

NEW SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL™ SERIES EXPLORES WORLD'S MOST HALLOWED SHRINES, TEMPLES AND MONUMENTS

SACRED SITES

PREMIERES MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 AT 8PM ET/PT



NEW YORK, August 23, 2016 – Smithsonian Channel will offer fascinating new perspectives on some of the world's most remarkable and mysterious religious locations in the new five-episode series **SACRED SITES**, premiering on Monday, September 12 at 8 p.m. ET/PT. Based on new scientific breakthroughs and compelling archaeological and historical research, the series includes episodes on: the ancient cities of Petra and Hegra; the secrets of the Knights of the Templar; the oracles of Ancient Greece; the magnificent tombs and temples of ancient Egypt; and the ruined great houses of Chaco Canyon in New Mexico.

Each episode explores fundamental questions about these sites and the people who constructed them. Was the fabulous rock-cut city of Petra once ruled by a lost matriarchy? Were prophecies at ancient Greek oracles triggered by tectonic turmoil and electromagnetic fields? Did the Knights Templar secretly belong to an obscure cult that worshipped John the Baptist? **SACRED SITES** will provide extraordinary insight into the people of these ancient cities, their practices and struggles, and how this is all reflected in their shrines and temples.

SACRED SITES episodes:

SACRED SITES: PETRA

Premieres Monday, September 12 at 8 p.m. ET/PT

In the rocky highlands of Jordan and the shimmering deserts of Saudi Arabia lie the remains of two incredible cities – Petra and Hegra. The people known as the Nabataeans created them 2,000 years ago, carving great temples and tombs from the

rock where they lived. Much of the Nabataeans' story has faded from history, but these sacred sites hold profound secrets about their way of life. Mysterious solar alignments, ancient inscriptions and new discoveries suggest that Petra and Hegra could have been centers of a 'lost matriarchy', in which women enjoyed unrivalled power and privilege.

SACRED SITES: THE TEMPLARS

Premieres Monday, September 19 at 8 p.m. ET/PT

In 1096 AD, a bloody struggle for control of Jerusalem led to 200 years of holy war. Known as the Crusades, this conflict saw the rise of a legendary military order, sworn to protect the faithful – the Knights Templar. The Templars became vastly wealthy and powerful across Europe. In the 1300s, the king of France attacked the order, accusing them of corruption, blasphemy and heresy. Many Templars were imprisoned, tortured and executed, but their powerful and mysterious legacy endures to this day. A recent discovery at the Vatican Secret Archives may at last reveal the truth about the order.

SACRED SITES: THE ORACLES

Premieres Monday, September 26 at 8 p.m. ET/PT

For a thousand years, the Oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece was one of the wonders of the known world. This was the most famous of the oracles, where it was believed the gods spoke through a priestess or priest, offering cryptic visions of the future. But were these really the words of the gods, or were there even more powerful elemental forces at work? In the 1990s, an archaeological team discovered an extraordinary link between the prophecies and seismic activity beneath the surface of the earth. Featuring drone aerials of ancient sites in Greece and Turkey, this episode explores this astonishing story, and reveals how seismic activity and magnetism still give rise to sacred sites in the present day.

SACRED SITES: EGYPT

Premieres Monday, October 3 at 8 p.m. ET/PT

In 2015, Egyptologist Wael Sherbiny unearthed a 4,000-year-old leather manuscript at the Cairo Museum, which could change everything we thought we knew about religion in ancient Egypt. The manuscript sheds new light on the mysterious document known as The Book of the Dead, a collection of spells to help the soul on its fearsome journey through the afterlife. Why were the ancient Egyptians obsessed with death and the afterlife? Could this new manuscript reveal the source of this obsession? From the mighty Pyramids of Giza to the shadowy tombs of the Valley of the Kings, the sacred sites of ancient Egypt are perhaps the most impressive of any ancient civilization.

SACRED SITES: CHACO CANYON

Premieres Monday, October 10 at 8 p.m. ET/PT

In the remote desert valley of Chaco Canyon, New Mexico stand the remains of an incredible ancient city and pilgrimage center the heart of a sophisticated Native American civilization. Around 1100 A.D., this mysterious civilization collapsed, ravaged by climate change, drought and violence. Archaeologists discovered disturbing

evidence of ritual murder, human sacrifice and even cannibalism. What forces drove a peaceful, advanced culture to resort to the ultimate taboo?

SACRED SITES is produced by Tile Films for Smithsonian Channel. Stephen Rooke executive producer for Tile Films. David Royle and Tim Evans serve as executive producers for Smithsonian Channel.

Smithsonian Channel™, owned by Smithsonian Networks™, a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, is where curiosity lives, inspiration strikes and wonders never cease. This is the place for awe-inspiring stories, powerful documentaries and amazing entertainment across multiple platforms. Smithsonian Channel combines the storytelling prowess of SHOWTIME® with the unmatched resources and rich traditions of the Smithsonian, to create award-winning programming that shines new light on popular genres such as air and space, history, science, nature, and pop culture. Among the network's offerings are series including *Aerial America*, *Million Dollar American Princesses*, *The Weapon Hunter*, *Mighty Ships*, *Mighty Planes* and *Air Disasters*, as well as critically-acclaimed specials that include *Civil War 360*, *9/11: The Heartland Tapes*; *MLK: The Assassination Tapes* and *The Day Kennedy Died*. Smithsonian Networks also operates Smithsonian Earth™, through SN Digital LLC., a new subscription video streaming service delivering spectacular original nature and wildlife content. To learn more, go to www.smithsonianchannel.com, or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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