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## FOLLOWING HADRIAN

- I came, I saw, I photographed... follow me in the footsteps of Hadrian! -

# The Painted Tombs of Paestum

July 15, 2014November 2, 2015

With its three magnificent large Doric temples, Paestum became a well-known site thanks to the 18th century engravings by Piranesi ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni\\_Battista\\_Piranesi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Battista_Piranesi)) and Goethe's impressive descriptions in his Italian Journey ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian\\_Journey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Journey)). However Paestum is also renowned for its tombs decorated with painted scenes. During excavations in the 1960s, around 200 richly painted tombs from the Lucanian period (4th century B.C.) were discovered in a small necropolis about a kilometre north immediately outside the city walls.

The tombs were painted on the inside with scenes depicting funerals and the passage of the dead into the underworld. They were executed on site right after the four slabs had been put in place in the pit. These paintings were executed using a technique resembling fresco. A thin layer of plaster was applied to a smoothed travertine slab. This style of tomb decoration blossomed under the Lucanians, a native people from mainland Italy who took over the city around 400 B.C. The scenes depict funerary games and rituals; the deceased on his/her deathbed, chariot racing, hunting scenes and duels between men.

One particularly richly decorated tomb is the so-called Tomb of the Diver. The tomb, which dates to around 480 B.C., is unique in the Greek colonies in Italy. The significance of this particular tomb is that it contains the only example of Greek wall painting from the Archaic, or Classical period to survive in its entirety. It is made of five limestone blocks forming the four lateral walls and the roof, the floor being excavated in the natural rock ground. The paintings on the four walls depict a symposium (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symposium>) scene, while the cover slab shows the famous scene that gives the tomb its name: a young man diving into a curling and waving stream of water, the passage from life to death.

Here is a series of images from the Paestum Archaeological Museum collection of paintings, starting with some pictures of the Tomb of the Diver.













([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14599910471\\_c79472010b\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14599910471_c79472010b_h.jpg)).

*Detail of fresco from west walls of the Tomb of the Diver depicting a cortege of guests, 5th century BC  
Paestum Archaeological Museum*





([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14580183586\\_5587875e1e\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14580183586_5587875e1e_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting of a chariot race, 340-330 BC  
Paestum Archaeological Museum*









([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14623177163\\_54719a5bd0\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14623177163_54719a5bd0_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting of a man on a chariot, 350-330 BC  
Paestum Archaeological Museum*





([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14603089585\\_3542f63e32\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14603089585_3542f63e32_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting of 2 warriors fighting, 3rd century BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*





([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14416565189\\_c50bb6c3ce\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14416565189_c50bb6c3ce_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting of a two men fighting, 3rd century BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*





([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14602559172\\_e2881b402f\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14602559172_e2881b402f_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting a duel and boxing contest, 3rd century BC, Paestum  
Archaeological Museum*









([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14599876131\\_1605ba695f\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14599876131_1605ba695f_h.jpg))

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting a lion hunt, 3rd Century BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*



([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14602552552\\_4c162f6160\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14602552552_4c162f6160_h.jpg))



*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting a hunting scene, 370-360 BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*



([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14623255653\\_f891ecb8a0\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14623255653_f891ecb8a0_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting a hunting scene, 2nd half of 4th century BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*





([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14623218423\\_31f005114e\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14623218423_31f005114e_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting of a rooster, about 350 BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*



([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14416727887\\_44dfaf64f6\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14416727887_44dfaf64f6_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting a duel judge by a sphinx, a flute player and two women weeping,*



*340 BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*



([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14416512778\\_6c319d658e\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14416512778_6c319d658e_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting the deceased on her deathbed (prothesis), 340 BC, Paestum Archaeological Museum*





([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14603103635\\_4f90b007a7\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14603103635_4f90b007a7_h.jpg)).

*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting the deceased's departure for the underworld, 340 BC, Paestum  
Archaeological Museum*





([https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14601140104\\_47aad4185a\\_h.jpg](https://followinghadrian.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/14601140104_47aad4185a_h.jpg)).

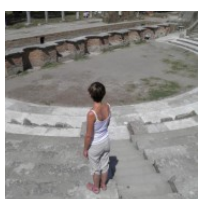
*Lucanian fresco tomb painting depicting the deceased's departure for the underworld, 340 BC, Paestum  
Archaeological Museum*

Further images of the painted tombs of Paestum can be viewed from my [image collection on Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/carolemage/sets/72157645522581886) (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/carolemage/sets/72157645522581886>).

Tagged [Lucania](#), [Magna Graecia](#), [Paestum](#), [Paistos](#), [Poseidonia](#)

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## 4 thoughts on “The Painted Tombs of Paestum”

**ALBERT M.** says:

July 15, 2014 at 8:25

pm

1. Amazing!

Reply →

**RITAROBERTS** says:

July 16, 2014 at 9:12

am

2. Wonderful post as always Carole. I love the Chariot Race fresco and The man on a Chariot .Thank you for sharing your lovely photo's,

Reply →

**SARAHFRAZER89** says:

July 17, 2014 at 11:35

pm

3. Reblogged this on [sarahfrazer89's Blog](#) and commented:  
One of my favourite bloggers, always filling me in on my yet unvisited sites! Informative as always!

Reply →

**PATTI ROSE** says:

January 21, 2016 at 9:53

pm

4. Gorgeous! I was only there for the day but could have easily spent a week!

Reply →

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