



APOLLO TEMPLE TIMELINE

The origins of the Greek god 'Apollo' drift into the mists of time. There is an inscription at the ancient capital of the Hittites (c.1680-1220 BCE) which alludes to a deity named as Apulunas, hinting that the name goes even further back into pre-history; to the Hattian period (c.2500-2000 BCE) and probably earlier.

The initial shrine at Didim was based around a sacred spring surrounded by a daphne grove; the tree of Apollo's desire. An Archaic temple was commenced in the 8th century BCE and developed over the next two centuries. This final version was utterly destroyed by the Persians in 494 BCE.

The rise of Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) broke the Persian occupation of Anatolia, whence thus the Hellenistic Temple we see today began to rise from the ashes of the old.

Construction was maintained throughout the Greek influenced period and well into the Roman orbit of power. Though it was never completed and time itself was ebbing away from the pagan gods.

The politically astute conversion of Emperor Constantine (274-337 CE) led to Christianity being promoted as the official religion of the eastern Roman Empire, which later became the Byzantine era. The pagan rites and rituals at Apollo's temple continued to be followed sporadically, though gradually they too receded into the mists of time.

The Apollo Guide

All text has been composed by Glenn Maffia, a long-time Didim resident and regular contributor to the Voices Newspaper.

Voices Newspaper is a weekly English-language newspaper which has been based on the West Coast of Turkey for more than 10 years.

Please Note that it is archaeological practice to re-inter any recent finds, to protect them from the elements and also to allow research to be comprehensively concluded. Sites thus re-covered on this map are "C", "D", "G" and the mosaic floor of "E".

Apollo Temple Guide

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A - TEMPLE OF APOLLO

The focal point of the entire archaeological site, each new rediscovery radiates out from its hub. The Temple would have been included in the original 'Wonders of the Ancient World' but was omitted on the grounds it was never fully completed.



B - STADIUM

As in all ancient Greek and Roman places of dense population an area for physical sporting prowess was a prominent feature. The Stadium here is aligned along the south-east side of the Temple.



In rather novel fashion the steps leading down from the Temple were used as seating for the spectators. Today we can still observe names inscribed in many seating areas suggesting that some families possessed what we may call "season tickets". There were also similar seating areas opposite, but these have mainly fallen into ruin.

C - THEATRE

Continuing a little further to the south (just outside today's perimeter wall) is the site of a good size theatre, similar in size with Priene's we see today. As with all ancient theatres the auditorium faced seawards to catch the breeze enabling spectators to keep cool and also to aid the acoustics, and projection, of the actor's voice.



D - BYZANTINE CHAPEL

A little to the eastern side of the theatre, close to the main road and behind the Medusa Otel, the archaeologists revealed a rather delightful Byzantine chapel. One superb feature to come to light was



a splendid apse. It was evident this Christian building had seen some torrid damage in the past and its repair was a touch haphazard. Underneath the chapel is another structure of either Hellenistic or Roman date of which we are not yet aware of its purpose. It doesn't conform to any temple plan, though its sturdy and precise foundations attest to it being a structure of some high importance.



E - ROMAN BATHS

Crossing to the northern side of the Temple we see a stone arch standing soulfully alone today. But in its heyday this would have been the centre for the Roman preoccupation of conducting business deals, political intrigues, plain old gossip and their fastidiousness of maintaining cleanliness. Excavations some years back unearthed wonderful mosaic flooring which, again, suggests a high quality status construction.

F - SACRED WAY

Directly east from the Baths is the beautifully preserved conclusion to the Sacred Way, a road that winds across the undulating landscape for 16-18km from its commencement in Miletus. Note the building lining one side; probably shops.



G - TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS?

There is no solid evidence for knowing if this temple was, or was not, dedicated to Apollo's twin sister Artemis, though it is of a temple design. The find is certainly one of the most important rediscoveries, in that it indicates what an extensive centre of activity the whole vicinity was during the religious festivals in Didyma.



H - RENOVATED CHAPEL



This charming 19th century chapel was recently restored to its full glory and permission was obtained in 2015 from the Didim municipality for it to be used once again as a place of Christian worship (now on Sundays) and other notable dates in the religious calendar. It is also hoped to be made available in the future for the presentation of local arts, social and cultural events.