

Egypt reopens historic Serapeum of Saqqara

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A keeper uncovers a massive granite sarcophagus in the Serapeum of Saqqara in Cairo in 2008. Egypt on Thursday reopened the Serapeum of Saqqara, a vast underground necropolis south of Cairo dedicated to the bulls of Apis, after 11 years and complete renovation of the historic pharaonic site.

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The Serapeum, whose origin dates back to around 1400 BC, was

discovered in 1851 by French [Egyptologist](#) Auguste Mariette, founder of the first department of Egyptian antiquities.



A massive granite sarcophagus is seen in the Serapeum of Saqqara in 2008. Egypt on Thursday reopened the Serapeum of Saqqara, a vast underground necropolis south of Cairo dedicated to the bulls of Apis, after 11 years and complete renovation of the historic pharaonic site.

It was closed temporarily in 2001 because of water seepage and earth movements.

The site contains huge subterranean galleries in which are contained the large [tombs](#) of some 30 sacred bulls, accompanied by steles bearing inscriptions providing information on the reigns under which the animals lived.

Mohammed Ibrahim, the secretary of state for antiquities, said Egypt was working to open to the public other pharaonic sites in a bid to revive tourism which has been hit by political instability for more than 18 months.

"Egypt has not stopped working after the revolution" that ended the regime of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, he told reporters, adding that "this opening must be followed by others."

"We hope that this will help revive domestic and international tourism in Egypt," he added.

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