

## My Favourite Historical Site - Pompeii

By Mrs Weeden

Pompeii and Herculaneum are the sites of two ancient cities in Naples, Italy. They date from 450BC but in August 79AD they were buried under 4- 6 metres of volcanic ash which came from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The eruption lasted for two days and killed almost all of the inhabitants of the area. Nevertheless, much of the town was left intact and preserved by the volcanic covering.

Both sites were accidentally rediscovered in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Excavations of these sites have been ongoing ever since, with attempts to reconstruct areas that suffered damage from earthquakes in the 1980s. Despite this, only two thirds of the city have been excavated and these areas are beginning to deteriorate now they are not under the preserving effects of the volcanic matter which buried them.

The preservation from the volcanic matter means that these sites offer a fantastic insight into the daily life of Roman civilisation. I would recommend taking a guided tour around the many areas of the city which are open to the public. You are able to see many examples of amazing Roman architecture including the remains of the Temple of Jupiter, the Forum and the Theatre as well as some fantastic examples of public baths and private homes. Wandering through the streets gives you a great appreciation of the quality of Roman engineering and you can even see examples of genuine Roman mosaics as well as signs from long forgotten shops. The museum also holds plaster casts of the "bodies of Pompeii." This is an exhibition of the remains of victims of the eruption which were reconstructed in 1864. It is truly fascinating to be able to see how these long forgotten people lived their lives, and truly heart-breaking to see how their lives were destroyed by one act of nature, which they would have attributed to the wrath of the Gods.

To find out more about the archaeological sites around Pompeii visit:

<http://pompeisites.org/en/>