

Archaeologists unearth 'birthplace of Roman emperor' in Italy

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A marble bust of Roman Emperor Vespasian. Archaeologists said Thursday they had unearthed the ruins of a villa believed to be the birthplace of the Roman Emperor who reigned almost 2,000 years ago.

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Professor Filippo Coarelli, who is leading the dig, said "numerous clues" pointed to the site as the house of [Emperor](#) Vespasian, who ruled the

Roman Empire from 69 AD to 79 AD.

The location of the villa, in the ancient city of Falacrine, 70 kilometres (45 miles) northeast of Rome, was a strong indicator that the site was where the ruler was born, Coarelli added.

Vespasian was born in the city, which was lost until 2005 when archaeologists located the site and began excavating it.

In addition, the luxurious property could only have been built by a wealthy person such as the father of Vespasian, who was a banker from the region, the [archaeologists](#) said.

The first-century villa forms a complex stretching over 14,000 square metres (150,000 square feet) and is lavishly decorated nestling amid the Apennine mountains.

But it was not certain the building was the emperor's birthplace, Coarelli said, as there were no markings which made this clear.

"Villas from this era do not generally have inscriptions, which complicates the identification of their owners," he said.

The [excavation](#) is being carried out by an international team of about 20 archaeologists from Britain, France and Italy.

Vespasian -- whose full name was Titus Flavius Vespasianus -- is credited with restoring peace to the ailing Roman Empire following a period of instability sparked by the death of Emperor Nero.

He is also known for starting work on the Coliseum in Rome.

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