



Hello There! Oh, how I love Italy! And what's not to love?! Beautiful weather, fantastic food, and some of the most amazing monuments in the world! The best part is sharing this beautiful country, and history, with our kids! I mean, what's not to love about dragging your kids around, all day long, in the hot, Roman sunshine. Come on, they love it ... right? Okay, let's be honest - getting the kids to share in our excitement can pose some challenges!

### **Colosseum History**

Why was the Colosseum Built? When the Flavian Family took over Rome, they wanted to give something back to the people, because Nero the old ruler was not a very nice guy. They built this great amphitheater for all Romans to enjoy. The amphitheater was free for all citizens of Rome as long as they wore their best

clothes to the games. The Emperor even supplied food for all who came.

The theater could hold 55,000 people and took 8 full years to build! It was covered in white marble, and was one of the most beautiful structures in Rome!

## **Things for Your Kids to Find**

**1. Entrances:** First you should know that the Amphitheater has 80 entrances and exits. 76 of those entrances were used for the people of Rome. Each was numbered above the arches. There are only two arches that you can still see the Roman Numerals those are gates 23 (XXIII), which is 3 arches down from the Gate of Life. The other gate you can find is gate 54 (LIV), which is close to Death's Gate. Try to find them when you look for the Life and Death gate (listed below). Most people don't even know they are there! Entrances 1-4 were used by the emperor, senators, and special guests like the Vestal Virgins, who were the protectors of Rome.

**2. Seating:** Look to your left or right and you can see the Amphitheater going up. There are four levels of seating inside the theater. The first floor was for dignitaries, rich people, and government officials. The 2<sup>nd</sup> level is for the nobles and knights. The 3<sup>rd</sup> level was for normal men of Rome. The 4<sup>th</sup> tier way was for the normal women of Rome! Hmm, what do you think about that? My boys thought the idea of me sitting all the way at the top was hilarious!

**3. "Life's Gate":** This is a huge archway that was the exact arch where the gladiators, exotic animals, and all the chariots would enter into the Colosseum! First, they would parade around Rome, ending at the Colosseum. The arch is big so it can accommodate large chariots and larger animals like ostriches, elephants, and

rhinoceros. Believe it or not, some chariots were even pulled by ostriches.

Life's Gate is the big gate near where you entered into the Colosseum. If you are looking into the middle of the Colosseum, and you are standing directly in front of the new walkway that crosses the middle to the other side, Life's Gate is right behind you!

Why is it called the "Life Gate?" Well, because everyone entered the Colosseum alive, and only those gladiators who lived through the battle were allowed to leave through this archway!

**4. Coliseum Floor:** When you are inside, you have some options. If you go forward, you can walk out on the walkway that crosses the middle of the Colosseum. You will notice below there are many stone pillars and spaces. Use your imagination and pretend this whole area is covered with a wooden floor! This was, yep you guessed it, the Colosseum floor where the games actually took place.

On this floor was sand, and under the sand were 36 trap doors that led to the underground tunnels and animal cages. You can see the remains of the cages and tunnels below you. These trap doors were there so animals and/or props (fake trees or scenery) could suddenly appear to the crowd, magically popping up from the floor below.

Imagine if you were a gladiator and a tiger suddenly appeared from below the ground. *HOLY COW!*

**5. Underground Tunnels:** There are five underground tunnels, and you can actually see the tunnels from where you are standing. See if you can find five of them! Only four of the tunnels have been explored, but the 5th one was partially destroyed when Rome built some of its current infrastructure. You can also now go on a tour through the tunnels!

## **These tunnels were used for many things.**

**One tunnel** was used for the gladiators to enter into the arena and it comes above ground at Life's Gate. This tunnel also led to the Gladiator School that was outside the Amphitheater. Lastly, they believe it also led to the Sanitarium, or hospital, for the wounded gladiators. The entrance to the tunnel is between gates XIX (19) and XX (20). This main tunnel would have also led to the animal cages, stables, and barns outside of the stadium.

**The next tunnel** leads to where the props and costumes were stored; in a room below the Colosseum. The room is called "Summum Choragium", but it's easier to remember "the storage room!"

**The third tunnel** goes to the room where all the dead gladiators were stripped of their possessions like swords, armor, and helmets. These things were all saved and given to future gladiators. This tunnel also splits into a **4<sup>th</sup> tunnel** that is used to drag the dead gladiators out of the arena to the room called the "Spoilarium." We would know these rooms today as a morgue! These two tunnels both start at the Death Gates. The entrance to the tunnels can be found directly next to death's gate between arches 57 and 58!

**The final underground tunnel** is known as the Passaggio di Commodo! This was the secret passage for the emperor to enter and exit the Amphitheater. This tunnel leads directly to Palantine Hill, and the home of the emperors outside the arena! This tunnel is located right behind the emperors seats at the unmarked gate 1.

**6. Death's Gate:** This Gate is directly behind the stadium floor that has been rebuilt. It is also directly across from Life's Gate.

You can see it in this picture --> I think you can guess what this gate was for... yes, to drag out the dead bodies of both gladiators and animals that had been killed during the games. Once you get

to this gate, don't forget to look for the secret tunnel that leads to the underground.

**7. Emperor's Box:** Looking out towards the coliseum with your back to Death's Gate, you will see a space with a wooden floor and a large cross. It is in the middle of the south side of the Amphitheater. This is where the emperor himself sat during the games.

**8. Gladiators:** The gladiators would enter into the Colosseum through Life's Gate. Then, they would stop in front of the Emperor's Box, salute him, and say "*For those about to die, we salute you*". The gladiators would fight, often to their death! There were over 30 kinds of gladiators. Gladiators were named by how they fought! Some fought with swords, some fought wild animals, and some fought with heavy armor! If the gladiator survived, and fought a good fight, he could ask the crowd (by a show of thumbs) if he could live and exit out of Life's Gate! If the crowd showed their thumbs, the gladiator had to fight to the death, and his body would be drug out through Death's Gate!

**9. Cross of the Christians:** Now that you have found your way around and have pointed out where the emperors sat, you will also see a large cross in the emperor's box. This is there to remember all the Christians that were killed in ancient Roman times. Many people think this is for all the death of the Christians that were killed in the Colosseum; however, the Colosseum was for sport and entertainment. Most of the Christians were killed at Circus Maximus

**10. Awning over the Colosseum:** Did you know that there once was an awning over the entire Colosseum? It was made of the same material that was used for the sails on large ships and could be stretched over the whole amphitheater. It could be put

on or removed to help protect from rain or too much sun. The awning, or velarium it was called, was tied on by ropes and connected to the Colosseum by large brackets! It took 1000 men to open the awning and tie it down each time they used it! Many of these brackets you can still find today. How many can you find?

**Buying a Souvenir:** Last but not least... I know you really want a souvenir from the Colosseum, right? Sadly, those plastic swords are hard to take on the airplane, and your kids won't ever use it when you get home! So, here is a better idea — while in Rome, get some change from 1 euro, and ask for a 5 cent coin. The 5 cent euro coin has a picture of the Colosseum on it that you can easily put in your pocket and take home with you to always remember Rome!

I hope you enjoyed your time at the Colosseum! Check back with [basketslifetravel.com](http://basketslifetravel.com) if we can help you with anything else.

Stacey