



AS IT IS

## Archaeologists Find 27 Coffins at Egypt's Saqqara Pyramid

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Egyptian **archaeologists** have discovered 27 **coffins** inside a large burial ground in an ancient city south of Cairo.

The coffins have remained unopened since they were buried more than 2,500 years ago, the country's Ministry of **Tourism** and Antiquities said this week.

The burial ground is near the famous Step **Pyramid** of Djoser in Saqqara, said Neveine el-Arif, a ministry spokeswoman. She said 13 coffins were found earlier this month in a newly discovered, 11 meter-deep well. Last week, 14 more were discovered in another well.

The ministry showed video of the coffins, which were covered with colorful ancient Egyptian writing. Other **artifacts** found in the two wells were also shown.

In March, Egypt reopened the Step Pyramid at Saqqara after a 14-year restoration effort that cost around \$6.6 million. The pyramid is believed to be the first ever built.

The Saqqara area once had at least 11 pyramids, including the Step Pyramid. It also held hundreds of **tombs** of ancient officials, ranging from the 1st Dynasty, 2920 B.C.-2770 B.C., to the Coptic period, 395-642.

Archaeologists are still working to discover more about the history of the coffins, el-Arif said. She added that more information and some "secrets" would likely be announced next month. Additional coffins are expected to be found in the area, she said.

In recent years, Egypt has often announced new archaeological finds to international media and diplomats in an effort to bring more tourists to the country.

Last year, archaeologists found a burial ground containing hundreds of **mummified** animals.

The Saqqara area is part of Egypt's ancient city of Memphis. It also includes Abu Sir, Dahshur and Abu Ruwaysh, as well as the famed Giza Pyramids. The ruins of Memphis became a UNESCO World Heritage site in the 1970s.

In October 2019, archaeologists found 30 ancient wooden coffins with writings and paintings in the southern city of Luxor.

The Luxor coffins were moved to be shown to the public at the Grand Egyptian **Museum**. Egypt is building the museum near the Giza Pyramids.

Egypt's financially important tourism industry has suffered from years of political problems and violence since the 2011 uprising that removed longtime leader Hosni Mubarak.

The industry has also been hurt by the coronavirus crisis. In July, the country restarted international flights and reopened major tourist areas, but the number of visitors remains low.

I'm Susan Shand.

*The Associated Press reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Bryan Lynn was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**archaeologist**- *n.* those who study ancient sites and cultures

**coffin**- *n.* the box a body is placed in before burial

**pyramid**- *n.* a triangular building built in ancient Egypt

**tourism**- *n.* the business of visiting places for pleasure

**artifact** - *n.* *something from that is from ancient times*

**tomb** - *n.* a building that hold the remains of the dead

**mummified** - *adj.* an ancient way of preparing bodies for burial

**museum** - *n.* a place where art and antiquities are displayed for the public

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