



*The Temple of Venus and Roma designed by the emperor Hadrian © Carole Raddato*

The Temple of Venus and Roma (Latin: *Templum Veneris et Romae*) was the largest temple in Ancient Rome. It was located at the far east side of the Forum Romanum, near the Colosseum. It was dedicated to the goddesses Venus Felix (Venus the Bringer of Good Fortune) and Roma Aeterna (Eternal Rome). The designer was emperor Hadrian. Construction on the temple began in AD 121. Although the temple was officially inaugurated by Hadrian in 135, the building was finished in 141 under Antoninus Pius.

The building measured 110 m in length and 53 m in width. It was placed on a stage measuring 145 m in length and 100 m in width. The temple itself consisted of two main chambers (*cellae*), where the cult statue of the god was, in this case the statues of Venus, the goddess of Love, and Roma, the goddess of Rome, both of them seated on a throne. The *cellae* were placed symmetrically back-to-back. Roma's *cella* was facing west, looking out over the Forum Romanum while Venus' *cella* was facing east, looking out over the Colosseum. Each *cella* had its own line of four columns at the

entrance.

As an additional clever subtlety by Hadrian, Venus also represented Love (Amor in Latin), and “AMOR” is “ROMA” spelt backwards. Thus, placing the two divinities of Venus and Rome back-to-back in a single temple creates a further symmetry with the back-to-back symmetry of their names as well.

When Hadrian asked Apollodorus, the most celebrated architect of the time, to comment on his design, he allegedly replied that the temple was too low and the statues of the gods too tall for the space they occupied. ““For now,”” he said, ‘if the goddesses wish to get up and go out, they will be unable to do so’” (Dio, LXIX.4.1-5). Hadrian was so exasperated at the remark that he banished Apollodorus and later may have had him put to death.

[Links and further reading:](#)

[Templum Veneris et Romae, A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome](#)

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