



Overview of the site of Göbekli Tepe. Photo by: © GHF

Göbekli Tepe, Turkey

Unique Early Neolithic Ceremonial Center

Site Significance

The circa 300-meter- wide hill of Göbekli Tepe is situated approximately 15 km northeast of the modern town of Şanlıurfa in southeastern Turkey at the highest point of an elongated mountain range, creating a landmark that is visible from far away. Since 1995 archaeological excavations by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) have been carried out there under the direction of Prof. Dr. Klaus Schmidt. Göbekli Tepe was not a settlement but rather a sanctuary which seems to have been a regional center where communities met to engage in rites. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that excavations to date have provided no evidence of residential buildings or fortifications; instead, monolithic T-shaped pillars, each weighing several tons, were erected here forming large circles in whose center another pair of pillars towers above all. The arms and hands depicted on their sides allow us to interpret them as being anthropomorphic, while reliefs carved on the pillars depict wild animals like cats of prey, bulls, wild boars, foxes, birds, scorpions, spiders and snakes creating a rich and intriguing iconography.

Project Goals

GHF's goals at Göbekli Tepe are to support the preparation of a comprehensive Site Management and Conservation Plan, construction of a shelter over the exposed archaeological features, training local community members in guiding and conservation and aiding Turkish authorities in securing World Heritage Site inscription.

Preservation by Design®

Planning

GHF is seeking development of an approved plan for the site and surroundings to guide all future site development. Considerations will include:

- Project Team Facilities
- Visitor Center
- Parking and Traffic
- Access
- Community Opportunities
- Investments



Threats

Climate
Looting

Start Date

2010

Project Partnerships

- German Archaeological Institute (DAI)
- German Research Foundation (DFG)
- Şanlıurfa Municipal Government
- Turkish Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Conservation Science

The massive site of Göbekli Tepe has only been five percent excavated. A great number of new scientific breakthroughs are expected in the next 10 years as new areas and stratigraphy are investigated. However, if it is decided to excavate new areas, then additional conservation and shelter funding will need to be secured. One of the most pressing issues is the repair of broken stelae.

Construction of a shelter to protect the site and its remains is also a crucial and urgent need, and a shelter design competition is underway with six architecture firms submitting proposals under the supervision of the German Archaeological Institute.

Community

Economic impact for the adjacent local community beyond direct employment on the site is likely to remain limited as a new road to the site bypassed the nearby village, and all tourists, the majority of which travel with tour companies, stay in Şanlıurfa. As such, it is unlikely that local facilities such as home stays will be developed. However, a local institute is being sought to aid in training local community members as guides for the site, and there is potential for a café/shop to be operated onsite by the village as well as parking and toilet facilities. A guidebook is also planned in Turkish- and English-language versions, and this could then be sold in the locally owned shop with the proceeds supporting the community.



Detailed look at a Carved Pillar. Photo by © GHF



Left: Stabilization of a carved pillar. Right: Conservation work underway. Photos by © GHF

Göbekli Tepe is an Early Neolithic site of enormous significance, featuring 5-meter-high (16.5 feet) monolithic pillars carved in relief and dating to 10,000 or more years ago.



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