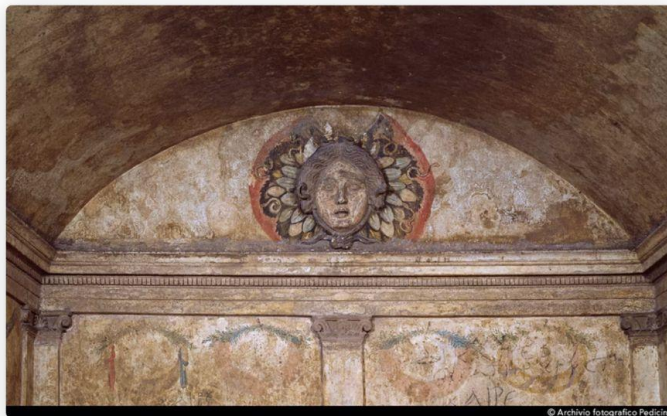


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Done Pompeii? Try Naples' newest ancient attraction when it opens this summer

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ipogeo dei Cristallini will open to the public in June © Archivio dell'arte, Pedicini fotografi

Naples' newest ancient attraction will allow visitors to travel 2500 years back in time when it opens in June for the first time since its discovery in 1889.

Naples is a gateway to some of the most spectacular historic sites in the world. [Pompeii](#) and [Herculaneum](#), both frozen in time by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79AD, are essential places to visit if you want a window to the ancient world. Not to mention nearby [Oplontis](#) and, closer to the city's main attractions, the [National Archaeological Museum](#) with its bric-a-brac of Ancient Roman life.

Come June, visitors will have a new ancient site to explore, a hypogeum — or underground tomb — that predates the ruins of Pompeii by about 400 years.

The best things to do in Naples: [lavin' la dolce vita](#)



<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/news/naples-newest-ancient-attraction-ipogeo-dei-cristallini-opens-june>



Ipogeo dei Cristallini was discovered in 1889 © Ipogeo dei Cristallini

Ipogeo dei Cristallini was built by the Ancient Greeks between the late fourth and third centuries BC, back when Naples was a Greek city known as Neapolis. It's an ancient network of burial chambers located deep in the bowels of the city in the neighborhood of Sanità.

Once part of a larger necropolis for Naples, Ipogeo dei Cristallini will showcase four almost perfectly preserved and richly decorated burial chambers — rare survivals of ancient Greek art and architecture that show how the early inhabitants of Naples lived (and died).

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The sites have always been closed to the public, guarded since 1889 by the aristocratic Baron di Donato after he discovered the hypogeum while excavating the grounds of his palace for a water source, and later by the Martuscelli family who inherited the site.

Giampiero Martuscelli, his wife Alessandra and his children Paolo and Sara, petitioned for the site to be overseen by Italy's Central Institute for Conservation after an archaeologist convinced the family to open the treasure of ancient Greek history and art to the public. Restoration of the chambers began in September 2020.

"[The archaeologist] had asked us to visit the Hypogeum," Alessandra said. "After entering the most beautiful of the four rooms, he exclaimed: 'My dear, how much beauty, I would like to live here!'. In that particular moment, we realized that it was about time to take care of this place that had been closed for too long."



It's a network of burial tombs created in the third and fourth centuries BC when Naples was a Greek city © Ipogeo dei Cristallini

The burial chambers are decorated with carved columns, sculptures, ancient inscriptions, vases, symbols of resurrection (such as pomegranates and eggs), carved mattresses and pillows painted in yellow, blue and red, and ancient Greek frescoes.

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In one of the most decorative rooms, there are painted laurel wreaths, crowns, a Medusa head to ward off evil spirits, two painted candelabra and a scene that depicts the ancient Greek mythological figures of Dionysus and Ariadne.

"We have given a lot of thought on how to value and enhance the great heritage we were given, and we understood soon enough that the desire was not only to restore those wonderful frescoes to their original beauty, but also to bring an ever wider audience closer to Greek art. Art belongs to everyone, and anyone who manages an asset like this has the duty to make it understandable and accessible," Alessandra said.

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Visitors will have the chance to see how ancient Greeks lived in Naples © Archivio dell'arte, Pedicini fotografi

Paolo Giulierini, director of Naples' National Archaeological Museum, claims that the Ipogeo dei Cristallini tomb complex compares only to the decorative [Verginia Royal Tombs in North Macedonia](#), which is believed to contain the bones of Alexander the Great, and highlights the significance of Naples in ancient times.

"The hypogeum teaches us that Naples was a top-ranking cultural city in the (ancient) Mediterranean," Giulierini told [the Greek Reporter](#).

Everything you need to know before your trip to Naples

Ipogeo dei Cristallini will be available for visits on pre-booked small group tours when it opens in June (exact opening date to be announced, see [Ipogeo dei Cristallini's official website](#)). In the meantime, some 700 artefacts from Ipogeo dei Cristallini are also on display at Naples' National Archaeological Museum.

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