

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ANCIENT ROME

Prepared to complement *Roman Art from the Louvre*, an exhibition organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Musée du Louvre and supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Women in ancient Rome dyed their hair with goat fat and beech wood ashes. Red and blond were the most popular colors.

Trajan's Column is 128 feet high, which is the same height as a nine-story building. The sculptural frieze that wraps around the column is approximately 655 feet in length—the length of about two football fields—and depicts more than 2,500 men.

The Circus Maximus, a theater in Rome, could hold as many as 250,000 spectators. New York's Yankee Stadium holds approximately 60,000 people.

Instead of soap, Romans used oil, which they rubbed into their skin and then scraped off with a metal tool called a *strigil*.

When the Roman Empire reached its territorial peak in 116 A.D., it spanned 2.5 million square miles.

Lead was used as both a preservative and a sweetening agent.

The **toga**, the official costume of the Roman citizen, was created using a semi-circular piece of white wool cloth that was about 18½ feet in diameter.

Many gladiators, like athletes today, chose colorful surnames to enhance their public identity. One gladiator, whose name is preserved on a funerary monument, was known as Antaios, the name of a giant from Greek mythology.

The trepan, or drill, that ancient sculptors used to create their art was also used as a surgical instrument to bore holes into the skull. This procedure (called trepanning) was thought to cure headaches, treat brain disorders, let out evil spirits, and treat insanity.

Roman charioteers belonged to racing clubs or teams. The most well known were the Whites, Blues, Greens, and Reds.

Roman bath houses used an advanced heating system called *hypocaust* to heat the *caldarium* (hot bath) and *tepidarium* (lukewarm bath), as well as the floors and walls of the complex.

Romans played board games such as chess, checkers, and tic-tac-toe.

Many ancient Roman houses had flushing toilets and indoor plumbing.

Associated with Mercury, the messenger god, a caduceus (a winged stick encircled by two snakes) came to be linked with postal workers and journalists. The caduceus of Mercury is often confused with the rod of Asclepius—a staff with a single serpent—which is a symbol of medicine.

