



Baths and bathing

Pompeii: The life, death and rediscovery of a Roman town
(HPAH5078/HPAH6078)



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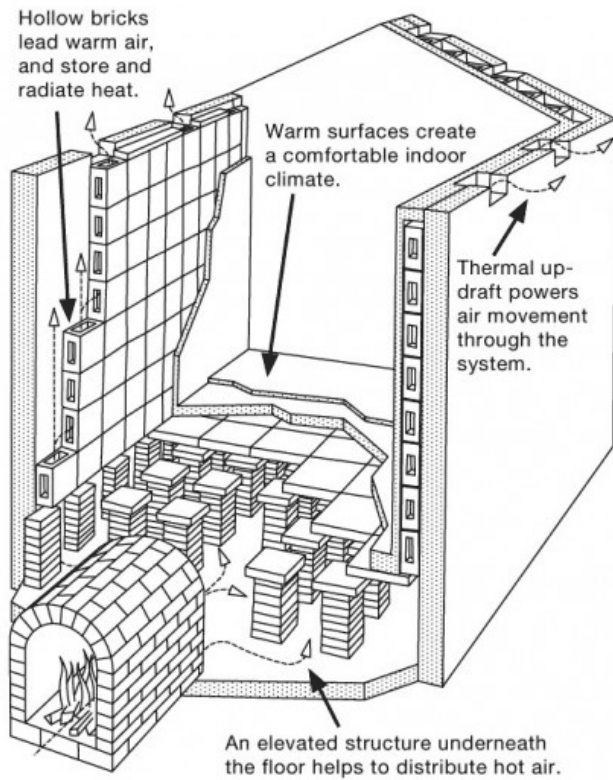
“Though not used by the people of Italy, it seems proper that I should explain the form of the palaestra and describe the mode in which it was constructed by the Greeks... adjoining that is the frigidarium...on the other side is the hot bath...” – **Vitruvius** *On Architecture* 5.11.

A photograph of the ancient thermal baths at Baiae, Italy. The ruins are built into a hillside, featuring multiple levels of stone walls, arches, and a central courtyard. The site is surrounded by lush green trees and vegetation under a clear blue sky.

Thermal baths
at Baiae

A photograph of the interior of the Stabian Baths in Pompeii. The image shows a curved wall with several arched niches. The walls are covered in colorful frescoes, including red, blue, and yellow. The floor is made of stone tiles, and the overall atmosphere is one of ancient Roman architecture.

Stabian Baths
(Pompeii)



Underfloor heating

- Hot baths from at least the fifth century BC.
 - Aristophanes Clouds.
 - Charcoal braziers.
- Evidence for a rudimentary form of under-floor heating at Gela, ca. 310-280 BC.
- Sergius Orata (early-1st century BC) is credited by Vitruvius with being the person to invent the hypocaust system.
 - Based at Lucrine Lake .
- Earliest discovered hypocaust system from Stabian Baths.



Hypocaust at the Stabian Baths (tepidarium)



Caldarium – Forum Baths

New baths at Pompeii

- Stabian Baths connected up to aqueduct during Augustan period.
- Forum Baths (VII.5-6) for the new colony.
 - [The duumvirs]... undertook the construction at public expense, in accordance with the wishes of the decurions, and approved it.” (C/I 10.819).
- Suburban Baths (VII.16.a) (early 1st century AD).
 - Ground floor bath complex, upper floor sea views.
- Central Baths (IX.4)
 - Under construction at time of eruption.

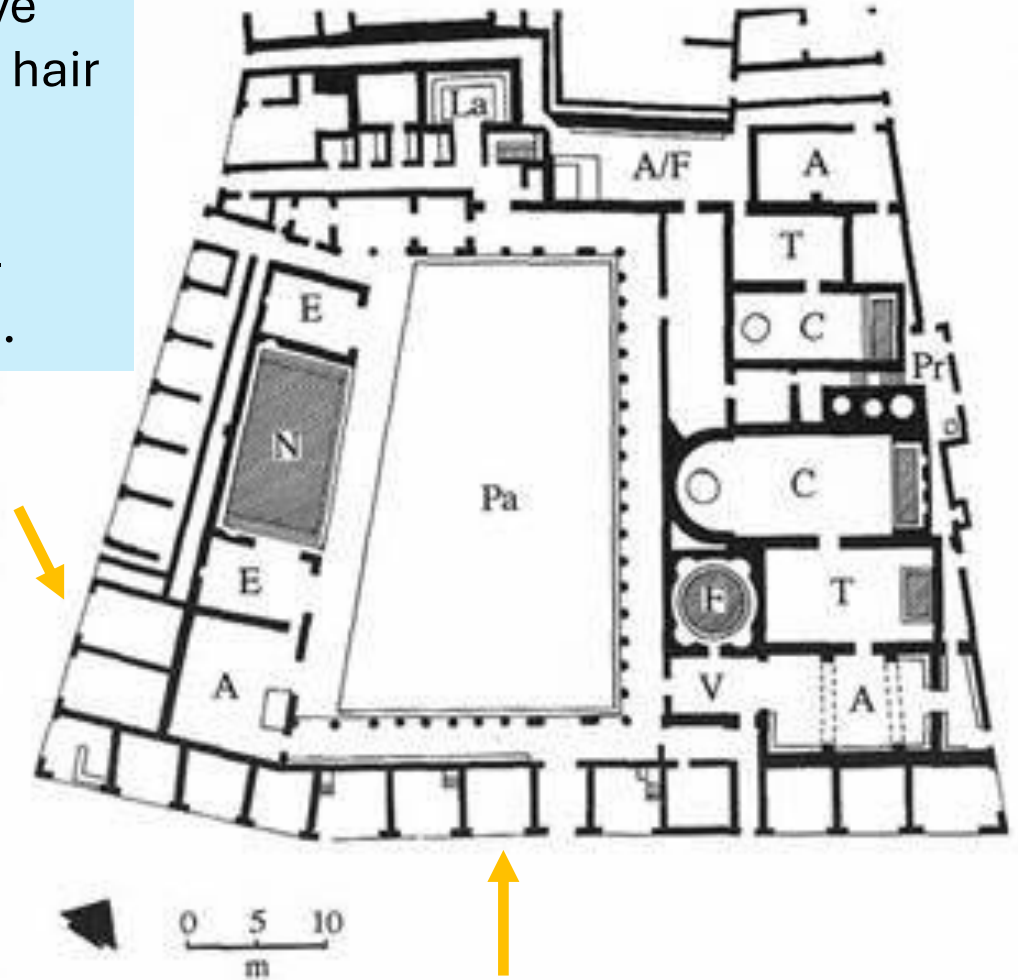
Facilities

- *apodyterium* (room for undressing).
- *tepidarium* (warm room).
- *frigidarium* (cold room).
- *caldarium* (hot room):
 - *tintinnabulum* (announcing bell).
- *Natatio* (swimming pool).
- *laconicum* (sweating room).
- *palaestra* (exercise area):
 - *destrictarium* (scraping room)

“...a multitude of noises surround me, since I live directly above a bath... hair pluckers... vendors of sausages, pastries... hawking their wares.” – **Seneca *Letters* 56.1-2.**

Key to Plans of Baths

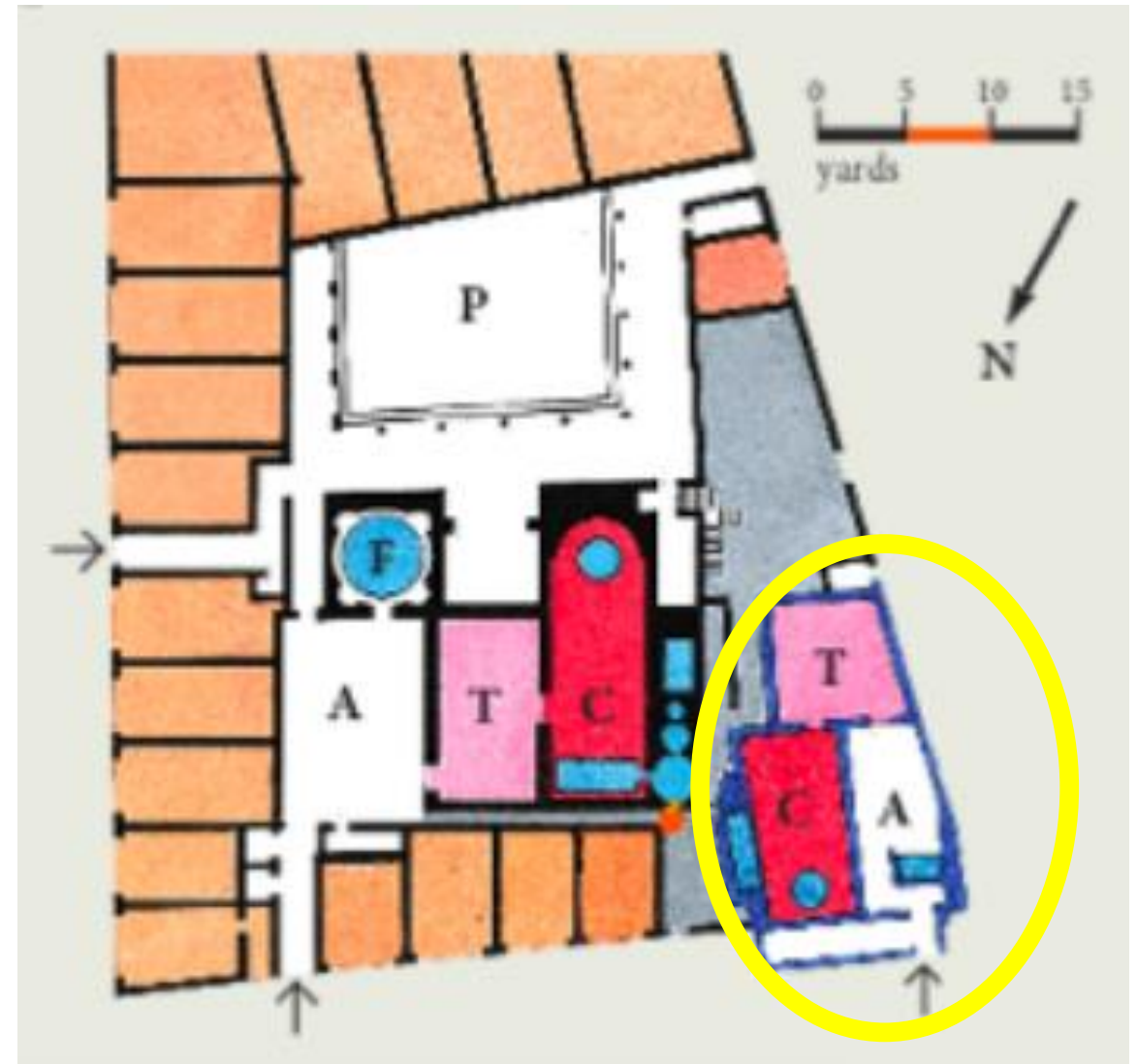
A = Apodyterium
C = Caldarium
Ca = Calida Piscina
E = Exedra
F = Frigidarium
N = Natatio
La = Latrine
Lc = Laconicum
Pa = Palaestra
Pr = Praefurnium
T = Tepidarium
V = Vestibule



Plan of the Stabian baths

Mixed or separate bathing?

- First public baths separated men and women (Varro *On the Latin Language* 11.41.68).
 - Different times, different facilities within a bath complex, or different baths.
 - Forum Baths (Augustan period), a second suite of rooms in northwest corner.
- However, late Flavian evidence for mixed bathing.
 - e.g., Martial, Juvenal, Plutarch, Cassius Dio, *SHA Alex. Sev.*



“Afterwards, however, when they had learned from the Greeks their freedom in going naked, they in their turn infected the Greeks with the practice even when women were present.” – **Plutarch *Cato the Elder* 20.6.**