

# [***'Lost' ancient Roman palace reopens after 50 years of neglect***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69W2-9MP1-JBSS-S4C7-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Rome (CNN) &#8212; After 50 years of neglect, [*Rome's*](https://www.cnn.com/travel/destinations/rome) "lost" imperial palace Domus Tiberiana has reopened as an open-air museum.

Until recently a crumbling and off-limits ruin near the famous [*Colosseum*](https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/rome-colosseum-viral-vandals-scli-intl/index.html), the [*Domus Tiberiana*](https://colosseo.it/en/area/domus-tiberiana/) palace - built in the first century AD and beloved by Nero - hopes to once again take its place as one of the city's top tourist attractions.

The ancient palace sits on Palatine Hill - the city's oldest hill, overhanging Rome -from where imperial dynasties ruled for centuries. But over the years, the site fell into disrepair and in the 1970s, the Domus Tiberiana site was shut due to the structural instability of some of the ruins. The closure left behind what many Romans described as a "black hole" in the capital's archaeological heart.

Now, after a six-year makeover, the palace has reopened its doors as a "diffuse museum," with findings and frescoes scattered across the site to provide visitors with an insight into the palace's ancient grandeur.

And it was grand. The Domus Tiberiana was Rome's first imperial palace, built by the emperor Tiberius who combined and incorporated the pre-existing noble mansions built on the hill. Occupying over four hectares, the palace featured residences alongside large gardens, places of worship and rooms for the emperor's Praetorian guard.

As the seat of Rome's power and ***politics***, Domus Tiberiana held a prime location, high above the Palatine and Roman Forums, offering its occupants a "balcony view of the city." Over time, the Domus was embellished and enlarged by other emperors including Nero, who was crowned on its steps aged just 16, in 54 AD.

Alfonsina Russo, director of the Colosseum's archaeological park (in which Domus Tiberiana falls) and lead archaeologist on the renovation, told CNN that ancient antiquities, many exceptionally well-preserved**,** were unearthed during the project.

The artifacts - bright stuccos, frescoes, amphorae, potteries, looms, terracotta, and divinity statues related to the cults of Isis, Dionysius and Mithras - offer visitors a trip through time, said Russo.

"They make this place - formerly (inhabited) by aristocratic families, then Roman emperors - feel alive again," she said. "There are seven exhibition rooms full of extraordinary finds, starting with those preceding the original construction of the palace when aristocrats lived in mansions before Tiberius subsumed them into the Domus."

Among the newly-exposed and frescoes are some of the earliest paintings of lemons (considered an exotic fruit in Ancient Rome, as they hailed from the Far East) and a depiction of a gladiator, provingthat the era's gladiatoral games were appreciated by rich families, explained Russo.

The imperial palace remained in use until the 7th century, when it became the papal residence of John VII. In the mid-16th century, the aristocratic Farnese family - who were powerful local landowners - built the lavish Orti Farnesiani gardens on the site, adorning it with ornaments and sculptures of nymphs, satyrs and fauns.

"This monument speaks of history," Russo added. "We have restored (Domus Tiberiana) to its past splendor, but more work lies ahead."

Indeed, painstaking efforts have been made to blend old and new. A series of majestic, reddish-brown vaulted arches that greet visitors having been carefully reconstructed with the same materials as ancient Romans used in the past.

"What makes this revamped Domus unique is the architectural style," said Russo. "We managed to use original materials to reinforce and strengthen the handmade 15-meter (50ft) tall front arches (which run alongside the palace's) ancient paving."

It has certainly caught the public's attention. Since reopening at the end of September, Domus Tiberiana has attracted some 400,000 visitors, a "huge success," said Russo, adding that she believes that this incarnation of the Domus Tiberiana offers visitors the most "evocative" visit in generations.

Archaeologist and scholar of ancient Rome Giorgio Franchetti told CNN that, in the reopening of the Domus Tiberiana complex, Rome has "recovered a lost jewel."

"The Palatine Hill has always been the stage of Rome's power ***politics***," he said in an interview. "Tiberius likely chose this spot to build the palace as it was where his family residence stood. There aren't many places like the Domus Tiberiana where you can really breathe the past."

By Silvia Marchetti, CNN

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