



Pompeii Rediscovery Timeline

- 1709-1711:** A farmer sinking a well struck Herculaneum's ancient theater, in which he found handsome ancient marble sculptures. An Austrian general acquired the land, had deep tunnels dug and for two years plundered the site for antiquities.
- 1738:** Employing miners, soldiers and convicts, Charles I, the 22-year-old representative of a brand new Tuscan-Spanish dynasty installed in the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, launched a treasure hunt at Herculaneum. Hundreds of sculptures, columns and frescoes were hacked from walls and removed.
- 1740:** Originally thought to be the city of Stabiae, it was later discovered that the buried city was Pompeii. The city was crudely plundered after excavations began. For decades there was no attempt to record or preserve the site, and countless objects were destroyed. The finest frescoes and artifacts went into the royal collection, today housed in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples.
- 1750-1764:** Karl Weber, a Swiss army engineer directs excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii. He is the first to conduct systematic digs, and to record uncovering of the sites.
- 1760:** The first to attempt a methodical approach at Pompeii was German art historian, J.J. Winckelmann, considered the father of archaeology. He catalogued Pompeian loot, and because the city was buried under a shallow layer of lightweight pyroclastic matter, speedy excavation was both possible and a priority to limit the number of thefts.
- 1765:** Excavations at Herculaneum were suspended after the Temple of Isis is discovered at Pompeii.
- 1805-1815:** Coming under French rule, the kingdom of Naples is run by Napoleon's sister and brother-in-law. Thanks to Queen Caroline Bonaparte Murat's keen interest in archaeology, French architects excavated and surveyed Pompeii, and the forum was discovered.
- 1817:** Sir William Gell, living in Naples, published *Pompeiana*, the first English guidebook on Pompeii. New editions were printed for decades.
- 1830-1832:** The Alexander Mosaic, circ 100 BCE, was discovered during excavation of the House of the Faun. The complex floor mosaic, 19 by 10 feet – a copy of a famous earlier Macedonian fresco or painting – depicted young Alexander's victory over Darius, King of Persia.
- 1860-1875:** The archaeologist Giuseppe Fiorelli, director of excavations at Pompeii for a newly unified Italy, introduced innovative methods. Frescoes were no longer removed from walls and sent to the Naples museum but were left in place. Fiorelli cleared the streets of debris, and numbered streets and buildings. From hollows left by decaying organic matter he made plaster casts that reconstruct bodies of dead people, and also those of animals and trees.

- 1879:** Official ceremonies marked the 1800th anniversary of Pompeii's destruction. Fiorelli's successor, the archaeologist Michele Ruggiero, continued to preserve and restore Pompeii's original appearance.
- 1910-1923:** Archaeologists focused on clearing Pompeii's main street, the Street of Abundance (*Via dell'Abbondanza*), and restoring every excavated building along it.
- 1924-1930:** After Giuseppe Fiorelli, Amedeo Maiuri became the single most influential superintendent of excavations at Pompeii. He re-launched excavations after they were halted for 162 years, fearing encroaching construction above ground.
- 1935-1939:** The Large Palestra (gymnasium) near the amphitheater was fully excavated and restored. Many bodies were found in the portico.
- 1943-1944:** During World War II, Allied bombs fell on Pompeii, striking several houses in the Street of Abundance (*Via dell'Abbondanza*). Vesuvius also erupted for several months and parts of Naples were evacuated.
- 1940-1960:** Volcanic rubble was in great demand for road-building – excavation records for this period were extremely poor and non-existent.
- 1980:** Pompeii was damaged by a severe earthquake in November. Documentation of existing ruins became a priority in anticipating future quakes.
- 1997:** Pompeii, Herculaneum and associated sites were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- 2010:** The National Archaeological Museum of Naples opened a new wing, dedicated to the display of paintings from the Vesuvian sites. Some of the freshly restored paintings were on view for the first time in decades.
- Late 2010:** Torrential rains reduced two houses in Pompeii to rubble. The House of the Gladiators was given an overly heavy cement roof over 60 years prior, and the House of the Moralist rested against a man-made embankment that collapsed.
- Today:** Pompeii takes up a quarter of a square mile. Large-scale excavation has now ceased, and one-third of the city remains underground. Archaeologists oppose undertaking fresh excavations while they focus on conserving existing buildings, re-examining and understanding earlier discoveries, and researching the pre-Roman settlement of Pompeii.