

Ukraine: Greek City of Tauric Chersonese Reveals Fascinating Past

Among the newest additions to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 2013 is the Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora found on the shores of the Black Sea, Ukraine. The area carries with it a rich history that is reminiscent of notable archaeological sites under the international body's protection status. The decision by the World Heritage Committee that was agreed upon during their 37th session in Phnom Penh, Cambodia brings the number of protected sites in Ukraine to seven.



Combined efforts by Ukrainian and U.S. archaeologists in excavating, studying, and classifying relics of the 5th century BC Greek city have been going on since 1994 under the keen leadership of Joseph Carter, a professor of classical archaeology at the University of Texas, Austin.

The excavation works on the expansive 40 hectare area that made up the main city have uncovered physical evidence of a thriving cultural and trade centre built and inhabited initially by Dorian Greeks between Pesochynaya Bay and Quarantinnaya along the Black Sea. The International Council on Monuments and Sites profiles that the city was inhabited between 5th century BC and 14th century AD when it started to decline and was later abandoned for several centuries until the 20th century AD when the military discovered it as a strategic location. The military used the area as a quarantine cemetery thus shielding it from destruction.



Some of the unique features include two fortification walls, one of which is believed to have been erected in the 5th century BC while the other is said to have been an effort towards expansion during the 4th century BC. The remains clearly indicate a division of hundreds of clearly demarcated plots which were used as vineyards. Grapes were the main commodity of trade between the ancient Greeks and Romans. The city was the leading centre of wine trade during the 3rd century AD.

An orthodox monastery that stands at the centre of the ruins is thought to have been constructed by later occupants as Christianity began spreading across Europe. Other artefacts and settlement ruins that

were discovered were dated back to Stone Age and Bronze Age meaning that occupation of the Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese could have begun a few million years ago.

You are also able to see the fusion of early Roman and Greek architectural styles in the fortification towers and exceptional water supply systems that run across the city into commercial and residential complexes. The administration of land as evidenced by the ruins might just be one of the most democratic human organizations the world has ever seen, according to UNESCO. This organization can be traced further into over 10, 000 hectares in the adjacent lands that are under protection.

Scholars involved believe that the city is evidence of the mercantile movement and interaction of various civilizations such as the Scythian state, the Crimea and later the dominant Byzantine, Greek, and Roman Empires in the course of several millennia. It is this clearly defined evidence that offers an illumination into the relationship between cultures courtesy of the preserved ruins that validated the UNESCO's decision to inscribe the Ancient City of Tauric Chersonese and its Chora on to the prestigious list. The preservation is so good that archaeologists did not have to undertake major restoration projects, thus preserving the authenticity of various objects.



Historians record that the city has been under control of various administrators since 480 BC. Scythians, Cimmerians, Romans, Greeks are thought to have been among the early rulers until the rise of major empires as civilization took shape in later years. The vast stretch of the peninsula, initially known as the Crimean Tatars in modern times, was divided between Russia and Ukraine in 1921, with the latter taking over a bulk of the mainland portions.

Visiting the site as a tourist is not only a chance to glimpse in to the past physically but could as well be the start of discovering a part of history that was less known to the outside world. Since only a portion of the city has been excavated, no one knows what to expect should the archaeological team of Professor Carter delve deeper and explore the adjacent lands.

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