Built in the 1840s in the Bavarian town of Aschaffenburg, the Pompeiianum (called Pompejanum in German) is an idealized reconstruction of a Roman house based on excavations in Pompeii. It is picturesquely located high on a terrace ridge overlooking the River Main. Now a unique tourist attraction, the building is a testimony to the enthusiasm for Antiquities in the 19th century.

The Pompeiianum was built between 1840 and 1850 by order of King Ludwig I of Bavaria who had been inspired by the excavations in Pompeii. It was loosely modelled on the House of the Diosuri (Casa dei Dioscuri) in Pompeii. The King chose to built the Villa in Aschaffenburg because of its mild, sunny climate and its attractive position. The Pompeiianum was never intended to be a royal residence. It was a place where art lovers could study antiquity and see how life was like in a Roman house.
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 2

Pompejanum, Aschaffenburg, Germany
© Carole Raddato
Visitors stepping into the Pompeianum find themselves transported back 2000 years into the world of a Roman patrician.
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 4

The Atrium, Pompejanum. Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 5

Detail of wall painting in the 4th Pompeian style of the atrium, Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany
© Carole Raddato
The rooms in the house are situated around the central *atrium*, an open inner courtyard which acted as the reception and living area. *Cubicula* (bedrooms) are arranged around all four sides of the *atrium* providing the perfect setting for original works of Roman art. Since 1994, Roman artefacts from the State Antiquities Collection and the Glyptothek in Munich are now on display inside the rooms of the Pompeianum.
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg.

Marble statue of Fortuna in one of the cubicula, Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany.
As a philhellene, Ludwig I patronized the arts and commissioned many neoclassical buildings, especially in Munich. He was also a frenetic collector. Through his agents, he managed to acquire such pieces as the Medusa Rondanini, the Barberini Faun, and the figures from the Aphaea temple on Aegina. The Glyptothek, which he commissioned, houses his collection of Greek and Roman sculptures.
Marble statuette of Hercules, 2nd century AD, Pompejanum, Aschaffenburg, Germany
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 10

Marble statue of Bacchus, exhibited in one of the cubicula, Pompejanum, Aschaffenburg, Germany
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 11

Fragment of Fresco from the theatre at Herculaneum, Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg.

The splendid decoration of the interior and the mosaic floors were copied or adapted from ancient models.
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 13
Directly behind the atrium, opposite the entrance, is a room open on two sides (though both sides could be closed with curtains or folding doors in Roman times), the tablinum.

The tablinum was the office in a Roman house, the master of the house (paterfamilias) centre for business, where he would receive his clients. It often had an attractive mosaic floor and wall paintings.
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 15

Painting from the Tablinum, Minerva preventing Achilles from killing Agamemnon, Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany
© Carole Raddato
The Roman *domus* was typically designed so that anyone standing in the vestibule could see straight through the *atrium* and *tablinum* to the colonnaded garden in the back of the house (*peristylum*). This has clearly been recreated in the villa.
Instead of surrounding their houses with large lawns and gardens, the Romans created their gardens inside their *domus*. The *peristylium* was an open courtyard within the house; the columns surrounding the garden supported a shady roofed portico whose inner walls were often embellished with elaborate wall paintings.
The Pompeiianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg

The Peristylium richly decorated with architectural elements and still life painting, Pompeiianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato
The Peristylium richly decorated with architectural elements and still life painting, Pompeiianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato

The back part of the house is centred around the *peristylium* much as the front centred on the atrium. Surrounding the peristyle in the Pompeiianum are the summer *triclinium*, the winter *tricinium*.

*Winter triclinium with wall painting, Pompeiianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato*

A *triclinium* is a formal dining room. It was named after the three couches (*klinai*, known as *lectus triclinaris*) typically found in this room. Each *klinē* was wide enough to accommodate three diners who reclined on their left side on cushions while some household slaves served multiple courses, and others entertained guests with music, song, or dance.
Dining rooms, like other rooms in Roman houses, often had beautifully painted walls and mosaic floors like the ones reproduced at the Pompeii-anum.
In addition to the *triclinia*, surrounding the *peristylium*, are the *culina* (kitchen) and a single latrine. Wealthy *matronae* did not prepare meals; that was the job of their household slaves. The kitchen is complete with replica utensils and cooking wares. Baking was done in ovens, whose tops were used to keep dishes warm. Embers from the oven could be placed below metal braziers for a form of “stove-top” cooking as seen in this reconstructed kitchen.
The Pompeiianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 22

The Culina, Pompeiianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany
© Carole Raddato
Antique Roman glass, bronze vessels and Terra sigillata ware are among several authentic items on display too.
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 24

Antique bronze containers displayed in the culina (kitchen) Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg

Roman glass displayed in the culina (kitchen), Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato
Terra sigillata ware displayed in the culina (kitchen), Pompeiianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato

Beside the kitchen is a tiny room, no bigger than a cupboard, but one which often intrigues visitors most. It’s a Roman latrine. Single latrine in the house were located in or next to the kitchen. This was a typical arrangement which enabled the latrine to be used for the disposal of kitchen waste.
The Pompeiium, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg | 27
Reconstruction of a single latrine next to the culina (kitchen), Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany  
© Carole Raddato

Upstairs are more cubicula (bedrooms) where several display cases have been installed, displaying ancient household objects, medical and cosmetic utensils, jewellery, children’s toys and oil lamps.
In World War II, the Pompeianum was heavily damaged by Allied area bombing but it was totally reconstructed and restored. It opened to the public for the first time in 1994.
In March 1995 the restoration of five rooms on the upper floor began and these new rooms have been open to visitors since July 2002. The ancient works of art exhibited on a permanent basis originate for the most part from the State Collections of Antiquities and the Glyptothek in Munich, which co-oversee the Pompeianum as a branch museum. Since 2009 the Collections of Antiquities and the Glyptothek have also presented special exhibitions that change every year. The exhibition “The Immortals – The Greek Gods” is currently being shown until October 2014.
The Pompeiianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg

The exhibition room, Pompeiianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany
© Carole Raddato
The Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman Villa in the German town of Aschaffenburg.

The Pompeianum enables visitors to get a vivid impression of what a Roman villa looked like and how life was lived in the *domus*. It is open daily except Mondays 9:00 to 18.00 from April 2 to October 12.

* Cave canem mosaic (beware of the dog), Pompeianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany © Carole Raddato

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