

Guide to the Oplontis excavation



P  M P E I I

PARCO
ARCHEOLOGICO
DI POMPEI

Guide to the Oplontis excavation sites



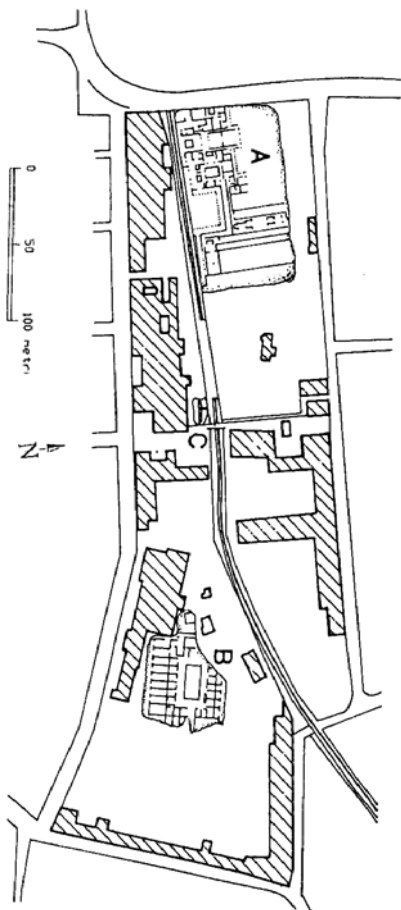
PARCO
ARCHEOLOGICO
DI POMPEI

Table of contents

General map of the Oplontis excavations	3
Oplontis	4
History of the excavations	6
Villa of Poppea	10
1 <i>Atrium</i>	14
2 Kitchen	16
3 <i>Calidarium</i>	17
4 <i>Tepidarium</i>	19
5 Sitting Room	20
6 <i>Triclinium</i>	22
7 <i>Cubiculum</i>	24
8 Sitting Room	25
9 Portico	26
10 <i>Viridarium</i>	27
11 Corridor	28
12 Reception Rooms (<i>Oeci*</i>)	29
13 Sitting Room (<i>Diaeta*</i>)	30
14 Pool	31
15 <i>Hospitalia</i>	33
16 <i>Viridaria</i>	34
17 Sitting Room	35
18 Sitting Room	36
19 Sitting Room	37
20 Corridor	38
21 Latrine	39
22 Peristylum	40
23 <i>Lararium</i>	41
24 <i>Tablinum</i>	42
25 <i>Viridarium</i>	43
Glossary	44
People: table of contents	51
Rules and guidelines when visiting the excavation sites	55

In the following pages the terms indicated by an asterisk (*) will be defined in the glossary

General map of the Oplontis excavations



General layout of the excavations

A: Villa Poppea

B: Villa B

C: part of the portico found between the two villas

Oplontis

The only documentary evidence of the name *Oplontis* is in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a medieval copy of an ancient map of the roads of the Roman Empire. It was part of the suburban area* of the city of Pompeii, on which it depended administratively. Since the Bourbon age, remains of ancient buildings have been found in the area of the modern city of Torre Annunziata, testifying to the existence of a semi-urban site with villas and public buildings, and identified as the ancient *Oplontis*.

The main archaeological finds in the area consist of two monuments that had faced the sea: Villa A, which was called Poppea, a luxurious residential building, and the complex known as Villa B, or Villa di *Lucius Crassius Tertius*, which was a *horreum*, meaning a building in which commercial and production activities were carried out. It had a housing area on the upper floor. The discovery of a bath establishment at Punta Oncino confirms that *Oplontis* was a small town with infrastructures.





Detail of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*

History of the excavations

The identification of the excavation site of the Villa A took place at the end of the 16th century during the construction of the Sarno Canal, excavated by Count Muzio Tuttavilla and his heirs in order to channel water captured from the sources of the river into the mills he owned in the area of what is known today as Fabbrica d'Armi as well as near the port; the toponomy (via Mulini Idraulici, vicolo Frumento, Mugnai ramp) brings to mind that ancient destination. Recent digs downstream of the canal have revealed that the structures of the *basis villae** and of the underlying level with the sea front were damaged and covered by the canal bed. This confirms that the builders and probably the designer, the famous architect and engineer Domenico Fontana*, had to be well aware of the presence of the ancient ruins.

In the eighteenth century, riding the wave of the enthusiasm for the recent discoveries of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabia, the Bourbon government promoted archaeological research initiatives throughout the Vesuvian territory and it was no accident that the first excavation was attempted in Mascatelle for the Torre Annunziata area. In 1785 Francesco La Vega*, the military architect in charge of the excavations, reported having inspected the ruins identified here, but had to suspend excavation due to the presence of mofeta, the exhalation of carbon dioxide that was lethal for the workers who were digging. Later, in 1833, Minister Nicola Santangelo* commissioned the then Superintendent General to the Excavations and Director of the Royal Bourbon Museum, Marquis Michele Arditi*, to proceed with the investigation, which, however, took place only in 1839, after there had been clandestine excavation attempts in the vicinity by Wilhelm Johan Carl Zahn*, a noted

German painter and architect, friend of Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe*. Even if the excavation did not yield the ancient artefacts that they had hoped to find, the excavations of 1839 made it possible to fully comprehend the great importance of the area and to make it a part of state property with a provision of protection that preserved the remains up to present day.

The excavation of *Oplontis* was no longer discussed for more than a century, until a committee of local enthusiasts managed to bring attention to the site. Ten years of uninterrupted excavations brought to light a building that had 90 rooms spread over 10,000 square meters.

In 1974, about 300 meters east of Villa A, during the construction of the gymnasium of Giuseppe Parini middle school, workers found Villa B, or *Lucius Crassius Tertius*. The building occupies an *insula** of the settlement bordered on the north by a road facing houses belonging to a second *insula** buried under the structures of the modern inhabited area. In one of the rooms of this complex, in 1984, the famous "Oplontis golds" were found, a treasure trove of jewels and coins that the owners brought with them in their desperate flight from the fury of the volcano, as they were waiting for the relief efforts that should have been coming from the sea, a few meters from the structure where they had taken refuge. The building is currently closed to the public.







Photo on the upper left: *the peristyle of Villa B during the excavations*

Photo on the lower left: *the Erma di Eracle at the time of its discovery in Villa A*

Top photo: *the satyr-hermaphrodite group re-positioned along the edge of the pool*

Villa of Poppea

Built on a tall cliff overlooking the sea, the Villa could be reached by covered pathways, porticoes, terraces with lookout points and gardens built on different levels. The structure is a classic example of an *otium** villa, amongst the many that were dotted along the gulf of Naples, which Strabo* describes thus *"Here the gulf known as Cratere ends, bordered by two bluffs oriented towards south, the Capo Miseno and the Ateneo, and enriched by the cities already mentioned that can be found all along the stretch of land as well as by residences and farmlands in the middle spaces that are all so close together they appear to be a single city"*.

Its importance lies in the rich pictorial decorations and in the organization of the spaces based on perspective axes, symmetries and backgrounds with gardens that are richly decorated with statues and fountains.

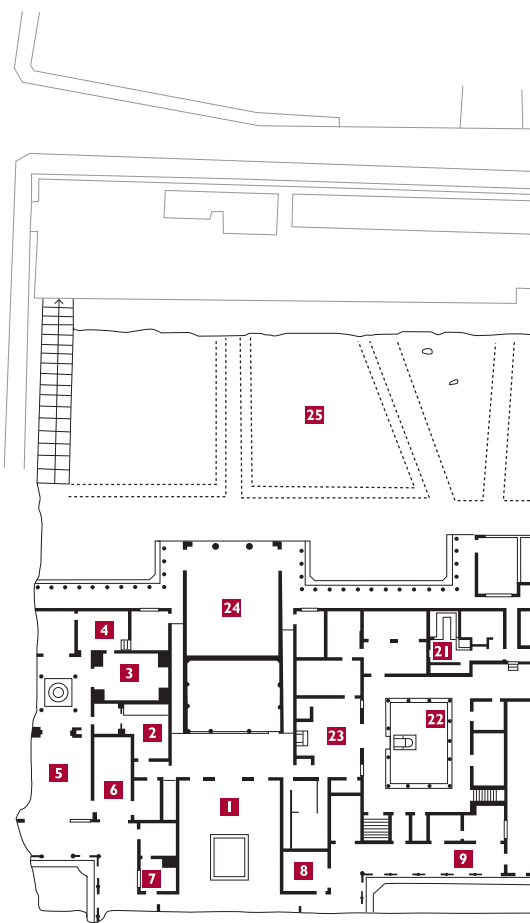
The oldest part of the building dates back to about the middle of the first century BC, and it is organized around the Tuscan (1) atrium* with magnificent paintings in Second Style*, and overlooked the sea, to the south, and the garden (25) to the north. Around the atrium* there are sumptuously decorated rooms for resting, dining and sitting. The windows opened onto the garden facing the sea, and were closed by wooden shutters. The villa also had a private bath complex, which was heated by the kitchen and overlooked a small courtyard with a fountain in the middle. The baths were later transformed into spaces for sitting rooms, while the kitchen with the masonry counter and the mezzanine for the servants were kept in use. To the east of the atrium*, around the peristylum* (22) that has a fountain in the centre, we find the lararium* with an altar dedicated to the Lares, the guardian deities of the house, as well as rooms destined for

storage and servants' sleeping quarters, and another small bath area. In the south-west corner of this peristylum a staircase leads to an underground gallery that stretches under the sixteenth century Conte di Sarno Canal. It connects with a cryptoporticus facing the sea, whose structures, which collapsed due to earthquakes that occurred along with the eruption, were found in recent digs. The villa also had incorporated the remains of an even more ancient production complex, located south of the pool. Excavators were only able to investigate the area of the press.

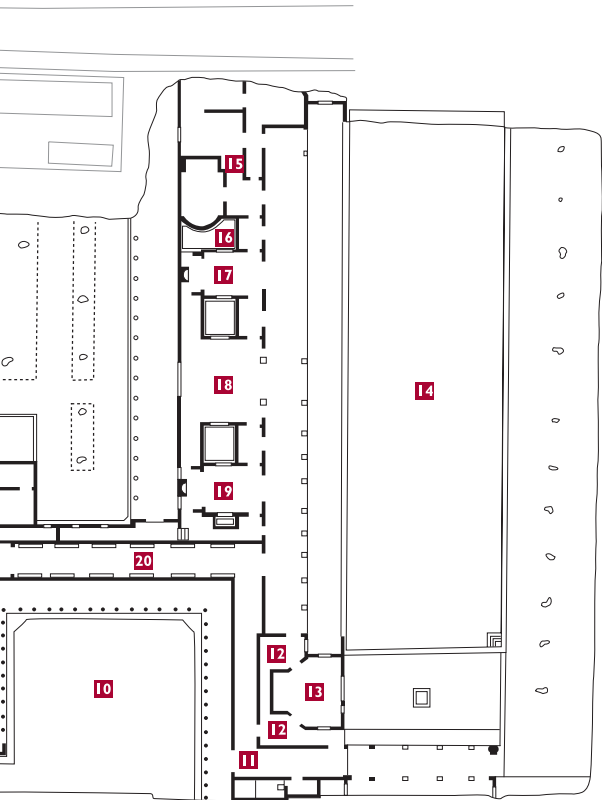
Around the middle of the first century AD the complex extended to the east with the addition of the huge swimming pool, 61x17 meters, along which the dining rooms, the sitting room, the lodgings for the guests and the small winter gardens were located. A portion of the sculptures that decorated the luxurious structure were found around the swimming pool in the rich vegetation.

Amongst the many Vesuvian villas this is the only one that gives us the possibility of reconstructing, on the basis of archaeological findings, the composition of internal gardens and places of rest and meditation, which were deemed of great importance in the life of the Roman aristocracy. Moreover, palaeobotanical studies have allowed researchers to reconstruct the original vegetation was present at the time: hedges of boxwood, oleanders, lemons, plane trees, olive trees, cypresses, climbing ivy and roses were arranged to complement the sculptural and architectural elements.

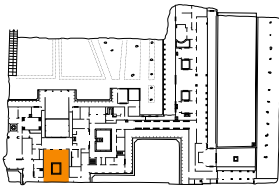
According to an inscription on an amphora that refers to one of Poppea's slaves or freedmen, the villa may have belonged to the rich land holdings on the Campania coast owned by the family of Nero's wife. At the time of the eruption the building had to be largely uninhabited due to construction work in progress, which had perhaps begun during a change in ownership. This involved the removal of many architectural and decorative elements.



- 1 Atrium
- 2 Kitchen
- 3 Calidarium
- 4 Tepidarium
- 5 Sitting Room
- 6 Triclinium
- 7 Cubiculum
- 8 Sitting Room
- 9 Portico
- 10 Viridarium
- 11 Corridor
- 12 Reception Rooms (Oeci*)
- 13 Sitting Room (Diaeta*)



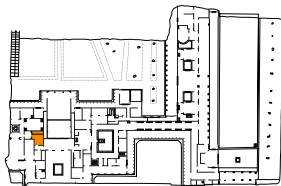
- 14 Pool
- 15 *Hospitalia*
- 16 *Viridaria*
- 17 Sitting Room
- 18 Sitting Room
- 19 Sitting Room
- 20 Corridor
- 21 Latrine
- 22 Peristylum
- 23 *Lararium*
- 24 *Tablinum*
- 25 *Viridarium*



Atrium

The Tuscan-style atrium* was the main entrance to the villa in ancient times. The real entryway was in the south, from the sea, right at the point where we find today's Canale Conte di Sarno. The atrium has an opening in the roof (*compluvium**) and corresponding basin in the middle of the floor (*impluvium**) to collect rainwater. It has a mosaic white tesserae floor with a polychrome meander frame. On the walls we still see part of the sumptuous Second Style*: colonnades decorated with *imagines clipeatae**, basins, cistus, bronze incense burners and fake doors, surmounted by small squares with landscapes. Their purpose was to use illusion to expand the physical limits of the walls. The authors of this rich pictorial decoration were probably those who (mid1st century BC, approximately) had worked in the villa of Fannio Sinistore in Boscoreale during that same period. The two south wings are decorated with frescoes in Second Style* with imitations of marbles, garlands of flowers and painted landscapes. To the north there is a small enclosed garden, as well as a small passage with an Opus Signinum (cocciopesto) floor* with white tiles and frescoes in the Fourth Style*. Fruit trees were planted at the four corners of the flower bed; the silenus-head drips were placed in their original positions, and the lower part of the columns is decorated with a shoot of ivy adorned with birds. Two long corridors without openings, painted with imitation marble, lead us to the full light of the garden.

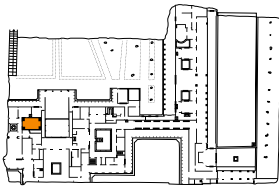




Kitchen

The long bench with a brick-covered work surface along the north wall was designed to house the embers; the terracotta or bronze pots could be placed on iron supports or directly on the embers. The small compartments with arched openings, found under the bench, were designed to contain extra firewood. Along the east side, in the floor, a circular basin was used to drain liquids; the two walls on the south side held a wooden table. The room also had a wooden loft, accessible by an outer staircase, which served as a servant's quarters. The floor is undecorated Opus Signinum (cocciopesto)*, a very resistant material used in service areas. The kitchen is the only room in this sector that retained its original purpose.



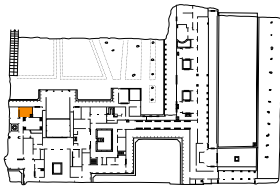


Calidarium

The villa was equipped with a private bath, like many residences that belonged to members of the wealthiest families of the time. The calidarium*, the heated bath with hot air coming from the adjoining kitchen, has the typical characteristics of this kind of room: the *tegulae mammatae**, terracotta slabs spaced from the wall by protrusions near the corners, and the *suspensurae**, hollow earthenware columns or small brick pillars upon which the suspended floor rested. These measures ensured circulation of the hot air and made sure that the heat in the room remained constant. At a later stage it was transformed into a sitting room. The frescoes in the Third Style* belong to this stage. On a red and black panelled base we see slender columns that support architraves, and in the middle of the east wall there is a large depiction of Hercules in the garden of the Hesperides. The upper portion of the wall, inserted into slender architectural elements, features landscape paintings and the figure of a poet playing the lyre. The simplicity of the floor, in white mosaic with a double black frame and contours that delimit the niches, contrasts with the decorative richness of the walls; a constant motif in all the rooms of the villa. The room overlooks a small portico with a fountain in the centre. It had two concentric walls, inside which terracotta vases have been found, with holes on the sides, used to grow small flowering plants that enlivened the space.

Calidarium



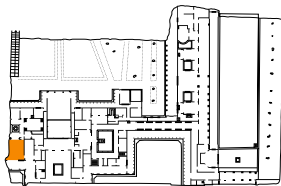


Tepidarium

Just like all bath structures, alongside the *calidarium** was the *tepidarium**, a room that was heated with warm air. Through the grating in the floor we can see *suspensurae**, consisting of small brick pilasters, but here we do not have the *tegulae mammatae** on the walls.

Like the previous one, this space was also transformed into a sitting room. The walls were frescoed in the Fourth Style*. Above a black base with stylized plants, the large red panels, flanked by vertical stems that are surmounted, in the upper part, by slender schematic architectural structures, bear in the centre small paintings of birds pecking fruit. Here too the floor is made of white tiles with a double black frame.



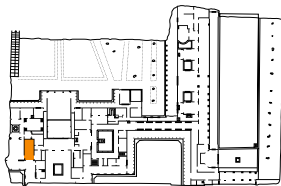


Sitting Room

The great sitting room, of which only the eastern wall has been brought to light, is one of the most elegant and luxurious rooms in the villa. The decoration in Second Style* depicts a view of a sanctuary of Apollo. Through an open gate we can see the Delphic tripod, with a torch at the base, immersed in a garden of laurels and surrounded by a portico with three arms with two orders of Ionic and Doric columns. On the wall at the sides of the gate, the decoration is enlivened by peacocks, masks and paintings inside doors. The floor is a mosaic carpet of white tesserae with irregular inserts of coloured marble surrounded by a black frame. The passage brings us from the small portico with the fountain, whose black tile floor with rows of white crosses and frames with vegetable motifs features a white mosaic threshold with black triangles arranged as a pin-wheel.

The hall overlooked a portico that opened up onto the garden overlooking the sea, with a large window. The imprint of wooden doors, found open, was preserved. In the garden there was also a tall tree, and one of its branches left a mark on the levels of the eruption to the west. The columns of the portico are covered with plaster with white and red scales as decorative elements. Later they were supported by *opus craticium** masonry sections in the Fourth Style*, and probably had doors or curtains to protect the spaces in the back from the heat as well as the cold. The white mosaic floor has perpendicular rows of black tiles, with a black stripe along the walls.

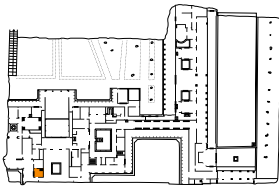




Triclinium

This was a dining room and it connected to the kitchen through a small service area paved in Opus Signinum (cocciopesto)* with simple frescoes in the Fourth Style*. The fact that there was a division of the Sitting Room into an anteroom and dining room is seen by the floor and wall decorations. A polychrome meander threshold divides the anteroom, with a white tile floor with red, green, orange and blue crosses and a black stripe that serves as a border, from the hall that has a polychrome rhomboid carpet in the centre where they would place the table with food. The diners stretched out to eat on beds arranged along the walls. The threshold from the previous sitting room is decorated with a polychrome meander design. The wall decoration in Second Style* is an extraordinary example of Hellenistic Baroque architecture. Coloured marble columns with figured capitals stand on a low podium, around which metallic trunks are wrapped with flowers in precious stones, holding arched architraves. Right in the centre between the east and west sides, beyond a closed door, you can see round temples with statues of female deities and perspective colonnades. On the north wall two figured columns frame a gate beyond which a tall column holds a statue of a female divinity in a garden. On this wall there is a basket of figs, a rustic offering to the divinity, well suited to the convivial functions of the sitting room. Above the frescoes we can see the remains of the stucco decoration that completed the space's décor. The antechamber's walls are adorned with small landscapes in yellow monochrome, and in the upper part there is an architrave with figured corbels that supports a wall with false marble encrustations.



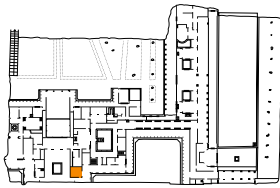


Cubiculum

The small bedroom has two alcoves* with vaulted roofs, where the beds were located. The narrow space seems to be made larger by the Second Style* illusion, very similar to atrium* 1. At the centre of the walls the false alabaster columns frame fantastical architecture, false marble and wreaths of intertwined flowers tied by ribbons, completing the ornamentation. The vaults of the alcoves, with stucco frames, are decorated with a coffered pattern, while the lunettes feature complex landscape scenery. The mosaic white tesserae floor features a black frame, and the space of the alcoves is contoured by a stripe with a chequered and triangle overlay pattern.

The imprints of the door and window were found. At the time of the eruption the window was ajar. At a later time an opening was made in the north wall to make a passageway into the next room, which resulted in the removal of a bed.

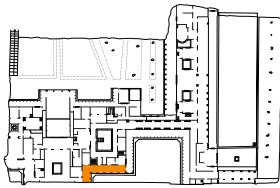




Sitting Room

This space is yet another sitting room. The sumptuous frescoes in Second Style* that perhaps represent the *Scaenae frons** of a theatre, above which the perspective flight of the columns of the porticoes can be seen *pone scaenam**, are enriched by numerous details. On the north side, at the bottom right, a basket containing fruit appears covered by a very thin veil; always on the right, but at the top, the transparency of the glass of a cup full of pomegranates is rendered with great skill. On the southern side, at the bottom, on a silver support we see a cake, while at the top centre of the western side is a lovely example of a mask recalling theatrical backdrops of Hellenic Greek tradition. The door threshold is made of alabaster, and is a rare example of the use of this precious material that is usually used for the creation of small luxury items. The mosaic floor has white tesserae with a black border.

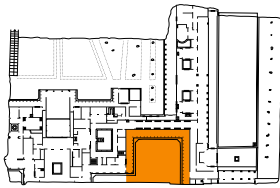




Portico

Recent excavations have shown that this portico is the continuation of the other portico, symmetrical to this one, which is located in front of the Sitting Room 5 and the Triclinium* 6. Here too, the space between the columns, covered with red and white scales, is closed by *opus craticium** wall sections, frescoed in Fourth Style*, within which curtains or doors were likely to be inserted to protect the *cubicula** back rooms from being too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. The white mosaic floor has perpendicular rows of black tiles with a black stripe along the walls. The smallest *cubiculum*'s* ceiling was able to be reconstructed. It is frescoed with a sober decorative Third Style*, with a red or white background, and the panels feature painted dolphins and floral elements. The *cubiculum** is frescoed in Fourth Style* with two alcoves for the beds located at the north-west corner, towards the garden. Above the dark red base the white panels, decorated with cupids and animals, are separated by aediculae* on a red background with candlesticks; subtle architectures, among which birds are painted, decorate the upper part. This room also has lozenge shapes, with plant motifs, that indicate the space for the beds.

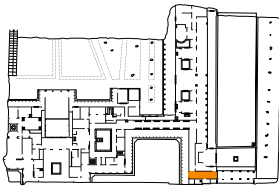




Viridarium

Overlooking the sea, but more intimate and secluded than the large garden 25, this is the traditional space that was dedicated to rest and meditation, typically present in *otium** villas. Palaeobotanical studies have allowed researchers to reconstruct the vegetation of that time. In the lawn enclosed by the portico, of which there are only three arms with brick columns covered with white stucco, and in front of each column there were creepers and evergreens and a flower bed in the centre. The walls of the portico are decorated the Fourth Style* with a black base revived by plants, a red panelled median area separated by black stripes with aediculae* decorated with plant motifs. The upper portion is white with perspective architectures. The small paintings on the west side were detached by the Bourbon excavators, who were also responsible for the large holes in the walls due to the "tunnel" excavation technique that was practised at the time.

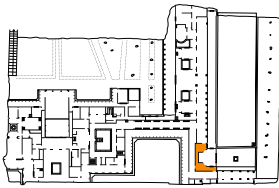




Corridor

This corridor, formed by two perpendicular arms, surrounds and links rooms 12 and 13. The west-east arm leads directly to the rooms and to the open space south of the pool, intended to be a *solarium**, in which a pergola was to be placed, of which the supporting pillars remain. A small gap in the south wall gave access to the rooms of an older rustic villa that had been previously built and was incorporated into the property at the time of construction of the pool. The north-south arm, instead, leads to a large corridor, 20, that connects this with the oldest area of the villa. In the frescoes in Fourth Style* of the east-west arm, above a black baseboard, red panels with birds pecking fruit separate large white mirrors with fantastic perspective architectures and trees; the upper area has a white background with architectures in which birds or landscape paintings are inserted. The decoration of the north-south arm, up to half height, has a cursive decoration typical of passageways: on a red base there are large black panels filled with parallel white and grey stripes that imitate marble. The upper part of the walls and the ceiling have a continuous decoration with coloured bands that divide the space into panels with birds and sea animals. Here too the white tesserae floor has a black frame.

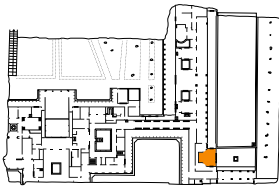




Reception Rooms (*Oeci**)

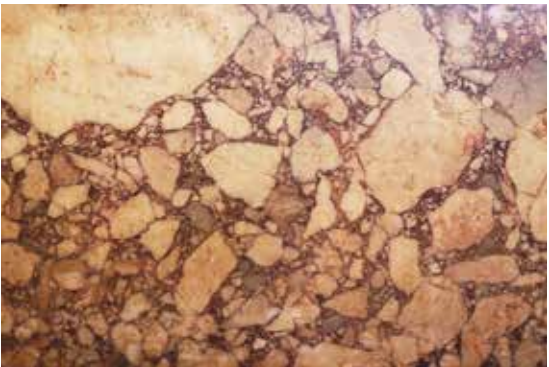
The unusual shape of these two spaces, connected by a narrow service passageway, is determined by the peculiar shape of sitting room 13 right in front of these rooms. Together they constitute a one core group of spaces that acts as a sitting room. The decoration of both rooms is very similar to the east-west arm of corridor 11: the paintings inserted in the upper part of the walls depict still life and birds. To the east, the room opens up to an uncovered corridor with frescoes that mimic a garden in the lower part of the wall that has a faux rustic bossage*. The corridor connecting its twin space to the north has a black baseboard with plants and panels, also with a black background, in the middle part, featuring birds and pottery. The space to the North distinguishes itself because its frescoes are very well preserved.

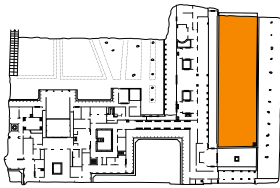




Sitting Room (*Diaeta**)

This room has an unusual polygonal layout and its large window overlooks the pool. The room's rich decorative elements are a testament to the high quality of the room. The floor was in *opus sectile**, but had largely been removed because when the volcano erupted the villa was undergoing a remodelling. Of the rhomboidal marble tiles there remain traces of the preparation of the bottom. The walls had sophisticated decorations, which was quite unusual. In the lower part they were covered by a base of coloured marble, and some slabs remain under the window. Above the marble there were wooden panels arranged so as to form a bossage*. The hall overlooked a large open space. Here in the small still visible basin, there was a large marble crater decorated with dancing warriors. It was used as a fountain. In front, a sculpture of Satyr with Hermaphroditus was reflected in the water of the pool.





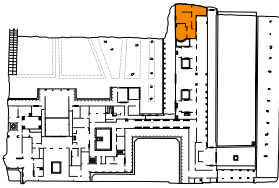
Pool

The 61x17 meter pool is the central element of this sector and was added in the Julio-Claudian age. Originally larger, it had reached the edge of the portico and was then brought to its current size at a later time. The pool was accessed by a staircase in the south-east corner. The pool is paved in Opus Signinum (cocciopesto) with stucco walls with relief panels. It shows certain technical details such as being tilted towards the south, to allow the water to drain out, and the overflow system visible in its south west corner, which make it one of the most stunning examples of structures dedicated to sport and personal care in general. The long colonnade portico that houses the pool has a splendid decoration in Fourth Style* with a white background set on a marble base. The thin ivy shoots that emerge from metal craters with peacock feathers are populated by miniature animals, lizards, grasshoppers, frogs, goats and birds, and they perch onto thin rods that form large panels with landscape paintings. The white floor with a black frame is interspersed with coloured marble pieces. Thirteen bases were found along the east side of the pool, but only seven had their corresponding statue, mostly replicas inspired by Greek sculptural masterpieces. From the north, we see a boy's head, a herm of Heracles, a female statue with a chiton, and a Nike. Then, in reverse order, a Nike similar to the previous one, a male statue, and another herm of Heracles. Each statue was placed in front of a tree, forming a natural counterpoint of vertical elements in sequence to the colonnade on the opposite side. Palaeobotanical studies have given us the opportunity to reconstruct the original arrangement of the garden: plane trees, laurels, cypresses and oleanders were present during that time and they served to complement the sculptural

Pool

and architectural decoration elements. The area was interpreted as a Greek style *gymnasium**. The large pool and the space immediately east of it offered a place for athletic exercise under the eyes of gods and heroes. When the volcano erupted, the villa was being refurbished and workers were rebuilding the portico's roof. The columns had been removed and were in fact found far from their original location in the large *tablinum** 24 that overlooks the villa's internal garden.

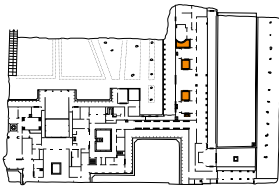




Hospitalia

Among the rooms that open onto the pool's portico, a core group of rooms stand out for the simplicity of the decorations: a red, yellow or black base delimits the lower part of the wall that is then covered with large white backgrounds on the upper part, without any additional decoration. This feature, along with the fact that these rooms are in an area that is quite isolated from the other rooms, has led us to believe that they were *hospitalia*, or rooms set aside for the added privacy of guests who were invited to stay in the villa.

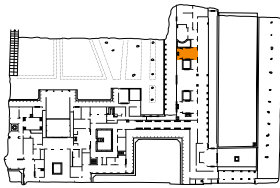




Viridaria

Next to the villa's large open gardens full of real plants, inside we can also find gardens where reality and fiction coexist. The reception rooms overlooking the portico of the pool are separated by small internal gardens with central flowerbeds, where medium or small plants were planted. The pictorial decoration of the walls is so rich in detail that we can recognize the plant and animal species that are depicted: hedges of myrtle surround the marble fountains of various shapes, where we see crested larks, nightingales and magpies with blue wings drinking water. In the small garden north of room 18 the bones of two dormice were found. It was not possible to determine if they were trapped here by the eruption or if they were locked up in small wicker cages, now destroyed. It is equally true, however, that the dormouse was considered a delicacy by the Romans, therefore the bones can perhaps be considered remains of a meal.

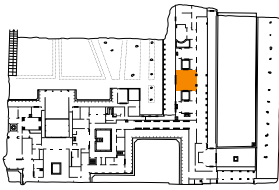




Sitting Room

Arranged symmetrically to room 19 on the sides of hall 18 and delimited by the *viridaria* 16 in a composition whose complex layout is reflected in a similar arrangement of *Nero's Domus Aurea*, this room also incorporates that layout with a semicircular niche on the west wall, in the back, which was to accommodate a small sculpture. The most striking feature of this sitting room is the ceiling, which they were able to reconstruct with just a few fragments, thanks to careful restoration. The decoration recalls the decorative patterns of Fourth Style*, but the typical geometric partitions are here rendered in relief with stucco frames that, with their round or rhomboid motifs, animate the surface creating a fascinating alternation of light and shadow. On the walls there are traces of marble slabs up to one meter in height, above which a simple monochrome fresco would have been painted. The mosaic floor is white with a black border.

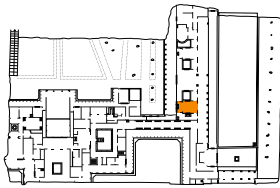




Sitting Room

This sitting room opens onto the garden with a large window. The lower part of the walls was covered in precious marble, while the floor was *opus sectile**, consisting of polychrome marble tiles, of which only a part is visible today. The east side, open towards the pool, had two very tall columns that had been removed because of the remodelling work that was being carried out, just as those of the portico. On the north and south sides two windows open out onto interior gardens (*viridaria**). Those who stayed in this room enjoyed an extraordinary view: in front of them the white of the imposing pool of water, surrounded by an art gallery immersed in the luxuriant vegetation of oleanders, cypresses, laurels, plane trees and lemons. Behind the room there is an interior garden, a place for walking and meditation, with tall trees, rosebushes, apple trees, olive trees, and daisies. The vivid and bright colours of these gardens are contrasted by the darker ones of the small interior *viridaria** 16, which in perspective created an intriguing interplay of light and shadow.

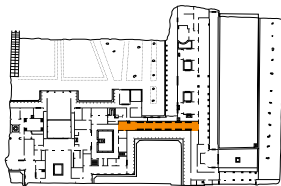




Sitting Room

This space, identical in layout to the previous Sitting Room 17, with the exception that it has two windows that look out to the back garden, has a sumptuous wall decoration in coloured marble in the lower part and white plaster above. Yet another *viridarium**, this one extremely small, is visible through a window on the south side. It is very similar to the others, both for its flower bed and the wall decoration. It should be emphasized that owners of villas at the time were extremely sensitive to naturalistic elements, whether real or reproduced in paintings, to the point where they would take advantage of even the smallest available space for this purpose.

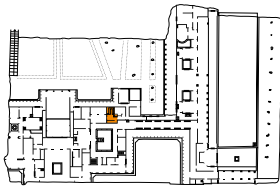




Corridor

The core rooms of the oldest part of the building and the most recent area with the pool are linked by this imposing corridor along whose walls we see resting benches that were used during the practice of the *ambulatio** (the hygienic walk) in this fresh and airy space. The walls and the ceiling are divided into square sectors decorated with large panels in Fourth Style* that have a white background with coloured frames and contours enriched with aediculae*, animals, garlands, paintings and Medusa* heads, rendered with great elegance and skill. The lower part of the walls features the typical decoration of these passage areas. The base and the benches were painted red. Above them there were large black panels filled with parallel white and grey stripes and separated by yellow lines, imitating marble. The floor is paved in Opus Signinum (cocciopesto)*.

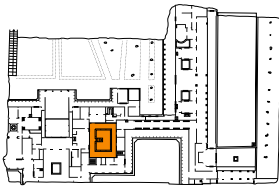




Latrine

The small space, built around the peristylum 22, was equipped with a small bath area, with simple light plaster and an Opus Signinum (cocciopesto)* floor. We can recognize a *calidarium** with *suspensurae** and the actual latrine, divided into two sections with a partition and equipped with a masonry tank for water collection. Along its walls, special wooden bored shelves were presumably embedded in the wall, under which a canal covered in Opus Signinum (cocciopesto)* ran, which allowed the system to be cleaned using the water contained in the tank.

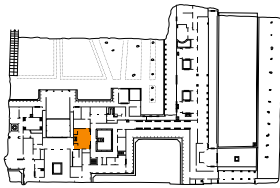




Peristylum

The peristylum*, whose open central area was occupied by a fountain shaded by a large chestnut tree, probably the oldest among the villa's trees, has four corridors with an Opus Signinum (cocciopesto)* floor with marble inserts, flanked by columns connected by plutei* in masonry that are decorated on the inside with plants on a red background. The columns, the back walls and the external part of the plutei are decorated with squares with black and white stripes that imitate marble, which is in accordance with an economic model of decorating that we have already seen in rooms intended for passageways or to accommodate the family of servants. Around it we see small rooms, some with a wooden mezzanine, destined as storage areas or dormitories for the servants; others were on the second floor, accessible by a staircase. In the south-west corner a staircase led to the cryptoporticus that accessed the pathway to the sea. We believe that the small statue of a boy with a goose that was found in one of the porticoes overlooking the garden 25, used as a fountain, presumably would have been originally placed on the small fountain in the centre of this open space.

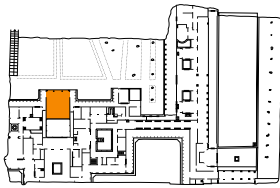




Lararium

This room housed the lararium* of the house and it has a large masonry altar. It is decorated in Fourth Style* with a white background with fine architectures and small paintings of fish. The niche for the altar has a red base with yellow panels and the floor is white with rows of black crosses and a black frame. The lararium* was the centre of the family's religious life. The altar held the images of the Lares, spirits who protected the fortune of the house, to whom the members of the family prayed daily. On the occasion of special festivities, flames were lit before them. According to a legend, reported only by Ovid*, the Lares were twin sons of the nymph Lara and Mercury. They are usually depicted as curly youngsters, dressed in a short tunic and tall boots, dancing while raising a horn-shaped vase (*rhytòn*) in the left hand and a plate in the right (*patera*). Beside the Lares, the owners of the house might have placed images of ancestors and other deities to whom they were particularly devote.

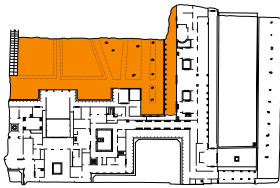




Tablinum

With a large window on the small internal garden, this huge room probably served as a reception space. In the front there are two very tall brick columns covered with white plaster, but the walls do not have any type of cladding because of the renovations. The floor is in white mosaic with a black border and it features stylized plant motifs on the thresholds between the columns. The columns deposited along the walls belong to the portico of the pool and were moved here during the renovation of that part of the villa. Two symmetrical porticoes with columns covered in white plaster are the wings of the room, whose interior walls are decorated in Fourth Style* with panels having a red background with yellow in the middle area. To the west one can see where the arm of the portico not yet brought to light extends. Here the statues of the four centaurs and the child with the goose used as fountain elements were found; the first ones in the big garden 25, the second one in the peristylum 22.





Viridarium

This large garden has only been partially excavated and probably extends below the modern buildings to the north and west. Careful palaeobotanical studies have allowed us to reconstruct the essences present during the time and the design of the garden itself, inspired by Topiary (*ars topiaria*)* canons.

On the same axis with the large Sitting Room 24 and the atrium* there is a walkway that is lined with hedges of evergreens. To the east we find a diagonal path, which had to have a counterpart in the west of the garden, toward the north. The three paths met at a point that falls below the unexcavated area. Along the edge of the diagonal walkway there are bases for four marble herms* of Aphrodite, Dionysus child, an old woman and another child, which were found during the excavations. Presumably the four statues of centaurs found under portico 33 were also originally located along these walkways.

At the eastern edge of the garden, towards the swimming pool, two parallel paths were separated by a row of centenarian trees whose root imprints can be seen. Other imprints in the flowerbeds belong to the roots of apple trees and oleanders. At the end of the eastern portico, in the remains of a space that was destroyed by an earthquake, a small rose garden was planted, reflecting the priority that the owners gave to the reconstruction of the gardens. Flowerbeds with daisies and olive trees completed the vegetation.



Glossary

AEDICULA: diminutive of the Latin *aedes* (seat) that indicated the house of the god. Dedicated to public and private worship, it consists of a niche with the characteristics of temples, a pediment supported by columns, with or without wooden doors. The aediculae house statuettes of deities who protect the home. It is also commonly called *Lararium**.

ALCOVE: The area of a room, separated by an arch or an architrave and closed off by curtains, where the bed is found.

ARS TOPIARIA: technique of pruning trees and shrubs into defined geometric shapes, different from the way a plant would grow naturally, for ornamental purposes.

ATRIUM: vast space connected to the most important rooms. In the most ancient times it was the heart of the house, then the centre of domestic life became the internal portico garden, the *peristylum**, and the *atrium** served as a reception area.

BASIS VILLAE: terracing that regularizes the land and supports the villa's facilities; in it we find spaces that have various destinations: residential, storage or cellars. It was like a panoramic terrace.

BOSSAGE (BUGNATO): type of masonry consisting of blocks of stone overlapped with staggered rows, the horizontal and vertical joints are set back from the front of the masonry, to give a jutting effect to each block. Very widespread during the Renaissance and used for the façades of noble palaces.

CALIDARIUM: bath space warmed with hot air through a system that used *suspensurae** and *tegulae mammatae** and heated by a furnace.

COMPLUVIUM: opening in the centre of the atrium's* roof, source of light and air for the house. The sloped roof directed rainwater into the impluvium* below, which in turn drained the water into the cistern underneath it.

CUBICULUM: bedroom. Generally they were small in size to facilitate heating in the winter months.

DIAETA: sitting room intended for rest. The term, often used by Pliny the Younger* when he describes his villas, indicates one or more rooms that are secluded or separated from the rest of the house. A freedman or a slave, called Diaetarchus, was responsible for supervising the *diaeta*.

GYMNASIUM: Greek term to indicate a set of rooms used for the physical education of young people, considered a duty of good citizens towards themselves and towards their homeland, and for the training of professional sportsmen.

HERM: pillar with a quadrangular section, varying in height from 1 to 1.5 metres, surmounted by a head sculpted all around. In Greece Herms supported the head of Hermes, hence the name, and were placed along the streets, at crossroads, at the borders of properties and in front of doors to invoke the god's protection. In later times they became simple supports for all-around portraits, and this use continues today.

IMAGINES CLIPEATAE: portraits within a frame reminiscent of the round shield, the *clipeus*. This type of portrait is typical of the Roman Republic, in particular of noble families. The cult practices required, in fact, that funeral masks of ancestors were to be

carried in processions during the funerals of family members. Later the portraits began to be mounted inside round shields, hence the name.

IMPLUVIUM: quadrangular basin for the collection of rainwater, placed in the atrium** in correspondence with the compluvium and connected to a cistern below.

INSULA: With this name, in a metaphorical sense, the Romans designated the house, which originally, since it was separated from the neighbouring houses by a space of two and a half feet (*ambitus*), resembled an island. The term therefore has a spatial meaning in contrast to the generic voice *domus*, which indicates the dwelling.

LARARIUM: aedicola* that holds the statues of the Lares, guardian deities of the house and the public spaces. In domestic cult practices they represented the ancestors (*Lares familiares*) and were depicted as young men with short tunics and tall boots, about to pour wine from the *rhyton* (a horn-shaped cup). Every important event was put under the protection of the Lares with sacrifices and offerings: for example becoming an adult, departing or returning from a journey, marriage, and births.

MEDUSA: a Gorgone, daughter of the marine deities Phorcys and Ceto. Just like her sisters Stheno and Euryale she had the power to petrify those who met her gaze. Medusa, the only mortal of the three sisters, was beheaded by Perseus with the help of Hermes. Her blood gave life to the winged horse Bellerophon and the giant Chrysaor, as well as coral (*Gorgoniidae*), according to some variations of the myth.

OECLUS: the most important room of the Roman house often used as a triclinium* for banquets. The more luxurious the home the more magnificent the layout.

OPUS CRATICIUM: masonry technique that obtained light load-bearing structures to be used for partitions and walls of upper floors. It consists of a wooden warp buffered with various types of material: stone masonry, terracotta bricks, wooden boards, clay mixed with straw or a plastered canopy.

OPUS SECTILE: one of the most sophisticated decoration techniques for floors and walls both for of its use of luxury materials (usually precious marbles) as well as for the complexity of installation. In fact, the pieces of marble had to be sectioned in thin sheets to compose polychrome inlays. The technique was used in the West for the entire duration of the Roman Empire and would continue to be used in Byzantine basilicas in the East.

OPUS SIGNINUM (COCCIOPESTO): mixture of minute fragments of bricks and mortar used as a waterproof coating for both interior and exterior floors and walls. It is often decorated with tesserae or marble inserts. Normally used for lining tanks, basins, swimming pools and in service areas.

OTIUM VILLA: large building mainly for residential use, located in a suburban area, with large open spaces, pavilions and areas for rest and meditation.

PERISTYLIUM: courtyard surrounded by porticoes.

PLUTEO: balustrade in metal, wood, stone or masonry that divides two parts of a space. It can be decorated with geometric or figurative motifs, or it can be

painted. In Christian religious architecture it divides the various sectors of the church.

PONE SCAENAM: literally "behind the scene". These are quadrangular porticoes (*porticus pone scaenam*) placed behind the scenes of the theatre, where the spectators could walk during the intervals of the performances. They performed the function of the modern *foyer*.

SCAENAE FRONS: theatre backdrop. Normally it consisted of a more or less elaborate wall in which two or three doors were open, to be used by the actors. By convention the central door was linked to the scene, the right door indicated the way to the forum, and the left to the port.

SOLARIUM: part of the house that is open to the sun and the air; it could be either an open space or a terrace or a loggia under a roof.

SUBURB: from the Latin *sub* (under) and *urbs* (city). Indicates the area immediately outside the city walls.

SUSPENSURAE: small pillars, usually with a square base, placed under the flooring of the heated rooms in order to create a cavity for the passage of hot air produced by the furnace.

TABLINUM: the room that opens onto the atrium*, on the opposite side of the entrance, and divides it from the peristylum*. It is the main space of the house, the owner's office, where customers were received. Originally it was the owner's bedroom.

TEGULAE MAMMATAE: bricks with protuberances used to create air chambers in the walls of the heated rooms.

TEPIDARIUM: bath environment warmed up with warm air through a system that used *suspensurae** and/or *tegulae mammatae**, and heated by a furnace.

THE POMPEIAN STYLES OF PAINTING: on the basis of Pompeii's frescoes, which offered a wider picture of evidence than Rome, the German scholar August Mau identified four styles, based on the treatise made by Vitruvius in the VII book of *De Architectura*:

- FIRST STYLE mid II century BC – beginning I century BC Imitates walls covered in marble, also using stucco elements in relief. The walls are always divided into three zones: an upper band decorated with stucco frames; a middle area with panels, usually three, imitating marble slabs, and a plinth or baseboard. Relief stucco architectural elements are frequently used for the vertical division of surfaces.
- SECOND STYLE end II century BC – end I century BC Painted architectural elements on the walls with sophisticated perspectives that give the illusion of a larger space. Elegant colonnades rise up onto podiums painted in the foreground, doors and windows open onto perspective views. Friezes and architectural cornices are no longer made of stucco, but painted. During this period artists loved landscape painting and still life.
- THIRD STYLE a contemporary of the SECOND arrives up to the end of I century AD Deeply different from the previous style, this style completely abandons perspective. Walls appear flat, painted a single colour, almost like curtains or tapestries on which small panels with genre scenes are painted. Frequent decorative elements are candelabras, winged figures or vegetable spirals and Egyptian motifs. The first example of Third Style is found in the pyramid of Caius Cestius, in Rome.

- **FOURTH STYLE** affirms itself in the Neronian age, and it is characterized by the presence of fantastic and surreal architectures that reflect the decorative patterns of the previous styles: imitations of marble cladding, faux architecture and trompe-l'oeil from the second style; ornaments with candlesticks, winged figures and plant shoots, characteristic of the third style.

TRICLINIUM: the dining room of the Roman house; takes its name from the three beds on which the guests and the home-owners would lay, three per bed, placed on three sides of the room, leaving the fourth side free for service. It generally opened onto the garden so that guests could enjoy the view of the greenery.

VIRIDARIUM/VIRIDARIA: the garden of the Roman house, often adorned with statues and fountains. It is generally located at the centre of the peristylum*.

People: table of contents

MICHELE ARDITI (1746-1838), lawyer, archaeologist and antiquarian. In 1787 he became part of the Accademia Ercolanese, established in 1755 by Charles III of Bourbon to publish and illustrate the objects coming from the excavations of the cities buried by the eruption in 79 AD. In 1807 Giuseppe Bonaparte appointed him director general of the Museum of Naples and superintendent of the excavations of antiquities. For over twenty years and until his death, he dedicated his work to the arrangement and conservation of archaeological, numismatic and literary materials, the study of these materials, the organization of excavations, and the preparation of elements for the development of a literary and political history of the Aragonese period.

DOMENICO FONTANA (1543-1607), Swiss architect who worked in Rome and Naples in the late Renaissance. Appointed architect of Saint Peter's, he is responsible for, among many works, the lantern of the Dome of Saint Peter's Basilica, the loggia of San Giovanni in Laterano and the Vatican Library. He also was responsible for the raising of the obelisks of Saint Peter's Square, Piazza del Popolo, Santa Maria Maggiore and San Giovanni in Laterano. In Naples he designed the new Palazzo Reale, the Canale Conte di Sarno and, between 1610 and 1616, he completed a reclaimed large area of Campania creating the Regi Lagni system, which were collection channels that put an end to frequent floods, an obstacle to the agricultural development of the lands.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE (1749-1832), universally considered one of the greatest German writers. He wrote poetry, drama, literature, theology, philosophy, science, painting and music. In 1786

he undertook the Grand Tour, or that trip to Italy that between 1700 and 1800 was considered necessary for the cultural training of a citizen, during which he also visited Pompeii and Herculaneum reporting his impressions with meticulous description of the places, mixed with reflections on art and literature, in his work *Italian Journey*.

FRANCESCO LA VEGA (1737-1815), a Spanish military engineer who was one of the first excavators of Pompeii and Herculaneum. In 1778 he designed the first map of Pompeii. During his direction the Odeon, the theatre, the temple of Isis, the Triangular Forum, the quadriporticus of the theatre with the barracks of the gladiators, the Samnite Palestra, the Villa di Diomede and other buildings of the area were brought to light. La Vega kept precise excavation diaries and drawings of the findings that are still a great help for the reconstruction of Pompeii. He was also the first to recognize the tourism potential of the archaeological site.

PLINY THE YOUNGER (61/62 AD -113/114 AD), fatherless, was taken under the tutelage of his uncle Pliny the Elder, the famous naturalist who died in the eruption in 79 AD. Very rich, he went through all the stages of his public career becoming governor of Bithynia, where he died. His best known work is the *Epistles*, a collection of letters addressed to various people including the historian Tacitus, to whom Pliny writes two missives, important sources that give us information about the eruption of Vesuvius, which was experienced in the first person by Pliny the Younger himself. In those days he was in his villa in Capo Miseno.

PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO (OVID) (43 BC-17 AD), originally from Sulmona he went to Rome when he

was very young to study rhetoric, then dedicated his studies to poetry. He was in contact with the greatest writers and poets of his time and was in the court of Augustus, leading a brilliant life. His most famous works are *Ars amatoria*, *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*; in the latter he narrates fables and myths related to the feasts of the Roman Calendar. The work remained unfinished because in 8 AD he was exiled by Emperor Augustus to Tomis (Costanza) on the Black Sea, where he died. During his period in exile he composed two poems and the books of the *Epistulae ex Ponto* and the *Tristia* in which he longs for his distant homeland.

NICOLA SANTANGELO (1754-1851), Minister of the Interior of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies; maintained this position from 1831 to 1847. Very rich, he collected a precious archaeological collection, subsequently donated by his brother to the National Archaeological Museum. On the public works front he built the Poggioreale cemetery, restructured the Great State Archives, and built the Vesuvius Volcano Observatory, inaugurated in 1845 on the occasion of the 7th Congress of Italian Scientists in Naples, spearheaded by Santangelo himself. He established the Fire Brigade (which did not yet exist in Italy). He built the first section of the famous Naples-Portici steam railway, the first in Italy, and the Reale Opificio Borbonico in Pietrarsa, the first factory of locomotives, rails and rolling stock.

STRABO (before 60 BC-approximately 20 AD), he arrived in Rome around 45 BC, travelled to Etruria, to the Aegean, to Egypt, where he ascended the Nile to Philae, and spent a long time in Alexandria. He returned to Rome between 20 and 10 BC, but left again (maybe after 7 BC), probably returning to the

Orient (according to others, he was in Campania). Of all his works *Geographica* the one remaining, with 17 books, in which he describes the regions of the inhabited world.

WILHELM JOHAN CARL ZAHN (1800-1871), professor of the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin from 1829, and author of the famous work *The Most Beautiful Ornaments and the Most Notable Pictures from Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiæ*, he was active in the Twenties in Pompeii, where he had the chance to clash several times with the erudite scholars of the Herculaneum Accademia. A friend of Goethe, he accompanied his son August on his unfortunate trip to Italy.

Rules and guidelines when visiting the excavation sites

The area of the Villa di Poppea has an area of about 11,000 square meters and still preserves original decorative elements. The pavements have natural irregularities, therefore we recommend comfortable shoes and that you pay the utmost attention during your visit in order not to damage the surfaces and to avoid possible incidents for which the Archaeological Park cannot be held responsible. It should be noted that in the Vesuvian archaeological areas the provisions of Legislative Decree no. 81/08 apply regarding the rules for the protection of cultural heritage sites (Legislative Decree no. 42/2004 and s.m.i.).

ENTRANCE

The site has an entrance/exit on Via dei Sepolcri.

BAGS

We do not allow bags, backpacks, luggage, or cases greater than 30x30x15 cm.

Students and groups who are visiting the sites should leave their backpacks on their buses.

GUIDED TOURS

The tourist guide service is not supervised by the Archaeological Park and is carried out by guides authorized by the Campania Region who can be identified by their special badges.

PICNIC AREAS

It is forbidden to eat inside the Villa's facilities and the gardens.

FIRST AID

The excavations are not equipped with a first aid medic. For emergencies please call 118 toll-free, available 24 hours a day. The number can be reached anywhere in Italy and from all telephones.

Rules and guidelines when visiting the excavation sites

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Photos and videos are permitted solely for private use. Flash photography is prohibited. Please contact the Archaeological Park for authorization before filming with tripod or for commercial use.

PRECAUTIONS AND PROHIBITIONS

Visitors with mobility limitations and cardiovascular issues should exercise the utmost caution. We recommend wearing comfortable shoes during your visit. It is strictly forbidden to access the areas that are closed off by barriers and bollards. We ask visitors to be careful not to come close to the frescoed walls. Do not climb or sit on walls or on the archaeological and architectural structures present in the area. We urge you to be respectful, refrain from shouting, from writing on the walls, and from littering. Please dispose of waste in the appropriate bins.

NO SMOKING

It is strictly forbidden to smoke inside the sites.

PETS

Large dogs are not allowed in the archaeological area. Pets must be on a lead and held in your arms when inside the building. Please do not approach unattended animals that may be in the area.

In order to download the guide and map,
and for information about all the sites at
the Pompeii Archaeological Park, visit the
website: www.pompeisites.org



MINISTERO
PER I BENI E
LE ATTIVITÀ
CULTURALI



Unione Europea
Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale

© 2018

Pompeii Archaeological Park

This guide contains brief
introductory texts on the
excavations' most significant areas.
Some may be temporarily closed.

It is strictly forbidden to distribute
this material without the express
authorisation of the Pompeii
Archaeological Park.

Photographs by Dario Assisi e Riccardo Maria Cipolla
Press Rubbettino