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**A 'Lamborghini' Of Chariots Is Discovered At Pompeii. Archaeologists Are Wowed**

NPR

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Becky Sullivan

Calling it an "exceptional discovery," researchers at Pompeii have announced the uncovering of an intact ceremonial chariot from a villa near the famous Italian archaeological site.

[The announcement Saturday](http://pompeiisites.org/en/comunicati/the-four-wheeled-processional-chariot-the-last-discovery-of-pompeii/) called the chariot "an extraordinary find" that "has no parallel in Italy thus far."

The chariot is preserved in remarkable detail, officials say, with four iron wheels, metal armrests and backrests, and a seat perched atop that could sit one or two people. Notably, the chariot is adorned with metal medallions depicting satyrs, nymphs and cupids, suggesting the possibility that it may have been used in marriage ceremonies.

"I was astounded," said Eric Poehler, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst who has a specialty in traffic in ancient Pompeii. "Many of the vehicles I'd written about before ... are your standard station wagon or vehicle for taking the kids to soccer. This is a Lamborghini. This is an outright fancy, fancy car."

Archaeologists worldwide expressed similar excitement Saturday over the announcement. "Still wrapping my head around the latest incredible discovery," [wrote](https://twitter.com/pompei79/status/1365606246536077312) Sophie Hay of the University of Cambridge. "My jaw is on the floor just now!" [wrote](https://twitter.com/JLDraycott/status/1365644089237114882?s=20) Jane Draycott of the University of Glasgow. A single exclamation point did not suffice for historian and writer Rubén Montoya, who [wrote](https://twitter.com/rubsmontoya/status/1365597406516162570?s=20) in Spanish that Pompeii "does not stop giving us surprises!!!"

The ancient city of Pompeii has been the subject of fascination and archaeological digs for hundreds of years. It was buried in volcanic ash from Mount Vesuvius nearly 2,000 years ago, a disaster that preserved in incredible detail the buildings and ephemera of the city and even the shapes of the bodies of the Romans who once walked the city's streets.

According to Italian authorities, the chariot survived the eruption and the intervening years because it was stored inside a portico. The eruption caused the walls and ceiling around it to collapse under the weight of volcanic ash. In recent years, looters had dug tunnels on either side. But "miraculously," officials say, the chariot was spared.

While previous excavations had yielded everyday vehicles used for travel and work, this ceremonial chariot is the first find of its kind to be discovered, explained Massimo Osanna, the outgoing director of the site.

"It is an extraordinary discovery for the advancement of our knowledge of the ancient world," Osanna said in a statement.

Every so often, some new discovery from Pompeii prompts excitement from historians about the glimmer of understanding it reveals about the residents of the ancient world: [their fast-food preferences](https://www.npr.org/2020/12/27/950645473/whats-on-the-menu-in-ancient-pompeii-duck-goat-snail-researchers-say), [how their taverns were decorated](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/11/pompeii-dig-unearths-fighting-fresco-gladiators-tavern), [their unlucky deaths](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/05/29/615179234/new-excavation-at-pompeii-uncovers-victim-crushed-by-massive-rock).

Even among those semi-frequent discoveries, Poehler says, this chariot stands out.

"This is precisely the kind of find that one wants to find at Pompeii, the really well-articulated, very well-preserved moments in time," he said. "And it happens to be in this case an object that is relatively rare despite its ubiquity in the past."

1. **What happened to the ancient Roman city of Pompeii?**
2. **Using evidence from this text, explain why people are so fascinated with Pompeii.**
3. **Using evidence from this text, explain why this discovery is so important.**
4. **Write a short summary of this article.**