The Colosseum is perhaps Rome’s most awe-inspiring ancient monument, an enormous structure that despite the depredations of nearly two thousand years of earthquakes, fires, riots, wars and, not least, plundering for its seemingly inexhaustible supply of ready-cut travertine blocks, still stands relatively intact – a recognizable symbol not just of the city of Rome, but of the entire ancient world. It’s not much more than a shell now, eaten away by pollution and cracked by the vibrations of cars and the metro – but a huge, 25-million-euro renovation, funded by Italian shoe giant Tod's, will uncover a much sprucer structure by the time works are completed in 2019. Continue reading to find out more about...Colosseum opening times. Colosseum tickets. Despite the scaffolding, it's easy to see the basic structure, which has served as a model for stadiums around the world ever since. You’ll not be alone in appreciating it and during summer the combination of people and scaffolding can make a visit more like touring a contemporary building-site than an ancient monument. But visit late in the evening or early morning before the tour buses have arrived, and the arena can seem more like the marvel it really is. Originally known as the Flavian Amphitheatre (the name Colosseum is a much later invention), it was begun around 72 AD by the Emperor Vespasian. Inside, there was room for a total of around sixty thousand people seated and ten thousand or so standing. Seating was allocated according to social status, with the emperor and his attendants naturally occupying the best seats in the house, and the social class of the spectators diminishing as you got nearer the top. There was a labyrinth below that was covered with a wooden floor and punctuated at various places with trapdoors that could be opened as required, and lifts to raise and lower the animals that took part in the games. The floor was covered with canvas to make it waterproof and the canvas was covered with several centimetres of sand to absorb blood; in fact, our word “arena” is derived from the Latin word for sand. **Colosseum opening times.** Daily: mid-Feb to mid-March 8.30am–5pm; mid- to end March 8.30am–5.30pm; April–Aug 8.30am–7.15pm; Sept 8.30am–7pm; Oct 8.30am–6.30pm; Nov to mid-Feb 8.30am–4.30pm; last entry 1hr before closing. **Colosseum tickets.** [€12 combined ticket with Forum and Palatine Hill](https://www.coopculture.it/en/colosseo-e-shop.cfm), valid for two days; first Sun of the month free.