

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Pompeii and Ercolano (Italy)

No 829

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The archaeological areas of Pompeii, Ercolano, and Torre Annunziata
<i>Location</i>	Province of Naples, Campanian Region
<i>State Party</i>	Italy
<i>Date</i>	19 July 1996

Justification by State Party

Pompeii is the only Roman inland commercial city to be preserved in such an exceptional way, and Ercolano is the most intact example of a coastal residential town. Both were preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. They give visitors a full picture of Roman town life from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD in all its aspects - urban, architectural, decorative, etc.

Criteria iii, iv, v, and vi

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Pompeii, Ercolano, and the Villa Oplontis at Torre Annunziata are *sites*.

History and Description

History

Pompeii was an Opician foundation of the 6th century BC, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus maintained that Herculaneum (Ercolano) was founded by Hercules on his way back to Greece from Spain. Both underwent several changes of overlord in the centuries that followed - Oscans, Samnites, Greeks, Etruscans, and finally Romans in 89 BC, following the Social War. By this time both were thoroughly hellenized, as a result of their contacts with Greek colonies such as nearby Cumae. Pompeii was elevated to the status of *Colonia Cornelia Venera Pompeiana* in 89 BC, whilst Herculaneum was accorded the lower rank of *municipium*.

Excavations have revealed the development of Pompeii in particular. The original settlement, to the south-west of the Roman town, was fortified by the Samnites in the 4th century BC; these defences were reinforced after the Roman occupation with a new wall and an interior earthen rampart. The early town had a main street (*cardo*) crossed by two *decumani*. There was a major period of urbanization in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, when tufa replaced limestone as the main building material. At this time a triangular colonnaded forum was constructed around the ancient Doric temple in the southern part of the town, along with a theatre. Later a second forum, this time rectangular and elongated, was added with temples to the official divinities around it.

After Pompeii became part of the Roman territory, it was further endowed with fine public buildings in stone, such as the large amphitheatre, the forum baths, and the *odeon* (small theatre) alongside the theatre. There was an episode of modernization at the end of the 1st century BC, with the construction of an aqueduct to bring the waters of the Sarno river to the town, where they were distributed by means of a sophisticated supply system to houses, baths, and public fountains. High sidewalks were built along the streets, with stepping stones to facilitate crossing.

Herculaneum was a much smaller town (320m by 370m within its walls) on the coast. The latest layout, on the standard classical "Hippodamian" grid, dates from the end of the 1st century BC. The wide main street (*decumanus maximus*) also served as the forum, and was lined with public buildings, such as a basilica, a shrine to Hercules, a theatre, and public baths. The houses in the centre of the town were spacious, with panoramic views on the sea, which at that time came up right up to the town. There was a sacred area, with shrines and baths, outside the walls, and the surroundings contained many fine villas, such as the magnificent Villa of the Papyri.

The roles of the two towns were very different. Pompeii was a commercial town, benefiting from river trade along the Sarno between the interior and the coast and from that along the coastal road between Cumae and southern Campania. It was also the centre of an important wine-producing district, the other main source of its prosperity. Herculaneum, on the other hand, was a holiday resort for rich Romans from the region, with its fine views of and easy access to the sea.

The lives of both towns came to an abrupt and catastrophic end on 24 August in AD 79. The area had been shaken by an earthquake shortly before and reconstruction work was still in progress when Vesuvius erupted with tremendous violence. Pompeii was buried under a thick layer of volcanic ash and stone and Herculaneum disappeared under a pyroclastic flow of many metres of volcanic mud.

Description

Since the discovery of the two buried towns in the 18th century, much more of Pompeii has been revealed by excavation than of Herculaneum - some 44ha, or two-thirds of its original extent.

The main forum, measuring 142m by 38m, is flanked by the foundations of a number of imposing public buildings, such as the *Capitolium* (temple dedicated to the divine triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva), the *basilica* (courthouse), and one of the sets of public baths. Close by is the older triangular forum, where the two theatres are located. The larger of these is interesting because it is of Greek origin, remodelled and enlarged to suit Roman taste. Among other notable public buildings are the very well preserved Stabian Baths, begun in the 2nd century BC.

However, Pompei is especially renowned for its remarkable series of domestic buildings, ranged along its well paved streets. These vary in style from simple dwellings to sumptuous urban villas. The earliest form is the *atrium* house, entirely inward-looking with a courtyard at its centre: the House of the Surgeon is a good example of this type. Hellenistic influences made themselves felt, and this type of house was enlarged and decorated with columns and arcades and equipped with large rooms for social functions.

In its most extreme form, this type of characteristic Roman house, known from towns all over the Empire, developed into a veritable palace, richly decorated and with many rooms, of which the House of the Faun and the House of the Chaste Lovers (currently being excavated) are outstanding examples. In addition to dwelling houses, Pompei also offers many examples of shops, storehouse, inns, brothels, and other categories of urban buildings. It is worth noting also that many of the larger houses away from the town centre have excellent gardens, laid out with fruit trees, shrubs, and flower beds.

Perhaps the most exceptional of all the houses in Pompei is the Villa dei Misteri (the House of the Mysteries). This is an enormous establishment just outside the walls, which developed from a modest town house built in the 3rd century BC. It takes its name from the remarkable wall paintings in the *triclinium* (dining room), which depict the initiation rites ("mysteries") of the cult of Dionysus.

A special characteristic of Pompei is the wealth of graffiti on its walls. An election was imminent at the time of the eruption, and there are many slogans to be found scrawled on walls, as well as others of a more personal, often scurrilous, nature.

Much less of Herculaneum, which was built on a promontory overlooking the Bay of Naples, has been uncovered, not least because of the depth to which it was buried. Current excavations of part of the monumental House of the Papyri require the removal of over 25m of volcanic deposits in order to reach the buried buildings. The situation is aggravated by the fact that much of the ancient city lies beneath the modern town of Ercolano.

Only seven *insulae* (city blocks defined by streets intersecting at right-angles) are now open to the public. However, the nature of the volcanic covering of Herculaneum is such that the ancient buildings are much better preserved than those of Pompei. Organic materials such as wood survive *in situ* and the upper floors of many of the buildings are intact.

Several impressive public buildings are well preserved. These include a spacious *palaestra* (exercise court) entered through a monumental gateway, two sets of public baths, one of which (the Urban Baths) is monumental in scale and vividly decorated, the College of the Priests of Augustus, and a theatre of standard form (though the latter is still largely underground and can only be visited by means of the *cuniculi* (tunnels) dug by 18th century excavators).

The houses are also remarkable for their extent and decoration, especially the "House of the Bicentenary" (so named because it was excavated two hundred years after work first began at Herculaneum). The houses fronting on the sea, especially the House of the Deer, are notable for their large courtyards and rich decoration. The town is also noteworthy for the completeness of its shops, still containing fittings such as enormous wine jars.

Recent excavations in the harbour area have revealed vaulted warehouses which contained the remains of unfortunate citizens who had sought refuge there, only to find death by asphyxiation.

Excavations are currently in progress on the monumental House of the Papyri, which lies outside the city walls. This opulent establishment covers an immense area; its plan was established by means of *cuniculi* in the 18th century, and only a small part is accessible for open-area excavation.

Of great importance in both towns is the artistic styles represented by their sculptures, their mosaics, and, above all, their wall paintings. The intensive study of this art over many years has resulted in the production of a typological sequence which is fundamental to the dating of much of the Roman art of the Mediterranean basin.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Both sites are protected under the provisions of the basic Italian antiquities Law No 1089/1939.

The perimeter of the Pompei site is protected by means of a Decree of 10 June 1929. Environmental legislation in the form of Laws No 431/1985 (the *Decreto Galasso*) and No 1434/1939 have extended this protection to a wider area. All building and excavation works within the modern town of Pompei must be approved by the Soprintendenza (see "Management" below).

The area around Herculaneum is similarly protected. In addition, Law No 431/1985 imposes controls over the modern town of Herculaneum.

Both sites fall within the Vesuvius National Park, which is in the course of being created, where there will be additional protection of the environment.

Management

Both sites are State property (*Proprietà demaniale*) and are managed by the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei, a regional agency of the Ministry of

Cultural and Environmental Heritage (*Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali*).

The total staff of the Soprintendenza is well over a thousand, but the overwhelming majority of these are custodial and administrative personnel: the professional staff consists of twelve archaeologists and three architects, who are responsible for both sites, as well as a number of other properties in the area. Annual visitor numbers at Pompei now exceed two million (half of these are estimated to be foreign tourists); the numbers at Herculaneum are 11-12% of that figure.

There is at the present time no management plan *sensu stricto*, although conservation and restoration activities are programmed. An application has been sent to the Ministry for funding for an exhaustive survey of conservation requirements, to form the basis for an active management plan. A major scientific study of the environmental history of the region is in progress, in which a number of international institutions are participating.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The ruins of Herculaneum were discovered by chance in 1709 when a well was being dug. This well still survives, above the buried remains of the theatre. Tunnels (*cuniculi*) were driven out from the original shaft and the site was pillaged for its artistic treasures. Deliberate excavation, rather than mere treasure hunting, but still using the tunnelling technique, began in 1738, on the orders of the Bourbon King of Naples, and work continued on a sporadic basis over the next two centuries.

The existence of the ruins of Pompei had been known since the 16th century, but work did not begin to clear them until 1748. The task was much easier than that at Herculaneum, owing to the nature of the overlying volcanic deposits, and the work continued systematically from that time on. However, this was not scientific excavation in the modern sense of the term, since for many years it concentrated on the recovery of works of art for the Royal collection, which forms the nucleus of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples.

The era of scientific excavation began at Pompei in 1860. It was not until 1927 that the excavation of Herculaneum was undertaken using techniques developed at Pompei to bring the ancient town to the light of day. The theatre at Herculaneum is still only accessible by means of the systematic series of *cuniculi* dug in the 18th century. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century work has continued at both sites on excavation, conservation, consolidation, and restoration of the remarkable remains.

Two major excavation projects are currently under way. At Pompei the House of the Chaste Lovers (*Villa dei Casti Amanti*) is being excavated systematically, and has changed the dating of the earthquake that is known to have preceded the eruption of Vesuvius dramatically. At Herculaneum a

small part of the monumental House of the Papyri (on which the Getty Museum in Malibu, California, is based) is being excavated in what requires a mammoth civil engineering project to remove over 25m of volcanic debris.

Both sites, and Pompei in particular, illustrate the evolution of conservation techniques over the past two centuries. The degree of reconstruction and the use of materials such as concrete and steel in restorations and reconstructions carried out before the 1980s would not be acceptable if performed today; they are, in fact, being replaced progressively by modern techniques and materials. It may be argued, however, that these early restorations have a historicity of their own which is worthy of some form of conservation.

The wall paintings were in the past generally conserved using organic materials, which have caused little, if any, damage to them. However, the techniques used for remounting them using concrete were harmful, and a new method using instead aluminium and plastic, developed by the Istituto per il Restauro in Rome, is now being applied progressively to all the paintings.

There are serious structural problems at both sites resulting from a variety of factors, such as inappropriate materials, rising damp, and rain and wind attack, and these were exacerbated by the 1980 earthquake. At Herculaneum the high water table resulting from a lowering of the coast during the eruption of AD 79 also creates special difficulties.

Several new approaches are being implemented at Pompei. Instead of concentrating on single buildings, restoration and conservation are being directed to entire quarters of the ancient town, consisting of one or more *insulae*, so as to achieve a more integrated result. There is also considerable emphasis being placed on the reconstruction of early gardens, with the planting of fruit trees, shrubs, and flowers known from scientific studies to have been there originally. In order to differentiate clearly between original gardens and house interiors (which under the old regime were allowed to become grass-covered), the latter are now being covered with layers of pumice, which keeps down vegetable growth and provides the necessary contrast.

An innovation at Herculaneum is the insertion of copies and casts of paintings and sculptures now in the Naples Museum at the sites of their original discoveries, which has greatly enhanced the appearance of buildings such as the House of the Deer.

Funding from the European Union is being used to create new interpretation centres and other facilities (bookshops, restaurants, etc) at the unexcavated farm site in the centre of Pompei and the former administrative office buildings at Herculaneum.

Authenticity

Despite the nature and quality of earlier restoration and reconstruction work, the authenticity of both properties is very high. This applies both to the

individual components and to the ancient urban fabric.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Pompei and Herculaneum in March 1997.

Qualities

Owing to their having been suddenly and swiftly overwhelmed by debris from the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, the ruins of the two towns of Pompei and Herculaneum are unparalleled anywhere in the world for their completeness and extent. They provide a vivid and comprehensive picture of Roman life at one precise moment in time.

Comparative analysis

Nowhere else is it possible to identify any archaeological site that even remotely stands comparison with these two ancient towns.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

The area proposed for inscription at Pompei is acceptable and logical. It is important, however, that it should be extended slightly, so as to include the strip currently the subject of expropriation that links the Via dei Sepolcri outside the town walls with the Villa dei Misteri.

At Herculaneum the nominated site should be extended so as to include the area of the Villa dei Papiri currently under excavation. It is not reasonable to propose the entire known extent of the villa because most of it still lies under a number of privately owned properties.

However, the Theatre, which is protected although it lies underground, beneath part of the present-day town, should certainly be added.

Finally, ICOMOS strongly recommends the inclusion in the nomination of the Villa Oplontis at Torre Annunziata. This well preserved rural villa, which was engulfed at the same time as the two towns and which is under the control of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei, contains what are indisputably the finest wall paintings anywhere in the Roman world.

These proposals were discussed with the Soprintendenza. Subsequently, full documentation was received by ICOMOS and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre for the extension of the original nomination as proposed by ICOMOS.

ICOMOS hopes that the funding required for the preparation of a management plan (see "Management" above) will be made available with the minimum delay.

Recommendation

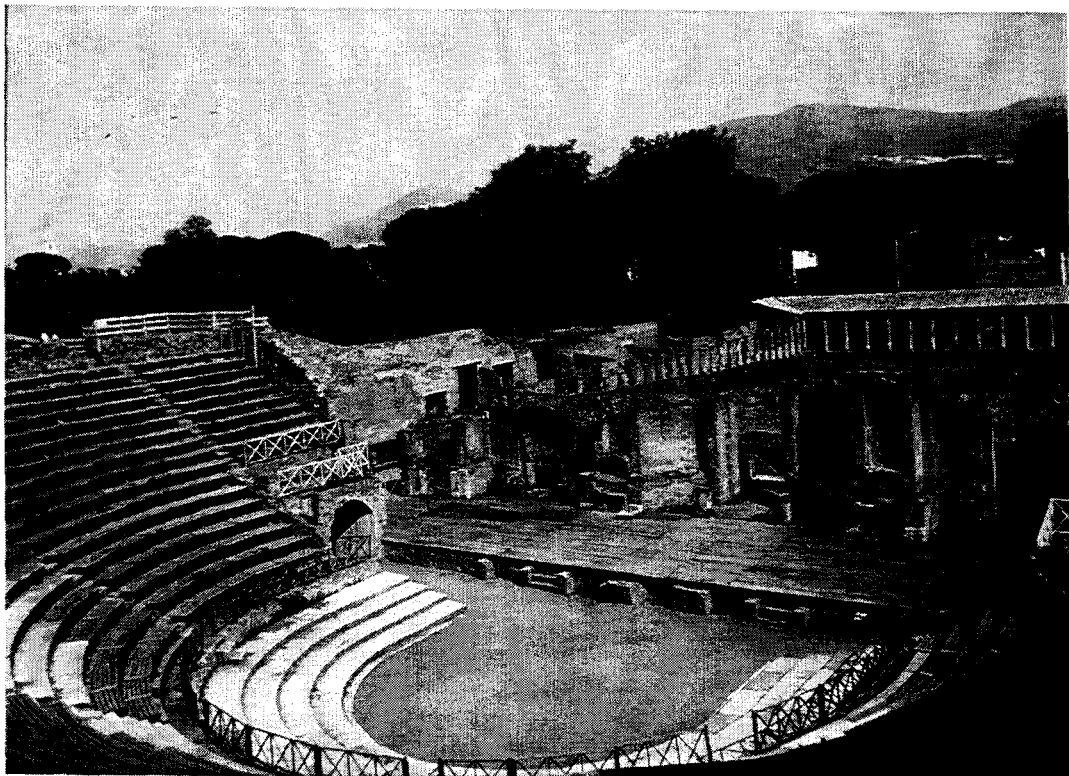
That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii, iv, and v*:

The impressive remains of the towns of Pompei and Herculaneum and their associated villas, buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, provide a complete and vivid picture of society and daily life at a specific moment in the past that is without parallel anywhere in the world.

ICOMOS, September 1997



Pompéi / Pompei :
La Porte Marina et les thermes suburbains /
The Marina Gate and suburban Baths



Pompéi / Pompei :
Le Grand Théâtre /
The Large Theatre



**Herculaneum / Ercolano :
Maison de l'atrium aux mosaïques /
The House of the Mosaic Atrium**



**Herculaneum / Ercolano :
Rue avec fontaine publique /
Street scene, with public fountain**