Travelling the Roman World

A pedestrian on the streets of Rome
Hurry as we may, we are blocked by a surging crowd in front, and by a dense mass of people pressing in on us from behind: one man digs an elbow into me, another a hard sedan-pole; one bangs a beam, another a wine-cask, against my head. My legs are beplastered with mud; soon huge feet trample on me from every side, and a soldier plants his hobnails firmly on my toe. **Juvenal**

On the Appian Way
Our next stop was Forum Appii which was packed with boatmen and also some roguish inn-keepers. We were lazy and took two days over this stage, which more energetic travellers usually manage in one. But the Appian Way is less tiring if taken leisurely. Here I declared war on my stomach because of the appalling water. . . Sleep was quite impossible because of the dreadful mosquitoes and the marsh frogs. . . **Horace**

Good and bad food guide
Next day we travelled twenty-four miles by coach to stay at a village. You have to buy the water there, cheapest commodity as it is. But the bread is so marvellous that travellers who know about it often carry it with them on their shoulders; for the bread at Canusium is rather gritty, and a jug of water is no better. **Horace**

Interrupted journey
Halt, muddy river! Rest awhile among your reeds. Make way for a lover in a hurry, for you haven't a bridge, or a chain-ferry, to take me across without oars. I remember you as a little stream easily forded, hardly deep enough to wet my ankles. Now you're in spate, swollen by melting snow from the mountain, swirling along brown and turbid. **Ovid**

Complaints of a traveller
I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent twenty-four hours in the water. In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from fellow-Jews and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. **Paul**

Despite the complaints of travellers, the Roman Empire opened up the Mediterranean world to (relatively) easy travel for the first time. Frontiers were easy to cross, Roman roads were good, pirates had been swept from the seas, and there was peace. All this meant that the Christian message was able to spread rapidly.

Major Roman roads
Province boundaries
Locations of Roman legions in AD 68

Map labels: CORSICA · Rome · ITALY · Rhegium · AFRICA · LIBYA · DALMATIA · MOESIA · THRACE · Byzantium · MACEDONIA · Thessalonica · Philippi · ACHAIA · Corinth · Athens · Pergamum · Ephesus · ASIA · BITHYNIA AND PONTUS · GALATIA · CAPPADOCIA · LYCIA · PAMPHYLIA · CILICIA TRACHEA · CILICIA · Tarsus · CRETE · CYPRUS · Antioch · SYRIA · Palmyra · Damascus · River Euphrates · River Tigris · MARE INTERNUM · Cyrene · Alexandria · Jerusalem · NABATAEAN KINGDOM · River Nile · EGYPT