



The Secrets of Vesuvius

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

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Media type:

Book

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This attractive volume, profusely illustrated with colour photographs and artwork, provides an immensely enjoyable way of absorbing history as well as a fascinating glimpse of an archaeologist and anthropologist at work. In 1982 Sara Bisel, one of the world's specialists in ancient bones, flew to Herculaneum in response to an urgent request for assistance - workmen digging near the ruins had discovered some skeletons. Because the Roman custom was for cremation, very few skeletons existed; this would be a unique opportunity to reconstruct a microcosm of Roman life tragically ended when Vesuvius erupted in AD 79. Dr Bisel's narrative is a model blend of erudition and enthusiasm. She effortlessly mingles information about her work and the significance of the finds with details about Roman life in general and Herculaneum in particular. Interwoven amongst all this is an imaginative fictional reconstruction of events in the lives of some of the inhabitants on those fateful August days. This is a compelling read from start to finish. Sara Bisel originally expected to stay in Herculaneum for five days - she ended up spending most of the next six years analysing the bones and 'making them talk'.

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