

## First Century Villa Near Mount Vesuvius May Belong to Pliny the Elder

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The remains of Punta Sarparella villa in Bacoli, Italy.  
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The ruins of a seafront villa, believed to be where Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder witnessed the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, were uncovered near Naples, Italy. The site was found during an excavation to build a playground.

When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE, Pliny the Elder sailed from his home toward the volcano in an effort to rescue people. His nephew and adopted son Pliny the Younger

wrote about having witnessed Pliny's death from toxic gas not long after.

Pliny the Elder was a wealthy commander of the Misenum fleet, which protected the coast from pirates, and a prolific writer, primarily known for his compendium on natural history.

Mount Vesuvius's eruption decimated the region, including notable Roman cities like **Pompeii** (<https://www.artnews.com/list/art-news/artists/worlds-most-important-archaeological-sites-1234636277/pompeii/>) and **Herculaneum** (<https://www.artnews.com/list/art-news/news/underrated-archaeological-sites-1234680123/herculaneum/>).

The ruins of **Punta Sarparella** (<https://www.artnews.com/t/punta-sarparella/>) were recently excavated after a swimming pool from the site was removed to make way for a playground. Located in Bacoli, a commune of Naples that was known as Misenum during ancient Roman times, when it was a major port city, the town matches Pliny's written descriptions.

The villa also has a view of Mount Vesuvius at only 20 miles away, making it a likely candidate, according to **Italy's ministry of culture** (<https://sabapmetropolitanana.cultura.gov.it/una-villa-romana-scoperta-sulle-sponde-del-porto-di-miseno-grazie-ai-lavori-per-una-villa-comunale/>). At his estate, among several others, Pliny the Elder would have entertained Roman elite with banquets. (Archaeologists, however, note the possibility that it could have belonged to another wealthy Roman citizen.)

The remaining walls, Italian Ministry of Culture archaeologist Simona Formola told **CNN** (<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/19/style/naples-roman-beach-house-pliny/index.html>), were made from soft limestone known as tufa that extended to the beach. There would have been ten large rooms and multiple panoramic terraces. Excavations, which could provide additional information on the villa and nearby naval base, are expected to continue for several months.