

PRECIOUS TREASURES

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The Qin Terracotta Warriors.

When many people hear the word “treasure”, they think of pirate caves, buried chests, gold, silver and jewels.

But museums all around the world are full of wonderful things that are also treasures. Some are gold and jewels, but some are treasures of a different kind—statues, paintings, books and weapons.

THE BURIED WARRIORS— THE MUSEUM OF QIN TERRACOTTA WARRIORS, CHINA

The Museum of Qin Terracotta Warriors is outside the city of Xian in the Shanxi Province, in north-west China. It is part of the burial site of the Chinese Emperor, Qin Shi Huang, who came to the throne in 246 BC. As was the custom, Qin Shi Huang started preparing his tomb at once.

Seven hundred thousand people worked for thirty-six years to build it, and by the time the emperor died, a whole palace had been built under the ground and buried under a huge mound.

Over the centuries, Qin Shi Huang and his palace under the ground were almost forgotten. Only a description of the wonders of his tomb, which was written one hundred years after his death, remained. It described a bronze relief map of China that had rivers of flowing mercury, and a palace ceiling decorated like the night sky.

In 1974, some farmers digging a well near the mound broke into a large underground pit. They were amazed to find it contained an army—an army made of terracotta. Six thousand life-size soldiers stood in rows, each one different from the other and all dressed in brightly painted uniforms.

The discovery of the terracotta warriors caused a sensation around the world—but there was more to come.

In 1976, two more pits were uncovered, one with 1400 soldiers and horses, and the other with sixty-eight soldiers. In 1980, a chamber to the west of the mound was found, containing two bronze carriages with drivers and horses.

You can visit the pits today. In the first, the terracotta warriors have been set up in neat rows, just as they were when Qin Shi Huang was buried. In the second, the soldiers have been left lying in the positions in which they were found.

The terracotta army is certainly impressive. But the 7500 life-size figures were only the guardians of the tomb. What wonders might be in the tomb itself?

So far, the huge mound containing the burial chamber of Qin Shi Huang in his underground palace, has not been opened. Chinese archaeologists believe it will contain amazing treasures, but they want to be sure that they have the skills to excavate it properly first.

No date has been set for excavating the mound. What treasures might be found when it is opened?

**VINCENT VAN GOGH'S *IRISES* —
J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA**

The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles collects and exhibits Greek and Roman antiquities, European drawings, paintings, manuscripts, sculptures, decorative arts and European and American photographs.

One of its treasures is Vincent van Gogh's most famous painting, *Irisés*. Van Gogh is now considered to be one of the world's greatest painters, yet of the more than 800 oil paintings and 700 drawings that constitute his

life's work, he sold only one painting during his lifetime. He also lived in poverty and suffered from constant ill health and unhappiness.

In 1888, van Gogh had moved from Paris to the south of France, hoping to start an artists' colony. This was not successful, and van Gogh suffered a nervous breakdown. He voluntarily admitted himself as a patient in an asylum for the insane at Saint-Rémy.



Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear,
1889, Vincent van Gogh.