

Roman Art and Architecture | Sample answer

(i) Aosta – 2015

Photograph E on paper X shows the plan of Aosta (Augustus Praetoria), a city of Roman Gaul.

(a) Identify the features shown at a, d, e, ff and gg.

- a. Temples
- d. A theatre
- e. Amphitheatre
- ff. Decumanus maximus
- gg. Cardo

(b) What type of town was Aosta and what was the reason for its location?

Aosta was a colonia founded by Emperor Augustus in 25 BC. It was built for 300 discharged soldiers of the Praetorian Guard. The colonia can be found north of Turin at the foot of Mount Blanc. The colonial was of tactical importance. We know this from its severe military layout.

It was built on 100 acres and was planned in 16 large blocks of insulae. The colonia was surrounded by a wall. Given that even the amphitheatre was located inside the city walls, it is fair to assume that Aosta had local security issues and it was more strategically placed military town than a leisure town. It is strategically located in northeast Italy on the fringe mountainous terrain.

(c) From studying the plan what can you tell about the life of the citizens in Aosta?

Aosta was a well ordered and organized town. It followed a typical Roman fort grid pattern. The citizens had proper blocks of houses and straight streets. It was planned on a severe military layout as it was of tactical importance and its residents were mainly retired Praetorian Guards. The housing of Aosta was exclusively insulae.

The colonia's trade was lively as there are warehouses and there is a marketplace in Aosta. So, despite its location in the mountains, the town still had links to trade. As Aosta is a colonia, it was built for veterans, and it was probably a useful center of administration. Security was probably an issue for Aosta. The amphitheatre is located inside the walls of the town which is unusual.

There was also plenty of entertainment in Aosta. There was an amphitheatre where gladiator fights would take place, public baths where the people of Aosta could relax and socialize. There was also a theater where Romans could go, and watch plays as a community. The citizens also practiced public religion. The multiple temples located in the town suggest that it was a part of their daily lives and of great importance to them.