

Archaeology Field School in Italy: Excavations at the Villa del Vergigno

June 29th – July 31st 2020

Director: Dr. McKenzie Lewis

Project Description:

The Villa Romana del Vergigno is a large *villa rustica* inhabited from ca. 100 BCE to 500 CE, located on the outskirts of Montelupo Fiorentino in the mid-Arno Valley of northern Tuscany, approximately twenty kilometers west of Florence. The area of Montelupo has had continuous habitation since the prehistoric era due to its strategic importance at a docking point along the Arno River. This region was prosperous during the last few centuries BCE, resulting in its Etruscan population being subjected to repeated waves of Roman colonization between 82 and 30 BCE, a period that is roughly concurrent with the development of the Villa Vergigno. During the Roman Imperial period, the villa had a large domestic area with mosaic flooring, a hypocaust system, and a bath complex, as well as an agricultural sector for the production of wine, olive oil, glass, metals, pottery, and amphorae.

In the 2013 through 2019 field seasons we have been primarily excavating the agricultural sector of the villa to determine the scale of agricultural production and the site's contribution to the regional and Mediterranean economy. In the last four seasons we have also reopened excavations in the residential sector of the site to investigate the villa's phases of construction the site's status before and after Roman colonization and the chronology of occupation on the villa's plateau. In the 2015 – 2019 seasons, evidence was found for life at the villa continuing into late 5th and 6th Centuries CE, despite that it is commonly assumed that after the 200s CE Italy was on the fast track toward full economic decline. The later phases at this villa are therefore bringing to light evidence that helps retell the story of Tuscany's transition from the Roman Imperial period into the Middle Ages.

In the 2020 field season we will continue the work begun in previous seasons in the main agricultural and industrial production area of the villa. This location is revealing a series of rooms with large outer walls, inside of which there is coming to light evidence of a kiln, pottery production, and an area that served either as a refuse heap or leveling layer during the villa's later period of occupation. We will likely expand the excavation area of the agricultural and ceramic/metal production area, which will likely answer questions about how this work space differs in type and chronology from the four other kilns discovered on site during previous seasons.

In 2020 we will also continue to excavate inside the villa's residential section at the location in and around the bath complex and the villa's Phase 1 foundation walls. In particular, this season will focus on excavating an early-phase iron forge and adjacent work space, which appears to have been repurposed during the villa's Imperial era modifications. Additionally, investigation will continue to excavate areas where the earliest foundation walls are coming to light. In the artifact laboratory, analysis will continue on the previously excavated amphorae and fine-ware pottery found during previous seasons.

We will possibly continue excavating an area discovered in 2013 that lies approximately fifty meters away from the villa proper at which a series of walls came to light, although an exact identification of their nature is still to be determined. There is good evidence, however, to support the hypothesis that this outlying area predates the major monumental phases of the villa, which would indicate Etruscan ownership of the site prior to the Roman Imperial period. If true, the 2019 season has the potential to dramatically alter many modern assumptions about northern Tuscany's relationship with Rome during the 1st century BCE.

Objectives:

The Villa del Vergigno Field School is designed to provide a hands-on introduction to the principles of archaeological excavation, practical laboratory experience, data analysis, research design, and socio-political history of ancient Italy. Participants will receive training in excavation techniques, survey methods, site mapping using Geographic Information Systems, and will take part in recording and conserving artifacts discovered during excavation. The project also includes optional weekly excursions to nearby Etruscan, Roman, and medieval archaeological sites, and major sites and museums at Florence, Fiesole, Pisa, Arezzo, and the Chianti hills.

The primary goal is to provide students with an active opportunity to understand how archaeology is practiced in the field, and for students to gain a better understanding of past cultures and their evolution over time. Upon completion of the field season, engaged students will be able to demonstrate a practical, working knowledge of archaeological field methods, including excavation, survey, mapping, and artifact analysis. Specifically, students will learn to:

- Excavate while observing stratigraphic units
- Document data on formal excavation forms
- Measure, map, and draw archaeological features
- Preserve contextual data in a Harris matrix
- Obtain and process environmental data via a flotation system (if applicable)
- Analyze pottery and artifacts and catalogue them for publication
- Identify Etruscan, Roman, and Medieval artifacts and discern the differences between the typology and chronology of these artifacts
- Describe the Villa Vergigno and other archaeological sites in the context of the history of the region
- Engage with broader issues of archaeological research, such as research focus for a site and field season, data analysis and interpretation, and the development of hypotheses as they relate to the ongoing discovery of new data

Prerequisites:

None. As is typical of archaeological field schools, the primary learning is done in the field, hands-on under the instruction of the field school staff. There is a requirement that you approach the project, season, and each workday with enthusiasm, ready to work and investigate, and that you understand that this project involves actual, real work conducted Monday through Friday in the hot summer sun involving physical labor and a variety of tools.

Accommodations:

Participants are housed in a large, multi-suite historic villa located in the center of Montelupo Fiorentino, approximately ten minutes by car from the excavation site, twenty minutes by train from Florence, and walking distance to train station, grocery stores, cafes, shops, and restaurants. There will be 2-4 people per room/sharing amenities. The cost of the program covers room and board: breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided six days a week. A washing machine, kitchen, and wireless Internet are available at the student apartments.

Travel and Meeting Point:

Students should make their own travel arrangements to and from Italy (we will not travel overseas as a group). The four best airports for arrival, in order of convenience of travel to the meeting point, are Florence, Pisa, Rome, and Milan. Upon arrival in Italy, students should plan to meet at 5pm on Monday, June 29th outside Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence, from which transportation will be provided to Montelupo Fiorentino.

Students are encouraged to travel independently on weekends, as well as prior to or after the field school. Trains from Montelupo to Florence and Pisa run roughly every 30 minutes.

Upon conclusion of the field school, students will be dropped off at Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence at 10:30am on Saturday, August 1st.

Cost of Field School

\$ 4,800 USD

Price includes:

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner 6 days a week
Room and Board from June 29 – August 1
Professional on-site instruction in archaeological methods

Site and Museum Visits
4 Optional Group Excursions
Field Equipment and Tools

Not Included in Price:

Travel to and from Florence, Italy
International Health Insurance (ca. \$50)
Personal snacks and beverages (water is always provided and juice/coffee/tea is provided at breakfast)
University course tuition

Independent weekend travel
Personal apparel

Personal Gear:

The summer days in Tuscany, Italy can be rather hot - sometimes in the mid-high 30s C (90s F) during the day; low 20s C (70s F) at night. Keep this in mind when packing clothing for daily work, but also for non-excavation activities.

All necessary tools and equipment are provided for excavation, though you are welcome to bring your own favorite items and personal digging gear.

Health Information

Do you have any allergies or chronic medical conditions? [] No [] Yes
If "yes" please provide additional information with this application.

Do you have any mental health conditions that might require attention while abroad? [] No [] Yes
If "yes" please provide additional information with this application.

Do you have any dietary restrictions? [] No [] Yes
If "yes" please provide additional information with this application.

Please list any prescription medications that you are currently taking (this is important; some medications that are common in Canada and the US are unavailable in Italy): _____

Please list any physical limitations that might prevent you from working on an archaeological site, outside, in the sun, in summer temperatures [Note that limitations in this regard would not preclude your acceptance, since work in the laboratory is also part of the program.]: _____

Other Information

Previous travel experience: _____

In one or two sentences, explain your interest in participating on an archaeological project and/or what goals to do hope to obtain:

I certify that the information given above is accurate and complete. I agree to release any and all records and transcripts held by my college or university, and other institutions, to International Programs as necessary for my participation on a study abroad program. I understand that as a participant on a study abroad program I shall be subject to certain rules and requirements of the University of Wyoming and cooperating institutions in U.S., Canada, and overseas, which I agree to fulfill in all respects, subject to immediate dismissal if I do not do so. I agree to assume financial responsibility for the program fees as determined by the University of Wyoming International Programs Office and for my own welfare while overseas.

Signature of Student

Date

The Villa del Vergigno Archaeological Project and University of Wyoming is an affirmative action /equal opportunity employer and institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, status in any aspect of employment or services. Academic educational programs, activities and services offered to students and/or employees are administered on a non-discriminating basis subject to the provisions of all civil rights laws and statistics.

Please Submit a Digital Copy of this Application to:

McKenzie Lewis (mcklewis@gmail.com) or (mac.lewis@uwaterloo.ca)

The Deposit is non-refundable, but will be returned if applicant is not accepted to the program.
Payment Details will be provided upon acceptance to the program.

Application and Program-Fee Due Dates:

Total Program Fee:	\$4,800 USD
March 1, 2020:	Application and \$500 Deposit Due
March 31, 2020:	\$2,000 of Total Program Fee Due (plus Deposit if not yet submitted)
April 20, 2020:	Remaining Balance of Program Fee Due