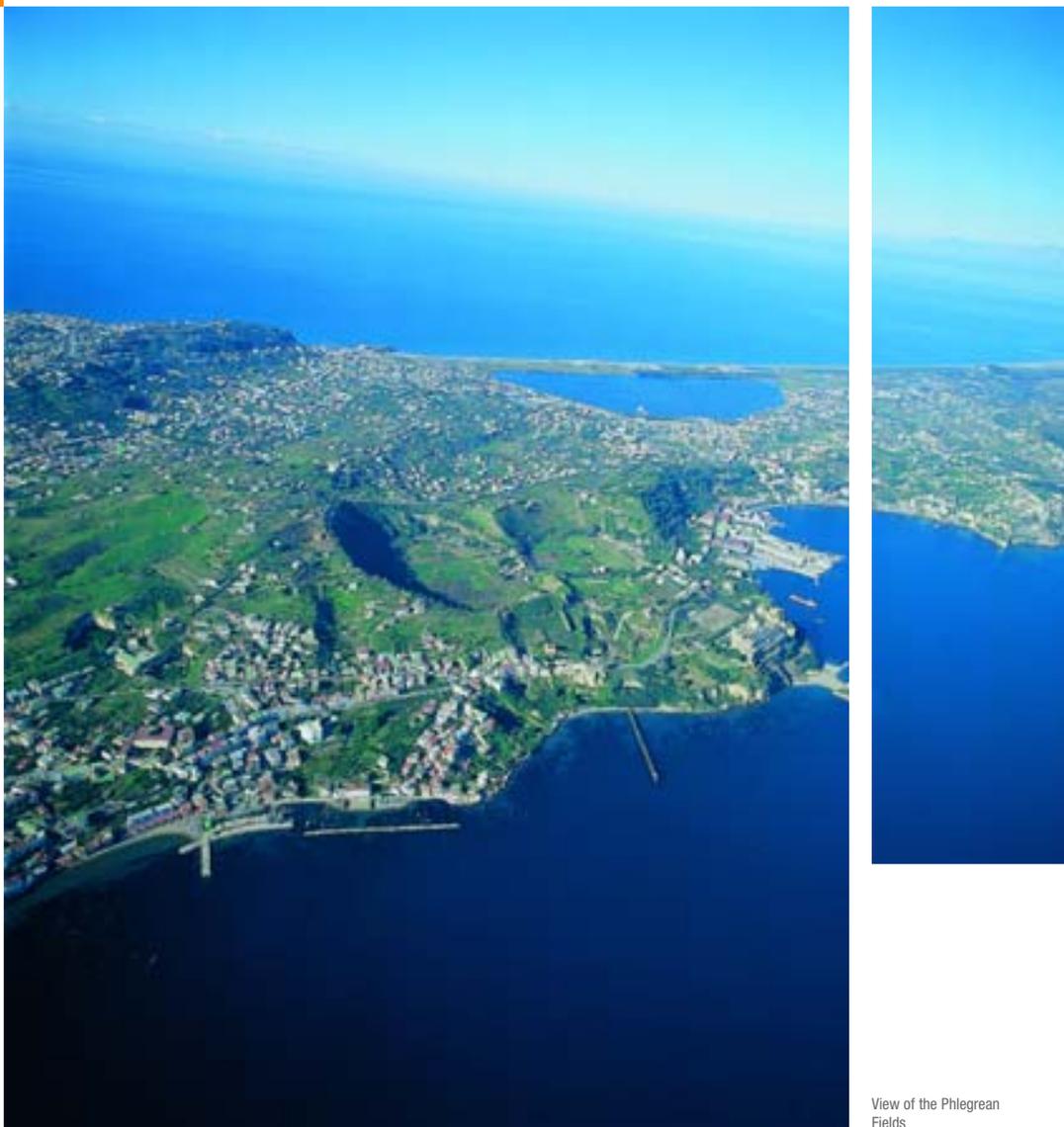


The Phlegrean Fields



View of the Phlegrean Fields

famous travellers

A land where only stones breathe, deserted, with boiling water, and with the remains of a past shaped by spent and half-spent volcanoes; the most marvellous region of the world under the purest of skies and the most perfidious of terrains.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 1787

The Phlegrean Fields is a place of profound and ancient fascination. Here history, legend, myth and mystery melt into a fickle landscape. Rich with history and art, the Phlegrean Fields are also extraordinarily beautiful, with the signs of volcanic activity clearly evident. The area was an obligatory stop on the Grand Tour. The myths sung by Homer and Virgil, the Greek culture that spread onto the rest of the peninsula, the record of the times in which the Roman aristocracy built sumptuous villas: all of it helped to increase the fascination of an area where extraordinary natural beauty and the wonderous opera of man create an incomparable scenery. Archaeology lovers will find so much to see: impressive ruins, archaeological parks and underground cities. Not to mention the exquisite local seafood tradition to renew their spent energy.

The Phlegrean Fields (from the Greek *Flegraios*, or “burning”) is an enormous volcanic area that extends to the west of the Gulf of Naples from the hill of Posillipo to Cuma, and includes the islands of Nisida, Procida, Vivara and Ischia. The volcanic nature of the zone is immediately obvious in the widespread presence of tuff, pumice, geysers of scorching steam and the craters that form natural amphitheatres. Some craters have become lakes like Averno, Lucrino, Fusaro and Miseno. Active volcanic phenomena are visible close-up, like in the famous Solfatara with its lake of lava, and the thermal springs of Agnano. In order to safeguard the delicate environmental equilibrium, the area was made into the Phlegrean Fields Regional Park in 1997.

phlegrean bradyseism

The pressure of the incandescent lava under the Phlegrean Fields has always provoked the raising and

lowering of the terrain (bradyseism). The consequences of the variations of sea level can be seen in many parts of the area, particularly in the Serapis Temple in Pozzuoli.

the Wine Trails of the Phlegrean Fields

The road from Naples ascends to Posillipo and then goes down again to Bagnoli and Pozzuoli. The

climate and the terrain have permitted the cultivation of local wines that have the Doc marking “Campi Flegrei”. The Doc wines are Piediroso and Falanghina, cultivated here for centuries; Biancolella and Coda di Volpe for the whites, Olivella and Sciascinoso for the reds.



Azienda Autonoma di Cura Soggiorno e Turismo di Pozzuoli
via Campi Flegrei 3
tel. 081 5261481/5262419
www.infocampiflegrei.it

Pozzuoli Tourist Information Office
piazza Matteotti 1/a
tel. 081 5266639

Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici per le province di Napoli e Caserta
piazza Museo 19 - Napoli
tel. 081 4422111
fax 081 440013
www.archeona.arti.beniculturali.it

Ente Parco Regionale dei Campi Flegrei
Via Lungolago, 74 - Bacoli
tel. 081 5231736
fax 081 7966144

Agnano
Riserva Naturale WWF
Astroni
via Agnano Astroni 468
tel. 081 5883720

Bacoli
Cento Camerelle
via Cento Camerelle
Piscina Mirabile
tel. 081 5233199

Baia
Parco Archeologico
tel. 081 8687592
Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei
tel. 081 5233797
Parco Sommerso di Baia
tel. 081 5235992
www.areamarinaprotettaibaia.it

Cuma
Parco Archeologico
via Licola
tel. 081 8543060

Pozzuoli
Solfatara
via Solfatara 161
tel. 081 5262341
Rione Terra
tel. 848 800288

not to be missed

- Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei (Bacoli)
- Castle of Baia
- Cuma Archaeological Park
- Rione Terra (Pozzuoli)

the phlegrean fields in 1 day

- Pozzuoli
- Baia
- Cuma

the phlegrean fields in 3 days

- Pozzuoli
- Solfatara
- Lakes of Averno and Lucrino
- Baia
- Bacoli
- Cuma

shopping

- Ceramics and terracotta ware
- Wines

outings with children

- Amphitheatre of Pozzuoli
- Sybil's Cave (Cuma)
- Solfatara



Castle of Baia

events

May-October

- _Flashes of Antiquity*
- Ancient Roman Thermae of Baia

July

- _Mussel Festival*
- _Sweet Festival*
- Bacoli
- _Great Operas with the San Carlo at the Ancient Roman Thermae of Baia*

August

- _Pennon Festival*
- Pozzuoli

art and archaeology

- Amphitheatre of Pozzuoli
- Sybil's Cave (Cuma)
- Casino Reale (Fusaro lake)
- Archaeological Museum of the Phlegrean Fields (Bacoli)
- Archaeological Park of Baia
- Archaeological Park of Cuma
- Rione Terra (Pozzuoli)

nature and parks

- Baia Protected Marine Reserve
- Phlegrean Fields Regional Nature Park
- Crater of Astroni Nature Reserve

for young people

- Bacoli
- Pozzuoli seafront
- Miseno
- Stufe di Nerone Thermal Baths

specialities

- Miseno mussels
- Buffalo Mozzarella Dop
- Blue Fish

wines

- Campi Flegrei Doc

spas and fitness

- Stufe di Nerone (Baia)
- Agnano Thermal Spa
- Puteolane Thermal Spa (Pozzuoli)

I wanted to see this grotto. I resolved to take a dog ... We reached the grotto at about three in the afternoon, and proceeded at once to make the experiments. But now, an important difficulty presented itself. After I had taken off my coat and bathed a handkerchief with cologne, and tied it over my face, and got all ready, and was wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, I recollected that we hadn't got any dog.

Mark Twain, 1867

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Once famous for its lake, in the oldest volcano of the Phlegrean Fields, Agnano got its name from the latin "anauni", snakes: legend had it that they descended in large numbers to the lake to quench their thirst. The lake was drained in 1870 (in its place nowadays there is a horse racing track).

From the dried lake bed emerged archaeological proof of a huge roman thermal baths complex: remains of a *natural sauna* (that used the natural heat released from the sides of the Mount Spina) and of a *thermal establishment*.

In the same basin are the **Stufe di San Germano**, thus named by a bishop of Capua that enjoyed its benefits in the 6th century. They were used by the local people during the entire middle ages up to the present day. Not far from the present day entrance to the thermal establishment is **La Grotta del Cane** (the Dog's Grotto), a niche carved into the hill where carbonic acid vapours are emitted: this heavy gas rises only a short distance from the ground, thus killing the animals that breathe it. The name has its origins in the barbaric practice of introducing a dog, which would then slowly but surely show signs of suffocation.

In Agnano is the verdant **Astroni Reserve** (a WWF oasis for the protection of the fauna): the huge crater of a spent volcano, covered in woods, in which small hills and lakes have formed.

The habitat is characterised by "vegetational inversion" - cooler near the ground and warmer up by the slopes of the volcano - and so we find chestnut, elm and oak trees down below, and mediterranean scrub up high. The guided tours inside the park and around the three lakes are a delight for children, that can observe the many types of birds, reptiles and amphibians found within.



45

Panoramic view from Monte di Procida



the thermal spas of the crater

Found on the bottom of an ancient volcanic crater, the Agnano Spa Centre offers a hydrological patrimony

formed by 72 springs. The waters, that bubble up at a temperature of between 20°C and 70°C, are recommended for the treatment of arthritis and rheumatism, muscular pathologies, respiratory ailments, ear, nose and throat disturbances and gynecological conditions.

The establishment also houses specialised medical centres equipped with avantgarde technology.

A boat trip (to Pozzuoli); some short drives in a carriage; walks on foot through the most astonishing landscape in the world.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 1787

46

Pozzuoli is one of the worlds' most fascinating archaeological areas. Main part of the region in Roman times, the city revealed a surprising and unexpected "underground Pompeii" with the excavations in the Rione Terra.

Founded in 520 BC by Greek colonists who gave it the name *Dicearchia*, or "Just Government", it was named *Puteoli* by the Romans (for the malodorous sulphur vapours that its wells emitted), and became one of the main ports of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

The **Temple of Serapis** (I-II century BC) is proof of the lively commerce conducted in *Puteoli*. The temple is so called because of the discovery of a statue of an Egyptian divinity. In reality, the so-called temple was a food market, a *Macellum*. The shops were lined up under the arches on the sides of the courtyard, and the apse was dedicated to the imperial cult and to the gods that protect the market (Serapis among them). The columns of this hall are good measures of the force of the volcanic phenomenon of the Phlegrean area: you can see the small holes dug by marine shellfish when they were underwater for a long due to bradyseism.

The oldest part of town is **Rione Terra** (abandoned in the 80's due to the effects of bradyseism, but now under restoration), on the high part of the tuff rock that dominates

the port. Archaeological excavations are revealing the fascinating texture of this Roman city, preserved intact underground, with its store lined streets. Houses and fountains alternate with shops and restaurants. This was once the glorious **acropolis of Puteoli**, impermeable defence against the enemy. The most significant monument of the area is the **Temple of Augustus**, rediscovered after the baroque Cathedral of San Procolo burned down in 1964. It is, in fact, the *Capitolium*, the temple of the Capitoline trinity cult.

The **Amphitheatre** dates to Flavian times, and is the third largest in the world. Its functional architecture is an excellent example of the exceptional technological levels reached in that era: it has underground spaces, wide stairwells, corridors, a contraption to lift the wild beasts' cages and even a device to reenact naval battles.

Pozzuoli does not just offer archaeological remains. This lively town has a strong sense of identity: ingrained ties to an age-old maritime tradition (evidenced by the excellent cuisine) and a meeting place for young and old alike. With its port (departure point of the ferryboats to the islands), its streets, small squares, lovely seafront and many bars, make this a lovely place to spend pleasant hours.



Rione Terra



Flavian Amphitheatre

47

The Solfatara

famous travellers

There lies between Naples and Great Puteoli, a chasm deep cloven, and Cocytus churns there his current; the vapor in fury escapes from the gorge with that lethal spray laden.

Petronius, 1 AD

48

At the Solfatara, near Pozzuoli, you can see the inside of a crater with boiling lava, full of its vapours and steaming mud. This active volcano is one of the main attractions of the Phlegrean Fields. The feeling here is one of restlessness: the earth tormented by fire makes for a surreal scenery of unimaginable colours.

Born 4,000 years ago almost in the exact centre of the Phlegrean Fields, the Solfatara (from the late latin *Sulpha Terra*, or sulphurous earth) presents itself lively with geysers, sources of gas, mineral water springs, spouts of hot mud and seismic shocks. The biggest geyser is called 'Bocca Grande' (Big Mouth), a natural source of pressured water vapour. It shoots out at 160°C and contains a mixture of gases that give it a peculiar "rotten egg" smell.

The Solfatara



Geysers of Solfatara

49



Lakes Lucrino and Averno

famous travellers

You cannot imagine anything more romantic than the short walk from the lake of Averno to the entrance of the cave, especially for those with their heads full of legends... It is possible that Virgil had this place in mind when he elaborated his tale.

Johann Gottfried Seume, 1802

50

Hercules, after having stolen Geryon's cattle, had them walk on a thin strip of land he himself constructed on the sea, thereby closing in the water that makes up the **Lake of Lucrino**. The name may come from *lucrum* and it would refer to the hefty profits earned from the farming of fish and mussels in the lake.

Near to the lake are the 'Stufe di Nerone' (Nero's Stoves), sweat holes carved into the tuff rock to take advantage of the geysers that emanate from the volcanic ground: they were part of a grandiose thermal system that spreads over the entire side of the mountain. They are still in use.

The **lake of Averno** is surrounded by wooded hills. The austere scenery and the motionless water induced the ancient inhabitants to consider it the entrance to Hades (*Aeneid* and *Odyssey*). The word *Avernus* derives perhaps from the Greek "aornon", or "without birds", because they fled in fear from the mouth of Hades.

In the 1st century AD the emperor Augustus decided to turn the area into a naval base, the *Portus Julius*, connecting the two lakes to the sea with canals. But the new port soon filled with sand, and while the fleet transferred to Miseno, on the shoreline villas and spas were built.

Thanks to the boat excursions organised in the area by the **Baia Underwater Park**, you can still see the structures of **Portus Julius**, the entrance to the canal and the lay-out of the coastal road. Nothing remains of the port structures along the shoreline of Averno. One of the aristocratic villas that took its place has a magnificent ruin known as **Temple of Apollo**, which in reality is the large room of a thermal spa. A trail along the shoreline takes you to a cave, which up until 1932 was thought to be a *Sybil's Cave*. In truth it is a 200 meters long tunnel that once connected the lake of Averno to the lake of Lucrino.



Lake of Lucrino



Monte Nuovo

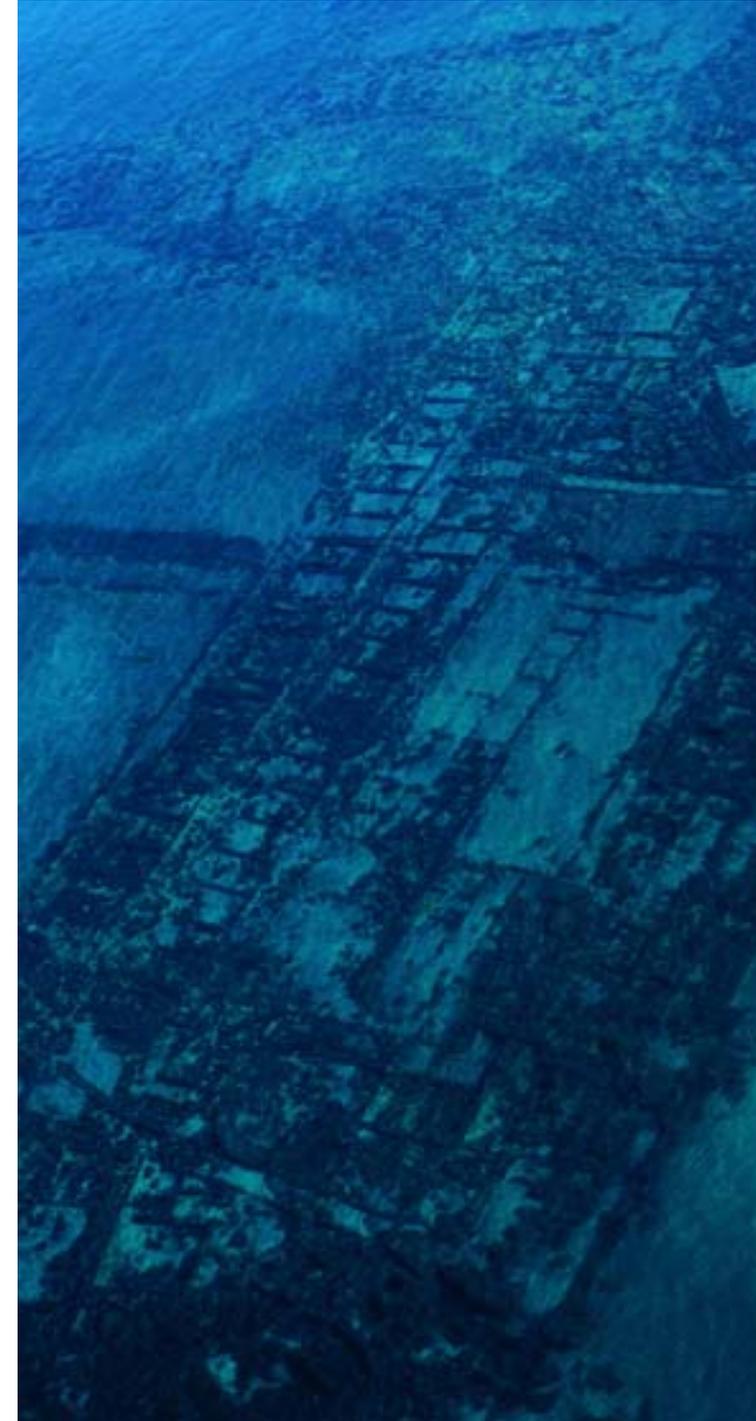
The profile of Monte Nuovo, the volcanic crater that rose in 1538, is behind the lakes. A terrible eruption

buried the village of Tripergole and its surrounding area where a hill was formed from the massive amounts of pumice, rocks and cinder, and is now covered with a mantle of pine trees and mediterranean scrub. From the summit, easily reached with a nice walk,

you can admire the volcanic crater, whose bottom is covered in rich vegetation. Recently, the Nature Oasis of Monte Nuovo has been founded.



"Temple of Apollo" at the lake of Averno



Baia. Underwater Archaeological Park

51

Baia, Bacoli and Miseno

famous travellers

Nero's Baths, the ruins of Baiæ, the Temple of Serapis; Cumæ, where the Cumæan Sybil interpreted the oracles, the Lake Agnano, with its ancient submerged city still visible far down in its depths.

Mark Twain, 1869

52

In **Baia** you arrive to the richest of the Phlegrean archaeological wonders. The grandiose Roman ruins speak of ancient splendour, when the area was the centre of the most elegant holiday resorts.

The luxurious and licentious lifestyle there provoked the invectives of both Seneca and Propertius, while Horace described the gulf as "the most enchanting in the world".

Most of the fabulous buildings of Baia have been submerged by the sea. These ruins constitute the **Baia Underwater Park**.

Excursions with special boats and underwater films show the mosaic pavements, walls, columns and other remains. At the centre of the area is the villa of Lucius Piso, father-in-law of Julius Caesar.

At Punta Epitaffio a nymphaeum of the emperor Claudius was discovered, a luxurious hall decorated with statues that, after having been recovered, are now exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of the Phlegrean Fields in the Aragonese Castle.

The entire side of the hill that gives onto the Gulf of Baia is covered in archaeological ruins spread out over the terraced land. They make up the **Baia Archaeological Park**, a huge complex of buildings that were probably an imperial residence.

The area is divided in three sections: to the south the *Venus section*, in the centre that of *Sosandra*, and to the east *Mercury*.

The **Venus thermal spas** are in a great covered hall with a half cupola. The complex also included a large circular hall outside of the archaeological park, almost at the port, known as the *Temple of Venus*.

The **Sosandra spas** spread out over the scenic terracings with a lower portico, a nymphaean theatre, residences with arched walkways and gardens, is to be imagined covered in mosaics, statues and paintings.

The **Mercury thermal complex** gets its name from the grand hall with dome where echoes return. Just north of the park, visible from the street, is the **Diana Temple** (3rd century AD). Named after its marble bas reliefs of animals, it is a large octagonal thermal hall.

The splendid Aragonese Castle (built in the 1400's and restructured by the viceroys) serves as a backdrop for the **Phlegrean Fields Archaeological Museum**, home to the relics from Baia, Miseno and Pozzuoli. The view from the terraces of the fortress is unforgettable.



The Nymphaeum of Punta Epitaffio. Phlegrean Fields Archaeological Museum

Baia Archaeological Park

53



And each time we reach higher ground, we discover an ample and splendid landscape. In front, the calm, blue sea; down below, enveloped in a light haze, the coast of Italy, the classic coastline of even rocks; Capo Miseno closes in the distance, everything in the distance.

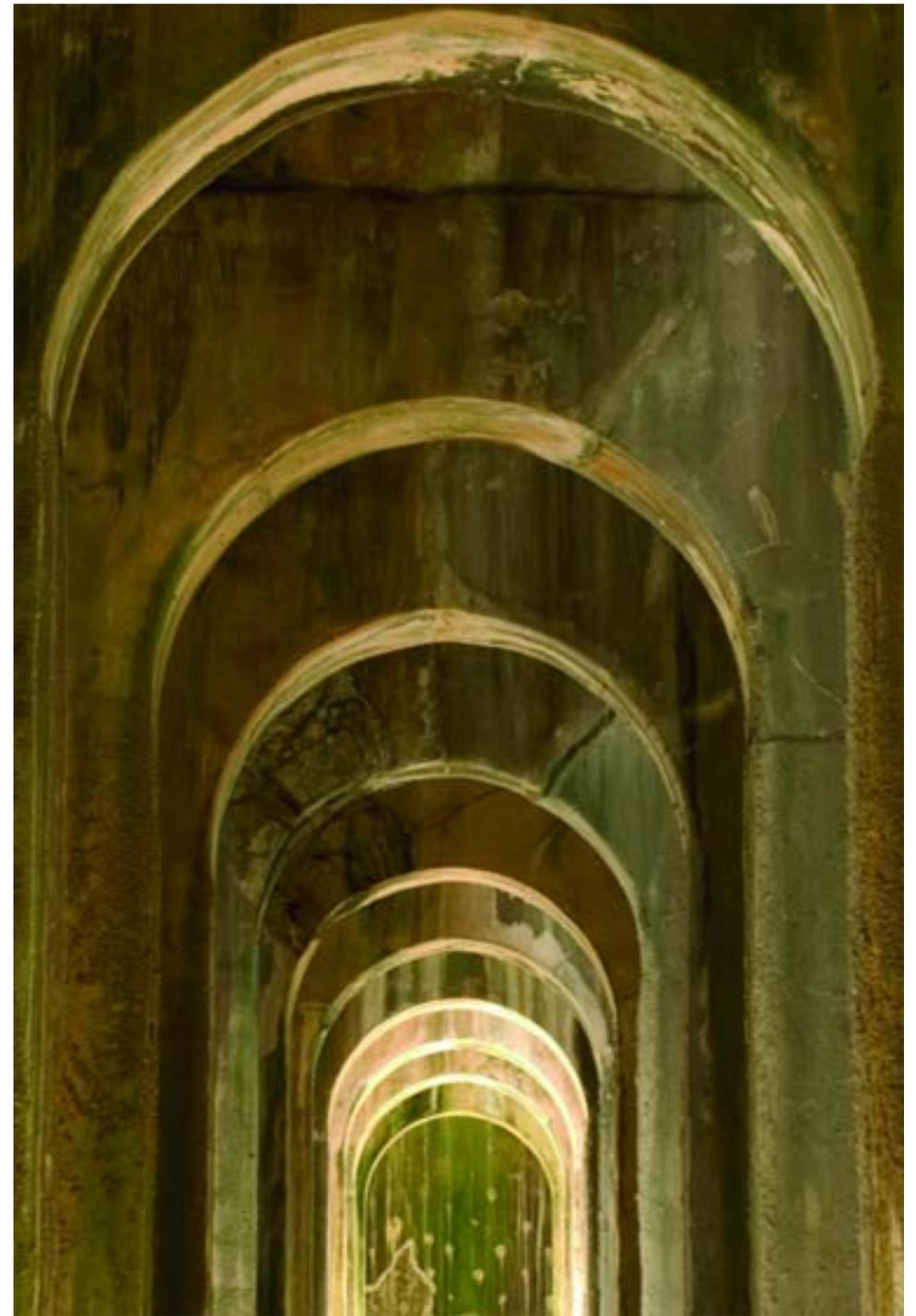
Guy de Maupassant, 1890

54

The architectonic and sculptural complex of the **Shrine of the Augustals** from Miseno is on the ground floor of the museum. It is a small temple from the Augustinian period (1st century AD) dedicated to the imperial cult. The façade and the statues of Vespasian and Titus remains of the structure, as well as the bronze equestrian statue of Domitian (when he was killed, the face of the statue was replaced with that of Nerva, his successor). On the upper floor we find the extraordinary complex of the **Nymphaeum of Punta Epitaffio** (the cape that closes to the east the Gulf of Baia), in an exhibit that reconstructs the original hall designated to host sumptuous banquets. Submerged by the effect of bradyseism and found during underwater excavations in the 70's, it is a triclinium coated in marble and decorated with statues that recall episodes of Polyphemus' drunkenness. Ulysses and his companion offer wine to the Cyclops (whose statue is lost). Two statues of Dionysus and various portrait-statues of personalities of the Imperial family complete the group. Another priceless part of the museum shows statues and architectonic decorations from the excavations of the **Rione Terra** of Pozzuoli. The **Plasters of Baia** section is also interesting. It shows fragments of the moulds used to reproduce famous statues found in that which is probably the atelier of the Baian sculptors that specialised in decorating the sumptuous villas of the coast.

Between Baia and Miseno, **Bacoli** was constructed on the Roman city of *Bauli*. On the highest part of the city there is a grand installation of two-story cisterns known as **Cento Camerelle** (1st century BC). The upper cistern, with a rectangular layout, is divided into four naves; the lower one is a complicated network of tunnels dug into the tuff rock. A thin strip of coast separates the sea from a salt lagoon, the **lake of Fusaro**, creating a formidable ecosystem where fish and mussels are farmed. On the lake, on an islet united to the land by a small bridge, is the 1700's 'Casino Reale', a gracious Rococo building by Carlo Vanvitelli. Capo Miseno – the name derives from the herald of Aeneas, of whom, according to legend, the promontory is an immense tomb – was chosen by the Romans in the time of Augustus to take the place of *Portus Julius* of Baia, by now buried in sand. The main Roman naval fleet was stationed here. Miseno is also an important bathing destination, much appreciated by children who can splash about in all safety on the shallow soft sandy bottom. On one side of the mythical promontory is the Bay, on the other side the lake of Miseno (also known as the "Dead Sea" for its shallow waters), a coastal lagoon joined to the port by an outlet, and to the sea by a canal that crosses the big beach of Miliscola. Of the ancient city all that remains are the ruins of the public baths and the Shrine of the Augustals, dedicated to the imperial cult (reconstructed in the Archaeological Museum of the Phlegrean Fields). The most imposing monument of Miseno is surely the **Piscina Mirabilis**, an immense reservoir for the restocking of the fleet. Carved into the tuff rock, with the vaults upheld by four lines of pillars, this grandiose space, empty and silent, illuminated by a dim light, is extremely evocative.

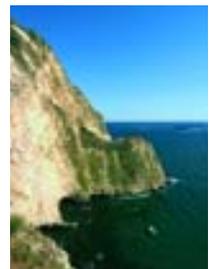
Upon exiting Bacoli, the street climbs up to **Monte di Procida**, one of the most panoramic spots of the entire phlegrean area. From every corner a magnificent view is to be enjoyed, whether over the Gulf of Pozzuoli, with Vesuvius and Mount Fauto on the horizon, or of Ischia and Procida.



Piscina Mirabilis

The 'Casino Reale'
at Fusaro

Miseno. Moresca cove



55

I saw the places of Virgil... then the lakes of Averno and Lucrino, and stagnant waters of Acheronte. I saw the fatherland, and the house of Sybil and that fearful cave from which fools do not return and where wisemen do not dare go.

Francesco Petrarca, 1343

56

From the Fusaro area you go to the oldest part of the Phlegrean Fields: Cuma, the first of the Greek colonies on Italian land, founded in about 730 BC. It soon became a flourishing commercial centre, destination of important mercantile routes and centre for the exchange of goods with the inland, gaining supremacy along the entire coast. Its inhabitants went on to found other cities along the coast, among which *Neapolis* in 470 BC.

The **Archaeological Park** includes the acropolis and a part of the lower city where the forum, the Sybil's Cave, the 'Arco Felice' and the Amphitheatre are to be found.

On the **acropolis of Cuma**, an outcrop perched on a vertical cliff over the water, traces of Greek fortifications are still visible. Two great temples, transformed into churches in the middle ages, also give testimony to the Greek period. The **Temple of Apollo**, with very little elements of the first archaic temple, still has its podium and shows the traces of a Roman remake in Augustan times. There are also traces of the octagonal baptistery of the paleo-Christian church. Of the **Temple of Jupiter** the oldest phases are barely identifiable, whereas the Roman period and paleo-Christian church are better documented.

For the Romans Cuma was a sacred place, a holy city: according to the tale of Virgil, here the Sybil revealed to Aeneas his future as founder of Rome. It is understandable, then, that the most important feature of the acropolis is the so-called **Sybil's Cave**: a long tunnel that ends in a three-roomed niche, believed to be the seat of the Sybil of Cuma. The lower part of the city was the **Forum** in Samnite and Roman times, an ample rectangular arcaded square. The most important monument here is the grandiose **Temple of Jupiter**, of the Hellenistic period (3rd century BC), frequently restructured up until the Imperial era. Near the Forum there is also a large thermal complex dating back to Republican times. Outside the city walls are the remains of the **Amphitheatre** (2nd century BC), one of the oldest of the Roman world.

Leaving the city going east one passes under the 'Arco Felice' (20 mt high, 6 wide) constructed to allow the Via Domitiana through Mount Grillo.



Sybil's Cave

The Temple of Jupiter

57



where the Sybil lives

The Sybil of Cuma was a priestess sacred to the god Apollo: from her cavern she gave ambiguous

interpretations of the future. Legend has it that the priestess had received immortality from the god, as she had requested. She had, however, forgotten to ask for eternal youth, thus becoming old and shrivelled. In Petronius' *Satyricon* she is depicted as tiny, locked in a bottle, and

invoking death in vain. The fame of Sybil and her cave is also tied to Virgil, who writes of her in the 6th book of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas goes to Cuma to the Sybil, who reveals to him his future as founder of the glorious Roman civilisation.

