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Lupanare of Pompeii

The term lupanare in the ancient Roman world comes from the word "lupa" meaning prostitute. In ancient Pompeii, lupanariums were the places designated for sexual pleasure, the so-called present-day dating houses.

In Pompeii there were as many as 25 lupanariums located in different parts of the city, but the most famous and frequented, was the lupanare of Victor and Africanus.

Lupanare of Victor and Africanus

The latter is located in regio VII, in a narrow, crooked alley near the forum of Pompeii and the Stabian baths.

Victor and Africanus' lupanare was structured on two levels; on the upper floor lived the prostitutes and the owner. While the lower floor was divided into five small cells and this is where the prostitutes welcomed their clients.

The cells were small, narrow and inside there was only a masonry bed with a mattress and pillow resting on it, closed not with doors but with simple curtains.

The entrance to the lupanare featured a corridor frescoed with many small paintings depicting erotic scenes, which have become world famous today.

These small paintings were placed above the cell entrance doors and probably represented a kind of catalog of the services performed by prostitutes.

The prostitutes were paid with the coins in circulation in ancient Pompeii, the so-called Aces. And one's services were worth from two to eight aces, just think that a cup of wine in Pompeii was paid only one ace.





The graffiti of the lupanare

Inside the cells of the famous lupanare of Victor and Africanus 120 graffiti were found, bearing erotic phrases and the names of prostitutes, who operated in the ancient brothel. Thanks to these engravings, it was possible to understand that they were mostly Greek and Oriental female slaves. And that the she-wolf trade was carried out not only by women but also by men.

The phallus at the entrance to the lupanare

Another important distinguishing feature of the brothels was the presence of the [phallus symbol](#) at the entrance to the dwelling. In fact, the owners of the brothels, used this symbol as a kind of sign, to attract various customers and signal the presence of the lupanare.

