Ancient Roman Architecture
Ancient Roman architecture adopted certain aspects of Ancient Greek architecture, creating a new architectural style.

The Romans were indebted to their Etruscan neighbours and forefathers who supplied them with a wealth of knowledge essential for future architectural solutions, such as hydraulics in the construction of arches.

Later they absorbed Greek and Phoenician influence, apparent in many aspects closely related to architecture; for example, this can be seen in the introduction and use of the Triclinium in Roman villas as a place and manner of dining.

Roman architecture flourished throughout the Empire during the Pax Romana.
The use of **vaults** and **arches**, together with a sound knowledge of building materials, enabled the Romans to achieve unprecedented successes in the construction of imposing structures for public use.

Examples include the **aqueducts of Rome**, the **Baths of Diocletian** and the **Baths of Caracalla**, the **basilicas** and **Coliseum**. They were reproduced at smaller scale in most important towns and cities in the Empire.

Some surviving structures are almost complete, such as the **town walls** of **Lugo** in **Hispania Tarraconensis**, or northern Spain.
• The Romans did not feel restricted by Greek aesthetic axioms alone in order to achieve these objectives.

• The Pantheon is an example of this, particularly in the version rebuilt by Hadrian, which remains perfectly preserved, and which over the centuries has served as the inspiration for countless public buildings.

• The same emperor left his mark on the landscape of northern Britain when he built a wall to mark the limits of the empire.
• The Roman use of the arch and their improvements in the use of concrete and bricks facilitated the building of the many aqueducts throughout the empire, such as the Aqueduct of Segovia and the eleven aqueducts in Rome itself, such as Aqua Claudia and Anio Novus.

• The same concepts produced numerous bridges, some of which are still in daily use, for example the Puente Romano at Mérida in Spain, and the Pont Julian and the bridge at Vaison-la-Romaine, both in Provence, France.
• The **dome** permitted construction of **vaulted ceilings** without crossbeams and provided large covered public space such as **public baths** and **basilicas**. The Romans based much of their **architecture** on the dome, such as Hadrian's **Pantheon** in the city of Rome, the **Baths of Diocletian** and the **Baths of Caracalla**.

• The use of arches that spring directly from the tops of columns was a Roman development, seen from the 1st century AD, that was very widely adopted in medieval Western, **Byzantine** and **Islamic architecture**.
Art historians such as Gottfried Richter in the 1920s identified the Roman architectural innovation as being the Triumphal Arch. This symbol of power was transformed and utilised within the Christian basilicas when the Roman Empire of the West was on its last legs:

The arch was set before the altar to symbolize the triumph of Christ and the afterlife. The arch is seen in aqueducts, especially in the many surviving examples, such as the Pont du Gard, the aqueduct at Segovia and the remains of the Aqueducts of Rome itself. Their survival is testimony to the durability of their materials and design.

The Romans first adopted the arch from the Etruscans, and implemented it in their own building. An arch transmits load evenly and is still commonly used in architecture today.
• The Ancient Romans were responsible for significant developments in housing and public hygiene, for example their public and private baths and latrines, under-floor heating in the form of the hypocaust, mica glazing (examples in Ostia Antica), and piped hot and cold water (examples in Pompeii and Ostia).

• Multi-story apartment blocks called insulae catered to a range of residential needs. The cheapest and darkest rooms were at the bottom; the lightest and most desirable at the top. Windows were mostly small, facing the street, with iron security bars. Insulae were often dangerous, unhealthy, and prone to fires because of overcrowding and haphazard cooking arrangements [citation needed].

• There are examples in the Roman port town of Ostia, that date back to the reign of Trajan. External walls were in "Opus Reticulatum" and interiors in "Opus Incertum", which would then be plastered and sometimes painted.

• To lighten up the small dark rooms, tenants able to afford a degree of luxury painted colorful murals on the walls. Examples have been found of jungle scenes with wild animals and exotic plants. Imitation windows (trompe l'oeil) were sometimes painted to make the rooms seem less confined.
• All Roman cities had at least one Thermae, a popular facility for public bathing, exercising and socializing. Exercise might include wrestling and weight-lifting, as well as swimming. Bathing was an important part of the Roman day, where some hours might be spent, at a very low cost subsidized by the government.

• Wealthier Romans were often accompanied by one or more slaves, who performed any required tasks such as fetching refreshment, guarding valuables, providing towels, and at the end of the session, applying olive oil to their masters' bodies which was then scraped off with a strigil, a scraper made of wood or bone. Romans did not wash with soap and water as we do now.

• Roman bath-houses were also provided for private villas, town houses and forts. They were normally supplied with water from an adjacent river or stream, or by aqueduct. The design of thermae is discussed by Vitruvius in De Architectura.
• Roman architecture was often at its most beautiful and impressive when adapted to the needs of Roman religion.

• The Pantheon in Rome has survived structurally intact because it has been continuously used for worship since it was built, over 2000 years ago. Although its interiors were altered when worship changed from paganism to Christianity, it is the finest and largest example of a dome built in antiquity still surviving.

• Some of the most impressive secular buildings are the amphitheatres, over 220 being known and many of which are well preserved, such as that at Arles, as well as its progenitor, the Colosseum in Rome.

• They were used for gladiatorial contests, public displays, public meetings and bullfights, the tradition of which still survives in Spain.
• Every city had a forum of varying size. In addition to its standard function as a marketplace, a forum was a gathering place of great social significance, and often the scene of diverse activities, including political discussions and debates, rendezvous, meetings, etc. The best known example is probably in Rome, Italy, and is the site of the earliest forum of the empire.
The Aqueduct of Segovia, Spain
Frigidarium of Baths of Diocletian.
The Coliseum in Rome, Italy
the Forum Trajenum with the Trajan's Column
The Roman Forum
Northern aisle of the Northern aisle of the Basilica of Maxentius in Rome
Roman theatre of Aspendos, Turkey
Modern influence

During the Baroque and the Renaissance periods, Roman and Greek architectural styles again became fashionable, not only in Italy, but all over Europe.

Today we still see those influences all around us, in banks, government buildings, great houses, even small houses, perhaps in the form of a porch with Doric columns and a pediment or in a fireplace or a mosaic shower floor copied from an original in Pompeii or Herculaneum.

The mighty pillars, domes and arches of Rome echo in the New World too, where in Washington DC not only do we see the Capitol Building, the White House and the Lincoln Memorial, but there exists a Senate and the same (in name) Republican and Democrat parties, who ran the Roman Empire. All across the US the seats of regional government were normally built in the grand traditions of Rome, with vast flights of stone steps sweeping up to towering pillared porticoes, with huge domes gilded or decorated inside with the same or similar themes that were popular in Rome.

In wealthy provincial parts of the US such as the great plantations of 18th and 19th century Louisiana, there too are the pillars and porticoes, the symmetrical façades with their pilasters, the domes and statuary that would have seemed familiar to Caesar and Augustus.

In Britain, a similar enthusiasm has seen the construction of thousands of neo-Classical buildings over the last five centuries, both civic and domestic, and many of the grandest country houses and mansions are purely Classical in style, an obvious example being Buckingham Palace.