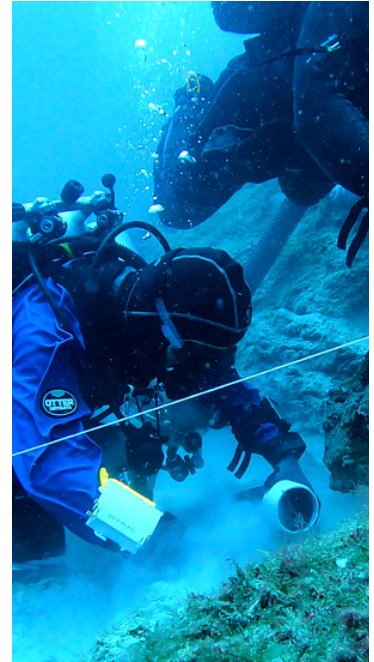


Press release

New discoveries on the wreck of Antikythera

A team of Swiss and Greek archaeologists recently completed the third season of excavations on the Antikythera shipwreck. The expedition, which took place between May 19 to June 18, 2023, is part of the five-year research program (2021-2025) carried out by the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece. Using cutting-edge techniques, this research has provided invaluable information on the history of this legendary shipwreck.



MYSTERIOUS SHIPWRECK

The wreck of Antikythera was recently brought into the spotlight by the film Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny. Far from the cinematic imagination, an international team of archaeologists, divers, engineers and physical and natural scientists led by Dr. Angeliki G. Simosi, Head of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and the Islands, and Professor of Archaeology Lorenz Baumer (UNIGE), is currently excavating the famous wreck. This year, the researchers have made significant progress in acquiring detailed knowledge of the site's structure, stratigraphy, the wreck itself and its valuable cargo. In addition, previously unexplored areas have been meticulously documented, enabling a more transparent and precise understanding of this legendary vessel.

The overall aim of these excavations is to better understand the circumstances surrounding the ship's sinking, by closely examining the wreck's preservation and positioning, its possible route and its cargo. This season's discoveries are essential for the formulation of a global vision of this tragic historical event.

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES

The progress of the excavations was meticulously documented using remote-controlled drones and digital capture by the divers. This data was processed daily using 3D modeling software, which enabled the visualization and analysis of the site with remarkable precision. In addition, all archaeological finds were rigorously documented and continuously integrated into a Geographic Information System (GIS), which allowed the understanding of the spatial and temporal distribution of the discoveries.

The database for this ambitious project includes all known data on the wreck of Antikythera, dating back to the first excavations carried out in 1900-1901. This holistic approach enables a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the site, taking into account all previously collected information.

THE DISCOVERY OF A SECOND SHIP

Excavations focused on the area at the eastern edge of the shipwreck site, where parts of monumental marble statues were found last year, after the removal of a group of large natural boulders. This year, the team discovered the bone remains of at least one more individual, a tragic victim of this devastating shipwreck. Characteristic artefacts of the Antikythera shipwreck, such as fragments of marble statues, pottery, glassware and elements of copper alloy, lead and wood belonging to the ship's structure, were also discovered. Among the marble fragments, one most likely belongs to the beard of the head of Herakles, discovered during the 2022 expedition. These finds confirm the cultural and artistic importance of the Antikythera wreck.

In addition, an exciting discovery was made at a higher stratigraphic level : Several fragments of proto-Byzantine pottery have been unearthed, indicating that another, probably much smaller, vessel suffered the same tragic fate during this period.

This new information opens up exciting perspectives on the maritime history of the region, and underlines the importance of continuing archaeological research in this area.



Extrait du modèle 3D



The research team

Supervised by the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities and under the patronage of H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou, the operation was coordinated by Rear Admiral (retired) Alexandros Palatianos. Field research was led by Alexandros Sotiriou, Associate Researcher at the University of Geneva, with a team comprising Orestes Manousos, Isaac Ogloblin (University of Haifa) and specialized divers. The team was completed by the eight members of the Underwater Missions Unit of the Hellenic Coast Guard (specialized diving team). Documentation of the archaeological finds, creation of the 3D models and updating of the GIS were entrusted to Patrizia Birchler Emery and Timothy Pönitz (UNIGE), while the field laboratory was organized by Isaac Ogloblin (University of Haifa), with the participation of Professors Maria Louloudi and Yiannis Deligiannakis (University of Ioannina), and the support of Yanis Bitsakis (UNIGE and Nereus Research Foundation). Geologist Charalampos Fassoulas (Natural History Museum of Crete) joined the team in Antikythera to discuss geological topics related to the shipwreck's site. Technical support (audiovisual documentation and underwater drones) was provided by the Hublot Xplorations team's members Mathias Buttet, Michel Blumenthal, Aloïs Aebischer, Guillaume Champain and Diego Carven. Diving architect Aikaterini Tagonidou and Athena Patsourou supervised all field activities on behalf of the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

The research project is being carried out by the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece, under the direction of Dr Angeliki G. Simosi, Head of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and the Islands, and Professor Lorenz Baumer of the University of Geneva. Underwater operations are supervised by the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities, while the project enjoys the patronage of H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou.

HISTORY

The wreck of Antikythera, dating in the first half of the 1st century BCE, is the richest ancient wreck ever discovered in Greece. After its accidental discovery off the coast of the island of Antikythera in 1900, it was excavated by the naval officer Cousteau in the 1970s, and then by Greek archaeologists between 2012 and 2020. Since 2021, the project has been coordinated by the University of Geneva, under the aegis of the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece. Its main objective is to gain a clearer understanding of the ship itself, its itinerary and cargo, as well as the current state of the wreck.



Official website

<https://esag.swiss>

<https://antikythera.org.gr>



The Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece (ESAG)

The ESAG is the only permanent Swiss archaeological mission outside Switzerland. As an inter-university training and research center, the ESAG encourages the next generation of academics.

Students from Swiss and International universities have the opportunity to take part in field and museum activities every year.

PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

The main supporters of the research program are the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, the Swiss watchmaker Hublot (Official Founding Partner) and the Nereus Research Foundation.

The telecommunications networks and systems are supplied by COSMOTE.

The research team would especially like to thank the mayor of Kythera and Antikythera, Efstratios Charchalakakis, for his constant support, and the few remaining inhabitants of the island of Antikythera islands for their warm hospitality.

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