

Egypt opens ancient tomb of King Djoser after restoration

September 14 2021, by Mohamed Wagdy



Inscriptions adorn the wall of the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty

Egypt on Tuesday showcased an ancient tomb structure belonging to the cemetery complex of King Djoser, a pharaoh who lived more than 4,500 years ago, following extensive restorations of the site.

The structure—known as the Southern Tomb—is largely underground and includes a labyrinth of corridors, decorated with hieroglyphic carvings and tiles. A central funeral shaft houses a massive granite-clad sarcophagus from Egypt's Third Dynasty.

However, the pharaoh was not actually buried there but in the famed Step Pyramid nearby. The two structures make up part of the Saqqara complex near Cairo—one of the country's richest archeological sites. The Step Pyramid is the oldest known pyramid and one of the first examples of monumental architecture from the [ancient world](#), according to UNESCO. It is believed to have been the inspiration for the Pyramids at Giza.

Egypt's Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism said the opening this week of the tomb [structure](#) marked the completion of restoration work that started in 2006 and included reinforcing of the underground corridors, refurbishing the carvings and the tiled walls, and installing lighting. As of Tuesday, the tomb opened to the public.

In addition to the Southern Tomb, the Saqqara plateau hosts at least 11 [pyramids](#), including the Step Pyramid, as well as hundreds of [tombs](#) of ancient officials and other sites that range from the 1st Dynasty (2920 B.C.-2770 B.C.) to the Coptic period (395-642).



Mostafa Waziri, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, talks about the inscriptions on the wall of the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



Inscriptions and details adorn the wall of the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



An archaeologist takes photos of inscriptions on the wall of the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



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A worker stands inside the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



A tourist listens to a guide speak at the entrance of the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



A journalist walks down stairs towards the southern cemetery of King Djoser, to film it after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



The famed Step Pyramid, is seen near the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



Journalists film the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty



A path leads to the entrance of the southern cemetery of King Djoser, after its restoration, near the famed Step Pyramid, in Saqqara, south of Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Nariman El-Mofty

The Saqqara site is part of the necropolis of Egypt's ancient capital of Memphis that includes the famed Giza Pyramids, as well as smaller pyramids at Abu Sir, Dahshur and Abu Ruwaysh. The ruins of Memphis were designated a UNESCO World Heritage [site](#) in 1970s.

Egypt has publicized a string of recent archaeological finds over the past year in an effort to revive its key tourism sector, which was badly hit by the turmoil that followed the 2011 uprising. The sector was also dealt a further blow by the global coronavirus pandemic.

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