



View of the Temple A in Chavín de Huántar. Photo by: Dr. John Rick

Chavín de Huántar, Peru

A Pre-Columbian World Heritage Treasure

Site Significance

Chavín de Huántar, which lends its name to the rich pre-Inca Chavín culture, is one of the oldest major cultures in Peru and thrived between 1500 BC and 400 BC. One of the more unique elements to Chavín was that rather than emphasizing conquest and warfare, this seemed to be a broad-spread religious cult whose art and style became dominant through sophisticated convincing techniques carried out in elaborated ceremonial centers throughout northern Peruvian interaction sphere. In 1985, UNESCO designated Chavín a World Heritage site for bearing exceptional testimony to an ancient civilization.

Chavín de Huántar is located east of Peru's Cordillera Blanca mountain chain near the long and picturesque valley known as the Callejón de Huáylas. 250 km to the north of Lima at an elevation of 3,180 meters, Chavín has long been a site of Peruvian public interest and archaeological inquiry. It is situated in a dramatic, deep valley setting in the uppermost Marañón River drainage into which most large rivers of the central Andes flow,

with high glacier-capped summits hovering above. Although Chavín was clearly a center of trade and exchange, its location required ancient visitors to undertake an exceptionally demanding journey. Today, Chavín is served by a recently-upgraded, mostly asphalt roadway.

Project Goals

GHF is working to integrate conservation, investigation and sustainable community development in order to ensure long-term site appreciation, preservation and sustainability. The conservation team is stabilizing primary monuments, repairing underground structures, documenting the site with high precision instruments, locating underground structures with non-intrusive technologies, revealing, assessing and when appropriate removing post-Chavín structures to reveal original architecture; cataloguing artifacts, and improving site interpretation facilities, while the local community is engaged through conservation and craft training, employment, tourism entrepreneurship and regular consultations regarding the management of the site and its environs.



Threats

- Structural Weakness
- Exposure
- Uncontrolled Tourism
- Flooding
- Erosion

Start Date

2003

Preservation by Design®

Planning

GHF's goal is to ensure critically-needed funding and expertise for the complete conservation and restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Chavín de Huántar in Ancash, Peru. To that end, a Master Conservation Plan, is nearing completion with GHF support and will soon be submitted to the Government of Peru for approval. GHF has provided direct expertise for conservation planning through its own staff and by providing support for Peruvian conservators.

Project Partnerships

- Stanford University
- Instituto Nacional de Cultura (INC)
- Town of Chavín de Huántar
- Asociacion Ancash

Conservation Science

Chavín retains significant archaeological materials that require considerable conservation efforts to preserve for the long-term. Features such as the monumental buildings, Circular Plaza, and the Rocas Canal have suffered greatly from neglect, water penetration, coluvial and fluvial action, while the impressive and extensive underground gallery system continues to suffer damage from inadequate management of wet season dampness. To mitigate these issues, GHF is supporting efforts to reduce water penetration, and improve ventilation and drainage to dry out the site so that preservation efforts can advance in a stable environment.

Community

GHF is funding post-excavation conservation and a local conservation lab, with an emphasis on stone and ceramic artifacts. GHF hopes to expand our current conservation funding for the next four years for site conservation and restoration, enabling Peruvian conservation teams to become self-sufficient and capable of unsupervised conservation. Not only will this funding provide year round employment to locals but it will also open the doors for Chavín artifacts, that are distributed across Peru, to return to the newly opened sizeable local museum. Local people are being trained and coordinated on renewed craft production in traditional materials, including ceramic, bone, and stone.

Recent Accomplishments

- Intensive and accurate three-dimensional documentation of the site, resulting in maps and models that form the basis of all scientific work in the site.
- Extensive work on revealing, stabilizing, and overall conservation of the Circular Plaza and surrounding area.
- Extensive exposition, assessment, and partial removal of post-Chavín structures as deemed appropriate in consultation with Peruvian officials.
- Support for background studies and expert intervention on the development of the Chavín Master Plan.
- Relocating, excavation, conservation, and return to function for the majority of the principal, 300 m-long original drainage – the Rocas Canal.
- Recreation of Chavín ceramic technology, and training of local population in ceramic production; bone craftwork is commencing.



Circular Plaza during conservation (left) and after (right). Photo by Dr. John Rick

Located high in the Andes, Chavín de Huántar is one of most endangered UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Peru.



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