

Mount Vesuvius

- On the morning of 24th August 79CE Mount Vesuvius erupted.
- Mount Vesuvius was situated just above a large Roman city called Pompeii. Pompeii is on the bay of Naples in Southern Italy. North of Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius was another city called Herculaneum.
- Both cities were completely destroyed by the volcano.
- The morning it happened the sky filled with dark clouds and smoke, hot ash and rock shot out of the volcano which showered Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- As the volcano erupted people tried to escape and run for their lives but gas and smoke filled the air. People could not see where they were going and within a few hours both towns and all their people were completely buried in ash.
- A young Roman soldier called Pliny witnessed the eruption and wrote two letters describing it. It is thought that the column of ash reached 20 miles high! It lasted over 19 hours and was felt as far away as North Africa.
- The towns remained buried for 1700 years, but during the 18th century archaeologists dug up Pompeii and the surrounding area to find the most preserved Roman remains ever!
- Today Pompeii is a famous tourist destination as the Roman ruins, including all the dead bodies of the people running or hiding from the volcano's vicious eruption, are preserved almost completely as they were nearly 2000 years earlier!
- The Roman buildings are still there, including an amphitheatre, public baths, a palaestra (gymnasium) and many houses. Many artefacts, including plates of food have been found carbonised but otherwise totally intact. This means it is one of the best places for historians and archaeologists to find out about Roman life.
- The eruption of Mount Vesuvius would have been utterly terrifying. Today the most frightening thing about visiting Pompeii is seeing the remains of over 3000 dead Romans, some of them with the fear still showing on their faces. These bodies have been covered in plaster of Paris to preserve history so all who come may see the horror of the Volcano.
- Since that day, August 24th nearly 2000 years ago, the volcano has erupted 12 times! The last time was in 1944. If it happened again today over 1 million people live & work in the area could be affected!