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## Archeological Excavations on a Roman Holiday

By Emily Rodden, West Chester University Junior, Anthropology major



Roman Forum  
Photo Credit: Emily Rodden

Imagine finding an artifact that is more than 2,000 years old and you are the first person to see it or touch it in millennia. As a West Chester University Anthropology major, finding new artifacts is my favorite part of participating in an archeological dig. Hearing someone yell, "I think we found something" on a dig makes my day. Everyone drops what he or she is doing to go over and marvel at what we found. This

is the best feeling because at that moment you are surrounded by people who are just as excited and passionate about what they are doing as you are.

Anthropology is a holistic field of study, encompassing culture, linguistics, biology and archeology. Being a student at WCU has provided me with many great opportunities to experience what it is like to be an anthropologist. So far, I have accepted opportunities in areas like co-curation of museum exhibits at our Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology, research on migration at the US-Mexico border, internships, study abroad programs, and archeological digs.

The archeological dig I attended this summer was through The International Society for Archaeology, Art and Architecture of Rome (ISAR), and we dug in the Roman Forum, at an Augustan-era building called the Horrea Agrippina. The

Roman Forum was the seat of political and religious activity at the height of the Roman Empire. It is situated right in the middle of Rome, in the valley between the Capitoline and the Palatine hills. As the mythological site of the founding of Rome, the Palatine hill is the archaeological center of Rome, and boasts some of the earliest known settlements.

My program group consisted of eighteen American students and ten Italian graduate students, and was co-directed by Dr. Dora Cirone, a renowned Italian archaeologist working for 25 years in the Roman Forum, and Dr. John Hopkins, a former professor of art history at Rice University in Houston, Texas and currently a professor at NYU. This six-week intensive program taught archaeological techniques and local history while contributing materially to the world's understanding of pre-empire Rome, which lays buried under layers of constant occupation in the Eternal City.

Working outside daily for eight hours in the hot sun was mentally and physically exhausting, but what made it all worth it was living in Rome for six weeks, making many new friends, and walking past the Colosseum every morning on my way to work. Ever since I was little, I have been interested in anthropology and I can't imagine studying anything else. I remember going to the public library when I was young and walking straight to the books about ancient Egypt and ancient Rome. When I was offered the ability to dig in the birthplace of the Roman Empire, it was like a dream come true. Thinking about it today, I sometimes can't believe I was digging for artifacts in the Roman forum. I am so grateful to everyone who has offered me these opportunities and to my family for supporting me.



ISAR group photo on the last day of the dig

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