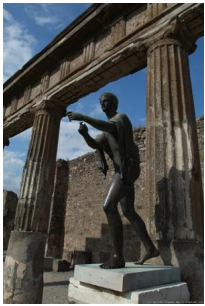


POMPEII FACES DISASTER - AGAIN



In recent months several walls in the Roman city of Pompeii collapsed and many experts blame the current Berlusconi government for their lack of attention and protection of this unique historical site.

Pompeii is one of Italy's most precious archaeological sites. It has given the historians invaluable information on Roman life and quite rightly deserves to be on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. **While its buildings survived intact for centuries, recent continuous rain and lack of professional attention are taking its toll now.** Several walls have collapsed already damaging the houses and while local authorities claim they are doing all they can to look after Pompeii, many foreign experts disagree. UNESCO plans to send a group of archaeologists to assess the current state of Pompeii.

Pompeii was a Roman city destroyed by a very sudden and powerful eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. A 20-ft layer of volcanic ash preserved the entire city for centuries until the 18th century when the city was finally discovered. It has been a valuable source of historical data which helped describe many areas of Roman life. **Nowadays, approximately 3 million tourists visit the site** and for some time, experts have been criticizing the way Italian authorities were treating one of its grandest treasures.

Continuous rain is taking its toll and several walls have already collapsed. The Italian Minister of Culture, Mr Sandro Bondi is trying to dismiss the accusations and points out that none of the walls damaged feature frescoes and it is hardly a surprise for a 2,000 year-old site to go on unharmed. However, **critics note the Berlusconi government is cutting down financial support to preservation and Pompeii is in a state of decay.**

The Roman city is not the only site in question. Many fear for the fate of all historical buildings in the country. UNESCO will surely issue an official report on Pompeii and hopefully, the outcome will not be as dark as expected.

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