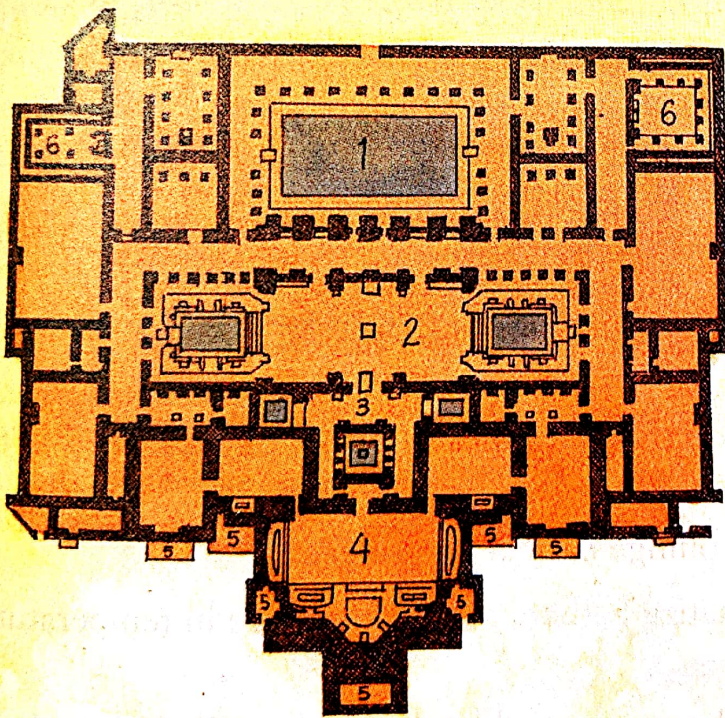


THE BATHS

In addition to the many references to baths in Roman literature, much information about the **balneae** and **thermae** can be deduced from the archaeological remains of bathing establishments still evident today. In Rome, the great **Thermae of Diocletian** now house the National Museum, its extensive grounds having been laid out by Michelangelo centuries after the baths were built. Grand opera is performed during the summer months in the Baths of Caracalla.

At Pompeii, both public and private bathing establishments have been found, and even in many of the houses there are full suites of bathrooms—warm, hot, and cold rooms—which were apparently used only by the family. On country estates and in town houses, in addition to the suites of baths for the owner, there were bath houses for slaves.



1. **NATĀTIŌ**
(OPEN-AIR SWIMMING-BATH)
2. **FRĪGIDĀRIUM**
(COLD ROOM WITH LARGE
RECTANGULAR BATHS
AT EACH SIDE)
3. **TEPIDĀRIUM**
(WARM ROOM WITH TWO
SMALL BATHS AT EACH
SIDE AND ONE LARGER BATH)
4. **CALDĀRIUM**
(HOT ROOM)
5. **FORNĀCĒS**
(FURNACES)
6. **LATRĪNĀE**
(LATRINES)

BALINEUM HADRIĀNUM LEPSIS MAGNAE

The first public baths in Rome were built in the second century B.C.; they were small, practical wash-houses for men only. Later, bathing establishments called **balneae** began to be built at private expense and run for profit by individuals or a consortium. As the practice of bathing became more and more popular, huge baths (**thermae**) were built by the state. These were increased in size and splendor under the emperors, e.g., the **Thermae of Caracalla** (A.D. 217) and of **Diocletian** (A.D. 303).

Romans of all social classes could spend an hour or more in the luxury of such complexes for only a **quadrāns**, the smallest Roman coin. Children were admitted free. The management of the state **thermae** was awarded for a fixed sum to a contractor. Sometimes a rich citizen or magistrate undertook to pay him the equivalent of the total entrance fees for a certain period, during which entry to the baths was entirely free.

So attached were the Romans to their daily hot steam bath that they built baths in most communities throughout their Empire. Where there were hot springs, as in Bath, England, they used these and built gymnasia and dressing rooms around them. Where there were no hot springs, they heated the air by a hypocaust (**hypocauston**, a Greek term meaning literally, "burning underneath"), a system whereby hot air from a furnace circulated under the raised floor and through ducts and vents in the walls. The fuel for the furnace, which was stoked by slaves, was wood and charcoal. Huge reservoirs were built near the baths to provide a constant and plentiful supply of water.

Bathers would take various articles with them to the baths, including towels, bottles of oil, and strigils. All but the poor would bring their own slaves to attend them, but it was possible to hire the services of others at the baths (e.g., masseur, barber). Attendants would guard clothes for a small fee.

Roman baths varied considerably in size and layout, but in all of them the following series of rooms was to be found:

1. **apodytērium**: a changing room with stone benches and rows of deep holes in the walls for holding clothes.
2. **frīgidārium**: cold room, with cold plunge bath at one side.
3. **tepidārium**: warm room, to acclimatize bathers to the difference in temperature between the cold and hot rooms.
4. **caldārium**: hot room, with hot bath and hot air like the modern Turkish bath. It was the best-lit room and was equipped with basins and tubs. Its ceiling was usually domed to allow condensation to run off.

The bathers could take the three stages of bathing in any order, but it was usual to end up with a cold plunge. Medicinal and perfumed baths were also available.

The baths became a suitable place for taking exercise. A large complex would have a court for ball games and an area for gymnastics and wrestling, in addition to the swimming pool. There were various ball games, each using a different type of ball and sometimes a racquet as well. Hoops or a dumbbell were also used for exercising.

The Roman baths were centers for recreation and relaxation in the fullest sense, and in the largest establishments the amenities could include gardens, reading rooms, and even libraries. “Snackbars” (**popīnae**) were numerous inside the building or nearby, while vendors of every type advertised their wares on all sides.

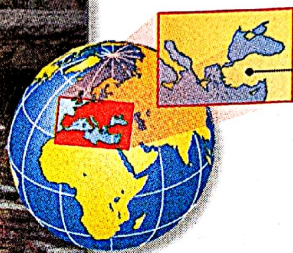
A Graffito from the Baths at Rome

Balnea, vīna, Venus corrumpunt corpora nostra;
at vītā faciunt—balnea, vīna, Venus.

balnea = balneae

Venus = amor

corrumpō, corrumpere, corrūpī, corruptus, *to spoil, harm, ruin*



Turkey

*Hypocauston in the caldārium of
the Baths of Varius
Ephesus, Turkey, first to third century A.D.*

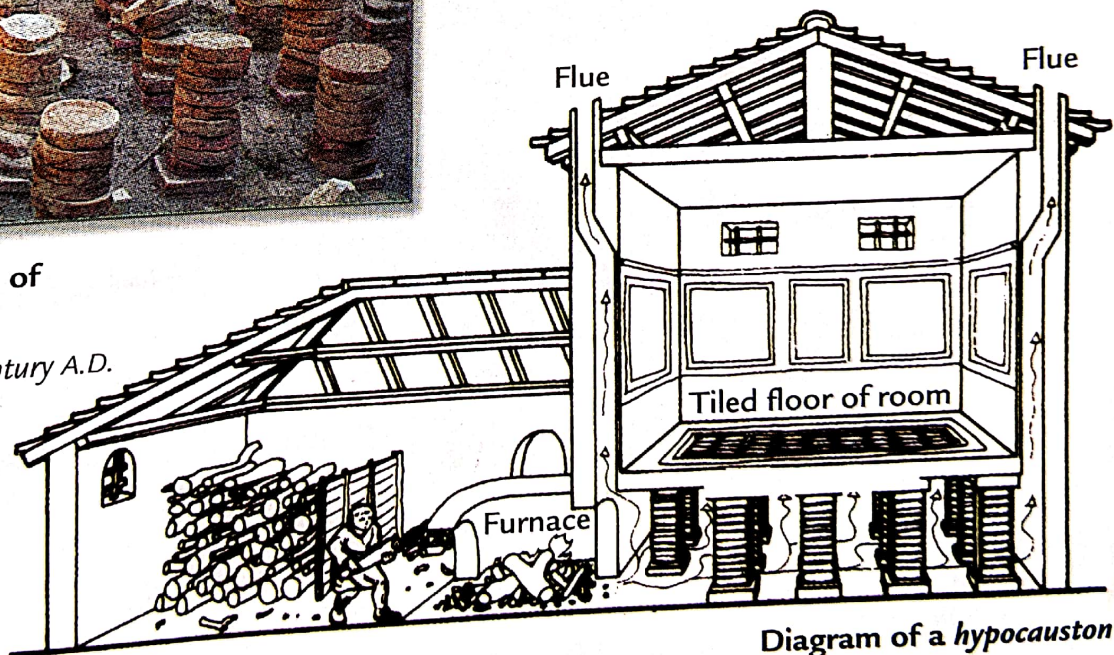


Diagram of a *hypocauston*