

The Entombed Warriors of Xian

The Terracotta Army

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Entombed warriors of Xian: The Army



- ▣ A column of armoured soldiers standing four abreast. In Pit 1 there are nine such columns arranged in a series of parallel trenches, 210 metres long. Originally the soldiers would have carried weapons. On each side of Pit 1 there is a double row of spearmen facing outwards. Across the front of the columns was a vanguard of three rows of archers and across the back of the columns was a rearguard of warriors armed with bows.



- ▣ This view across Pit 1 gives some idea of the extent of the excavation. Among the ranks of soldiers of the inner nine columns were wooden chariots, each drawn by four terracotta horses. Archaeologists estimate Pit 1 may contain up to 6000 warriors and 40 chariots.



- ▣ Across the front of the columns stood the vanguard, consisting of three rows of archers. In this section, only two rows have been restored and returned to their original position. They are not as heavily armed as the soldiers in the columns.



- ▣ Kneeling archer from Pit 2. Originally this archer would have been equipped with a crossbow. In Pit 2 there were 160 kneeling archers arranged in four columns. Behind them were 170 standing archers.



- ▣ The cavalry was an important part of Shihuangdi's army. This cavalryman and his horse are from Pit 2. The cavalryman wears long pants, a belted tunic, an armoured vest and a close-fitting cap tied under the chin. The cavalry horse wears a saddle secured by a girth strap around its belly, a bridle and reins which would have been held by the cavalryman. The horse's tail is long and neatly plaited. In Pit 2 there are 108 cavalrymen, each standing in front of his saddled warhorse.



There are terracotta figures of two types of horses: saddled war horses ridden by the cavalry and horses which pulled war chariots. These are chariot horses with their tails tied up to keep them clear of the chariot. The nearest horse shows clearly where the broken pieces have been reassembled. The terracotta horses were made in a similar way to the soldiers. The legs were solid while the head and body were hollow. Legs, body, head and tail were made separately then attached. A hole was left in the body to allow gases to escape during firing, preventing the figures from deforming or exploding. Details around the eyes, nostrils and mouth were sculpted into a fresh layer of clay applied to the assembled figure.



- ▣ One of the most remarkable things about the terracotta warriors is that each head appears to have been modelled on a different individual. There is variation in the shapes and features of faces, moustaches, beards and hairstyles. There are also differences in the way the neck scarves are worn and in the details of buckles and shoes.

Entombed warriors of Xian: The excavation

- ▣ The excavation in Pit 1 is ongoing. This view shows part of the unexcavated area toward the back of Pit 1. The trenches and some of the broken remains of terracotta figures are clearly visible.





- ▣ This view of an unexcavated area in Pit 1 shows traces of ash from the burnt beams which once supported the roof over the columns of soldiers. The corrugated appearance of the surface is due to the impression made by the timber logs which once covered the roof of the trenches.



- ▣ This view of a partly excavated trench in Pit 1 shows how most of the terracotta warriors looked when they were found. When the roof over the trenches collapsed, the terracotta figures were smashed.



- ▣ Part of the unexcavated area of Pit 2, showing some of the test trenches dug by archaeologists. Using these test trenches, archaeologists have estimated the number and formation of men and horses in Pit 2.



- ▣ Excavated area of Pit 3, the command centre for the terracotta army. This is the smallest of the three pits, containing only 68 terracotta figures and one chariot drawn by four horses. This view shows some of the smashed figures in a section of Pit 3.

- ▣ Some restored figures of officers, soldiers and four horses, placed in their original position in Pit 3.



Entombed warriors of Xian: Displaying the finds



- ▣ Entrance to the museum constructed over Pit 1 in 1979. This building has protected the site and enabled excavation and conservation work to be carried on throughout the year.

- ▣ Visitors can walk around the perimeter of the site to view the excavation from specially constructed walkways and viewing platforms. Humidity within the building is constantly monitored.



- ▣ These figures have been removed from their position in the pits, for restoration in an area at the western end of Pit 1. Each figure is photographed from different angles and entered into a database. After restoration the figures are returned to their original position.





- ▣ Figures in various stages of reconstruction. The figures are assembled from the jumble of pieces shown in the foreground. Some of the pieces have been digitally photographed for a 3D 'graphic visualisation' program which makes it possible to match pieces together onscreen. This saves countless hours trying to match pieces by hand.



- ▣ Originally the terracotta soldiers were coated with a lacquer base then painted with bright colours. Over time, the damp soil changed the chemistry of the paint and it flaked off and disappeared from many figures. This view of the head of a terracotta warrior shows traces of the original paint.



- ▣ Reconstructed crossbow which can fire a metal bolt up to 800 metres. Thousands of ancient weapons have been uncovered at the site, including swords, halberds and bows. They reveal important information about metallurgy in Qin times.
- ▣ The uniformity of particular weapons suggests they were mass produced, for example the trigger bolts from the crossbows are interchangeable.

□ One of the most spectacular finds from the burial complex were two half-size scale models of bronze chariots, each drawn by four bronze horses. They were not found in the three pits containing the terracotta soldiers, but in a deep trench closer to Shihuangdi's mausoleum.

□ It is believed the chariots were for the emperor's use on inspection tours in the afterlife. The chariots and horses were found in thousands of scattered pieces. It took eight years to reconstruct them. They are now on display in a specially constructed exhibition building to the east of Pit 2.

