



Photo courtesy of Discovery

Discovery Channel reveals human civilization's first building blocks were set in place in AlUla by 'The Architects of Ancient Arabia'

Narrated by Academy Award® winner Jeremy Irons

The international documentary unearths previously unknown aspects of the ancient history of Saudi Arabia, as experts uncover traces of a society from more than 7,000 years ago

(AlUla, Saudi Arabia; March 22, 2021) – Discovery Channel takes a behind-the-scenes look at one of the most important discoveries of modern history as expert teams uncover clues that reposition the global understanding and significance of ancient Arabia in a new one-off documentary 'The Architects of Ancient Arabia'.

Narrated by Academy Award®, Tony Award®, Golden Globe® and Emmy® Award winner Jeremy Irons, 'The Architects of Ancient Arabia' journeys into Saudi Arabia's deeper past, following teams of leading international and Saudi archeologists and a local historian as they reveal new wonders in the previously unexplored land. Using multiple modern technologies to record tens of thousands of sites, they choose some to explore in greater detail, to begin piecing together a new chapter in the story of human civilization.

AlUla is a largely unknown oasis valley in the vast desert of the North West Arabian Peninsula, once a prosperous and important crossroad on the incense route and home to 3,000 years of powerful successive civilizations. Some of the most important survey and excavation work in modern history has been taking place in the region, revealing the deep past of AlUla.



Specialist teams are seeking to decipher the activities associated with ancient stone structures they are excavating across the county surrounding the AIUla oasis, with their findings aiding to deepen the historical legacy of the country, and of ancient Arabia. In the documentary, the archeologists unearth evidence for an ancient ritual, completely unexpected and extraordinary as they continue to piece together AIUla's rich history in time to welcome guests from around the world.

Henry Windridge, Senior Director: Marketing, Digital & Creative, EMEA Pay TV & Global Brands at Discovery, commented: "An untouched desert Kingdom, Saudi Arabia has retained some of the most stunningly well-preserved evidence of ancient civilizations. As the global leader in real life entertainment, Discovery is delighted to be able to continue its longstanding commitment to the region by uncovering the history of this ancient masterpiece and sharing it with viewers around the world."

The documentary was made by Discovery in association with The Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) and produced by Powderhouse Productions.

Robert Kirwan, Executive Producer/Editor of the documentary, said: "The weeks we spent in AIUla filming alongside the archeological team were a life-altering experience for me and the rest of the crew. The startlingly spectacular landscape is like nothing I've ever seen. And the stone structures, literally thousands of them dotting the area, have sat untouched for thousands of years. We were walking among the ghosts of unknown ancients, and we could feel their presence, their yearning, to have their story told."

'The Architects of Arabia' reveals startling new discoveries which reset the timeline for the emergence of complex societies. The thousands of mysterious stone constructions built atop of otherwise barren desert may well hold the missing link to AIUla's part in a major turning point in the history of mankind.

These discoveries have been the source great interest from the archaeology community globally and will be unpacked in much more detail over the coming months in the form of published peer-reviewed articles and papers that will change the current understanding of the significance of the Arabian Peninsula.



Archaeologist at work in AIUla



Ancient Stone Patterns in the Desert of AIUla

Rebecca Foote, Director, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Research at Royal Commission for AIUla commented: "We already know things about the major sites like Hegra, but I hope that the team's work and this documentary begin to fill in gaps in our knowledge in the late pre-historic period, when societies are becoming more complex."



“Archaeologists are just beginning to reveal the secrets and stories held within the desert of this stunning landscape, there is much more to discover and we’re excited to be able to share our work and this place with the world through this documentary.”

‘The Architects of Ancient Arabia’ will air exclusively on Travel Channel, on 31 March at 10:00pm (ET/PT) and April 1 at 2am (ET/PT) on Discovery Channel on April 2 at 8am (ET/PT). For those unable to tune in during one of these airtimes, the documentary will be made available on demand on YouTube.

[LOCATION IMAGES AND BEHIND THE SCENES VIDEO](#)

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Notes to media

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About AIUla

Located 1,100 km from Riyadh, in North-West Saudi Arabia, AIUla is a place of extraordinary natural and human heritage. The vast area, covering 22,561km², includes a lush oasis valley, towering sandstone mountains and ancient cultural heritage sites dating back thousands of years to when the Lihyan and Nabataean kingdoms reigned. The most well-known and recognized site in AIUla is Hegra, Saudi Arabia’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site. A 52-hectare ancient city, Hegra was the principal southern city of the Nabataean Kingdom and is comprised of more than 100 well preserved tombs with elaborate facades cut out of the sandstone outcrops surrounding the walled urban settlement. Current research also suggests Hegra was the most southern outpost of the Roman Empire after conquering the Nabataeans in 106 CE. In addition to Hegra, AIUla is home to a fascinating historical and archaeological sites such as: Ancient Dadan, the capital of the Dadan and Lihyan Kingdoms, which is considered one of the most developed 1st-millennium BCE cities of the Arabian Peninsula; thousands of ancient rock art sites and inscriptions at Jabal Ikmah; Old Town, a labyrinth of more than 900 mudbrick homes developed from at least the 12th century, and Hijaz Railway and Hegra Fort, key sites in the story and conquests of Lawrence of Arabia.

About Discovery

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