

SITE VISIT

Vicarious Glimpse of Turkey's Treasures

One of the most closely watched digs these days is Çatalhöyük, a sprawling 9000-year-old village in central Turkey that's yielding surprising evidence that early settlers maintained primordial traditions of hunting and gathering (see p. 1442). The watching is made all the easier by the project's Web site,^{*} maintained at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. Archaeologists say Çatalhöyük appears to be the first dig to

make its entire excavation database available on the Web, down to the exact location of each skeleton, clay pot, and stone ax. For those who don't need this much detail, extensive overviews are provided in the excavation reports of the 90-member team, as well as a newsletter that summarizes the latest findings. You can even get a sense of what it's like working at Çatalhöyük, thanks to electronic diaries: "At some point I think I will crack and start screaming at someone. ... " wrote one team archaeologist in September. Intrigued? Read on.

For a more high-tech view of Çatalhöyük, visit the Science Museum of Minnesota's "Mysteries of Çatalhöyük" Web site,[†] designed for schoolchildren and the general public. Visitors can take a virtual tour of the dig, view movies of ongoing excavations, or get answers to questions like "Why did they bury their dead under their houses?"

^{*} catal.arch.cam.ac.uk/catal/catal.html

[†] www.sci.mus.mn.us/catal/top.html

COOL IMAGES

Virtual Archaeology Worth the Trip

Forget the long plane rides to remote field sites and the grubby toilets and dearth of good coffee once you're there. Now you can fly through a prehistoric village, wander a museum's halls, and pick up and inspect an ancient vase all from your desktop computer. That's just a sampling of how computer visualization is transforming archaeology on the Web.



also teaming up with computer experts to reconstruct villages from maps, photos, and wire models. A prime example is a Web

ARCHAEOLOGY

This week NetWatch surveys some of the Internet's archaeology offerings to complement our special News section on prehistoric transitions, beginning on p. 1441. Some Web sites here are on topics covered by our News stories, such as rock art and a Neolithic Turkish settlement; others stray further afield into areas such as virtual archaeology.

site for Ceren, a village in El Salvador that was buried in ash around A.D. 600.[†] Web visitors find themselves strolling through virtual houses complete with cooking utensils (see lower left). Adding to the multimedia experience are slide shows with maps, drawings, and text, notes project leader Payson Sheets, an archaeologist at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

For even deeper immersion, there's Paloma World, a project that has recreated a 3400 B.C. village on the coast of Peru.[‡] The fly-throughs of thatched huts are fun (above), as are buttons that let visitors "excavate" skeletons from a tomb. But for students at the University of Missouri, Columbia, the



view's even better: In a special room where images are projected on a curved screen, they can don goggles and gloves that let them walk around and pick up virtual artifacts. "It has a remarkable effect" on engaging students' interest, says Missouri archaeologist Robert Benfer.

Many reconstructions can be seen only on CD-ROMs, on which archaeologists are increasingly cataloging their finds instead of packing them into pricey hardback books. For more exotic Web destinations, including a virtual Stonehenge, see this list.[§]

^{*} www.thinker.org/deyoung/exhibitions/peru/virtual/index-2.html

[†] ceren.colorado.edu/intropage/intropage.html

[‡] gonk.atc.missouri.edu/paloma

[§] www.ukans.edu/~hoopes/virtual.htm

HOT PICKS

Big picture. Net neophytes can find their bearings with this Web "field guide" from a special issue of *Antiquity* on electronic archaeology. The article reviews links to virtual libraries, mail lists, museums, society home pages, and more. intarch.ac.uk/antiquity/electronics/champion.html

Hominid trail. Part of a site that counters creationist claims, Fossil Hominids reviews the evidence on questions such as whether Peking Man was an ape and the significance of human brain size. The wealth of information here includes background on key fossils, drawings and photos, scientists' biographies, references, and lots of paleoanthropology links. www.talkorigins.org/faqs/fossil-hominids.html



Cave art cache. Although RockArtNet's design is confusing, the site's directory of links is worth exploring for everything from a site on Egyptian monuments to photos of petroglyphs from the U.S. Southwest. Check the popular Web Board for new rock art offerings. www.rupestre.net/rockart

Dig it? For the latest on digs around the world that are looking for workers—both volunteer and paid—take a peek at Archaeological Fieldwork Opportunities. www.sscnet.ucla.edu/ioa/afs/testpit.html