



Domus del chirurgo, a little Pompeii in the heart of Rimini

Since December 2007 **the Surgeon's House** has been open to the public: a little Pompeii that came to light in the historic centre of Rimini.

In the late 80's, during some works in the Ferrari Square, an archaeological site of exceptional importance was found, with evidences from the Roman period to the Middle ages. In the area, behind the walls of Ariminum and not far from the port, the Surgeon's house was situated; it is so-called because of the profession of the owner, a doctor of Greek culture. The domus was destroyed by a fire in the middle of the III century, but the remains - such as rubble, mosaics, plaster, furniture and furnishings - have given a "snapshot" of life in the antique Rimini. It was in this place that a unique set of surgical and pharmaceutical equipment was discovered, the richest in the world of the ancient times.

After 2000 years it is now possible to visit this extraordinary discovery situated under a crystal glass covering that was built in order to safeguard the storage. The visit to the excavations is integrated with that of the archaeological section in the nearby City Museum (via Tonini 1), where the tools found in the site, are on show together with the reconstruction of the medical taberna which help to discover the professional and private life of the surgeon.

It is possible to visit the Surgeon's House in the opening time of the City Museum with a cumulative ticket. The archaeological site (Piazza Ferrari) and the City Museum (via Tonini 1) have the following opening time:

Winter time (from 1st September to 31st May):

from Tuesday to Saturday	8,30 am - 1 pm	4 pm - 7 pm
Sundays and holidays	10 am - 12.30 pm	3 pm - 7 pm
Closed on Mondays		

Summer time (from 1st June to 31st August):

from Tuesday to Saturday		2 pm - 11 pm
Sundays and holidays		5 pm - 11 pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays also	10am - 12.30pm	
Closed on Mondays		

Prices:

full ticket € 6
reduced ticket 4 € - children 7 to 14 years, over 65 and disabled

Guided tours to the archaeological site:

on Sundays (from September) at 3.30 pm and on Friday evening at 9.30 pm in July and August
The participation is subject to availability.

On request, guided tours for groups, max 25 people, are organized to visit the archaeological site and the City Museum, at a cost of € 30 for the whole group (additional to the admission ticket).

Reservation is required at the City Museum tel. 0541/21482 - e-mail: musei@comune.rimini.it at least 2 days before.





> The Piazza Ferrari Excavations

The archaeological area in Piazza Ferrari came to light in 1989, during some work on the municipal gardens. The unearthing by chance of a number of Roman ruins was followed, up to 2006, by systematic excavations. Preliminary probes and stratigraphic excavations have brought to light an area covering a surface measuring more than 700 square metres.

The most interesting remains are part of a residential block on the northern edge of Roman *Ariminum*, facing the Adriatic coast, which, at that time, was more than one kilometre further inland than in the present day. The area was flanked by two streets at right angles – *cardo* and *decumanus*. A later house from the Empire period is also included in the sector now known as the “Surgeon’s House”, together with a building from Late Antiquity.

In addition other finds of archaeological interest were unearthed, i.e. traces of flooring made of crushed potsherd fragments probably dating from a Late Republic period, dwelling as well as evidence of Early Medieval settlement, remains of several buildings from the 16th – 18th centuries, including a number of stone wells and corn silos originally belonging to the churches of San Patrignano and to the Religious House of the “Convertite” (a charitable order of nuns looking after penitent prostitutes).

All the remains, preserved as a museum in the site, provide the picture of an exceptional historical and urban stratification bearing witness to 2,000 years of local history.

> The Surgeon’s House

The northern sector of the excavated area contains the remains of the so-called “Surgeon’s House”, built during the second half of the 2nd century A. D., incorporating the back peristyle of a previous building, thus creating a two store residential building.

The small entrance hall, giving onto the nearby *cardo*, led into a service area followed by an inner corridor, on one side of which there was a garden, and on the other several rooms with baked clay walls standing on stone bases.

The living quarters, decorated with polychrome frescoes and geometric pattern and figure mosaic flooring included a dining room (*triclinium*), a bedroom (*cubiculum*) and two reception rooms, the first of which had a fine mosaic with Orpheus surrounded by animals. There were also a number of service rooms towards the back, a heated area (hypocaust), a latrine, and a kitchen and a pantry on the upper floor.

The whole building was destroyed by fire shortly after the mid 3rd century, probably at the time of raids by Germanic tribes during the reign of the Emperor Gallienus. It was also at this time that the new town wall circuit was built, a short stretch of which can be seen at the back of the house.

The sudden collapse of the walls preserved fittings and furnishings, unearthed among the rubble on the floors of the house. These finds include a remarkable collection of surgical and pharmacological items, evidence of the medical profession of the last owner of the house.

> Finds from the House

The remains of the “Surgeon’s House”, preserved in the archaeological site, are accompanied by the excavated finds on display in Rimini Archaeological Museum.

Evidence of the quality of the original architectural decoration is thus provided by a selection of polychrome frescoes unearthed from the rubble, including parts of coffer ceilings and walls with floral and animal motif decorated sections, among which is an impressionist style view of the harbour.





A decorative feature is the sophisticated glass paste panel imported from the east, originally in the *triclinium*, showing the sea bottom with three brightly coloured fish.

The garden yielded a large marble basin and the foot of a statue of the Epicurean philosopher Hermarchus, evidence of the intellectual leanings of the house owner.

There is a large number of movable items. Apart from the kitchen and tableware and a number of oil lamps, there is an extraordinary collection of medical items consisting of **more than 150 surgical instruments**, mortars, scales and containers for the preparation and preservation of medicines, as well as a thermos type therapeutical vase made to fit a foot.

On the basis of excavation data it has been possible to provide a detailed, full size reconstruction of the original doctor's surgery, consisting of the room with the Orpheus mosaic and the adjacent *cubiculum* where the surgeon looked after and operated on his patients.

> The Palace from late Antiquity

After the destruction of the Surgeon's House, the area was completely abandoned. This situation only changed towards the early 5th century, when an important historical turning point occurred. It is from this period that the remains to be seen in the southern part of the excavated area date. They are connected with a palace like structure occupying the front part of the old block opposite the *decumanus*.

> Late Medieval Structures

During the 6th century, at the time of the war between the Goths and Byzantine Greeks, the late antique palace began to show signs of decline, later to be completely destroyed, demolished and buried. Subsequently a small cemetery covered the area, following the Christian custom of burying the dead within the town walls. As it can be seen from a number of tombs on the site, the dead were laid out in simple ditches, occasionally protected by tiles, which often has damaged the mosaic flooring below.

The burial ground was used right into the 7th century, after which the area was occupied by new dwellings. As it was customary in the Early Medieval period, the unearthed house was surrounded by open spaces, perhaps used as kitchen gardens, and was built with perishable materials. Walls held up by flimsy foundations consisting of brick fragments, made use of wooden poles and clay fillings, while floors were made of beaten earth.

In the south western area of the excavation some of these structures are still to be seen. At floor level, next to a number of pole holes, there is a large hearth with the fire area made of fragments of re-used Roman bricks.