

Newly-found Roman villa may have been where Pliny the Elder saw Mount Vesuvius eruption

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NAPLES, Italy - A massive Roman villa that stood 2,000 years ago and is thought to have ties to [Roman scholar](#) and [military](#) commander Pliny the Elder was recently discovered during municipal work by officials in Italy.

The remnants of the villa, estimated to be from the 1st century AD, were found during an urban renewal project in Bacoli, located about 9 miles west of Naples in the Campania region, according to a press release from the Superintendency of Archeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape for the Naples Metropolitan Area.

The area is along the Gulf of Naples, and during work to develop a new access driveway, benches, and a children's play area for the public, the ancient villa was unearthed, officials said.

"About 10 large rooms with different building phases, walking surfaces and traces of wall cladding have been identified," officials said in the release, according to an English translation.

The site of a massive Roman villa that stood 2,000 years ago is pictured in provided images. Credit: Superintendency of Archeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape for the Naples Metropolitan Area

Roman villa's inhabitants may have witnessed Mount Vesuvius eruption

The ancient Roman city of Pompeii was located in what is now the Campania region, southeast of Naples.

Pompeii was famously destroyed in the summer of 79 A.D. when the nearby Mount Vesuvius volcano erupted – spewing searing-hot clouds of ash, rock, and toxic gas into the air. Almost overnight, Pompeii and many of its 10,000 residents vanished, [according to National Geographic](#). Its remains weren't discovered until the early 1700s.

Researchers say the area where the Roman villa was unearthed was once an ancient settlement called Misenum, a significant Roman military port, and may have been witness to the violent cataclysm that destroyed Pompeii.

A yet-to-be-verified hypothesis suggests that the villa was the residence of the prefect of the Roman Tyrrhenian Fleet. Researchers said this is because of its location near Punta Sarparella – a high point of land that juts out into the gulf offering views of the entire harbor.

Researchers said this could have been the site where Pliny the Elder, who was in charge of the naval fleet at Misenum in 79 AD, witnessed the volcanic eruption.

"Perhaps this would have been the promontory from which Pliny the Elder, who held the position of Praefectus classis Misensis, would have seen the eruption of Vesuvius, and then would have set sail for Stabiae, to help the inhabitants of the various coastal cities, threatened from the Vesuvian eruption," the city wrote the press release of the discovered Roman villa.

Pliny the Elder left for a closer view of the eruption and to make possible rescues, but was killed in the event, along with thousands of others in Pompeii and its surrounding towns.

In its press release, the Superintendency of Archeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape for the Naples Metropolitan Area said the discovery was of "exceptional significance" and noted that the perimeter of the rooms had been "well identified and fenced off" amid more extensive excavations.