

Archaeologists recover Neolithic Ship Cargo off the Coast of Capri in Italy

November 21, 2023



Following the identification in October of submerged remains near the famous Blue Grotto (Grotta Azzurra) of Capri, which the Roman emperors used as a private bath, by the underwater unit of the Naples Police Department, and the precise location of other findings that had been previously reported but not specifically located, on November 20, 2023, the Metropolitan Area Superintendence of Naples recovered the first in a series of obsidian cores.

Commissioner Mariano Nuzzo, along with the archaeology protection officer, Dr. Luca di Franco, and the supervisors of underwater archaeology, Dr. Simona Formola and technical assistant Carlo Leggieri, assisted by the Naples Police Dive Unit and the Carabinieri of the TPC, ensured the precise positioning of the discoveries.

Evidence dispersion was noted in a much larger area than initially thought, at depths ranging from 30 to over 40 meters, and the recovery of what must have been part of the cargo of a Neolithic-era ship.

The recovered core, showing clear signs of chiseling and carving on its surface, measures approximately 28 x 20 centimeters with a height of 15 centimeters and a weight of nearly 8 kilograms.

It has been stored in the warehouses of the Superintendence awaiting the cleaning of marine concretions and restoration.

The Superintendent noted that an extensive instrumental study of the seabed was necessary to verify the possible presence of the hull or other cargo material and to direct the direct excavation in a particularly challenging context for the research and recovery of ancient materials, especially those of a certain consistency, determined by the very low depth of the seabed.

Collaboration with police divers proved crucial, thanks to their great expertise in handling situations of certain complexity.

Subsequent recovery operations have already been scheduled and will be carried out in collaboration with the National Superintendence of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

They will undoubtedly allow for a deeper investigation into the frequented use of the island of Capri in particular, but also of the ancient Mediterranean in general, during a still-to-be-explored prehistoric period.