

STAFF PICK

THERMAE ROMAE

MANGA BY MARI YAMAZAKI

A bizarre historical fantasy manga by Mari Yamazaki, *Thermae Romae* attempts to draw similarities between the public bath cultures of modern Japan and ancient Roman Empire. After being fired for his outdated bathhouse designs, the Roman architect, Lucius, gets sucked under water while relaxing in a bathhouse. When he finally emerges, he finds himself in a Japanese bathhouse in the future. Believing himself to be in a faraway province of the Roman empire, he becomes fascinated by the strange new bathhouse customs of these, what he calls, “flat-faced barbarians”.

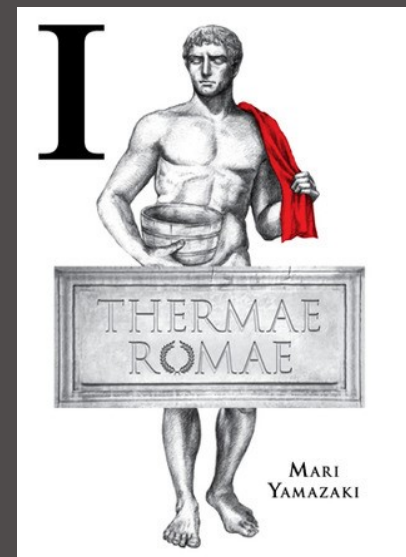
When reading *Thermae Romae*, you have to somewhat suspend your belief at Lucius’s over-the-top reactions to seeing a modern Japanese bathhouse and how what he sees in turn magically helps him solve the challenges back home. But it is precisely this ridiculousness that makes this manga a hilarious light-read, especially if you enjoy soaking in a warm bath on a cold wintery day. As a bonus, Yamazaki gives historical context at the end of each story, making *Thermae Romae* both informative and fun to read if you are interested in learning about Roman and Japanese bathhouses.

— Haram, Library Assistant
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ABOUT AUTHOR

Manga artist. Born in Tokyo in 1967. Traveled to Italy aged 17 to study oil painting and art history at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. Made her debut as a manga artist in 1997. Won the third Manga Grand Prize and the 14th Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize for *Thermae Romae*. Works include *Kokkyō no nai ikikata* (*A Life Without Borders*), *Dansei-ron* (*On Men*), *Steve Jobs*, and *Plinius* (*Pliny the Elder*) (with Tori Miki). Now lives in Italy, after previous stints in Syria, Portugal, and the United States. Received the Art Encouragement Prize of the Japanese Ministry of Education in 2015 and awarded the rank of Commander of the Order of the Star (Italy) in 2017.

— from nippon.com



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