

Roman Villas

Upper class, wealthy Roman Citizens in the countryside around Rome and throughout the Empire lived in villa-complexes, the accommodation for rural farms. The villa-complex consisted of three parts.

The "Villa Urbana" was where the owner and his family lived. This would be similar to the wealthy-person's Domus in the city and would have painted walls and lovely artistic mosaics on the floors.

The "Villa Rustica" was where the staff and slaves of the villa worked and lived. This was also the living quarters for the farm animals. There would usually be other rooms here that might be used as storerooms, a hospital or even a prison.

The third part of the villa-complex would be the storage rooms. These would be where the products of the farm were stored ready for transport to buyers. Storage rooms here would have been used for oil, wine, grain, grapes and any other produce of the villa. Other rooms in the villa might include an office, a temple for worship, several bedrooms, a dining room and a kitchen.

Villas were often plumbed with running water and many would have had under-floor central heating known as a "hypocaust". There are more than two dozen Roman villas in Britain, one of the finest being at Fishbourne in West Sussex.



Part of the mosaic floor at Fishbourne Palace.

1. Who lived in Villa Rustica?
2. What might be stored in the third part of the villa?
3. How were the villas heated?
4. How many villas are there in Britain?
5. Where is the finest Roman villa?
6. We would like you to do some research to find out if there were any Roman villas built near Bicester. We can't wait to see what you find out!