

ANCIENT HISTORY

Conservation and Preservation Issues in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Pompeii and Herculaneum has faced numerous issues of conservation and preservation notably due to human interaction with the sites. Such interaction consists of tourism, vandalism and theft, which continue to damage certain architecture and archaeology within Pompeii and Herculaneum. Specific techniques however have been imposed in order to resolve such issues.

Tourism in particular has been damaging the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum with over 2.5 million visitors entering both sites each year; they are often confined to small areas and are unaware of the degrading impact they have on the sites. The general movements around both cities has caused the wearing down of roads and pavements particularly in the more frequented areas such as the Pompeian forum complex and the amphitheatre. Mosaics and street pavements have additionally been eroded and pipes have become exposed. Furthermore the taking of rocks and stones as souvenirs, accidental brushing against walls and frescoes as well as camera flashes have also contributed to deterioration within both sites. The dumping of rubbish notably cigarette butts has proved to be a major problem, as the goals of preservation and conservation are not being achieved. To decrease the impacts of tourism, the Superintendent of Pompeii, Pietro Guzzo, declared a moratorium on all further excavations at both sites. Guzzo demanded that all funds should be diverted into preserving both cities rather than continuing excavations especially when there is still work to be done on already excavated sections. Such a preservation technique, although is arguably a good step in preventing further damage, still has not resolved the aforementioned damage.

Another issue affecting Pompeii and Herculaneum is vandalism, particularly graffiti. Despite continued efforts from authorities such as the Pompeii trust, the first world organization to specifically support conservation at Pompeii, vandals are still contributing to the deterioration of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Graffiti can often be seen inscribed on walls, paintings as well as frescoes particularly those less damaged or unsullied. Over the past decade graffiti has continued to multiply with markings seen in houses open to visitors. Further tourists breaking off part of the cities structures to take home as mementos or souvenirs as well as the pulling away of exposed plaster is prevalent at both sites. Wallace Hadrill, a British classical scholar argues that 'man is wreaking damage far greater than Vesuvius'. Hadrill manifests that unless constant efforts are made to arrest decay, the site will crumble to nothing within decades. These practices continue to cause significant amounts of deterioration and are affecting the heritage that once existed.

Theft is another issue tarnishing the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum with many thousands of objects missing over the past decades. Such acts include 14 frescoes being extracted from the walls of the House of the Gladiators in 1977 and two frescoes hacked off a wall in the House of the Chaste Lovers in Pompeii in 2003. The removal of the two frescoes has indeed contributed to the damage of the irreplaceable surrounding works of arts. According to an Italian preservation group nearly 600 items have been stolen from Pompeii subsequently causing authorities to minimize the use of insitu copies of original artifacts. To overcome such an issue strategies used by authorities have been implemented particularly to minimize the issuing of specific tickets. These tickets are used to encourage tourists to visit both Pompeii and Herculaneum thus minimizing the impacts of theft at both sites due to individuals not crowding one site in particular. Once again however, this is purely to spread any future damage, and does not solve the current damage that has been made.

The impacts of tourism, vandalism and theft are essentially degrading the once rich culture of Pompeii and Herculaneum. While specific actions have been performed in order to resolve any future issues, the current damage still remains a crucial issue.

Source 1

Source A portrays a tourist touching one of the structures in Pompeii. Such an act although not forbidden gradually wears away the surface of the structure with the numerous other individuals who perform the same act daily. With over 2.5 million visitors to Pompeii and Herculaneum each year the combined effects of touching structures as well as graffiti and vandalism ultimately causes destruction and reduces the once rich culture of the sites. Tourists are often unaware of the degrading effects they have on both societies causing Italian Preservation Groups as well as international bodies to create strategies to reduce the likelihood of further damage to the sites. Furthermore due to the effects of tourism roads leading to frequently visited areas such as the amphitheatre and forum have been eroded exposing lead pipes. This combined with mosaics being trampled has essentially caused irreversible damage to a society existing many thousands of years ago.



Source 2

Source B pictures an act of vandalism, a toppled column in a garden of an ancient Roman Villa. Such a deliberate act is contributing to the deterioration of Pompeii despite efforts to ensure conservation and preservation. Coupled with graffiti, theft and inscriptions deliberately placed on irreplaceable mosaics and frescoes the cultural significance of Pompeii is being considerably reduced and destroyed. It is evident that the greatest negative impact on the city is the millions of visitors each year who enter areas closed to the public such as barricaded houses and perform such debilitating acts as previously listed. Pietro Guzzo the Superintendent of Pompeii has ensured no further excavations occur and efforts be placed on conserving and preserving remains that have already been discovered. Ultimately this will reduce the impact tourism has on both sites and guarantee the preservation of unexcavated remains.

