

The Swedish Institute in Rome has since its foundation in 1925 been devoted to the study of ancient Italy. Swedish research on this subject can generally be divided into these main areas: Italic prehistory, Etruscan culture, the topography of the city of Rome, Pompeii, landscape studies and the cultural heritage from antiquity.

The study of Central Italy's early cultures, primarily the Etruscan and Latin, has long been at the centre of the Institute's activities. The first excavation by the Institute was undertaken in the Latin town of Ardea south of Rome in the 1930s. After the Second World War a dramatic increase of the archaeological activity of the Institute took place, with epoch-making excavations of primarily the Etruscan towns San Giovenale and Acquarossa, and the prehistoric site at Luni sul Mignone during the years 1956-78, and a joint Nordic excavation at Ficana south of Rome in 1976-78. Subsequently, more limited fieldwork has been undertaken, primarily in the form of surveys and aerial photography.

The Institute has also for a long time conducted research about the ancient city of Rome and its hinterland. A study of Rome's Republican city wall was followed in the 1950s by excavations of the oldest phases of the Forum Romanum. Swedish interest in Rome is primarily centred on the city's development during the centuries before and after the beginning of the Christian era. This led in the 1980s to a joint Nordic examination at the temple of Castor and Pollux at the Roman Forum. On the outskirts of the city, investigations has been conducted at the imperial villa at Prima Porta along the Via Flaminia, and a villa on the slopes of Lake Nemi. The research project Via Tiburtina, which study the road between Rome and Tivoli, is an interdisciplinary project about urban development from several historic perspectives. The rural landscape around Rome is studied with a focus on its cultural history within the pastoral economy.

In 2000, the Institute initiated an investigation of a city block in Pompeii, preserved for posterity through a volcanic eruption in 79 CE. The project can be seen as a development of the Institute's earlier research on Roman topography, but does also concern questions about heritage and conservation.

During later years, the Institute has come to focus more on questions concerning heritage and classical reception, i.e. how antiquity has been perceived in later periods, especially in modern times. Within this area, the Institute has conducted research about the current preservation, outreach and understanding of classical remains and cultures.