

Famed Antikythera wreck yields more treasures

Researchers find signs of untapped riches at 2,000-year-old site that housed mysterious clock-like object.

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Treasures found on an ancient Mediterranean shipwreck suggest that the massive vessel met a stormy, violent death, and scattered remains over a much larger area than previously thought.

An ornate bed leg, an intact jug and giant bronze spear are among the finds discovered by archaeologists in the famed Antikythera wreckage in the Aegean Sea. The 2,000-year-old site is best known for housing an intricate navigation contraption, [the Antikythera mechanism](#).

The treasure hints at a much larger booty, says Brendan Foley, a maritime archaeologist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts and co-director of the research team. "It kind of boggles the mind, what could be down there," he says.

The spear, which is 2.1 metres long, 6 centimetres in diameter, and weighs 10.3 kilograms, is too big and heavy to have been a weapon; researchers believe it was probably part of a statue. (The legs, arms and other pieces of six to eight bronze statues were excavated from the site in 1901, along with more than 30 marble statues, which are now housed at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.)

The team, with researchers from Woods Hole and the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities in Athens, had just five days of good weather during their 23-day excavation season, which finished on 7 October. But that was enough to learn that the wreck covers about 300 metres of the sea floor and that the ship was probably a hulking 50 metres long, quite a bit longer than the 37 metres reported for ships of that era.

"This is a pretty ponderous size for a vessel," says John Huth, a physicist at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and an expert in ancient navigation techniques. People hadn't yet figured out how to make wing-shaped sails that enabled sailing into the wind, so turning such a ship of that size would have required a lot of work by oarsman, Huth says. A perilous end on stormy seas isn't that surprising. "It would not have been very agile," he says.

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