

# THE ROADS OF TIME

A PROJECT OF 5 DOCUMENTARIES OF 52 MIN.  
BY DANIELE CINI

VIA  
CASSIA

VIA  
SALARIA

VIA  
AURELIA

VIA  
TIBURTINA

Roma

VIA  
APPIA

SINCE THE DAWN OF HUMANITY, MEN HAVE TRACED THEIR PATHS: PATHS MADE BY THEIR FOOTSTEPS, BY THEIR ANIMALS, ROADS RUTTED WITH THE WHEELS OF THEIR CHARIOTS. BUT ONLY THE ANCIENT ROMANS BUILT EIGHTY THOUSAND KILOMETRES OF ROADS THAT RADIATE OUT TO THE WHOLE OF EUROPE: ROADS FOR ETERNITY.



Roads for transporting goods, like one of the oldest commercial routes in central Italy: the Via Salaria. The route was based on a prehistoric track used by the Sabines to transport the salt extracted from the mouth of the Tiber. In ancient times, salt was more precious than gold and many wars were fought in order to assure supplies.

Due to its superior military force, Rome gained control of the salt road, laying the foundations for its expansion.

The turning point comes towards the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century BC, when Rome finally manages to overcome the Etruscans and Samnites, and dominate the centre and south of the peninsula.

Now Rome needs solid roads for its armies to march along if it is to maintain its control over the area, roads that can stand up to harsh weather conditions, roads that won't give off clouds of dust, roads for eternity.

The creator of the innovation that gave Roman roads the look that we still recognize today was the censor Appius Claudius the Blind. We also have him to thank for, among other things, the construction of the Via Appia, the *regina viarum* or Queen of Roads, that links Rome with the southern provinces and which in imperial times reached as far as Brindisi. They say that he was so meticulous that he tested the quality of the basalt slabs with his bare feet, trusting only to his sense of touch. After the construction of the Appia, civilians also begin to use the roads on a regular basis, allowing people to move to the new provinces. Not long afterwards comes the construction of the Aurelia, the road that unites the conquered Etruscan towns and over the centuries is extended to what is now France.

The Tiburtina, created to facilitate the transhumance of flocks heading for summer pastures in Abruzzo, later becomes the route used by patricians to reach their luxurious country estates. The countryside it crosses has inspired generations of poets, from the elegies of Catullus and Horatio to the leading figures of the Romantic "Grand Tour", Goethe and Stendhal. Thanks to them, the countryside along the Tiburtina revealed the other side of the military Rome that dominated the world.

As the Roman Empire headed towards its irresistible fall, the consular roads were not abandoned. Over time, they changed, as did the motivations of the people who moved along them. In the Middle Ages, pilgrims headed for ports to set sail for the Holy Land or the great sanctuaries of Europe, from Canterbury to Santiago de Compostela, traveling along the Via Francigena, a road that follows the path of the Roman Appia, the Cassia and other consular roads.

Then during the long centuries in which Italy remains divided between a number of warring states the roads become hunting grounds for bands of brigands.

From the treacherous maquis of the Maremma along the Via Aurelia, to the tufa gorges of the Via Amerina, as far as the karst ravines of the Via Appia, or the Via Latina infested by Fra Diavolo's gangs, danger lurks constantly. The glorious consular roads are left to their own devices and to the few passing travelers who dare venture along them.

And yet, once again, they stand the test of time. The twenty-nine consular roads have survived to the present day: their basalt blocks, under the eyes of the consuls that willed their construction, will always remind us that "all roads", as we know, "lead to Rome".



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