

Aphrodisias

On land | Turkey | 2nd century BCE-7th century CE | Grades 6-8

Name _____ Date _____

Aphrodisias had its own marble quarry, and its sculptors became famous all across the Roman world.

Read the story

People lived at Aphrodisias for thousands of years, but it grew into a grand city in the 1st century BCE. It was named for Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, and her temple drew visitors from far away.

The city had a special friend in Rome. It supported Julius Caesar's family, and Emperor Augustus gave it privileges. Nearby quarries gave fine marble, so the city became home to a famous school of sculptors whose work was shipped across the empire.

Aphrodisias built a stadium that held about 30,000 people, a theater, baths, and the Sebasteion, a temple to the emperors decorated with carved panels. Later, the city became Christian and the temple of Aphrodite was turned into a church. Earthquakes and changing times slowly emptied it.

How it ended

Earthquakes in the 300s and 600s damaged Aphrodisias, and its water supply was disrupted. As the Byzantine Empire weakened, people moved away. By the Middle Ages, a small village sat among the ruins.

Key words

- quarry: a place where stone is dug or cut out of the ground
- sculptor: an artist who carves or shapes statues
- inscription: words carved into stone or metal

Wow facts

- Its stadium is one of the best-preserved in the Mediterranean world.
- Unfinished statues show how ancient sculptors worked step by step.
- The Sebasteion had about 200 carved panels of gods, emperors and myths.

Talk about it

1. How did having marble nearby shape what this city became famous for?

2. What could unfinished art teach us that finished art cannot?

Try this

Draw a map of Aphrodisias as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Which goddess was Aphrodisias named after?

- A. Athena
- B. Aphrodite
- C. Artemis
- D. Hera

2. What were the city's artists famous for?

- A. Marble sculpture
- B. Glass making
- C. Silk weaving
- D. Pottery wheels

3. About how many people could the stadium hold?

- A. 300
- B. 3,000
- C. 30,000
- D. 300,000

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/aphrodisias/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. B. The city was named for Aphrodite.
2. A. Its school of sculptors shipped statues across the empire.
3. C. The stadium held about 30,000 people.