

Field School Montaione

in Classic Archaeology, Survey
and Material Culture

2026



Archaeology Society A.A.V.F.



SYLLABUS

June 29th - July 24th

Field School Montaione (Florence, Italy) in Roman Archaeology and Material Culture

A project managed by **IRLAB – Institute for Research and Learning in Archaeology and Bioarchaeology**

850 Michigan Avenue, Columbus, OH, 43215, United States of America.

For more info: www.irlabnp.org



Site staff:

Director & P.I.: Antonio Alberti, PhD

Email: antonialberti65@gmail.com

Instructor & Coord: Fabio Stratta, PhD

Email: studiostratta@gmail.com

+39 331 451 9898

Field Supervisor: Alessandro Costantini, PhD

Email: a.costantini2@virgilio.it

Lab Supervisor: Sabrina Bartali, PhD

Email: sabrina.bartali@gmail.com

+39 338 786 0926

IRLAB Ita Coord: Alessandro Cariboni

Email: alessandro.cariboni@irlabnp.org

+39 339 744 3256

IRLAB USA Coord: : Thomas Coley

Email: tcoley96@gmail.com

+1 (740) 739-8693

Further Information: info@irlabnp.org

Apply Online: application@irlabnp.org

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Site Introduction

The Field School Montaione is part of an ongoing research project pursued by the Cultural Association “Cetra” and the Archaeological Association “Valdelsa Fiorentina” and supported by both the local and national administrations through the Cultural Heritages Ministry offices. The excavation takes place at a 1st – 5th century Roman *villa* site in central Tuscany (Florence, Italy).

During previous field seasons, archaeologists have examined multiple areas of the villa site, including the thermal baths, warehouse spaces and, most recently, part of the living quarters.

The general topography of the site reflects the typical villa of the time, with large living and productive complexes owned by wealthy and socially prominent families. Both the material culture and the structural forms place the timeline of active use for the site in the Roman Imperial age, after which the villa was abandoned and ultimately buried below the present-day ground level allowing for agricultural development. The numerous pottery fragments and other material culture finds, thermal marble tiles, and extremely well-preserved mosaics, all serve as a testament to the historical and cultural richness of the settlement. All archaeological finds are processed in the field before transport to dedicated labs, allowing participants to get hands-on experience identifying and properly processing ancient Roman material culture under the direct supervision of an academically credentialed team composed of experienced professionals.

Course Description

The field experience introduces archaeological field techniques, new technologies for both in-field and post-processing analyses, focuses on a critical understanding of the methods and applications of archaeological theories in a practical setting. Through participation in the field school, students will be introduced to the methods of archaeological survey, excavation, photogrammetry, GIS (Geographic Information System), reconstruction, restoration, and data recovery, recording, and processing. Students will be involved in all phases of field excavation, and will be trained in basic laboratory processing. Participants will work together with student colleagues and actively engage with the professional team as a group, directly contributing to the final, long-term interpretation of the site and results of the project as a whole. In addition to

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fieldwork and lab experiences, lectures on the theory and practice of archaeology will be held on a weekly basis.

Schedules

Excavation will take place daily, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 am and 5:30 pm, with an hour lunch break. Given the value of direct involvement and observation of the archaeological investigative process, students are expected to contribute actively to the fieldwork for the entire duration of the field school. The students will be split into two groups. Each morning, these groups will alternate between excavation and post-excavation laboratory processing activities performed in parallel in the field. Lab activities may include cleaning, labeling, restoring, and analyzing artifacts, as well as record keeping and assisting with photography for both photogrammetry and GIS records. Such activities will be held at the instructors' discretion and will involve only small groups of students at a time. All students, including those involved in laboratory activities, will return to excavation following the lunch break until the end of the work day. Lectures may be given in the morning once or twice a week. In case of inclement weather, excavation will be replaced with laboratory activities and lectures. At the end of the working day students will have time to relax and shower. Students and staff will dine together at 8:00 pm-8:30 pm..

Learning objectives of this course

The field school is designed to provide all participants with an in-depth knowledge of archaeological field methods – including survey, excavation, and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) – and field and research methods for both architectural and cultural materials. Including recovery, restoration, and analysis of pottery fragments, marbles and mosaics. Practical, hands-on experience in the field will be complemented by laboratory activity and lectures on the theory and practice of archaeology and restoration.

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Course Requirements

Prior to their arrival to Italy, the students are required to complete all readings included in the attached reading list. Students are required to participate actively in both fieldwork and laboratory activities, and to demonstrate a good understanding of the concepts and techniques employed in the field. The readings will include topics such as Roman material culture and history, stratigraphy, geographic information systems. An understanding of such topics is essential to maximize on-site learning. Participation and overall performance in the field will be monitored throughout the entire field school.

Course Credit

The Montaione site is under the direct control of local ministerial offices. As such, the local *Soprintendenza* will release a participation certificate, which will be verified and distributed by IRLAB. If seeking course credit please communicate with your institution to identify the potential framework for your independent study.

Participants interested in earning academic credit must establish and enroll in an Independent Study at their home university. IRLAB has extensive experience in coordinating with students' home university and independent study professors/advisors to ensure that adequate scholastic benchmarks are set and tracked throughout the field school experience. Academic success in IRLAB programs has been previously tracked via:

- Excavation journals
- Participation in field/lab exercises, with graded feedback on skill level and improvement from field/lab supervisors
- General evaluations of student participation, demeanor, interest, and skill
- A final examination can be administered during the last week of the program to assess the student's mastery of the theoretical and practical concepts and techniques learned throughout the entire field school.

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Course Fees

Cost: 3,000.00 \$ for the 4 weeks session

SERVICE DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS

Support fees cover housing, meals, excavation, and laboratory equipment, and staff costs for one person (participant) for the entire duration of the field school. Fees also include a 1-year membership at the Student Level (\$25.00 value) in the Institute for Research and Learning in Archaeology and Bioarchaeology. A non-refundable processing fee is applied to all fees at the time of payment. There are no application fees. However, students are required to pay support fees in full within 2 weeks of admission. Failure to pay the amount due in full within two weeks of receipt of this invoice will result in the automatic forfeiture of the student's place in the course.

These fees do not cover: 1) travel costs incurred by students to reach the field school; 2) personal expenses during the stay in Italy not expressly stated in the service description above.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

You may arrive at whatever airport you wish, however staff will only pick students up from the Pisa and Florence airports. If a student chooses to arrive through a different airport they will be responsible for either 1) securing transportation to the Pisa or Florence airports to be picked up by staff or 2) securing their own transportation to the accommodation in Montaione. Upon arrival, a pickup service will be provided by the staff from the Pisa and Florence airports to the field school students. Students will be picked up in groups as they arrive at the airport. Clearly communicating your arrival time with staff will ensure this process goes smoothly.

The last day of the field school will be Friday the 24th. The field school staff can take a maximum of 2 trips to the airport on the 24th. Students leaving on the 24th will be responsible for organizing themselves into two groups based on their departure times. Students leaving after the 24th will be responsible for their own transportation (buses, trains, and taxis are all readily available).

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CANCELLATION/REFUND POLICY

In case of student withdrawal, all support fees minus a non-refundable deposit of \$500 will be refunded until May 1st, no fees will be refunded.

Admission Procedures

Should the minimum attendance requirement of 12 students not be met, the course will be canceled.

The Summer School has no formal prerequisites; students will be fully trained for all the activities they experience. Students interested in applying to the Summer School must fill out and submit the online Application Form.

The application deadline is June 1st. However, applications are reviewed as soon as they are received and successful applicants accepted right away.

Curriculum vitae and/or reference letters (e-mails) may be requested. The staff reserves the right to verify any of the information reported in the application form and request supporting documentation (e.g., advising reports; references) in its sole discretion. Staff will make final decisions regarding enrollment.

Acceptance will be communicated by e-mail. Upon acceptance, students will receive detailed instructions on how to submit required documentation and payments:

- **Proof of Insurance:** students must have valid international health and injury insurance (made available through student travel centers) and must provide the insurance provider's contact information, as well as the policy number, including a proof of tetanus vaccination (or booster) within the last 10 years. Additionally, as the world still deals with varying degrees of Covid 19 infection and protocols, please refer to U.S. CDC guidelines on travel. The program will only be affected by an outright ban on travel between the United States and Italy.

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• **Release form:** all students must read and accept the terms of the IRLAB Participation Agreement to participate in the program; a signed release form must be submitted prior to the start date of the Summer School.

• **Fee Payment:** Upon admission students will be required to pay fees in full within 10 business days receipt of the invoice sent by mail. In case of student withdrawal, all fees minus a non-refundable deposit of \$500 will be refunded within 5 business days since the communication. After May 1st fees will not be refunded. In the unlikely event of course cancellation, fees will be refunded in full (any applicable processing fees may not be refunded). Failure to provide all the above-mentioned documents and payment within the terms specified at the time of admission will constitute an automatic forfeiture of the student's place in the summer school.

Required Personal Materials:

Much of the equipment that we will be using on a daily basis will be provided, such as trowels, shovels, screens, bags, writing instruments, and forms. However you will need to supply your own field pack:

- o Backpack
- o Water bottles
- o Hiking Boots (Boots are required to be worn on site)
- o Hat
- o Sunscreen
- o Insect repellent
- o Rain poncho
- o A covered clipboard
- o 1 or more pairs of yard/garden gloves
- o Durable clothing

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Accommodations

Housing

*Housing is provided by the Field School at an old retirement home, **Villa Serena** (Viale Vincenzo da Filicaia, 18, 50050 Montaione FI), in double or triple rooms (separated for men and women), in the center of the town of **Montaione**, a 4-minute drive from the site, 5 minutes on foot from the town's self-service **laundry**, and even less from the pharmacy, supermarket, bars, restaurants, and local park.*

Meals

Participants in the Summer School will be provided with breakfast, lunch and dinner from Monday to Friday. On the weekends, students will be responsible for their own meals. Staff will go to the grocery store once a week. The purchase of certain necessities and shared food during the week will be covered by the field school. Students are responsible for the purchase of non-shared food items such as snacks and specific wants during the week. Grocery trips can be organized for the purpose of personal shopping.

Any dietary restrictions and food allergies must be communicated to the staff before the beginning of the field school so that accommodations can be made

Students are responsible for their own food on Saturday and Sunday, dinner can be provided either Friday or Sunday night depending on whether enough people stay Friday night or return before dinner Sunday (this will have to be planned for ahead of time by the students so this can be arranged in advance); grocery trips can be organized during the week so that you can purchase your own food for the weekend if you stay at the accommodation and do not plan on traveling.

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Directions

Accommodation: the shared house is in Montañone, a few minutes away from the site.

Closest Airports: **Pisa** and **Florence**. The local staff can manage the airport pickups at the arrival if needed. In addition airports, cities and villages are connected through a deep railway system.

Map

