

Pompeii and Herculaneum - revision notes

Differences between **Pompeii** and **Herculaneum**

a) **Herculaneum** is **nearer** to Vesuvius and so was covered by a **greater depth** of volcanic mud. But because **a north wind was blowing**, Pompeii was **first** covered by **ash** and **stones** carried through the air.

Because of this, people found it **hard to escape from Pompeii**, with hot ash and stones falling, poisonous gases, and darkness and chaos in the streets. Many people thought that the safest thing was to stay in their homes, but doors and windows became blocked and roofs collapsed. About **2,000 people** (out of a population of 20,000) were **killed. But many escaped.**



Fewer people were killed in **Herculaneum**. People used to think that almost everyone had escaped before the very hot and very strong wind blew through the town, followed by mud; but recent finds have shown that **quite a few were killed**: for example, about 300 **skeletons** have been found near the old **beach**.

b) **Pompeii** is covered with **ash** and **a thin layer of lava**.

Herculaneum is surrounded by mud which has set as solid as **concrete**. It is also much **deeper**. It is also **under** a modern **suburb** of Naples. Therefore, it is much **harder** to excavate **Herculaneum**.

However, when the ash fell from the sky on **Pompeii**, it made **roofs and balconies and some walls collapse**; the **mud preserved things in Herculaneum** by flowing around them quickly and then setting as it cooled. Many things made **of wood were preserved as charcoal in Herculaneum**. So, **in some ways Herculaneum is better** for archaeologists than Pompeii.



The importance of Pompeii and Herculaneum

It is possible to visit many large buildings in different parts of the Roman empire, but normally ordinary buildings like houses, and streets have been built over, have had their materials removed, or have simply fallen apart from neglect; and household objects are almost never found in the places they were used.



In Pompeii and Herculaneum we can see the streets, and most buildings have survived much as they were left on th of A.D.7 . And inside equipment, ornaments, mosaics and wall-paintings were found. In both towns, but in Pompeii in particular, life stopped very suddenly, and things, for example bread in a baker's oven or a meal in the temple of Isis, were abandoned when people fled, and then they were preserved, covered by volcanic debris.

Further points:

a) Apart from archaeological evidence, we know about the eruption from two letters written by , to the historian . In these he writes about what happened to him and his mother in , and to his uncle, , who died trying to rescue people with the boats of the Roman fleet, which was based at .

b) Difficulties for those escaping through the streets of Pompeii: