

**Arena** is the name of the amphitheatre located in Pula, Croatia. The Arena is the only remaining Roman amphitheater to have four side towers and with all three Roman architectural orders entirely preserved.

## History

Arena was built in the 1st century CE, as the city of Pula became a regional center of Roman rule, called *Pietas Julia*. The name was derived from the sand that, since antiquity, covered the inner space. The amphitheatre was first built in timber during the reign of Augustus (2-14 CE). Construction of the stone version probably began under the reign of Claudius, to be completed under Titus (up to 81 CE): this hypothesis was confirmed by the discovery of a Vespasian coin in the malting. The exterior wall is constructed in limestone.

The amphitheater axes are 132.45 and 105.10 meters long, and the walls stand 32.45 m high. It could accommodate 25,000 spectators in the cavea, which had forty steps divided into two *meniani*. The field for the games, the proper *arena*, measured  $67.95 \times 41.65$  meters. The arena had a total of 15 gates. A series of underground passageways were built underneath the arena from which animals, ludi scenes and fighters could be released; stores and shops were located under the raked seating. Each tower had two cisterns which fed a fountain with perfumed water.

St. Germanus was martyred here in the year 284. The amphitheater remained in use until the 5th century, when emperor Honorius prohibited gladiatorial combats. It was not until 681 that combat between convicts, particularly those sentenced to death, and wild animals was forbidden. In the 5th century the amphitheater began to see its stone plundered by the local populus. By the 13th century, the patriarch of Aquileia forbade further removal from the Arena.

In the Middle Ages the interior of the Arena was used for grazing, tournaments by the Knights of Malta and fairs. In 1583 the Venetian Senate proposed dismantling the Arena and rebuilding it within Venice. The proposals did not come to fruition and today, a headstone celebrating the Venetian senator Gabriele Emo opposition to the plan is currently visible on the second tower. The last time the Arena was used as a source of stone was in 1709 for the foundations of the belfry of the city's Cathedral.

The Arena was restored during 1816 by the Ticinese architect Pietro Nobile, commissioned by the emperor Francis I of Austria. In 1932 it was adapted for theatre productions, military ceremonies and public meetings.