

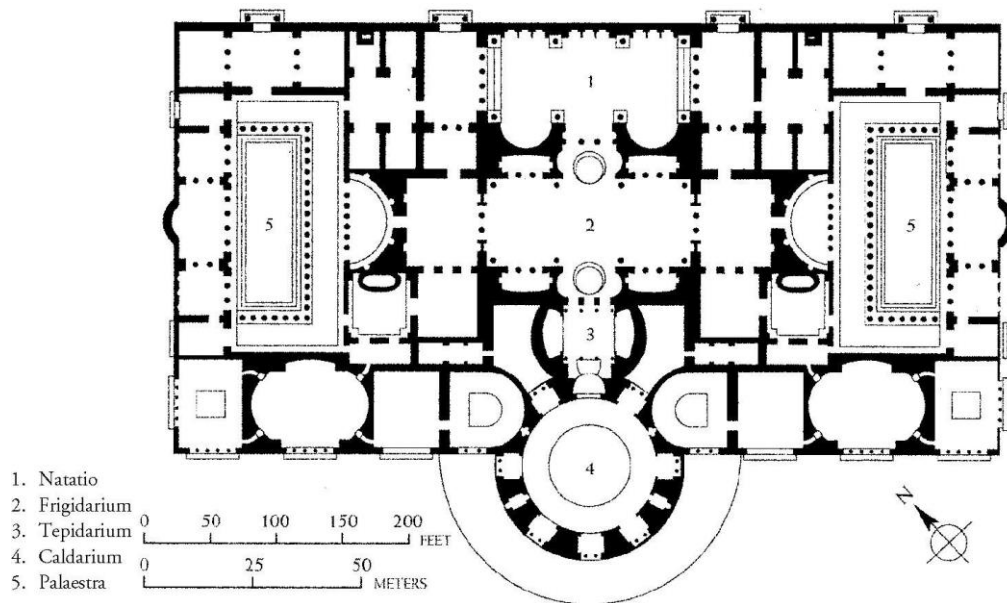
# Rome: City of an Empire

## Part IV: The Baths of Caracalla

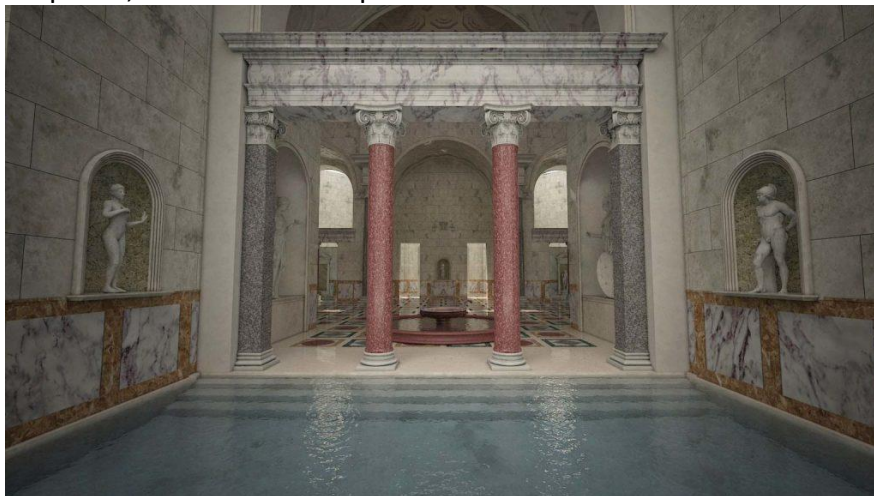
### Septimius Severus/Caracalla

- 145 A.D. he's born Lucius Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna, Africa.
- 170 A.D. Severus enters the Roman senate.
- 173 A.D. Severus is a legatus (legislator) in Africa.
- 175 A.D. Severus marries the Punic Lady, Paccia Marciana.
- 187 A.D. Severus marries the Syrian lady, Julia Domna.
- 188 A.D. Severus had his first son, Bassianus, also known as Caracalla.
- 189 A.D. Severus is proconsul of Sicily. Birth of Geta, his second son.
- 190 A.D. Severus is consul for the first time.
- 191 A.D. – 193 A.D. he is governor of Pannonia Superior (south east Europe).
- 193 A.D. Year of the Five Emperors. This year of turmoil started when Emperor Commodus (known for madness and playing gladiator) was assassinated. Pertinax was named Emperor but the Praetorian Guard objected and killed Pertinax. Eventually after three more successive Emperors were declared, Septimius Severus seized power. He fought campaigns against his rivals for the throne – Didius Julianus, Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus. Didius was killed early on, Niger was defeated in Cilicia (south-east Turkey today) in 194 A.D. and Albinus was defeated three years later (197 A.D.) in Lugdunum (Lyon) Gaul (France).
- 195 A.D. First war with Parthia (Iran).
- 197 A.D.-198 A.D. Second war with Parthia.
- 198 A.D.-209 A.D. Septimius' first son, Caracalla, co-rules the empire with his father.
- 200 A.D. The Triumphal Arch of Septimius Severus is built in Leptis Magna.
- 203 A.D. The Triumphal Arch of Septimius Severus is built in Rome celebrating his war with Parthia.
- 208-211 A.D. Campaign in Scotland.
- 209-211 A.D. Co-rule of Septimius, Caracalla, and the second son Geta.
- 211-217 A.D. Reign of Caracalla
- 212 A.D. Caracalla grants Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Roman Empire.
- 217 A.D. Caracalla dies while on campaign against Parthia. While urinating, he was stabbed by one of his soldiers, who had been refused a promotion to centurion – Marcinius, the commander of Praetorian Guard, had facilitated the murder and then declared himself Emperor.

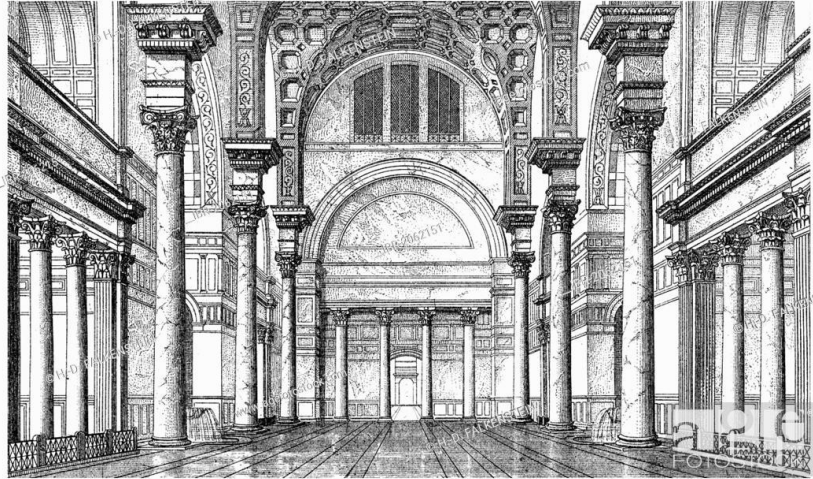
## Design



- The Roman baths complex in the south of Rome known as the Baths of Caracalla were probably commissioned by Septimius Severus but were opened by his son Caracalla in 216 CE and finished c. 235 CE. They are one of the best preserved bath complexes from antiquity and could accommodate as many as 8,000 bathers. The building was some 30 metres high and covered an area of 337 x 328 m.
- The rooms of the Baths would be similar the rooms of other bathhouses:
  - Natatio – swimming pool (room at the north side) this would have been open air and with an elaborate marble façade (wall with levels, columns, pillars, and alcoves. People would swim here for exercise.



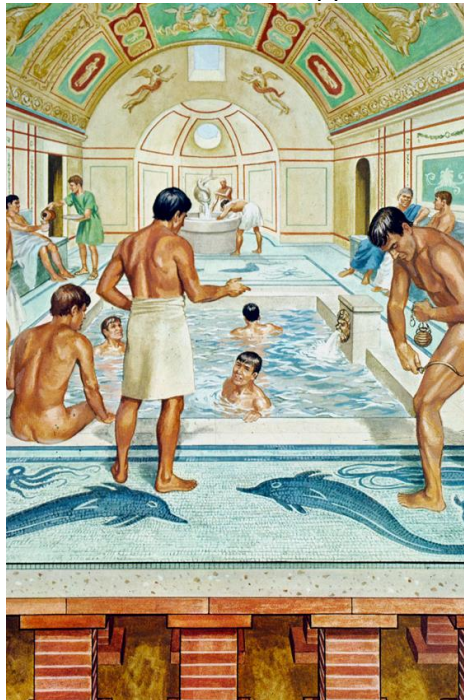
- Frigidarium/main hall – this was in the centre of the building. Two statues of Bacchus and two of Hercules would be at either end of the hall. Pools of cold water would have been attached at the sides. Only men were allowed to bath in these pools as the Romans believed that cold water could affect a woman's fertility. The room would have been marble, expansive, and high, with columns on each corner lifting of a groin vaulted ceiling.



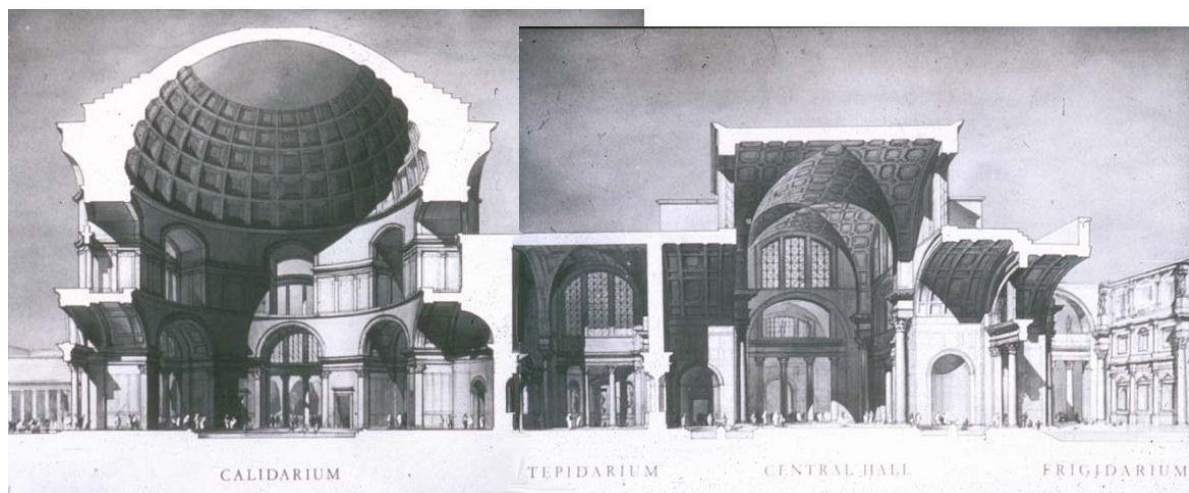
- Tepidarium – this was a small room, the warm room. Here people would sit, socialise, and relax while they sweated. After visiting the caldarium



they might come back here and have a slave cover them in olive oil and the dirt on their bodies scrapped off using a strigil.



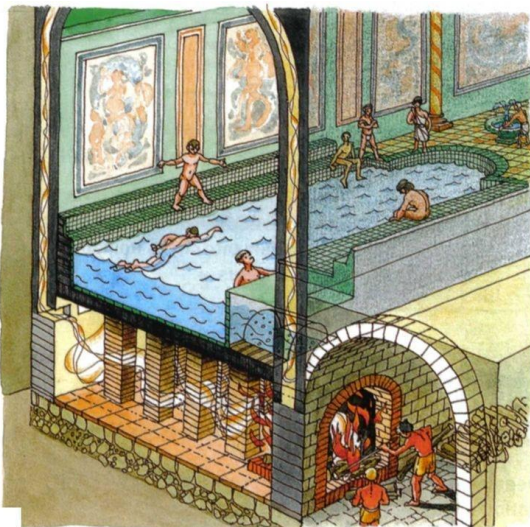
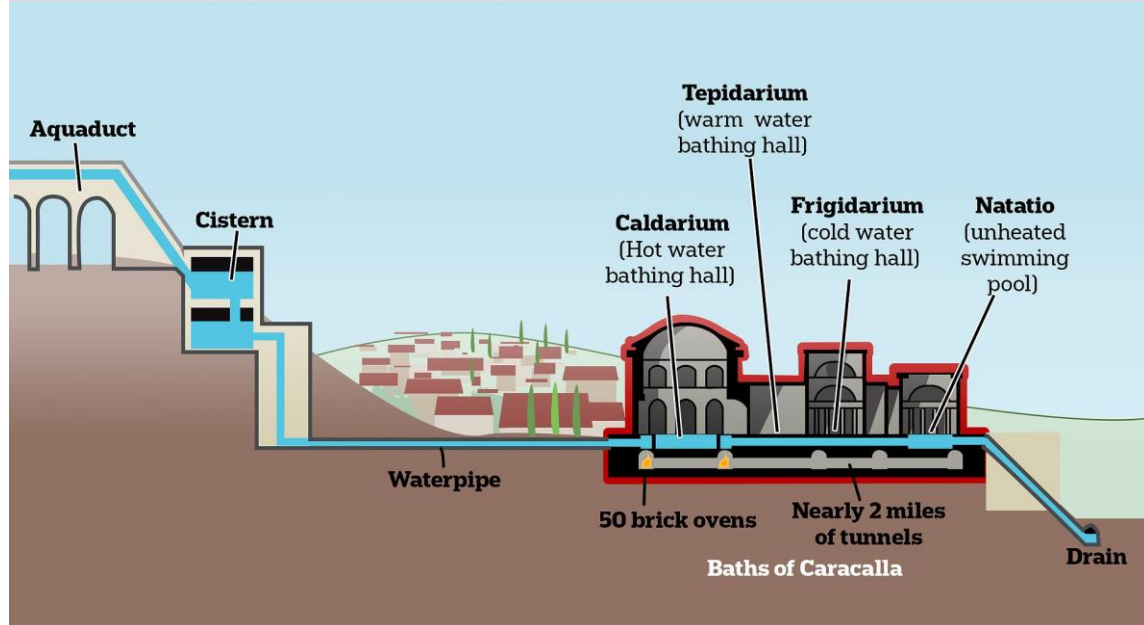
- Caldarium – this was the hot room. It was a tall rotunda with large windows looking out onto the gardens. The floor and walls would have been marble and the pool circular and hot. The roof was a huge dome only slightly smaller than the great dome of the Pantheon. Bathers would visit this room to sweat and then return to the tepidarium for the oil and strigil before finally visiting the cold pools of the frigidarium (if they were men) to close the pores of their skin.



- Hypocaust system – the hypocaust system would have heated both the Tepidarium and the Caldarium. This was an underfloor heating system. Brick ovens would have held up the floor from underneath, heating the water that was piped into the baths. About 2 miles of tunnels and 50 ovens would heat the air. Slaves would have worked tirelessly to keep the air hot. A shrine to Mithras – a middle-eastern god favourite with soldiers – was

found in the tunnels also. The ground of the bathhouses would be so hot that attendants would have to wear wooden sandals to protect their feet from burning on the hot stones.

## HOW THE BATHS OF CARACALLA WORKED



- **Palaestra** – there were two on each side of the bathhouse – creating a symmetrical design. The palaestra was an open space surrounded by peristyle (lines of columns). In most bathhouses this would be outside, however in these baths there were inside and were more like a Basilica in design. Relief sculptures depicting the military campaigns of the Severan dynasty (Septimius and Caracalla's campaigns) were carved onto a frieze above the columns. Usually the palaestra would be a place for people to exercise. School children and their teachers would also use the peristyle colonnade to give lessons. These palaestra also had alcoves for the display



of sculptural works of art such as the statues of the Farnese Bull (a statue group showing young men tying Dirce, Queen of Thebes, to a bull to punish her for the ill-treatment of their mother).

- Changing-rooms – rooms off the palaestra where people would change and leave their cloths with slaves.
- Libraries – large libraries were at the north end of the bath complex. Scrolls would have been available for reading.



### ***Other Images***



