



ITINERARY 5

The entrance to the archaeological area is on the right of the via dell'Arco di Travertino, a short distance from the via Appia Nuova. A section approximately 450 metres long of the ancient via Latina is visible inside the park, flanked by a series of extremely important funerary monuments. This area came to light, thanks to the initiative of Lorenzo Fortunati, who carried out excavation work between 1857 and 1858 at his own expense, subsequently to be completed according to the wishes of Pope Pius IX. Immediately after the Unification of Italy, in 1879 the new Italian State took care of expropriating the land which was the property of the Barberini family. At the beginning of the 1900's, following a restoration campaign directed by Rodolfo Lanciani, this area was set aside as an archaeological park through the initiative of the minister Guido Baccelli

Administrative area: Rome Archaeology Office

Web site: www.romacivica.net/tarcaf/storarc/lat_iii.htm



1) Dado tomb

On the right of the via Latina, immediately after the entrance, stands the parallelepiped nucleus of a dado tomb in tuff concrete, completely devoid of its original cladding. A plaque dated 1858 is affixed to the side facing the city, to commemorate Fortunati's excavation work.



2) Barberini tomb

Immediately afterwards we come to a monumental brickwork tomb, called the Barberini Tomb, after the name of the princes and ancient owners of the area.

This is a two-storey tomb, including an underground section which is not accessible, built in two-colours of brickwork and typical of the second half of the II century A.D. (the era of the Antonini Emperors). As is usual for the “small temple” type of tombs, the basement floor was the funeral chamber, where the famous “Barberini” sarcophagus has been discovered, with a portrayal of the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia, now preserved in the Vatican Museums, whilst the first floor was used to hold funeral ceremonies. The decoration motifs are also entirely in brickwork, just as the pilasters with angular capitals, the door and window frames and an architrave on support shelving running right round the building. The entrance to the first floor is on the side facing away from the road. Inside there are walls of brickwork and small, parallelepiped blocks of tuff (*Opera vittata*), and traces of mosaic flooring and of the plaster which clad the walls and the cross vault on the second floor, whereas the first floor ceiling was demolished in the 1700’s, when the tomb was used as a hayloft.



3) Fortunati Tomb 25

Several tombs are partly preserved on the left of the road, including one in brickwork, where only the underground funeral chamber remains, rectangular in shape and lit by means of two small window embrasures and including traces of the cross vault

ceiling. The walls, which were clad using marble slabs, contained two niches for the cinerary urns, which still preserve traces of their decorative painting, with figures of people and animals.



4) The via Latina route

At the point corresponding to the III mile can be found a stretch of the ancient, paved via Latina, with original paving stones (large polygonal-shaped stones in basalt lava) and the “crepidini”, the trodden earth side paths for pedestrian use. In this section the carriageway is 3.90 metres wide, against an overall width of approx. 10 metres.

Built at the end of the IV century B.C. to provide rapid connection between the newly-founded colonies in southern Latium and Campania, it in fact follows the tracks of a prehistoric route which connected Etruria and Campania through the Sacco and Liri valleys. Like the via Appia, the via Latina also originated initially from the Capena Gate and the Republican walls (the two roads later separated in the region of today’s Numa Pompilio Square), whereas after the construction of the Aurelian Walls it departed from the Latina Gate, then passing through the Alban Hills and crossing the Algidio Pass it reached first Cassino and then Capua, following a more internal route with respect to the Appia.



5) Valeri Tomb

To the right of the road, past a series of minor structures, travellers come across a remarkable two-storey, brickwork structure, arbitrarily referred to as the Valeri Tomb, on the basis of an inscription discovered in the region of the Demetriade villa.

The tomb, almost entirely rebuilt in elevation, offers a rectangular design and features a portico with two columns on the façade. The upper floor has a rectangular window and the roofing is double-sloped.

The entrance faces the road through an enclosure of half-columns and pillars. Beyond this lies an area open to the sky, where two symmetrical staircases descend towards the two underground sepulchral chambers, both with barrel-vault ceilings. The more important burial chamber, originally clad with marble slabs, perfectly preserves the magnificent stucco work in the vault, consisting of medallions set amongst memorial paintings: The centre medallion depicts a veiled figure, carried on the back of a griffon (a fantastic winged creature, with the head of an eagle and the body of a horse), symbolising the soul of the deceased carried up to heaven. In the centre of the other medallions and paintings mythological and fantastic figures are portrayed amongst sprigs of flowers. The side lunettes in the vault are also completely decorated with stucco.

The tomb dates from the second half of the II century A.D.



6) Resting place with thermal chambers

Around the Valeri tomb, on the left of the road, are the remains of thermal chambers associated with a *statio*, a place of rest and refreshment for travellers using the via Latina. Two pillars, originally supporting statues and now visible from the road, formed the entrance to this structure. A section of mosaic flooring is still preserved in one of the rooms, whilst two tanks around the Valeri tomb provided water for the system.



7) “Baccelli” or “C” Tomb

Once more on the right of the road, past the Valeri tomb, passers-by can make out a brickwork tomb, where only the façade has been preserved, looking towards a small side road on the via Latina leading to the Appia antica. The underground funeral chamber contains two rows of superimposed loculi on three levels, according to a form of intensive burial practice, in use since the II century A.D., when the burial rite began to prevail. In the 1500’s the tomb was used as a church.

8) Circular tomb

In front of the Valeri Tomb on the opposite side of the road are traces of a circular, brickwork tomb, consisting of two concentric circles linked by partition walls. The entrance faces away from the via Latina; here there are remains of marble decoration work together with fragments of columns.



9) Pancrazi Tomb

To the left of the road stands the Pancrazi Tomb, of which only the underground portion remains, covered with modern roofing. The elevation part was probably of the usual “small temple” design, similar to those in the tombs seen previously. The vestibule, which is reached by two flights of stairs, includes a base with four large

arches, which the sarcophagi were placed on. During excavation work five were found. One of these can be dated between the III and IV century A.D., with the name of the funeral college of the *Pancrati* and which gives its name to the tomb, is still preserved in this area. The burial chamber proper still has its mosaic floor in black and white marble in a fish scale pattern, marking off a large, smooth marble sarcophagus, around which the tomb was built, whilst a further seven sarcophagi, kept in the Vatican Museums, were positioned along the sides. The magnificent stuccoes and frescoes cladding the cross vault and the upper part of the walls inside are of particular importance. A circular medallion in the centre of the vault portrays Jupiter in flight with an eagle. In the centre opposite the entrance one of the larger paintings depicts the judgement of Paris, whilst a further painting in the opposite field shows Priam going to ask Achilles for the body of Hector. On the left there is a musical contest between Hercules and Bacchus, and on the right the wedding of Alcestis. The side lunettes portray make-believe architecture, floral elements and small paintings of landscapes and mythological figures. On the basis of the building techniques and the system of decoration used, the tomb can be placed in the era of Hadrian (first half of the II century A.D.).

10) Calpurni Tomb

Further on past the Pancrazi Tomb and once more on the left lies the Calpurni Tomb. The underground burial chamber remains, with its cross vault ceiling and large brickwork arches along the walls, used to house the sarcophagi.

11) Demetriade Villa

Behind the Pancrazi Tomb lies an area consisting of walls and a water tank belonging to a large villa, excavated by Fortunati and then buried once again, which was partly destroyed in 1964 to build a football field. On the basis of the web-work and brick building techniques used, as well as the official markings on the bricks, the villa can be dated between the I and the first half of the III century A.D. In the mid V century A.D. the Roman gentlewoman Demetriade, owner of the complex, transformed the villa into a place of Christian worship, building the Basilica which conserved the relics of St. Stephen. The area has provided several sculptures and decorative fragments, now kept in the Vatican Museums.



12) St. Stephen's Basilica

In the middle of the V century A.D., during the reign of Pope Leon I (440-461), a Basilica was founded on the central part of the Demetriade Villa, opposite the peristyle, devoted to St. Stephen the protomartyr. The structure consisted of three naves, on columns with Corinthian capitals. Today the apse remains, in striped "Opera listata", together with the confession below the altar, where the relics of the saint were kept, and the baptistery at the far end of the left nave, consisting of a small swimming pool, reached via a small stairway. In the IX century the Basilica was provided with a bell tower, which remained in use until the XII century.

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