
Puteoli

PUTEOLI pōōtē'ō-lē [Gk. *Potioloi*—'sulfur springs'] (Acts 28:13). A maritime city of Campania in Italy where Paul landed on his voyage to Rome; the modern name is Pozzuoli. It is on the northern shore of a recess in the Gulf of Naples, protected on the west by the peninsula of Baiae and Cape Misenum. The region was volcanically formed, and Puteoli owed its name to the odor of the sulphurous springs in the vicinity. The volcanic dust, called (Ital.) *pozzolana* today, was mixed with lime to form a durable cement that resisted seawater.

Puteoli was originally a colony, founded probably in the 6th cent. B.C., of the neighboring Greek city Cumae (Strabo Geog v.4.5f); it was called Dicaearchia. The earliest event in its history that can be dated definitely is a Roman garrison's repulse of Hannibal before its walls in 214 B.C. Carthage's effort to secure a seaport as a base of supplies and communication was thus thwarted (Livy xxiv.7.10–12; 12.1–13.7). Puteoli became the first Roman port on the Gulf of Naples when a Roman colony was established there in 194 B.C. (Livy xxxiv.45.1–3; Strabo Geog v.4.6; Velleius i.15.1–3).

The city's consequent commercial prosperity as the chief seaport of the capital was due to the harbor's safety and the inhospitable character of the coast nearer Rome. The harbor was doubly protected by a mole, known to have been at least 382 m (418 yds.) long, consisting of massive piers connected by solid masonry arches (Strabo Geog v.4.6). Extensive remains of this mole are still visible. The shoreline devoted to commerce (*emporium*) extended about 2 km (1 1/4 mi) west from the mole; the imports handled there consisted chiefly of Egyptian grain and oriental wares from Alexandria and other cities of the Levant (Suetonius *Augustus* 98.1–10; Strabo Geog. xvii. 1.7; Seneca *Epistulae morales* 77.1f.). At the height of Puteoli's prosperity under Claudius and Nero its population, estimated at nearly 100,000, included many people from the Eastern part of the empire.

Puteoli declined in importance when Claudius built an artificial harbor at Portus Augusti and when Trajan made the mouth of the Tiber the principal converging point for the Mediterranean Sea trade, but Puteoli and Baiae remained the favorite resort area of the Roman nobility. The foundations of many ancient villas are still visible, although partly covered by the sea. Cicero had a villa in this region (Cicero *Ad Atticum* xiv.16.1; 20.1). In the bay between Puteoli and Baiae NERO tried to have his mother Agrippina drowned by means of a boat that came apart while carrying her toward her villa near the Lucrine Lake (Tacitus *Annals* xiv.5).

The Apostle Paul found Christians living in Puteoli and stayed with them seven days on his way to Rome (Acts 28:13f.). At that time the ordinary route to Rome, along the Via Appia from Capua, was 155 Roman miles (about 229 km, 142 mi). Later Domitian reduced the distance by laying out the Via Domitia along the coast.

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