

# Paris show relives Pompeii's final horrifying hours

July 1 2020, by Jean-Louis De La Vaissiere

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All that remains: Pompeii today

It is the most explosive Paris exhibition of the summer—Mount Vesuvius erupting several times a day in a new immersive 3D show which opens Wednesday in the Grand Palais.

"Pompeii" recreates [daily life](#) in 79 AD (CE) in the hours before the volcano poured death and destruction down on the city and its 40,000 inhabitants.

A street and some of the sumptuous villas and temples of what was one of the richest cities in the Roman empire have been brought back to life by the exhibition, which the organisers describe as a "[time machine](#)".

Among the 3D recreations of Roman mansions such as the House of Leda with their startling mosaics and frescos, are some of the "extraordinary finds" recently unearthed by archaeologists from the remains of the city near modern Naples.

And every 15 minutes, the mountain overlooking the city begins to growl, before eventually erupting with a mushroom atomic cloud of volcanic dust, rocks and lava.

## **Witch's chest**

Archaeologists used drones to film the site as well as laser cartography, infrared cameras and photogrammetry, which allows [accurate measurements](#) to be taken from photographs, to bring the scene to life.

The show—which runs until September 27—was delayed by the coronavirus lockdown, meaning the treasures, rarely seen outside Italy, had to be locked away for safekeeping by French authorities.

Among them are a statue of the Livia, the wife of the first Roman emperor, Augustus, which still has traces of her blonde hair and her purplish red dress and a fresco of Venus, the goddess of love, on a ship's bow drawn by four elephants.

Massimo Osanna, director of the Pompeii Archaeological Park, said one

of the most unusual exhibits is a chest of 100 tiny amulets in glass, ivory and amethyst used by a "witch to protect her clients from the evil eye".

"We wanted to chose iconic and representative objects" to illustrate the richness of life in the city, he said, which was frozen in time by the speed of the eruption and its pyroclastic storm of lava and ash.

Bodies were buried where they fell, engulfed by the searing hot clouds of ash.

The virtual reconstruction of the city "is not at all a Disneyland version," Osanna told AFP.

"What we have shown in 3D corresponds exactly with our [scientific research](#)," he said.

The show also includes some of the plaster casts made of people and animals caught in their death agony.

As digging continues, nearly a third of the ancient [city](#) has yet to be uncovered by archaeologists.

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