

Amphitheatres

The Romans liked watching public games held in amphitheatres. The games began as part of religious festivals, but developed into entertainments in their own right.

The Romans liked watching dangerous and cruel contests. Roman leaders organised games to make themselves popular with the people.

Amphitheatres were huge round or oval buildings like football stadiums. They held large numbers of spectators. Gladiator contests and chariot races took place in the central arena while audiences sat on the raised seats surrounding it. Tunnels and cages were built underneath for the wild animals used in the gladiator contests.

The games began with wild animals fighting gladiators, or even just killing defenceless criminals. At midday, the bodies were removed and two gladiators fought each other to the death.

Chariot races were also held. Two-wheeled chariots raced around the track. There were a lot of accidents and deaths, which the Roman audiences loved.

1. What did Roman audiences enjoy most?

2. What would the gladiators have seen?

3. What might you have heard on the day of the games?

4. What would you have seen if you had arrived shortly before midday?
