



| VISIT GUIDE 2026

Herculaneum

Ercolano · From 19.50€

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History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Carbonized Time: A City Frozen

GOOGLE **4.8** ★★★★★ 15 817 reviews

TIQETS **4.5** ★★★★★ 1 544 reviews

Herculaneum, known in Latin as **Herculaneum**, traces its mythical origins to Hercules himself, who allegedly founded the city after his journey to Spain. However, its tangible history begins with Greek colonization and later Samnite influence before becoming a Roman colony. Unlike Pompeii, which was buried under cold ash, Herculaneum was devastated by a **hot pyroclastic surge** during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. This catastrophic event carbonized organic materials, preserving wood, furniture, and even food in an unprecedented manner.

The site remained hidden for centuries until **1738**, when Bourbon kings initiated systematic excavations. Initially, these digs were driven by a desire for artistic treasures rather than historical preservation, leading to the removal of many artifacts to private collections. It wasn't until the late 19th and early 20th centuries that scientific archaeology took hold,

revealing the complex stratigraphy of the town. The discovery of skeletons in the boat sheds provided a harrowing glimpse into the final moments of the inhabitants.

Today, less than a quarter of the ancient city has been excavated, as much of it lies beneath the modern municipality of **Ercolano**. This urban overlay limits further exploration but creates a unique juxtaposition between past and present. The preserved structures offer a vertical perspective rarely seen elsewhere, with restored upper floors and balconies allowing visitors to imagine the multi-level domestic life of the Roman elite.

The archaeological park is a UNESCO World Heritage site, recognized for its exceptional state of conservation. The **Villa of the Papyri**, an aristocratic retreat, yielded a library of carbonized scrolls, representing one of the most significant intellectual discoveries of antiquity. These texts, still being deciphered today, continue to fascinate scholars and provide insight into the philosophical currents of the time.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping into Herculaneum feels like entering a **time capsule** frozen in mid-action. The air is thick with history, and the sunlight glints off white stones that have survived millennia. Unlike the sprawling ruins of Pompeii, here you are immersed in intimate domestic spaces where every object tells a story. The preserved wooden beams and carbonized doors invite you to touch the very fabric of daily Roman life.

As you walk along the cobblestone streets, the silence is profound, broken only by the distant sound of waves from the nearby sea. You can almost hear the chatter of merchants and the footsteps of residents going about their day. The verticality of the buildings, with their intact windows and balconies, offers a **unique architectural perspective** that allows you to visualize the city as it once stood, complete with upper stories and intricate details.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

Ercolano · Train: Ercolano Scavi (Circumvesuviana Sorrento Line, 15 min from Naples Piazza Garibaldi).

OPENING HOURS

Open every day. Extended hours in summer (until 7:30 PM). Check for exceptional closures before your visit.

PRICES

Full price approx. €19.50. Discounts for EU students and children. Combined tickets available.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 2 to 3 hours to leisurely explore the baths, houses, and Villa of the Papyri without rushing. Also visit the boat sheds near the beach.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed without flash or tripod. Take advantage of natural light to capture unique vertical architectural details.

AUDIENCE

Ideal for history enthusiasts and families. The site is smaller than Pompeii, making it more accessible for young children.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

**Metro**

: Ercolano - Scavi, 222 — 2 min à pied

Naples Airport - Capodichino (30 min) · Salerno-Amalfi Coast Airport (130 min)

**Bus**

: Plinio — 6 min à pied

Naples Capodichino Airport (48 min) · Salerno-Amalfi Coast Airport (215 min)

**Car**

Naples Capodichino Airport (36 min) · Salerno-Amalfi Coast Airport (176 min)

**Bike**

Naples Capodichino Airport (48 min) · Salerno-Amalfi Coast Airport (241 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve Herculaneum ?



 Corso Resina — 80056 Ercolano

 40°48.356' N, 14°20.843' E



ORGANIZATION

Organization

Zone A: Suburban Baths & Forum

Start your visit at the Suburban Baths, exceptionally preserved thermal complexes showcasing grand Roman social life. Nearby, explore the forum area, though much remains unexcavated. Observe the layout of public spaces and the remnants of administrative buildings.

Zone B: Residential Streets & Houses

Wander through the narrow streets lined with well-preserved houses. Note the carbonized wooden doors and stairs, unique to Herculaneum. Visit key residences like the House of the Menelaus to see intricate frescoes and domestic arrangements.

Zone C: Boat Sheds & Beach

End your tour at the beachfront, where the boat sheds reveal the tragic fate of those seeking escape. Here, you will find the skeletal remains of victims caught in the pyroclastic flow. This area offers a powerful, somber conclusion to the visit.

ACCESSIBILITY

**Disabled Access**

Access possible but uneven floors; check for assistance devices on site.

**Families**

Site suitable for children due to its reduced size and immersive nature.

**Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Must-See Archaeological Treasures

01

Zone A

Suburban Baths

These baths are among the best-preserved in the Roman world, featuring elaborate mosaics and heating systems. Observe the **caldarium** and tepidarium, designed for comfort and social interaction. The structural integrity allows you to understand the engineering prowess of the era.

💡 The walls retain traces of original paint, giving insight into the vibrant colors used in public spaces.

02

Zone D

Villa of the Papyri

This aristocratic villa housed a library of over 1,800 scrolls, mostly philosophical works. The **carbonized papyri** remain unreadable in full but represent an immense intellectual treasure. The garden statues, now in Naples, originally adorned this serene retreat.

💡 Modern technology is slowly decoding the scrolls without unrolling them, revealing new literary works.

03

Zone B

House of the Menyla

Named after a fresco depicting Menelaus, this house showcases high-quality decoration and spacious rooms. The **frescoes** are remarkably vivid, illustrating mythological scenes with precision. It exemplifies the wealth and taste of Herculaneum's elite residents.

💡 A skeleton found here suggests the occupant tried to hide in a closet during the eruption.

04

Zone C

Boat Sheds (Barcaioli)

Located near the ancient beach, these sheds sheltered boats and people fleeing the disaster. The **skeletal remains** found here provide a heartbreaking glimpse into the final moments of life. They highlight the suddenness and brutality of the volcanic event.

💡 Some victims were found huddled together, indicating a desperate attempt to find safety.

05

Zone B

House of the Wooden Partition

This residence features a rare example of pre-Roman construction techniques. The **wooden partition** itself is preserved, offering a unique look at earlier building styles. It demonstrates the evolution of architecture in Herculaneum over time.

💡 The wood was carbonized instantly, preventing decay and preserving its structure for centuries.

06

Zone A

Sacred Area

This religious complex includes temples dedicated to Venus and other deities. The **hellenistic architecture** reflects the Greek influence on the region. Altars and votive offerings provide insight into the spiritual practices of the inhabitants.

💡 Statues found here were likely moved to protect them during the initial tremors.

07

Zone B

Bakery with Carbonized Bread

A small bakery where loaves of bread were found carbonized in ovens. The **preserved bread** offers a direct link to the diet of the Romans. It is a humble yet powerful artifact of daily sustenance.

💡 The bread is so well-preserved that its texture and shape are clearly visible.

08

Zone C

Stadium Terrace

Overlooking the sea, this terrace served as a gathering place for residents. The **view of the bay** remains similar to what Romans saw 2,000 years ago. It highlights the importance of the sea in the city's economy and lifestyle.

💡 Fishing equipment found nearby indicates the significance of maritime activities.

TIPS

Essential Tips for Your Visit

TIMING

Arrive exactly at opening time (8:30 AM) to avoid crowds and enjoy soft morning light for photography.

BILLET

Book tickets online in advance, especially during summer, to skip lines and ensure entry.

PARCOURS

Start with the Suburban Baths, then move to residential zones, ending with the boat sheds for a logical flow.

PHOTO

Use zoom to capture vertical details like restored windows and balconies, unique to Herculaneum.

PAUSE

Take a break at Torre Annunziata Park or Ristorante Da Cicillo after the visit to recover from the heat.

ENFANTS

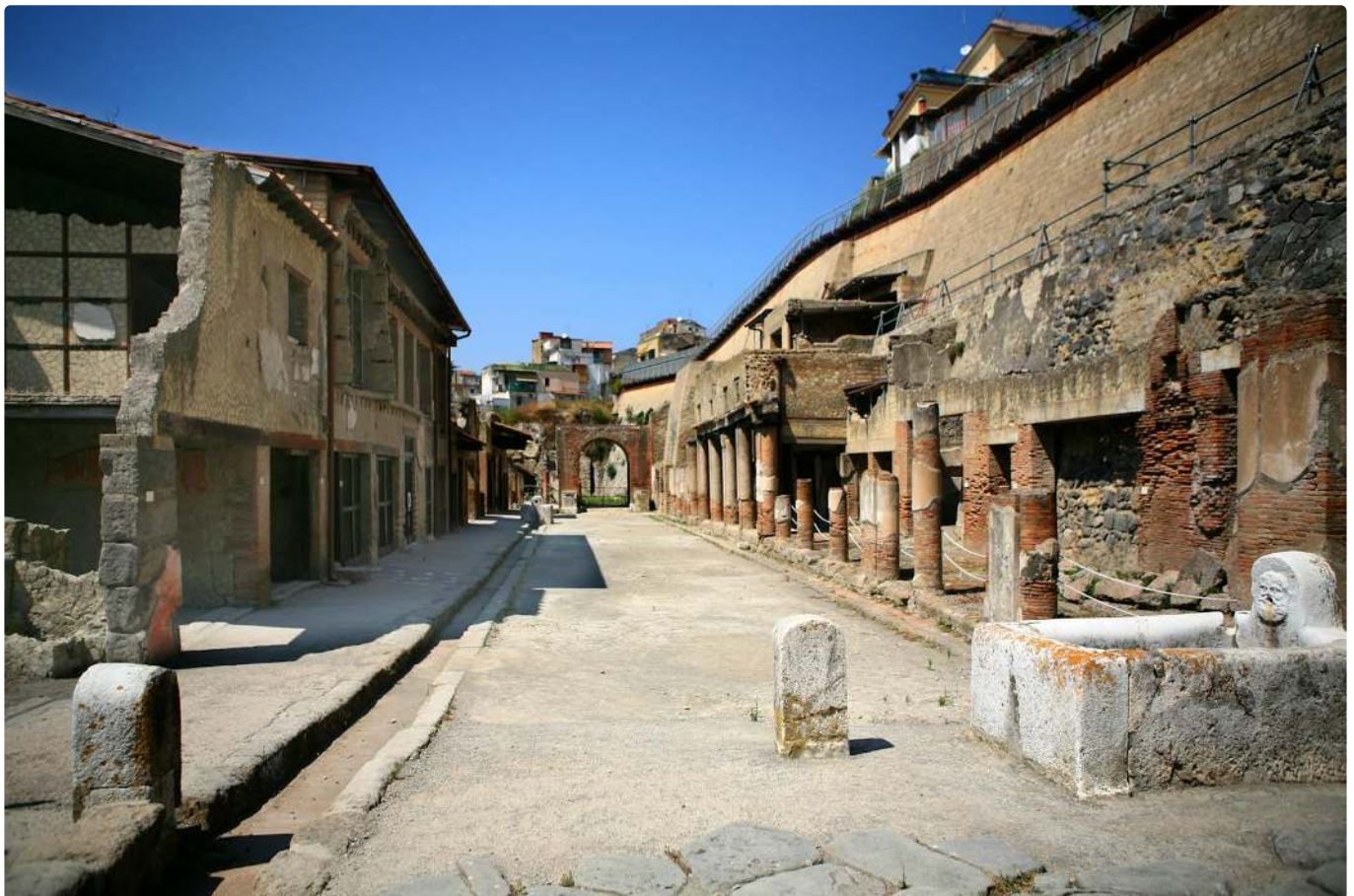
The site is smaller than Pompeii, making it manageable for children, but keep them close near uneven edges.

AUDIOGUIDE

Rent an audioguide to visualize disappeared upper floors and understand the context of each remnant.

CONFORT

Wear sturdy sneakers with good grip due to uneven cobblestones; bring water and sunscreen as shade is limited.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Should I book tickets for Herculaneum in advance?

Yes, online booking is highly recommended, especially during peak season (July-August) and on weekends. Since the site is smaller than Pompeii, it quickly reaches its maximum capacity. Buying in advance helps you avoid l

Are there combined tickets for Herculaneum and Pompeii?

Bundle deals sometimes exist, but please note that these are two distinct sites with separate access points. Always check validity and specific conditions at the time of purchase. Often, buying separately remains more fl

Can I combine Herculaneum and Vesuvius in the same day?

Absolutely, it's a classic itinerary. Start with Herculaneum in the morning to enjoy the cool air, then hike up Vesuvius in the afternoon. Be sure to check the trail opening status for Vesuvius before leaving, as it depe

What is the difference between visiting Herculaneum and Pompeii?

Herculaneum is smaller, better preserved (wood, upper floors), and less crowded. It takes 2 to 3 hours compared to 4 to 5 for Pompeii. Here, the volcanic mud carbonized the wood, offering a more intimate view of Roman do

How long does it take to visit the site?

Allow 2 to 3 hours for a complete and relaxed visit. This gives you enough time to explore the Suburban Baths, the Villa of the Papyri, and private homes without rushing. One hour is insufficient to appreciate the richne

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

Exceptional Wood Preservation

Unlike Pompeii, Herculaneum was buried under hot mudflows that carbonized organic materials. This process preserved **wooden furniture**, doors, and even beds, offering a rare glimpse into Roman domestic interiors.

The Lost Library

The Villa of the Papyri contained a library of previously unknown literary works. These **philosophical texts** are still being decoded using advanced imaging techniques, revealing lost knowledge.

Final Moments on the Beach

Skeletons found in the boat sheds help us understand the fate of the population. These **tragic discoveries** bear witness to the desperation of those trying to escape by sea.

City Beneath the Modern Town

Less than a quarter of the ancient city has been excavated. Most public monuments remain buried under the current municipality of **Ercolano**, limiting future archaeological work.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

After exploring the ruins, take a break at **Torre Annunziata Park**, a green space adjacent to the site offering shade and tranquility. For dining, visit **Ristorante Da Cicillo**, a traditional local spot serving authentic Campanian dishes just minutes away. Don't miss the **National Archaeological Museum of Naples**, which houses original works from the Villa of the Papyri and precious mosaics removed for conservation. The museum provides essential context for the artifacts left behind in Ercolano.



Visiting Herculaneum is not just an archaeological tour; it is an emotional journey through time. The presence of human remains in the boat sheds serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of life. This site offers a **tangible connection** to our ancestors, making the ancient world feel immediate and real. Leave with a deeper appreciation for the resilience of human civilization and the enduring power of memory.