



**Opening hours:**

From 16th March to 1st November, daily from 10:30 a.m. until 05:30 p.m.  
From 2nd November to 15th March daily from 10:00 a.m. until 04:30 p.m.

**Closing times:**

Closed at 25th December and at 1st January of each year

**Reservations:**

Tel: +39 0588 86099

**Price valid until 31st December 2015**

**Volterra Card (valid 72 hours):**

**Museo Etrusco Guarnacci, Pinacoteca, Ecomuseo dell'Alabastro, Teatro Romano and Battistero**

14.00 € full

20.00 € Family (2 adults and 2 under 18)

12.00 € Students & over 60

10.00 € Adult groups (min 20 pax)

5.00 € Student groups (min 20 pax)

**Teatro Romano**

The archaeological area of Vallebuona is one of the most important sites where it is possible to understand the urban and historic evolution of Volterra. It is a large space on the southern peaks of Volterra, just beyond the wall that enclosed the medieval city.

This area was not occupied in the Etruscan era, but there was only work for containment of the soil, which was very steep. The area was affected in the Roman era by intense urbanisation activities, with the construction of a large monumental complex composed of a theatre and a thermal facility, built in different periods, the ruins of which it is possible to visit today.

The excavations that brought these buildings to light began in the 1950s thanks to the Volterranean scholar Enrico Fiumi.

These used as workers a squad of patients of the psychiatric hospital of Volterra; a sign at the building entry serves as a reminder of their contribution.

During the excavations, part of a dedicatory epigraph of the theatre was uncovered. Today it is preserved in the Guarnacci museum. From it, it was learned that two members of the Volterranean family of Cecina built the theatre at their own expense between 1 B.C. and the 20 A.D.

Descending from the current entry for the visitors, we arrive at a semi-circular covered gallery (crypt) that would allow access by the Roman public to the cavea, the area of the stands occupied by the spectators; the gallery has almost completely collapsed, but in the still surviving areas of the roof we can see the remains of plasterwork that originally covered the walls and the ceiling. Above the crypt there are the ruins of a large terrace, decorated in the centre by three exedras where are found, according to a common custom of the era, the statues of members of the imperial family; only the heads were found.

Originally the theatre was entered through this terrace by the steps that led to the gallery below.

The cavea leans against the hill and is composed of two rows, respectively, of nine (media cavea) and ten (ima cavea) rows of seats separated by a narrow semi-circular passage.

The seats, of local limestone, are only partly preserved, as are some of the steps, in Montecatini placed in spokes aiming downward. The contrast between the white colour of the terrace seating and the black of the steps created a deliberate chromatic effect.

The two rows of seats below were of marble and were caved with the names of many families of Volterra, with a rather common system used to reserve places for the authorities and the most influential families of the city.

At the foot of the cavea, there is a semicircle, called the orchestra, delimited by a wall (pulpitum), behind which is found the proscenium, a rectangular space covered by a wooden floor on which the actors moved. Between the proscenium and the pulpitum, in a subterranean channel (aulaeum) was contained the curtain that was lowered during the spectacles. At the side of the proscenium there are the paraskenia and at the end the scaena, consisting of a wall with openings and inscribed exedras between columns placed on two levels. The left part of this structure was raised with substantial restoration work performed until the end of the 1970s, which helps to understand how the entire wall of the stage was built; it is noted that the entire structure was finished with coloured marble and the niches created between the columns could be decorated with statues.

Between the terrace seating of the cavea and the paraskenia, there are two galleries called parodoi, which lead from the edge of the semicircle into the orchestra.

Through two doors, the galleries are connected with vestibules alongside the paraskenia. The vestibules were used by the spectators for access to the portico behind the stage.

At the end of the 2nd Century A.D. the theatre underwent some slight renovations, but ended definitively its activities toward the end of the 3rd Century, probably because of an earthquake that caused part of the structure to crumble.

Behind the stage are seen the three surviving wings from a portico executed in various phases (a fourth wing should be found under the road in front of the theatre).

The older section, contemporary to the theatre, consisted only of the side placed behind the stage; next, in the Claudian age (41-54 A.D.), the eastern and western wings were completed.

Between the mid- 3rd and the 4th Century A.D., in the center of the area enclosed by the portico, a large thermal spa facility was built; only the lower part of the walls and some mosaics have been preserved.

The building was constructed in a period of abandonment of the theatre and was executed with repurposed materials brought from the theatre itself; for example, for the threshold of the apse of the first room, two orchestra seat backs were used.

People entered from the closest side to the theatre, and the first room was adapted as a dressing room (apodyterium); from here they entered a square room with two apsidal niches that comprised the tubs for the immersion in cold water (frigidarium). There followed an elliptical entryway to the rooms intended for hot baths; this space was floored with a mosaic with multi-coloured tiles of Salomonic nodes and rosettes that are still visible.

There are two doors on one side and one on the other, corresponding to the closed space between two doors; this is a technique used for maintaining the temperature in the heated areas, preventing too much dispersion of heat from the entry openings.

The next rooms are the tepidarium, the caldarium and the laconicum. In this area, the floors are raised from the ground by means of terracotta pillars (suspensurae); the hot air coming from the ovens circulated in the empty space under the floor.

All the rooms maintain at least part of the marble decorations of the walls and some mosaics; the mosaics are what allow dating this thermal facility. The style of the depictions does not appear to predate the 3rd Century A.D.

We do not know precisely when its use ended; it certainly was active in late antiquity (5th-6th Century A.D.).

The thermal bath building of Vallebuona is not the only one from the Roman era; at the port of San Felice, beyond the medieval walls, visitors may admire the ruins of a similar building, perhaps even more rich and elaborate, that was probably built around the 2nd Century A.D.