

Pompeii Yesterday and Today

Pompeii was an ancient city in southern Italy that disappeared after a nearby volcano erupted in A.D. 79. The city lay buried under layers of cinders, ashes, and stone for hundreds of years before it was rediscovered in the 1700s. Now more than three quarters of the city has been uncovered, and much of the city looks just as it did in ancient times.

During the disaster, lava and mud flowed into a nearby city but not into Pompeii. Instead, the city was showered with hot, wet ashes and cinders. When the ashes and cinders dried, they covered and sealed up much of the city. Only the tops of walls and columns could be seen. Later, other eruptions completely buried the city.

Many wealthy Romans lived in ancient Pompeii. The weather in Pompeii was warm and sunny, and Romans built large villas there to take advantage of the good climate. Many of the buildings near the center of the city had two stories. The city was surrounded by a great wall with seven gates and had a theater, many temples, a gladiator's court, and three large public baths.

During the eruption of A.D. 79, the air was filled with poisonous gases. Many people were able to get away, but many others died in their homes or as they fled.

Today visitors can walk in and out of houses and up and down narrow lanes, just as people did long ago. The eruption took place while the city was having an election. Visitors can still see election slogans on many walls.

1. Why was Pompeii so well preserved?
2. Why is finding Pompeii an important discovery?