

A DAY IN POMPEII

Pompeii Factoids

- **Pompeians loved fast food. Many fast-food establishments (called *thermopolia*) had divots or basins in the counter in place of dishes to save time.**
- A “beware of dog” mosaic was found at the gate of one house—it’s complete with a mutt baring its teeth.
- **The discoveries of the lost cities of Campania (including Pompeii and Herculaneum) fueled Neoclassicism in the 18th century. Had it not, Washington, DC, would look very, very different.**
- The traditional celebration of the god Vulcan, god of fire and volcanoes, was held on August 23 (the day before Mt. Vesuvius erupted).
- **The prevailing wind took most of the debris and volcanic matter toward Pompeii and the sea. It’s estimated that Pompeii is about one kilometer farther away from the sea now than it was in 79 CE because of the eruption.**
- Living near a volcano wasn’t all bad: the soil of the geothermally active region provided distinctively fruitful grapes and rich potting clay; also, hot springs throughout the area attracted of the spa-set from Rome.
- **There is a record of ancient philanthropy: a bath, a sundial and other objects have a donor’s name on a plaque. The public bath’s plaque even has how much the donor spent.**
- Much of the marble in the large forum (the public square) was “recycled” and used in Naples—before preservation of ancient sites was particularly important.
- **The city contained an amphitheater for gladiatorial entertainment (which could seat half the city’s population) as well as a training school for those gladiators.**
- In the 18th century, a landowner digging a well was the first to rediscover Pompeii. He kept tunneling down and bringing up statues.
- **Romans used to replace the head of a statue with the head of the latest Caesar. Some statues in Pompeii evidence this widespread money- and labor-saving technique.**
- In 62 CE, there was a big earthquake that damaged many city structures and temples. By 79, the only temple to be fully restored was that of Egyptian goddess Isis. Egyptology was hip in Pompeii.
- **Traditional Neapolitan pizza ovens today look the same as ovens in Pompeii.**
- The seats in the large Greek theater were numbered, much like theaters today. However, the seats were only 15 ³/₄ inches across.
- **The amphitheater in Pompeii is thought to be the oldest. It was the site of many gladiator battles. In 59 CE, a huge fight broke out in the stadium during a contest with a rival city. Because of the large loss of life, the Roman Senate forbade fighting in the amphitheater for 10 years. Raider game, anyone?**

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