

Off to Naples!

Today we adventured to southern Italy to the city of Naples. Naples, Napoli in Italian, is the capital of the Campania region and the third largest city in Italy. This Mediterranean Sea port city is just a short train ride to the archaeological sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum near one of Italy's famous volcanos, Vesuvius. These historical landmarks are the reason for our journey south.

The day began in preparation for our trip to Pompeii. Alarms rang at 6:30 AM to start what would prove to be a very long day. Frantically multi-tasking we packed the last minute items into our book bags and carry on suitcases, packed picnic lunches, ate breakfast, and locked all the doors and windows to our apartments.

Leaving the apartments in Trastevere, Rome at 7:15 AM we walked the 10 minute hike to the bus stop to catch the #75 bus. Expecting to be squashed like sardines, like every other time we ride the public buses, we were pleasantly surprised to find only a handful of passengers. However, unfortunately buses make stops and after 2 minutes of "elbow room" a large group of twenty-one Chinese students with luggage squeezed their way onto the bus. Although the morning air was cool the bus quickly became 20 degrees warmer (maybe an exaggeration, but it was toasty). After the 45 minute bus ride, we arrived at Termini Station, Rome's large train hub.

The group meeting time was 8:45 AM and since we arrived 30 minutes early we did as any Italian would do, we sat down and drank a coffee, "il cafe" in Italian. While sipping espresso and cappuccino we were joined by our Professor, Vincent Caranchini, Andrew Berger, our Teaching Assistant, and our ISA representative, Andrea di Carlo.

Andrea was last to arrive at the Termini. Due to the bad traffic during morning rush hour in Rome he was forced to run to the train station, panting as he arrived that he was going to have a "heart stroke". After giggles between the group members we informed him that he probably meant "heart attack". After the laughter had ceased he informed us of the happenings at the train station and warned us of Gypsy pick-pocketers.

Delay began when we looked at the arrival board and our train to Naples was 5 minutes late. Without hesitation Andrea celebrated his frustration for running unnecessarily with an espresso. Minutes later we had passed out seats numbers and were ready to board the nice, fast, Italian trains we had heard so much about. Hectically speed walking through the train station, we all followed Andrea and Vince as if their little ducklings. All fourteen travelers passed through the gateway onto the platform and began to board the large red train. Unfortunately everything spiraled downhill from there.

Once on the train we quickly realized that all of our seats were taken by other passengers. After confusion and frustration we all exited the train and walked back into the station, still in Rome. Customer Service informed us that they overbooked the train and gave us seats on the

following train to Naples at 10:40 AM. After waiting on the floor of the train station we finally were able to board a train and leave for Naples! The train ride was quick and easy. Half of us drew while the other half sketched. After an hour we safely arrived in Naples. Finally!



Once in Naples we received, from Andrea, our Naples metro card for the train and bus transportation and our tickets to both Pompeii and Herculaneum. After, we went to baggage storage and checked our bags into lockers as a group, leaving with us only our sketching materials, cameras, and packed lunches. From the train station we boarded a regional train, much dirtier and smaller than the fast train, to Pompeii.

The train stop is right outside the gates to the famous archeological site and we immediately headed to the entrance. So far during this trip it has been difficult to find public restrooms or even restrooms that you do not have to pay a fee to use, so we definitely took advantage of the free 20th century bathroom at the Pompeii visitors center. Also before entering into the ancient city we sat in the shade and devoured our packed lunches. Although the train dilemma only delayed us by an hour the entire group was starving by the time we arrived at 1 PM. A nice break in the shade and food was needed before beginning the hot and tiring trek around the beautiful Pompeii.

Once we ate our packed lunches, we only had less than two hours to explore the ruins of Pompeii. Looking at our maps, we knew it would be impossible to see the entire site in this amount of time. Luckily, Andrea gave us suggestions on areas of the town we should visit. He suggested we definitely see the brothel, the theater, and the forum area. While the rest of us proceeded to enter the site, Andrea stayed behind and told us to meet him there when we were done. Most of us felt bad for leaving him behind but, he said he would just be a “hobo” and sit on a bench and read his book. So, everyone else proceeded onto the site and most of us partnered up and went separate ways since the area was so large.

Some of us went straight to one of Andrea’s suggestions that was the farthest away, which was the brothel. It was slightly difficult to get to because all of the ruins almost look the same which made it hard to distinguish the areas. The map was also in Italian so that didn't help much either. Andrea talked highly of this area and how graphic it was but, when we got there we were very disappointed. The majority of the area had locked gates so we couldn't see anything Andrea had told us about and from what we could see, the area just blended in with the rest of the ruins. We decided there wasn't much to see there and chose to move onto another one of Andrea’s suggestions.



While navigating through the site, some of us decided to take a break from the hot sun and sketch in the shade. We didn't want to take too much time to sketch though because we wanted to be able to see as much of the site as we could, therefore, we stuck to quick sketches and watercolors. We later moved on to the theater. The theater was pretty large and it was

obvious that it had been restored because it was fully intact. You could tell that some of the stone may have been original but, most of it looked newer. There were some lights that had been placed to light the aisles for when they currently have shows there. After visiting the theater, we realized we were running short on time and needed to start heading back to where we were going to meet Andrea. On our way back we did stop at the forum. The forum was interesting because it did look a little different in comparison to everything else. The area was pretty open and had many remnants of standing columns. There were also statues of men on horses at the forum. After our last stop at the site, we made our way back to Andrea to catch the next regional train back to Naples.

Andrea led us back to the platform to wait for the train and it quickly arrived. Walking onto the train, we saw in the doorway there were a few men playing music on an accordion, a saxophone, and a drum. At first, most of us were interested in them and thought it was kind of fun. We quickly realized that they weren't just playing music for our enjoyment but, for money. After they quit playing, they went around to collect their money and most of us were careful to avoid eye contact with them so they wouldn't come up to us.

Once getting back to the train station in Naples, we went back to the lockers to pick up our overnight bags. We then proceeded to the metro. The Naples metro is considered the most beautiful metro in Europe and that was obvious. Every section of the interior was designed by a different artist and it was beautiful. After getting off the metro, Andrea walked us to our hotel. Our hotel was much nicer than I think the majority of us expected and it was a nice change from our apartments in Rome. After checking in, we were given two hours before we had to meet to go to dinner. During those two hours, some of us shopped around outside while others went to check out the spectacular view and get drinks on the terrace of the hotel.





After our two hours, Andrea told us it would be a fifteen-minute walk to the restaurant. We quickly realized it was going to be a much longer walk being that we walked for a hour. Although, none of us could complain about our walk because we had a beautiful view of the Mediterranean Sea and the city the entire time. At the restaurant, all of us ordered pizza since Naples was the birthplace of pizza. It was of course delicious. After stuffing ourselves, we walked back to our hotel for a nice shower and a good night of sleep.

