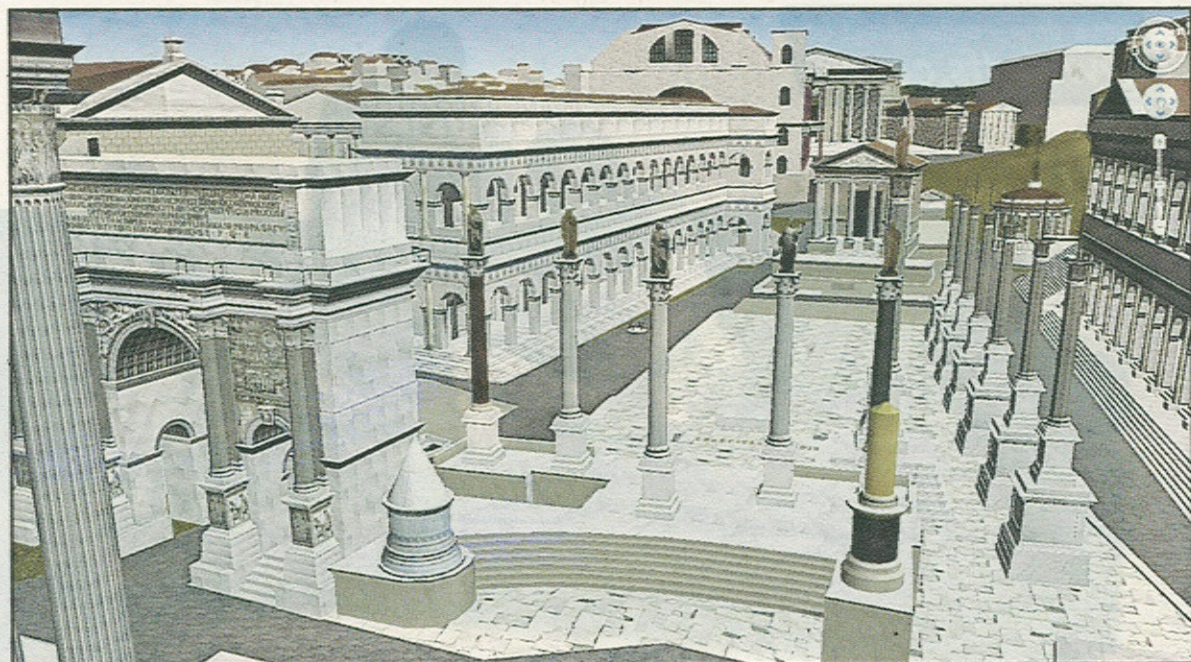


When not in Rome... simply log on to Google



This way, please: The Forum, as recreated in the computer model using ruins and ancient records

By David Derbyshire

IT IS difficult to imagine how Ancient Rome might have looked – unless you stand among the ruins and squint.

Now you don't have to.

The Eternal City has been restored to its former glory with the help of a computer model.

Visitors can explore Rome as it was under the Emperor Constantine in 320AD, regarded by many historians as its heyday.

The three-dimensional world was created by Google and is available to download for free.

It lets users stand in the centre of the Forum, stroll across the arena of the Colosseum or fly through the Arch of Constantine.

They can explore 6,700 buildings and the detailed interiors of 11 structures including the Temple of Venus and Rome, the Temple of Vesta and the Basilica of Maxentius.

CITY OF 1M PEOPLE ... AND 900 BATH HOUSES

- British pub signs can trace their roots to Ancient Rome, where landlords hung bunches of vines outside their taverns
- With more than one million inhabitants, it was the world's biggest city until overtaken by London in Victorian times
- Noise from hooves and chariot wheels on the stone roads was so loud that Julius Caesar

tried to ban all traffic at night

■ The Romans invented concrete and used it for many of their most famous buildings, including the Colosseum

■ A million animals and 500,000 people are estimated to have died in the Colosseum arena

■ Some Roman houses had flushing toilets and indoor

plumbing and were connected to a public sewer system

■ Most of the city's inhabitants visited a public bathhouse daily. The city had up to 900 – including one that could cater for 1,500 bathers at once

■ According to legend, Rome was founded on April 21, 753 BC by twins Romulus and Remus, who were raised by a wolf

The model also reveals how Trajan's Column – a 125ft monument at the centre of the Forum – can be seen from across the city and lets explorers tour Ludus Magnus, the gladiatorial training school.

Each building has been carefully reconstructed and positioned

using historical records, recreating the biggest and most important metropolis of the ancient world.

Google claims the site will be invaluable to historians, students and school children, as well as helping to bring the city to life for tourists. The model is available via

Google Earth, the internet service which allows users to explore the world using satellite maps.

Although some city centres such as San Francisco and Munich and famous landmarks have been recreated in three dimensions, this is the first time users have been

able to walk around an ancient city.

The virtual tour is based on a physical model – the *Plastico di Roma Antica* – created by archaeologists and model makers between 1933 and 1974.

One of the technical whizzes behind the Google version, Bernard Frische of the University of Virginia, said: 'The project is the continuation of five centuries of research by scholars, architects and artists since the Renaissance who have attempted to restore the ruins of the ancient city with words, maps and images.'

Mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno said: 'Our spectacular ancient remains continue to fascinate people all around the world drawing millions of tourists to our city every year. We're delighted even more people all over the world can now enjoy the heritage of our great city.'

'It's a perfect example of how the new technologies can be ideal allies of our history, archaeology and cultural identity.'

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