

# The Site of Portus

Portus lies on the coast of Italy, a short distance to the north of the mouth of the Tiber at Ostia. Goods from around the Empire were shipped through its docks, including grain and olive oil to feed Rome's masses, as well as precious goods such as spices and marble.

The site had two key phases of development. In the 1st century AD the Emperor Claudius began building an artificial harbour from a long curved bank called a mole that extended out into the sea. It was connected to the Tiber by two canals.

Later the Emperor Trajan built a huge hexagonal basin, connected to the Claudian harbour by a canal. The basin enclosed an area of 32 hectares, and its sides were lined with temples and warehouses. Between the two harbours was a luxurious administrative complex, known as the Imperial Palace, that tracked the goods, ships, and people who moved through the port.

The Portus Project is using archaeology to define the relationship between the Claudian and Trajanic harbours, discover the remains of buildings, and find out about the people who worked at Portus and where they lived.

1 Portus connected the city of Rome with the rest of the Mediterranean via the River Tiber.

2 Warehouses at Portus. Their thick walls suggest they once stored heavy goods such as grain.

3 Portus measures nearly 4km (2.3 miles) across. In comparison Roman London was just 1.5km (less than a mile) across.

4 Portus's monumental architecture showed off the Empire's wealth and power to visitors to Rome.

