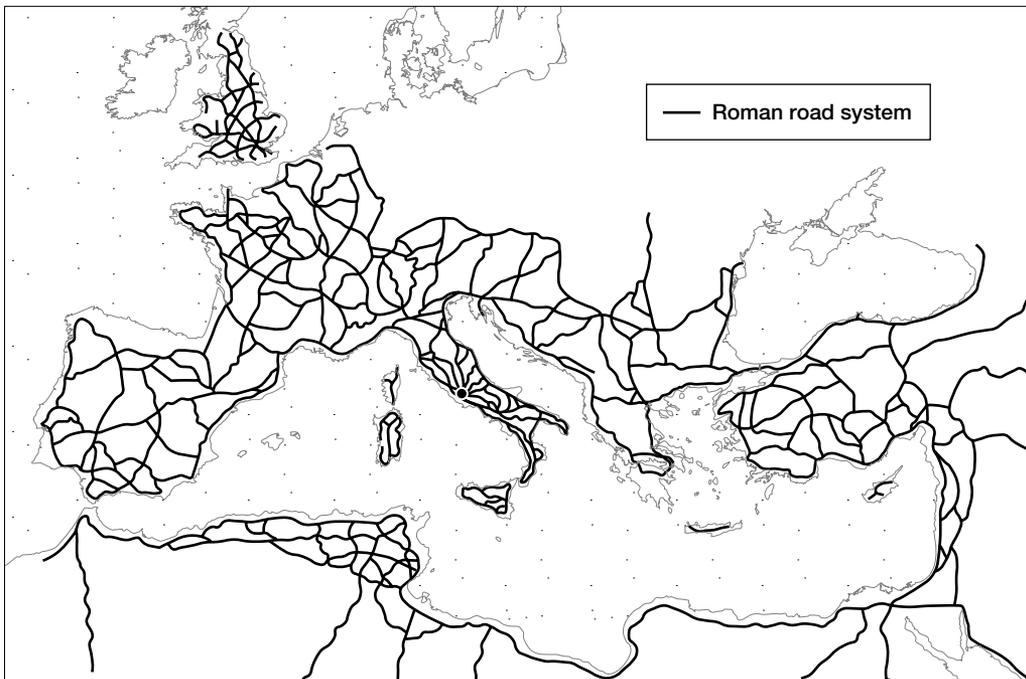


## The Roads of Ancient Rome

*Stretching from the British Isles in the northwest to the Red Sea in the southeast, the Romans built the largest empire of the ancient world. To hold their empire together, the Romans constructed some 50,000 miles of roads in a remarkable feat of engineering for the times. To learn about ancient Roman roads and how they were constructed, study the information and complete the activities that follow.*

The ancient saying that “all roads lead to Rome” recognized not only the empire’s geography, but also Rome’s position as its political, military, and commercial “center.” To symbolize Roman power, around the beginning of the Christian Era, Emperor Caesar Augustus had a huge map of the road system carved in marble and erected near the Senate building in the center of Rome. There it became a valuable source of information about the empire. Scribes made parchment copies of it for Roman generals and travelers, creating history’s first road maps in the process.

### Roads of the Roman Empire

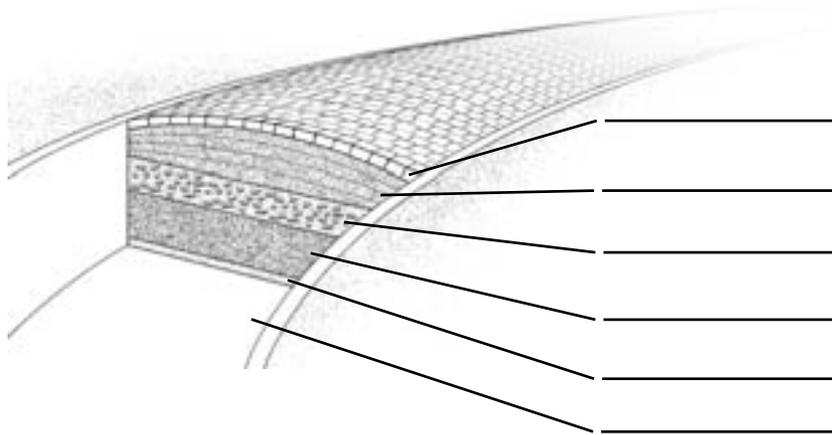


1. Use an atlas to help determine the shortest route a general would have followed to move legions from Rome to reinforce the Roman fort at Lutetia (now Paris) in the imperial province of Gallia. Mark out the route on the map.
2. Mark on the map the route a merchant from Antiochia (Antioch) would have followed to trade with the village of Aquincum (now Budapest).

**BUILDING THE ROAD**

After the road’s path was staked out, a worker used a plow to loosen the soil and mark the trench margins, or fossa. Other workers then dug a trench 6 to 9 feet deep and 9 to 12 feet wide for the road bed. After the dirt at the bottom of the trench was pounded down to a firm bed, a foundation of pavimentum—lime mortar or sand—was laid to form a level base. Next came statument, which consisted of rocks about four to five inches in diameter held together with mortar or clay. This layer could be from 10 inches to 2 feet thick. On top of the statument, workers poured rudus—9 to 12 inches of concrete filled with broken pieces of pottery or stones. Atop this came the nucleus, a concrete made of gravel or sand and lime. It was poured in layers, with each layer compacted with a roller. The nucleus was rolled to a thickness of one foot at the sides and 18 inches in the middle. This concave shape allowed water to run off the road’s surface. The top layer was the summum dorsum, large blocks of stone that were 6 or more inches thick. These were fitted on top of the still-moist nucleus. When the road became worn, this top layer was removed and the blocks were turned over or replaced.

3. Using the description above as a guide, label the diagram of a Roman road in the making.



4. Why would Roman rulers have preferred expensive paved roads over cheaper dirt ones in their efforts to control their empire?

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