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Herculaneum Papyrus Villa

The Villa of the Papyri is one of the most impressive structures found in the excavations at Herculaneum. So called by the archaeologists who discovered it because of the numerous papyri that were found during the excavation work, contained within the villa's library.

A good 250 metres long and structured on three floors, the Villa of the Papyri of Herculaneum stood overlooking the sea and was discovered by chance around 1750 during the construction of a well.

The interior of the Villa was characterised by numerous rooms, four floors of terraces, the largest of which measured 25 metres, an immense peristyle and an open-air pool of 66 metres. The entrance to the Villa of the Papyri, directly overlooking the sea, was paved with black and white tiles. And led immediately into the atrium where the central pool for collecting rainwater (impluvium) was located, surrounded by 11 statuettes used as fountains.

But the main feature of Herculaneum's Villa of the Papyri was the majesty of the peristyle. 100 metres long and 37 metres wide, with a garden bordered by a portico with 64 columns at the centre of which was a large outdoor pool.

The library of the Villa of the Papyri

From the peristyle one could access the various rooms of the villa. Including the famous library where no less than 1826 rolls of charred papyri were found enclosed in some crates and wrapped in wooden skins.

Unfortunately, many of these papyri were lost, probably either during the first excavation works because they were mistaken for pieces of charcoal and therefore thrown away, or they were probably accidentally destroyed during the unrolling.

Upon examination of them, it was discovered that they were written in Greek, only a few were in Latin and contained philosophical texts, which are currently preserved in the National Library of Naples.

Eighty-seven statues were also unearthed in the Herculaneum Villa of the Papyri. Which probably adorned the various rooms of the villa, made partly of marble and partly of bronze, including: the statue of Athena made of marble, the statues of the sleeping satyr, the drunken satyr and Hermes made of bronze. As well as a series of busts such as those of Seneca, Platon, Scipio and Berenice Artemis, all of which are currently kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.

The excavations of the Villa of the Papyri are not yet finished. In fact, only part of the Villa has been brought to light, due to the difficulties caused by the Villa's location 30 metres below the modern city of Herculaneum, and the continuing lack of funds.

Although it cannot be visited due to the works, Villa dei Papyri can still be admired thanks to the MAV's advanced technology, which has made it possible to fully reconstruct the interior and