



SOPRINTENDENZA
ARCHEOLOGIA
BELLE ARTI
E PAESAGGIO
SALERNO E AVELLINO

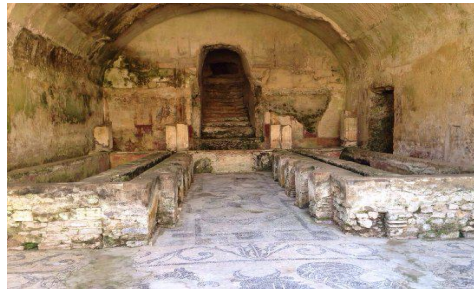


THE ROMAN VILLA IN MINORI (1st century A.D.)



The splendid seaside villa situated in the small sunny bay of the town of Minori is almost 2000 years old. It dates back to the 1st century A.D. probably to the times of Emperor Tiberius when it was fashionable to leisurely pass time in quiet and peaceful places. Tiberius himself spent the last years of his life (14 – 17 A.D.) on the Island of Capri. Unlike remains of the other Roman Villas of the area (in Positano, on the small island “Li Galli”, at Punta Campanella, in Amalfi, in Vietri sul Mare, in Tramonti, in Castellamare di Stabia, in Salerno etc) this Roman Villa has a well preserved ground floor which was buried by various floods and by the debris from the above houses and was therefore protected from further damage.

The villa was discovered by chance in 1932 and excavations began in 1934, even though part of it was already known as “Terme Romane” in the previous century. Buried again by a disastrous flood in 1954, the villa was entirely re-excavated in 1954 except for the East Side of *peristylum*, covered by private building. Possibly the villa could be accessed only by sea and it probably had a private landing place as well as tanks for fish breeding, like most of the seaside villas of the time. Certainly the only route to reach the plain of the river Sarno by land was through the mountain pass of Chiunzi, north of the town of Maiori. But this was little more than a track that could not be accessed by carriages, especially in the winter season. It should be noted that the coastal road Vietri-Positano was completed only in the 19th Century. The villa was formed by a large garden (*viridarium*), with a central pool surrounded on the three sides by a portico supported by strong brick pillars (*opus latericium*), whereas the rest of the villa was made of local calcareous stone (*opus incertum*).



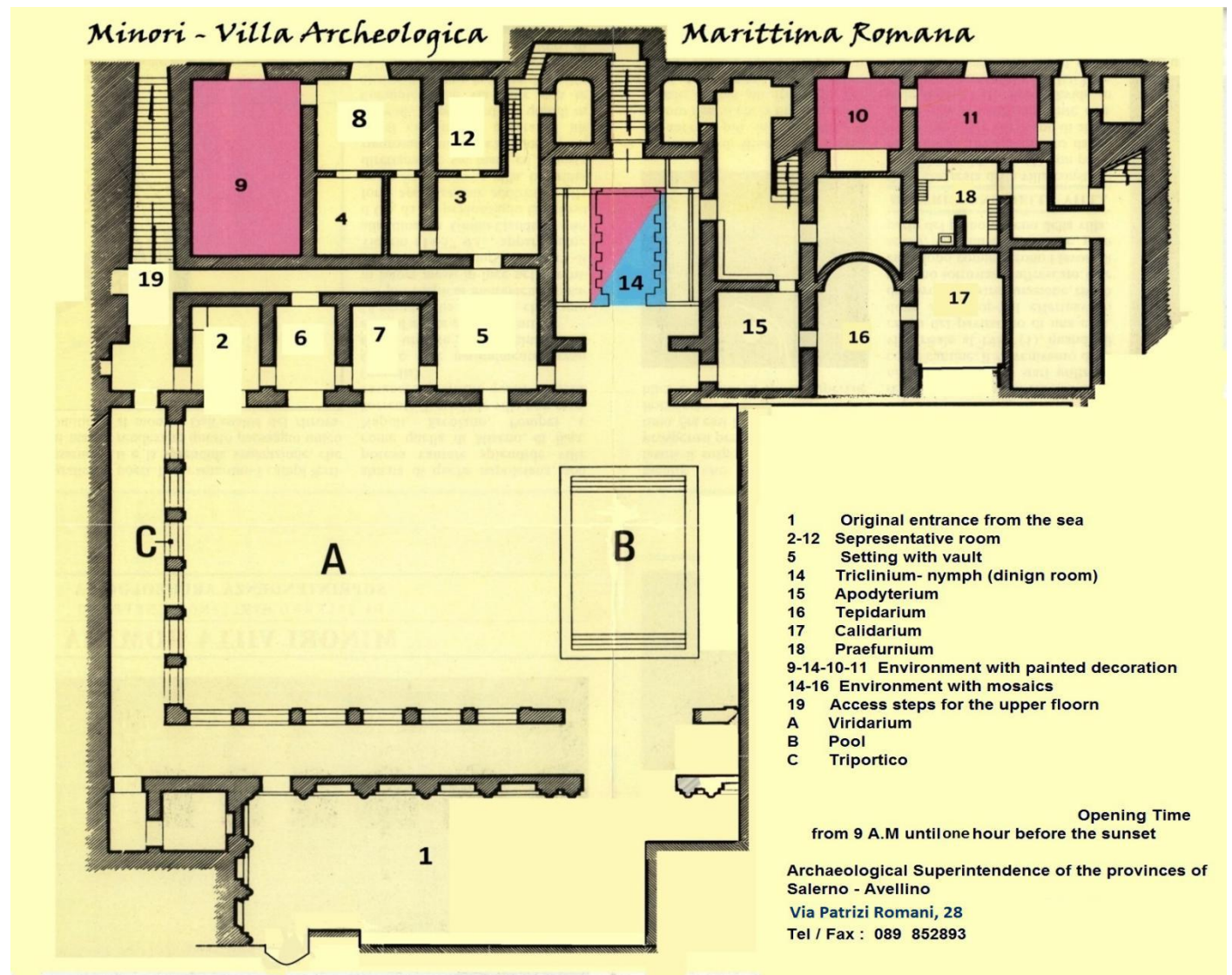
The most prestigious room of the villa was the *triclinium*, a large dining room with two *triclinia* only, instead of the usual three, added a few centuries after the villa was built. There is not much marble facing left.

The stuccos of the vault, the frescos and the splendid floor mosaics (III A.D.) representing mythological sea creatures and nymphs as well



as a hunting scene have badly deteriorated due to excessive humidity. On the west side of the *triclinium* there are some rooms. The most interesting of them is number 5 featuring one of the most ancient examples of domical vaulted ceiling, while all the other rooms have a barrel vaulted ceiling. To the east of the *triclinium* beside some reception rooms there were the baths: *tepidarium*, *calidarium*, *praefurnium* and probably *apodyterium* (dressing rooms). Two symmetrical staircases led to the upper floor with a beautiful scenographic effect. Only the west staircase is now standing. On the upper floor only few traces of floor mosaics and of a bathing pool remain. In 1958 a small *Antiquarium* was built on the upper level. Most of the items displayed in the *antiquarium* do not come from the villa excavations but from confiscations and underwater finds as evidenced by the shell fragments on the amphoras. There is a wide range of amphoras of different types and periods from the most ancient (4th Century B.C.) to the most recent (last centuries of the Empire). They were mainly used for transportation and conservation of wine, oil and other foodstuffs such as *garum*, a sauce made from the fermentation of some types of fish like tuna or mackerel which was highly appreciated by the Romans.

Pottery is kept in the glass showcases of the *Antiquarium*: everyday containers like pitchers, glasses, bowls, finely decorated vases (the so called African ceramics), glass fragments, fish hooks, bronze tools used to make fishing nets, marble sculptures and coatings, oil lamps and some animal bone fragments.



OPENING TIME

From Monday to Saturday: from 9 A.M. to one hour before sunset

Sunday: from 9 AM to 2 P.M.

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