

# Augusta Praetoria (Aosta)

ANSELMO BARONI

Augusta Praetoria (modern Aosta) was founded in 25 BCE in the middle of a plain “cleaned up” of the Alpine tribe of the Salassi, after a campaign led by Aulus Terentius Varro Murena. The emperor AUGUSTUS (IMPERATOR CAESAR AUGUSTUS) founded the town as a colony of veterans from the praetorian troops, hence the name (*colonia Augusta Praetoria*), and it has retained this strategic role ever since. The town was included in the Augustan eleventh region. Three thousand veterans with their families were settled on the territory, but a group of defeated Salassi (the surviving majority had been deported to nearby Eoredia and sold there as slaves) soon joined the civic body as *incolae*. The plan of the town was typically Roman and modelled on the scheme of a legionary camp. The impressive ancient remains include a main gateway (the *porta praetoria*), fortification walls, a theater, and an arch of Augustus. The AMPHITHEATER, unusually located within the town walls, had been erected at the colony’s foundation when defense

was a prime consideration. The road to Gaul entered the town through the *porta praetoria*, and then split into two main branches, both of which climbed along the Alps: the former left the town from the *porta principalis sinistra* and ran to the Great St. Bernard Pass (*summus Peninus*, or *Alpis Penina*); the latter ran from the *porta principalis dextera* up to the Little St. Bernard Pass (*Alpis Graia*), as stated by Pliny the Elder: “Augusta Praetoria is next to the twin gateways of the Alps, the Graia and the Penina” (*HN* 3.17.123).

SEE ALSO: Camps, military; Colonies, Roman Empire (west).

## REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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