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1st-century villa discovered near Mount Vesuvius may be where Pliny the Elder watched catastrophic eruption

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Archaeologists think the luxurious villa was where Pliny the Elder first witnessed the massive volcanic eruption that would later claim his life.



The remains of the luxurious villa were found at Punta Sarparella in the town of Bacoli, which in the first century was the port city of Misenum where Pliny the Elder commanded a Roman naval fleet. (Image credit: Italian Ministry of Culture)

An excavation to build a playground near Naples, Italy, has revealed an

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Elder witnessed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79.

The [eruption destroyed Pompeii](#) and devastated other towns in the region, possibly [killing up to 16,000 people](#), including Pliny.

Pliny, whose real name was Gaius Plinius Secundus, had famously sailed from his home toward the eruption in an attempt to rescue some of the people afflicted by it. His nephew and adopted son, Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus) wrote in a letter that he witnessed the elder Pliny's death a few hours later, when he was overcome by toxic gas from the volcano.

The newly excavated villa is at Punta Sarparella, northwest of Naples in the town of Bacoli, which in the first century was the port city of Misenum where Pliny the Elder commanded a Roman naval fleet.

While archaeologists suggest the villa also might have belonged to another wealthy Roman, it matches Pliny's descriptions and has a prominent view of Mount Vesuvius, which is about 20 miles (30 kilometers) away, across the bay.

The newfound villa gives "maximum visibility of the entire port basin and a wide view of the entire Gulf," representatives from Italy's Ministry of Culture said in a [statement](#). "This would have been, perhaps, the promontory [a high point of land above the sea] from which Pliny the Elder, who held the office of *Praefectus classis Misenensis* [the commander of the Misenum fleet] would have seen the eruption of Vesuvius."