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Remains of the villa discovered in Miseno | photo Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per L'area Metropolitana di Napoli

The Residence of the Prefect of the Roman Tyrrhenian Fleet, from where Pliny the Elder would have seen the Vesuvius Eruption, uncovered

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In an area already protected by ministerial archaeological restrictions due to the density of ancient testimonies scattered around Punta Sarparella, in Bacoli, from the entrance to the Roman theater of Misenum, passing through the *sacellum* of the Augustales, to the inner basin of the ancient port, an archaeological discovery of exceptional importance has been made.

As part of the urban regeneration efforts of the Bacoli Municipality, a project has been launched to recover and enhance the area formerly occupied by the ancient Lido Piranha, an unauthorized eco-monster finally demolished in recent years. It had plunged an area of great archaeological and landscape value into degradation and abandonment, also due to the dumping of special waste, leading to the activation of the Guardia di Finanza seals in October 2021.

After the release of the embargo and the recovery of the entire area, construction work began on a municipal villa to restore to public use one of the most spectacular accesses to the beach of Miseno, which had been inaccessible for many years due to trash and overgrowth. The Superintendency of ABAP for the Metropolitan Area of Naples actively participated in this redevelopment project to support the municipal administration.



It was precisely during the construction work on the ground floor, intended to accommodate the new roadway, benches, and the children's play area, that, thanks to the archaeological assistance provided by the Protection Office, the remains of what immediately revealed itself as a monumental Roman villa were uncovered. It can be dated to around the 1st century AD, constructed with well-crafted *cubilia* (diamond-shaped bricks), extending seamlessly to the beach and the seabed in front of it.

A dozen large rooms with different construction phases, floor levels, and remnants of wall coverings have been identified. These findings likely pertain to what remains of one of the terraces of the residence of the prefect of the Roman Tyrrhenian Fleet, the *Classis Misenensis*.

This hypothesis is based on the circumstance that the promontory of Punta Sarparella offered, due to its position, the greatest visibility of the entire port basin and a wide view of the entire Gulf. This would have been the place from which Pliny the Elder, then *Praefectus classis Misensis*, would have witnessed the eruption of Vesuvius and then sailed to Stabiae to rescue the inhabitants of the various coastal cities threatened by the Vesuvian eruption.



The discovery is even more exceptional considering that the organization and utilization of spaces in the Roman port and its surroundings are still unknown due to the almost total absence of data clarifying the organizational dynamics of the logistical base, the communication routes between the port and the rest of the city, and the location of the center of the Colony of Misenum.

The identification of these structures at a crucial point in the ancient territory, dominating the inner basin of the Roman port, near the entrance to the theater of Misenum and the area that must have housed the city's forum, adds a very important piece to the understanding of the ancient settlement palimpsest.

Pending the evaluation of an extensive excavation and contextual enhancement project for the villa, the perimeter of the rooms is currently well identified and fenced, and, thanks also to the upcoming installation of explanatory panels, returned to public enjoyment.

Sources

[Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per L'area Metropolitana di Napoli](#)