

Artifacts You Don't Want to Miss

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Statue of Apollo Citharist

Bronze, Second half of the 1st century B.C.

Pompeii, House of the Citharist

5630 Naples National Archaeological Museum

This Pompeiian bronze of a youthful Apollo was created as a replica of a 5th century B.C. Greek sculpture. The god is missing a cithara (a stringed musical instrument similar to a lyre), which would have been in his left hand, but still grasps the plectrum (pick) in his right. This type of sculpture is a rare example for Pompeii, as it didn't serve a function. The cult of Apollo was one of the oldest in Pompeii and probably influenced the choice of subject matter. At life-size, the inlaid bone eyes would have met the gaze of each passerby reinforcing the presence of the powerful god.

Male Bust

Bronze and glass, 1st century B.C.

Pompeii, House of the Citharist

4989 Naples National Archaeological Museum

This is one of two bronze busts found together at the House of the Citharist that likely portray the owners of the house, belonging to one of the oldest and most influential families in Pompeii. We cannot be sure whether this couple was still alive when this portrait was displayed in the *atrium*, but we do know that it would have been important to be lifelike. Roman portraits were made for reflection, and sculptors were to capture a person's character.

Statue of Caligula

Marble, 1st century A.D.

Pompeii

6046 Naples National Archaeological Museum

This statue of the Roman Emperor Caligula 12 A.D.-41 A.D. was created post-mortem, after his assassination. He is depicted larger than life and in the likeness of the god Mars Ultor. Caligula had many ties to Pompeii, including his mother Agrippina the Elder.





Flying Priestess

Painted Plaster, 1st century A.D., IV Style

Pompeii

8961 Naples National Archaeological Museum

This flying priestess was a part of a grand decorative scheme that would have covered an entire room. After the destruction caused by an earthquake in 69 A.D., many of the homes in Pompeii were redecorated with frescoes. The wall was divided and partitioned into many different sections. A main fresco, typically a mythological story, was featured in the center panel and framed by garlands or decorative patterns. Flying figures, such as this priestess, would have been framed and supported the main storyline.

Fountain Sculpture of a Snake

Bronze, 1st century B.C.

Pompeii, House of the Citharist

4898 Naples National Archaeological Museum

This bronze viper was found at the center of the peristyle garden water basin at the House of the Citharist. Installed after the earthquake in 62 A.D., water sprayed from the serpent's mouth to supply the fountain.

Erotic Scene

Painted Plaster, c.45-79 A.D.

Pompeii

27691 Naples National Archaeological Museum

Erotic images were often discretely placed in small rooms next to the slave quarters or in brothels. Some, like this one, were found in the public areas of private, wealthy homes, suggesting an easier familiarity with such topics. In this fresco, a satyr reveals the body of a nymph sleeping in the woods. He stares at her longingly, while surprised at the discovery.





Silver Coin

Silver, 1st century A.D.

Pompeii, House of the Successus

s.n. Naples National Archaeological Museum

This coin is a part of a hoard of seventeen silver coins found in a wooden box in the peristyle of the House of Successus next to the remains of someone attempting to flee Pompeii. Presumably, the coins represented his savings, gathered as he fled.

Guard Dog

Cast

Pompeii, House of Orpheus

s.n. Naples National Archaeological Museum

This dog was found by the front door of the *House of Orpheus*, presumably to guard the home while the family fled. The bronze studs around the dog's neck are all that remain of a collar.

Theater Mask

Marble, 1st century A.D.

Pompeii

6609 Naples National Archaeological Museum

Theater imagery and masks were common themes found in peristyle gardens. This mask was not worn, but used for decoration as an *oscillium*, a suspended architectural detail. This young man was a cheerful character that was prominent in Roman comedy.





Signet Ring

Gold, 1st century A.D.

Pompeii

25218 Naples National Archaeological Museum

Signet rings were unique to their owner and were worn by both men and women. They were engraved with the owner's name or had an engraving of the owner's mark, a symbol or figure. This signet ring features a hero. They would have pressed the owners mark on document seals or to make purchases.

Necklace with Emeralds and Pearls

Gold, Pearl and Emerald, 1st century A.D.

Pompeii

110869 Naples National Archaeological Museum

Adding gemstone accents to jewelry was common in Pompeii. Pearls and emeralds were associated with the goddess Venus, as was the crescent moon. If you look closely, you can see the small moon charm at the center of this necklace.





Gladiator Helmet

Bronze, 1st century A.D.

Pompeii

5670 Naples National Archaeological Museum

Galea is the Latin word for a Roman soldier helmet. This ornate helmet was found within the gladiatorial barracks in Pompeii. An eagle is at the top, typical of the Roman standards, as well as a Priapus (phallic figure) featured at the front for protection.

Oscillum

White Marble, c. 62-79 A.D.

Pompeii, House of the Citharist

6551 Naples National Archaeological Museum

The reliefs carved on *oscilla*, architectural details, are typically Roman scenes of Bacchus (god of wine) or theatrical themes. This circular *oscillum* has a relief carving of a naked satyr, which would have been viewed from both sides.

