

Around the [Mediterranean] sea lie the continents far and wide, always supplying you with products from those regions. Here is brought from every land and sea all the crops of the seasons and the produce of each land, river, lake, as well as of the arts of the Greeks and barbarians, so that if someone should wish to view all these things, he must either see them by traveling over the whole world or be in this city.... So many merchant ships arrive here, bringing every kind of goods from every people every hour and every day, so that the city is like a common warehouse of the world. It is possible to see so many cargoes from India and even from Arabia Felix.... [T]here can be seen clothing from Babylon and luxuries from the barbarian lands beyond, which arrive [in it] in much larger quantity and more easily than[elsewhere]. Egypt, Sicily and the cultivated part of Africa are your farms. The arrivals and departures of ships never stop.... So everything comes together here, trade, seafaring, farming, metals from the mines, all the crafts which exist and have existed, anything that is produced and grown.

-Aelius Aristides, *The Roman Oration* (circa 154 CE) excerpt