

Karahantepe of Türkiye is selected as one of the most important discovery and research projects of 2023

Karahantepe, one of the world's oldest Neolithic sites, has been attracting attention for its archaeological findings. Within the scope of the "Taş Tepeler" Project, Karahantepe is among those sites that have given us a deeper understanding of prehistory. Accordingly, Karahantepe was recognised as one of the nine most important "Field Exploration and Research" projects of 2023 at the Shanghai Archaeology Forum in China.

The **Shanghai Archaeological Forum**, now in its 5th edition and held biennially since its first session in 2013, is an important academic platform that supports archaeological studies on an international level. Karahantepe was ranked among the Forum's nine most significant "Field Exploration and Research" projects as a testimony to the intensive archaeological work in Türkiye and the success of the excavations. The nine projects were selected from 973 evaluations submitted by participants from 32 countries.

Karahantepe: The Oldest Known Neolithic Site in the World

The ongoing research in and around Şanlıurfa, the Southeastern Anatolian province of Türkiye, consists of the Sayburç, Sefertepe, Harbetsuvan Hill, Gürcütepe, Çakmaktepe, Medik, Kurttepesi, Taşlıtepe, Ayanlar, Yoğunburç and Yeni Mahalle sites, as well as Karahantepe, and Göbeklitepe, the most well-known settlements of the region, within the scope of the "Taş Tepeler" Project.

Göbeklitepe and Karahantepe stirred global archaeological circles with the latest findings unearthed in October. These ground-breaking discoveries included the largest known human statue of the period, unearthed in Karahantepe. An outstanding example of prehistoric art is the 2.45-metre-tall figure sitting on what appears to be a bench, which is believed to depict a male. The statue's seated position evokes a living person, featuring a realistic facial expression, while the emphasis on its shoulder bones and ribs suggests death. Adjacent to the human figure is a lower ledge upon which stone plates and a vulture statue were placed, indicating that the structure was built for special purposes.

Additionally, during excavations conducted by İstanbul University on behalf of Türkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, a life-size limestone statue of a wild boar was found in Structure D at Göbeklitepe, dating from the same period as Karahantepe. Featuring traces of red, white, and black pigments on its surface, the wild boar is the first full-scale painted sculpture of its period to survive to the present day. It was found on a bench decorated with an H-shaped symbol, a crescent moon, two snakes, and three human faces or masks. The archaeological site of Göbeklitepe, about 12 kilometres from the Şanlıurfa city centre, is one of the most important heritages of human history. As Türkiye's 18th UNESCO World Heritage Site, Göbeklitepe has significantly altered perceptions of hunter-gatherer societies such as in the Neolithic Age.

Sustainable Cultural Heritage

Conducting numerous archaeological excavation and restoration projects to ensure the sustainability of its cultural heritage, Türkiye is leading the world in this field, with the number of projects in the country expected to reach 750 by the end of this month. Türkiye, with 21 heritage sites already on the UNESCO World Heritage List, had the *Ancient City of Gordion in Ankara* and *Anatolia's Medieval Wooden Hypostyle Mosques* added this year. Recently, five new values of Türkiye were inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, bringing the country's total number of UNESCO-registered Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements to thirty; Türkiye now has the second-highest number of items registered on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

Download link for visuals: <https://docs.tga.gov.tr/tj1u2ls1>