

Roman Baths Information

Read the information about Roman Baths then complete the 'Fact Check 3, 2, 1' to test your knowledge before describing a day at the baths.



A visit to the bath house was an important part of everyday life in Roman times. The Romans loved to keep clean and they built *thermae* (large bathing complexes) or *balnae* (smaller bathing houses) in towns and cities all across the Roman Empire. Evidence still remains of the many Roman bathhouses built in places around Britain. A particularly fine example can be found in the city of Bath, known to the Romans as 'Aquae Sulis', in Somerset.

Wealthy Romans might visit the bath house every day and poorer people went at least once a week. Entry to the public baths was often free as a gift from the emperor or rich residents of the town. There was sometimes a charge, but it was so low that almost everyone could afford to visit. *Thermae* would be beautifully decorated with intricate mosaics and statues. They might have beautiful glass ceilings, marble-lined pools, mirrors and artwork on the walls. Some of the more elaborate baths would also have steam rooms and saunas, snack bars, gymnasiums (**palaestrae**) and even a library!

Just like a modern-day spa, visitors to the baths could get a relaxing massage or take some exercise. Going to the baths was a real social experience too. It was a great place to meet friends and enjoy a game of *tabula* (a Roman board game) or *trigon* (a tricky ball game played with three balls) and have a chat.

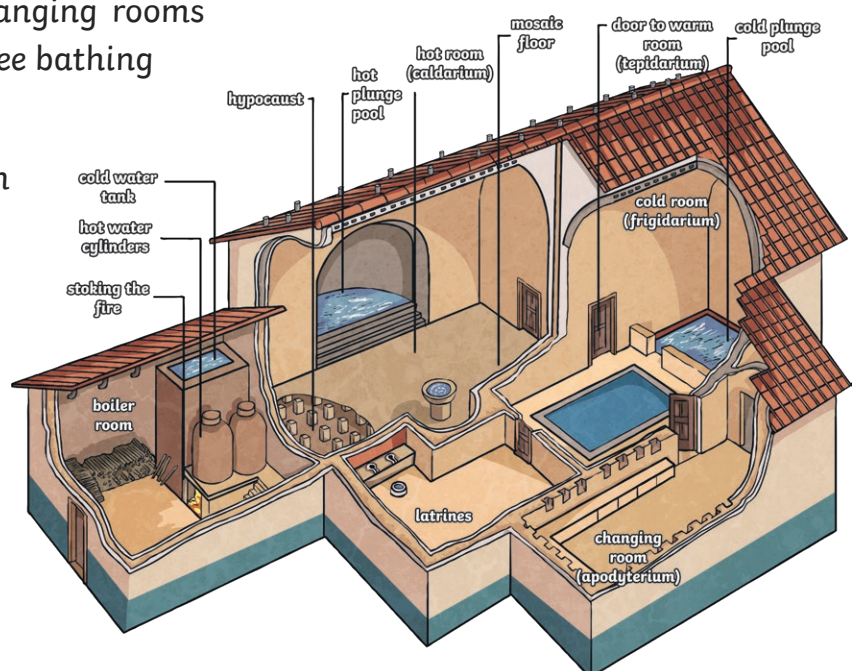
Men and women bathed in different areas or visited the baths at different times of the day. Once they had passed through the changing rooms (**apodyterium**), bathers would have three bathing experiences to look forward to.

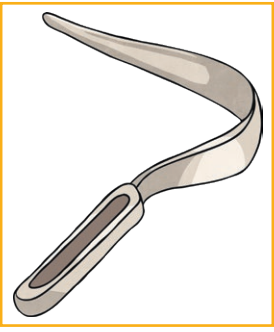
First, the bathers would relax in a warm room called the **tepidarium**.

After that, they would enter the **caldarium**, which was a hot room designed to make them sweat out dirt.

The final **frigidarium** bath was cold and large enough to swim in.

In the **caldarium**, the bathers would rub olive oil into their skin – instead of the soap we use today.





Then, they used a special tool called a strigil to scrape off any dirt. Workers kept the hypocaust (underfloor heating system) going. Wealthy visitors would take their servants along because they might need someone to fetch and carry for them or guard their belongings. Where possible, the Romans used water from underground hot springs to supply the baths, but if that source wasn't available, they would build an aqueduct to transport water into the town from lakes or rivers.

Socialising at the baths was so important that even rich Romans who had their own baths at home would visit them regularly.

Roman Baths

Fact Check 3, 2, 1

Describe the three bathing experiences at the Roman baths.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Explain the two ways that the Romans sourced water for the baths.

1. _____
2. _____

Describe how the special Roman cleaning tool was used.

Imagine you visited the baths today. Describe your visit.

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Challenge: The Romans loved to advertise and they pasted posters all around their towns and cities. Imagine you have just opened a new public bath house. Design a poster to promote the baths and all its amenities (pleasant or useful features) to the town's residents.

