

THE MAKEOVER OF HISTORICAL POMPEII STARTED



Last week, conservation workers began restoration work on Pompeii which is in the Campania region of Italy. The 105 million euro or \$142 million dollar restoration is being partially financed by the EU. This comes one day after former renovation managers ended up being investigated for corruption.

The project that is scheduled to be finished by 2015 is being financed by the European Union for nearly 41.8 million euros. **This endeavor is regarded as very critical for Pompeii's survival, following a number of structural collapses at the 44 hectare location which is very close to Mount Vesuvius.**

Pompeii was devastated by a massive volcano eruption almost 2,000 years ago (79 AD) however, the ashes and rock aided in the preservation of numerous buildings; several were found practically in their original state. The ash also preserved the shapes of curled-up victims who died in the calamity.

The extremely popular site, near the city of Naples, unfortunately symbolizes the many years of poor management of one of Italy's most treasured ancient sites, because of the effects of reduced spending for cultural preservation.

The repairs are directed at decreasing the risk of the ancient buildings being exposed to the elements, reinforcement of the buildings, restoring Pompeii's renowned frescoes and expanding video surveillance because good security measures have been lacking for years. The work commenced in two ancient Roman houses, the Casa dei Dioscuri and the Criptoportico, which are some of the most beautifully decorated structures in the ruins.

Johannes Hahn, the European Regional Policy Commissioner stated "It's a first small step to revamp the whole area." He inaugurated the restoration project together with Italy's regional policy, culture, and interior ministers. He went on to say that it was necessary to have the program in order to update Italy's cultural sites and also that it was an important economic opportunity. He stressed the project would have complete transparency in order to avoid further scandals.

Prior to the opening ceremony, Italy's financial police launched an investigation of the site's former director, Marcello Fiori for alleged misuse of office. Fiori had been appointed in 2009 by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

The previous supervisor of the Pompeii restoration project, Luigi D'Amora, was also charged with defrauding the state. Subsequently, Annamaria Caccavo, a former contractor, was put under house arrest because of fraudulent expenditures. Court documents stated that one of Caccavo's contracts of 449,882 euros, resulted in costing the state nearly 4.84 million euros. The work wasn't for preservation of the area but for having stage performances.

The newest renovations are going to be controlled by a "steering committee" that consists of Italian government ministries, as well as European Union representatives to make sure there is no misappropriation of the funds. Italian minister, who manages regional spending, Fabrizio

Barca, said the committee would adhere to a very strict schedule.

The latest "Grand Pompeii Project" is also going to make improvements to the visitors' facilities. The European Commission has estimated the number of visitors in 2017 could possibly increase to 2.6 million per year from 2.3 million.

When Prime Minister Mario Monti unveiled the restoration plans last year, he said it demonstrated the necessity, not only courage, but also strength to undertake complicated projects like this in southern Italy because the area has suffered from corruption and under-investment.

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