

Romans in France small group specialist history tours for seniors

Reading List

The First Ladies of Rome: The Women Behind the Caesars

by Annelise Freisenbruch

Like their modern counterparts, the 'first ladies' of Rome were moulded to meet the political requirements of their emperors, be they fathers, husbands, brothers or lovers. But the women proved to be liabilities as well as assets - Augustus' daughter Julia was accused of affairs with at least five men, Claudius' wife Messalina was a murderous tease who cuckolded and humiliated her elderly husband, while Fausta tried to seduce her own stepson and engineered his execution before boiled to death as a punishment.

In *The First Ladies of Rome* Annelise Freisenbruch unveils the characters whose identities were to reverberate through the ages, from the virtuous consort, the sexually voracious schemer and the savvy political operator, to the flighty bluestocking, the religious icon and the romantic heroine.

Using a rich spectrum of literary, artistic, archaeological and epigraphic evidence, this book uncovers for the first time the kaleidoscopic story of some of the most intriguing women in history, and the vivid and complex role of the empresses as political players on Rome's great stage.

Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul: Strategies for Survival in an Age of Transition

by Ralph Mathisen

Skin-clad barbarians ransacking Rome remains a popular image of the "decline and fall" of the Roman Empire, but why, when, and how the Empire actually fell are still matters of debate among students of classical history. In this pioneering study, Ralph W. Mathisen examines the "fall" in one part of the western Empire, Gaul, to better understand the shift from Roman to Germanic power that occurred in the region during the fifth century AD

Mathisen uncovers two apparently contradictory trends. First, he finds that barbarian settlement did provoke significant changes in Gaul, including the disappearance of most secular offices under the Roman imperial administration, the appropriation of land and social influence by the barbarians, and a rise in the overall level of violence. Yet he also shows that the Roman aristocrats proved remarkably adept at retaining their rank and status. How did the aristocracy hold on?

Mathisen rejects traditional explanations and demonstrates that rather than simply opposing the barbarians, or passively accepting them, the Roman aristocrats directly responded to them in various ways. Some left Gaul. Others tried to ignore the changes wrought by the newcomers. Still others directly collaborated with the barbarians, looking to them as patrons and holding office in barbarian governments. Most significantly, however, many were willing to change the criteria that determined membership in the aristocracy. Two new characteristics of the Roman aristocracy in fifth-century Gaul were careers in the church and greater emphasis on classical literary culture.

These findings shed new light on an age in transition. Mathisen's theory that barbarian integration into Roman society was a collaborative process rather than a conquest is sure to provoke much thought and debate. All historians who study the process of power transfer from native to alien elites will want to consult this work.

Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul

by Greg Woolf

This book is a study of the process conventionally termed 'Romanization' through an investigation of the experience of Rome's Gallic provinces in the late Republic and early empire. Beginning with a rejection of the concept of 'Romanization' it describes the nature of Roman power in Gaul and the Romans' own understanding of these changes. Successive chapters then map the chronology and geography of change and offer new interpretations of urbanism, rural civilization, consumption and cult, before concluding with a synoptic view of Gallo-Roman civilization and of the origins of provincial cultures in general. The work draws on literary and archaeological material to make a contribution to the cultural history of the empire which will be of interest to ancient historians, classical archaeologists and all interested in cultural change.

Caesar in Gaul and Rome: War in Words

by Andrew M. Riggsby

Anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with Latin knows "Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres" ("All Gaul is divided into three parts"), the opening line of *De Bello Gallico*, Julius Caesar's famous commentary on his campaigns against the Gauls in the 50s BC. But what did Caesar intend to accomplish by writing and publishing his commentaries, how did he go about it, and what potentially unforeseen consequences did his writing have? These are the questions that Andrew Riggsby pursues in this fresh interpretation of one of the masterworks of Latin prose.

Riggsby uses contemporary literary methods to examine the historical impact that the commentaries had on the Roman reading public. In the first part of his study, Riggsby considers how Caesar

defined Roman identity and its relationship to non-Roman others. He shows how Caesar opens up a possible vision of the political future in which the distinction between Roman and non-Roman becomes less important because of their joint submission to a Caesar-like leader. In the second part, Riggsby analyzes Caesar's political self-fashioning and the potential effects of his writing and publishing the Gallic War. He reveals how Caesar presents himself as a subtly new kind of Roman general who deserves credit not only for his own virtues, but for those of his soldiers as well. Riggsby uses case studies of key topics (spatial representation, ethnography, virtus and technology, genre, and the just war), augmented by more synthetic discussions that bring in evidence from other Roman and Greek texts, to offer a broad picture of the themes of national identity and Caesar's self-presentation.

History of the Ancient Civilizations that Defined our World: The Gauls (History Books, Roman Empire, Ancient History, Ancient Rome)

by Virtus Libris

For centuries the empire of Rome dominated the continent of Europe. Its armies patrolled the four corners of the known world, from Africa to the Middle East to the edges of Britain. In the ancient world, Rome was the name that conjured sentiments of fear and dread. But to the Romans, there was an ancient evil that even they feared: The Gauls.

The Gauls were a warrior race, fearful to the Romans with their hairy bodies and thick mustaches, a Celtic group whose sole desire was to demonstrate their valor through combat. As the fledgling Roman Republic was establishing itself on the Italian Peninsula, the specter of Gaul loomed on the horizon.

Before the founding of the Roman Empire, the city of Rome was destroyed by the Gauls. During the Punic Wars, the Gauls allied with Rome's arch-enemy, the Carthaginians, assisting Hannibal in his crossing of the Alps and his razing of the Italian countryside. Rome would one day become great; to get there, it would have to shake off the persistent nightmare of Gaul.

Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of an Empire

by Simon Baker

This is the story of the greatest empire the world has ever known. Simon Baker charts the rise and fall of the world's first superpower, focusing on six momentous turning points that shaped Roman history. Welcome to Rome as you've never seen it before - awesome and splendid, gritty and squalid.

From the conquest of the Mediterranean beginning in the third century BC to the destruction of the Roman Empire at the hands of barbarian invaders some seven centuries later, we discover the most critical episodes in Roman history: the spectacular collapse of the 'free' republic, the birth of the age of the 'Caesars', the violent suppression of the strongest rebellion against Roman power, and the bloody civil war that launched Christianity as a world religion.

At the heart of this account are the dynamic, complex but flawed characters of some of the most powerful rulers in history: men such as Pompey the Great, Julius Caesar, Augustus, Nero and Constantine. Putting flesh on the bones of these distant, legendary figures, Simon Baker looks beyond the dusty, toga-clad caricatures and explores their real motivations and ambitions, intrigues and rivalries.

The superb narrative, full of energy and imagination, is a brilliant distillation of the latest scholarship and a wonderfully evocative account of Ancient Rome.

Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up (Sather Classical Lectures) by Mary Beard

What made the Romans laugh? Was ancient Rome a carnival, filled with practical jokes and hearty chuckles? Or was it a carefully regulated culture in which the uncontrollable excess of laughter was a force to fear—a world of wit, irony, and knowing smiles? How did Romans make sense of laughter? What role did it play in the world of the law courts, the imperial palace, or the spectacles of the arena?

Laughter in Ancient Rome explores one of the most intriguing, but also trickiest, of historical subjects. Drawing on a wide range of Roman writing—from essays on rhetoric to a surviving Roman joke book—Mary Beard tracks down the giggles, smirks, and guffaws of the ancient Romans themselves. From ancient “monkey business” to the role of a chuckle in a culture of tyranny, she explores Roman humor from the hilarious, to the momentous, to the surprising. But she also reflects on even bigger historical questions. What kind of history of laughter can we possibly tell? Can we ever really “get” the Romans’ jokes?

How to Manage Your Slaves by Marcus Sidonius Falx

At last, a clear manual for managing slaves the Roman way. In *How to Manage Your Slaves*, Marcus Sidonius Falx offers practical advice, showing where and how to buy slaves and how to get the best out of them. He explains how to tell good slaves from bad, offers guidance on the punishment of

miscreants, and reveals the secrets of command and authority. He covers the delicate subjects of when you should let your slaves have sex and whether to engage in sex with them yourself - and considers when to set them free. Armed with this guide you will be master in your own home: your household will be a comfort to your family, its running the envy of your neighbours.

Slavery was a core institution in the Roman world for all its long existence. As they conquered, the Romans enslaved millions and then bred from this stock to maintain their numbers in times of peace. It almost never occurred to anyone that slavery might be dispensed with and to no one at all that it was morally reprehensible. Up to now ancient slavery may have been difficult to fathom: this Roman's-eye view takes us to the heart of the matter and, based on a wealth of original sources, lets us understand just why slaves meant so much to the Romans.
