

Trip to the Bay of Naples in May 2025 – James Heath – Attachment A

It was recon trip time for me in the middle of May as we were in need of updated hotel audits and to review some sites that we hadn't seen in a while. There was also the added bonus of Salerno airport opening last year and the need to see if it was a viable alternative to Naples airport.

The week before I left it was announced there was going to be a public transport strike in Italy on the day I landed, which would have really messed my plans up, but it was postponed at the last moment due to the Pope's inauguration, phew!

Currently, easyJet only fly into Salerno from Gatwick on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, so I took a bus, ferry and train up to Gatwick from the Isle of Wight on the Friday afternoon to have a stop off at the Premier Inn ahead of my 07:35 flight. The first step of the journey went all smoothly and after a very brief sleep I was up, through security and eating a hastily bought Starbucks breakfast before heading to the gate. The flight itself was only slightly longer than the ones to Rome and went rather smoothly. Salerno airport, having been a recent reopening, still has some way to go before being massively suitable. We had to queue outside the terminal to get into passport control, there's only two half-sized luggage belts, and once you're through to the main area, it's one café, small toilets, and info point and a car hire station, and that's it. There was no obvious taxi rank outside the terminal, though I got lucky and managed to jump on the shuttle bus before it departed. This journey took about 40 minutes and cost €5 (it's €10 with luggage, but I had already put my suitcase in the hold before I bought my ticket). Arriving in central



Figure 1: Salerno Airport

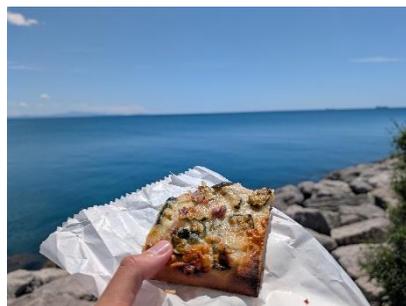


Figure 2: Pizza by the slice, by the sea

Salerno, we had chosen my hotel as it was directly opposite the train station to make my journey to Naples easier on the Sunday. Once I'd checked in, I bought myself some lunch from various locations around town – including pizza by the slice (the best way to eat pizza) and a cannoli and a maritozzo. I was going for that high sugar, high carb diet.

Having eaten lunch and washed it down with an ice tea (the best soft drink in Italy), I made my way back to the station to take my train to Paestum, the train journey was about 20 minutes and then there was the 10 minute walk from the station to the site. Being able to see the old walls and the arch as you walk down the long road from the station had me so excited for the site itself, which then proceeded to blow me away! I knew of the temples and the wider site, but even so, that doesn't prepare you for the scale of it all. The surviving level of the temples and the ability to walk through the temples (along set paths, sure, but still) was fantastic. So many temples that survive that well today, from the Greek or Roman periods, you can't get inside – the Parthenon in Athens, the temples



Figure 1: The Temple of Poseidon, Paestum

of Hera and Concordia at the Valley of the Temples, for example. The rest of the site was just as impressive, I had a good time just wandering the streets back and forth to see if there was something particular hidden along them, like the house with the mosaic of Poseidon. Knowing I had only a certain amount of time before my return train, and I had to still look at the restaurants and the museum, I perhaps rushed myself slightly, but there was work to do! The Via Magna

Graecia that runs between the Archaeological Park and the Museum, has several restaurants and eateries along it, serving a variety of food types, and we will be including photos of menus of these in pre-tour packs in the future. Some may work better than others, depending on group size etc.

Paestum's Archaeological Museum is a fairly modern building, certainly a modern interior, based on the design and layout of one of the temples. I'm not certain when it had an update, but it must have been recently, and work is still ongoing in giving the museum an upgrade. While I didn't check out the prehistoric pieces in the basement, the ground floor was made up architectural pieces and reliefs from the temples, with a few smaller votive pieces. The central cella like room had casts of a frieze on the outside while the inside had panels detailing the work done by conservators, excavators etc. Behind this was a room that featured a large screen and cavea-like seating, presumably used for lectures. There were a couple of display cases in this room with grave goods and coins in. Through a doorway in the back, a route leads you to the frescoes from the Tomb of the Diver, though no information in the room explain the fresco. Following this route also takes you past plenty of empty cases and fenced off areas that really bring to the attention that work is still going on at the Museum.



Figure 2: Tomb of the Diver fresco, Paestum Museum

Having returned to Salerno, and recharged my phone at the hotel, I headed out for dinner, eating at Café Ragusa, I had a lovely ravioli in a tomato sauce. The restaurant had something I hadn't seen before – they were making fresh pasta by hand and selling it for locals to use in their own dinner that night.



Figure 3: Buy your own pasta from the restaurant

After picking a lot of the sweet options at breakfast on Sunday, I checked out of the hotel then walked over to the Salerno Provincial Archaeological Museum, entry was free, which was nice! Featuring more pre-Roman pieces than Roman ones, there was still enough for me to photograph (whilst keeping an eye on the staff, as I had clocked a 'no photos sign', though they didn't seem too interested). Alongside all the Magna Graecia period pieces, grave goods from the town of Fratte, as well as architectural pieces from the temple of Hercules there, were a couple of interesting inscription fragments, a relief possibly commemorating Augustus' visits to Tyrrhenian coastal towns in 19BC, and a bronze head of Apollo.

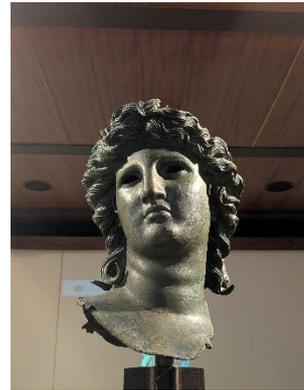


Figure 4: Bronze head of Apollo, Salerno Museum

I spent the rest of the morning walking through Salerno; there were a few Roman era sarcophagi in the Duomo courtyard, and I was given a presentation on the pieces in a



Figure 5: Roman Sarcophagus, Salerno Duomo Courtyard

Pinacoteca by Italian students practising their English. I did see a vending machine selling wine and beer, and I walked past a church where there was some form of singing going on, which was quite lovely.

My train to Naples was a bit stop start, but was more than comfortable, and I still managed to drop my suitcase off with the owner of a little coffee bar using the Bounce app, before heading back up towards the MANN for a visit, hopeful that more would be than the last time I visited in 2019. But first, LUNCH! Part of the reason for this trip was to find places to eat near the Museum in Naples. I had one in mind that would be ok for small groups, but I also photographed a lot of menus of bigger ones in the area of the museum, which like with the Paestum ones, we shall be listing in pre-tour packs. The one I had in mind, and ate at, was called Past(a) Food and I ate a bowl of pasta, two slices of bread, a fried pasta ball, and a coke for €11.50. You select your pasta shape and your sauce and then wait for them to make it, taking a ticket. It was about a 10 minute wait, but I expect that would be much longer for bigger groups. It's a hole-in-the-wall place the other side of the Galleria di Principe di Napoli from the MANN.



Figure 6: My Past Food past lunch

Once I was inside the MANN, it turns out even less was open that last time – the Gemma Farnese (though that has now reopened), the Mosaic, the Magna Graeci and the Epigraphic Gallery were also closed, the latter has no known reopening date. However, the new Campania layout on the ground floor does manage to include some epigraphic pieces, so it wasn't like there was a shortage of things to see. I still took over 900 photos, adding to the 600 that were already in my Flickr album. Boy, am I not looking forward to going back and re-organising that one. Despite my own self-inflicted grumbles, the MANN is one of the most spectacular museums going, the sheer amount of statues, frescoes, reliefs, sarcophagi, and everything else ancient under the sun make it a must see. I was also happy to see that the Villa of the Papyri rooms had reopened! There's also an exhibition on until the end of September – 'Treasures Found: Stories of Crimes and Stolen Artefacts' that I had quick whip through which includes this bronze head of Philip the Arab.

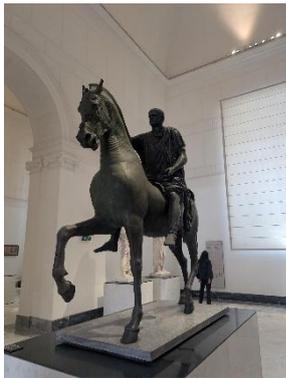


Figure 9: Bronze equestrian statue of Caligula from Pompeii at MANN



Figure 10: Bronze head of Philip the Arab, MANN

After about 2 hours in the MANN it was time to head over to the Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore Complex for the underground. We had had good feedback from groups about this site so I thought I'd best check it out. Next time I'm in Naples I will be scoping out the LAPIS Museum and the Bourbon tunnels. I didn't have the timing to have one of the tours of the underground, so I was on my own, and while there is signage at the start, it does disappear as you go on. I believe we make sure to get the guided tour option for groups, so you won't have the same issue. There are certainly some interesting parts to it, like the bakery, but I didn't make the most of it.



Figure 7: Bakery at San Lorenzo Maggiore Underground

Having come out of the Complex and walked back to the little bar where my luggage was stored, I had time for a quick drink before walking down to Molo Beverello to take my ferry to Sorrento. It was nice surprise to see remains of the old (possibly ancient, but no information panels) city walls and other remains in the Molo Beverello port building. A potential option for groups, as the boats are certainly large enough, it would just be making sure there was enough luggage storage space, the boats from Naples to Sorrento take about 45 minutes to complete the journey. It was mostly smooth, a couple of rocky moments, but that was to be expected for the distance out to sea we were for the crossing of the Bay. There were fabulous views of Capri, Vesuvius and the other towns along the coastline. The sun was getting low in the sky as we docked



Figure 8: The view of Vesuvius from the ferry

in Sorrento, which led to a lovely golden glow on the Sorrentine cliffs. I managed to jump on a minibus transfer for €2 to get from the Sorrento port up to the station, easily allowing me to then get to Sant'Agnello to check into Hotel Club for the night.

I got up on Monday morning and completed an audit with the Hotel Club's Manager before heading to Sorrento to complete audits with the Zi' Teresa and the Ascot. I managed to sneak in a panino lunch in the Sorrento back streets between the Zi' Teresa and the Ascot audits. I am happy to report that all three hotels reach the required level for us and STF!

Next up for me was taking the Circumvesuviana train to Pompeii, for my first time back since 2019.

It was probably the hottest day of the trip, so a great time to be walking through the uncovered area that was Pompeii Archaeological Park, but I wouldn't have traded that visit for anything. I was able to meet up with Dr. Sophie Hay and have a catch up since meeting her during my time at the BSR in 2017. After that, and with only a few hours left before closing, I hiked my way around the site to see as many of the recent openings as I could – the restored House of the Ceii, House of Menander, House of the Lararium of Achilles, the platforms over Insula dei Casti Amanti, House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto, House of the

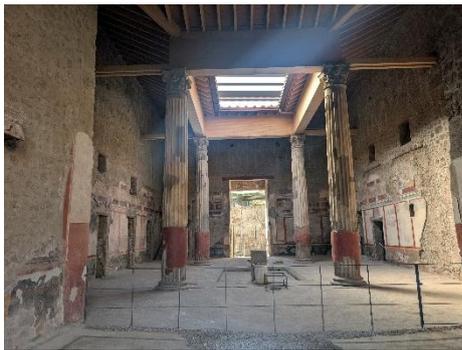


Figure 10: Atrium of the House of the Silver Wedding, Pompeii

Vettii, House of the Silver Wedding, the new Thermopolium, and the House of the Small Fountain. They were all spectacular in their own ways, but the insula dei Casti Amanti and the House of the Vettii were both absolutely top notch! The level of restoration work that has gone into the frescoes in the House of the Vettii is incredible, some of them look brand new! Having been herded out of the Antiquarium as they were closing the site up, I took the train back to Sant'Agnello and grabbed a pizza margherita for dinner and a few pieces from a Pasticceria for dessert.



Figure 9: Room of the Cupids in the House of the Vettii, Pompeii

Tuesday morning rolled around and that meant I was off to Capri! I was really looking forward to this visit as I had been reading up on the Capri Archaeological Museums' Island of the Caesars permanent exhibition since it reopened last year. As my predominant Roman interest is in the early empire, I was psyched to see it! Having pre-booked my tickets I just had to check with the ticket booth as to the berth number and then queue for a bit to get on my boat to Capri, which was full of tourists. I wonder if Ischia and Procida get the same numbers?

Capri itself is bloody expensive, as those who have visited will testify. I got off the ferry and decided the best way to do it was to walk up the Piazzetta, as I couldn't be bothered to wait for a train or the funicular. It was cloudy and a wee bit muggy, so walking up proved to not be the smartest choice, fifteen minutes of mostly sharp stairs later I was at the Piazzetta, and in desperate need of refreshment, stopping just outside the Piazzetta I grabbed a granita, for €9! So much money for a cup of lemon flavoured ice! Anyway, moving on, I had to shuffle my way through Capri's narrow streets



Figure 15: Bust of Octavian, Capri Archaeological Museum

with the crowds of other visitors to reach the Giardini di Augusto and follow the path down to the Certosa di San Giacomo. Like with the Villa Jovis, the ticket for the museum is pay in situ, and students should be free with school letter. From the entrance where you purchase the ticket you have to follow the corridor round (past the Museo Diefenbach) until you reach the courtyard and then the Museum entrance is to your right, and you should be able to see the banners either side of the door for it. The Museum itself is utterly fantastic! There's only about 150 pieces in it, but it is laid out thematically, including one that featured a lot of pottery that as entitled 'At Lunch with the Princeps'. My favourite room was probably the one with the family tree of the Julio-Claudians and busts of most of the major players. The best shot however, is this one from early on in the exhibition (Fig.16). Finishing up at the Museum I started to hike my way towards the Villa Jovis, stopping for lunch, of course I had to

have a Caprese, and given the muggy heat, it also gave me a nice break from the hiking uphill. Once I'd finished my lunch, my drink, and paid the bill, I set off again for Villa Jovis. I ended up bumping into a couple of English ladies on the way up as we both stopped at a split in the path where signs told us to go one way but Google Maps advised the other. They were there as part of a wider holiday (I actually briefly bumped into them again at Naples airport), so I ended up giving them a rough explanation of the wider history once we'd made it up to the Villa and were going round it. The Villa Jovis itself appeared to be under ongoing restoration works, there were lots of temporary



Figure 16: Villa Jovis from the base

fences and dug up earthworks on sites with new piping being laid. The current route around the site does miss out several large sections of the residence, and that meant not being able to see the information panels and signs that are on display, which is a bit of a shame, but the site is still impressive in its scale and I liked the touch of the painted tiles on the reception building that said 'Sperlonga and Capri United by the Sea and History' (but in Italian, obviously, see Fig.17). They also had goats wandering around the site! No surprise given the island's name, but still! After a brief stop at the Ignacio Cerio Museum at the Piazzetta to see the small Roman collection there (including a head of Livia) I headed back down to the port and waited for my ferry back to Sorrento. The rain had started but it



Figure 17: The sign showing the relationship between Sperlonga and Villa Jovis

was a smooth journey back. Once I'd docked back in Sorrento I walked up to Piazza Tasso and onward to the hotel (the Circumvesuviana timing would have got me to Sant'Agnello about the same time), picked up my luggage, and took the Circumvesuviana to Pompeii.

Arriving in Pompeii I had the 10-15 minute walk from the Circumvesuviana station to the Hotel del Sole, which was a nice walk along the Porta Nocera side of the Pompeii site for part of that, and had checked in, I was off again walking through the modern town of Pompei to the Hotel Amitrano to complete their audit. I know schools usually prefer staying in Sorrento for the things to do once they are back from the sites, but Pompei has several gelateria's, shops, and other bits and pieces to do



Figure 11: The Lapillo Pompeiano

(one of which I'll come on to later), and the central piazza, outside the Sanctuary of Beata Vergine, is huge. Audit completed at the Amitrano, I headed back to the del Sole as I had heard good things about their on-site restaurant, and those things were absolutely spot on. Granted, I didn't have the set menu that groups would have, but we have also heard good things about those. I went for a supplì for starter, a main of porcini mushroom, guanciale and parmigiano cheese gnocchi, and a Lapillo Pompeiano for dessert. I think the dessert is the only one I'll need to explain – it consisted of vanilla bavaresi (Bavarian cream), cocoa ladyfingers, black cherries, dark chocolate mousse and vanilla whipped ganache. YUM!

Having finished dinner and packed up, I got a good night's sleep before completing the audit for the del Sole the next morning, the manager and staff were very helpful in that process. I walked through Pompei to get to the mainline train station for my train to Naples. On the way I saw several pieces of street art and at the back of Piazza Bartolo Longo there was even a map of the local ones, so perhaps, if you are staying in Pompeii, one evening activity can be finding all of Pompeii's street art. The train to Naples ran smoothly and I took one of the shuttlebuses from outside the station to the airport, which took around 20 minutes for less than €10. Once through security as Naples airport I got myself some food for lunch from the various restaurants and eateries inside the terminal and then met up with a friend from university and her husband who were on the same flight as I was.



Figure 12: Street Art in the modern Pompei

They'd been in Sorrento with her family (and at Pompeii the same day as me) whilst I had been in the Bay, but we hadn't been able to meet up. It was good to have a catch up since the last time I had seen them was while I was in Rome in 2019. Our flight back went smoothly, and after a long journey home (using every method of transport – planes, trains and automobiles, plus a ferry), I got home on the Isle of Wight at about 23:00 having landed at around 17:45. With over 115k steps walked, just shy of 3500 photos taken, 5 hotel audits completed, and several sites checked off my list, it was very successful trip!