

A.D. 70-80

# colosseum at rome

## Monument with a disreputable history

THE ROMAN COLOSSEUM is known for its size and the gory events that took place there. Its history may be bloody, but the building was an architectural marvel. Nothing had ever been built on such a scale: The largest structure ever built in imperial Rome, it was 513 feet by 620 feet (156 m by 189 m), held more than 50,000 spectators, and was in use for 400 years. The arena was used for combat between men, as well as between men and animals. Construction on the Colosseum begun about A.D. 70 by the emperor Vespasian, whose son Titus opened it about ten years later. Alterations were done by Emperor Domitian of the same family. Beneath the arena (image at left) there were subterranean cages for men and animals with pulleys and elevators to hoist them up into the arena, which could reportedly be flooded for sea battles.

### » FACTS AND STATS A Space for Entertaining

- MECHANICAL DEVICES allowed scenic props such as fake mountains to emerge from beneath the arena floor.
- BUILDING the Colosseum required 3,531,467 cubic feet (100,000 cu m) of travertine.
- AN AWNING could be drawn over the top of the Colosseum to keep spectators in the shade.