

LA CHIMERA

Italy/France/Switzerland/Turkey (2024) 131 minutes

Director: Alice Rohrwacher

Cast: Josh O'Connor (Arthur)

Carol Duarte (Italia)

Isabella Rossellini (Flora)



Screening 19th November 2025 at Swindon Arts Centre

Just out of jail, crumpled English archaeologist, Arthur, reconnects with his wayward crew of accomplices - a happy-go-lucky band of grave robbers who survive by looting Etruscan tombs and fencing the ancient treasures they dig up.

Reviews



" ... Set in the early 1980s, the film is focused on Arthur (Josh O'Connor), a one-time archaeological scholar who misused his almost preternatural ability to sense where long-buried Etruscan treasures have been buried in the Tuscan countryside by falling in with a strange gang of homeless locals that helped him dig them up in the middle of the night to sell them to a mysterious dealer. This is not exactly shadowy work, as it turns out—most locals know what is happening and have done the mental gymnastics required to justify such morally and ethically dubious actions. ...

... As you can probably surmise, "La Chimera" is a bit of an oddity. On one level, it works as a strange, shaggy-dog tale that feels like an art-house take on an Indiana Jones or Lara Croft adventure sans all of the thrilling action set-pieces. On another level, it serves as a quiet but piercing indictment of the ethically sketchy ways in which museums, despite their veneer of respectability, go about acquiring the antiquities that they then go on to proudly display to visitors...."

Peter Sobczynski, RogerEbert.com

" ... Rohrwacher's real story here – splitting the difference between the earthiness of *The Wonders* (2014) and the whimsicality of *Happy as Lazzaro* (2018) (and surpassing them both in vivid strangeness) – is the story of the Tuscan ground and the beautiful secrets that sleep beneath our feet. Rohrwacher is fascinated by the ransacked archaeology of Arthur's psyche. He simultaneously worships history, preserving a little cache of artefacts of no value to anyone but himself, while also destroying it for money. So perhaps the only perfectly ironic ending is for him to become a part of history. Through the songs being sung about his exploits. Through the way his story grows within the crevices of Italy's long, striated past. And through *La Chimera* itself, a joyous, masterful work of folk magic that plays like a discovery dug up from the ground where it has been for centuries, just waiting, in a rebellious reversal of that tragic shrine scene, to burst

into full bloom before the gaze of living eyes. ..."

Jessica Kiang, Sight and Sound

Film Facts

- La Chimera won the AFCAE Art House Cinema Award at the Cannes Film Festival 2023.
- Josh O'Connor wanted to work with Alice Rohrwacher. Over three years, he wrote to her five times not knowing her address beyond "Italy". One letter reached her.
- A Chimera is both a fire breathing female monster with a lion's head, goat's body and serpent's tail and a hoped for, unachievable, dream.

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