Buried Alive!

It was August 26 and the people of Pompeii were going about their business, visiting local shops and doing their chores, when they suddenly heard loud rumblings. They looked up at the massive mountain that towered over their city and saw hot waves of volcanic ash pouring down the mountainside. They stopped what they were doing and fled.

The Great Cover-Up

The year was 79 A.D. and the eruption was coming from Mount Vesuvius, a 4,200-feet high volcano that today looks down upon the city of Naples, Italy. Over the past two thousand years, Vesuvius has erupted several times, most recently in 1944, but never was the damage as great as it was on that summer day in 79 A.D. The city of Pompeii and the nearby town of Herculaneum were buried under ten feet of the volcanic ash; only the rooftops of a few buildings remained visible.

It is believed that most of the twenty thousand people of Pompeii escaped the wrath of the mighty volcano. Days later, many of the citizens returned to where the city once stood. They started digging, trying to recover their valuables, but the task was too difficult, so they gave up.

An Amazing Discovery

For centuries Pompeii remained a lost and forgotten city. Then, in the year 1748, a peasant struck a buried wall while digging in his vineyard. Thus began the archeological excavations of the lost city that have continued ever since.

Viewing History

In the beginning of the excavation, valuable treasures were discovered and taken to a museum in Naples. But as the workers continued to dig, they discovered that most of the ancient city was still intact. The volcanic ash had preserved the city. Buildings still stood along streets, swords and armor worn by gladiators were found, kettles and jars stood in kitchens, bronze tools were found inside shops.

Today, you can tour the lost city of Pompeii, and much of Herculaneum has also been unearthed and can be viewed. The buildings, the streets, and even the graffiti on the walls illustrate what life was like at the moment Vesuvius erupted, nearly two thousand years ago.