



Imperial Rome and Ostia

Aqueducts in Rome

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The Porta Maggiore carried two major aqueducts. Here we see the Anio Novus stacked on top of the Aqua Claudia: together, these great aqueducts doubled Rome's water supply. The Porta Maggiore is situated close to the point where five aqueducts entered the city. They were part of a complex system of water supply, developed from the early republican period, when the city outgrew its local springs. The water was brought in from distant hills. The system of aqueducts was a major engineering achievement, not only of construction, but of surveying, as each aqueduct followed a gentle incline across irregular territory carried on arcades or in underground channels depending on the contours of the land. The model shows a branch of the Aqua Claudia snaking around existing buildings to supply the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill. The strength and versatility of concrete, faced with masonry or brick was particularly suited to the construction of the large arches needed to carry the aqueducts through the city. Some of the brick-faced concrete arcades adjoining the Porta Maggiore still survive intersecting the remains of another defensive wall.