

Munich, September 2026

'Stonehenge. Ancient Mysteries, New Discoveries'

**// New special exhibition at the Bavarian State Archaeological Collection (ASM)
18 September 2026 to 29 August 2027 (Opening: 17 September, 7.00 pm)**

With this new special exhibition at the Bavarian State Archaeological Collection, the world-famous stone circle is, in a thematic sense, moving to Munich for a year. From 18 September 2026 to 29 August 2027, visitors can look forward not only to original artefacts from the Salisbury and Wiltshire Museums, but also to a varied programme of accompanying events.

For millennia, Stonehenge, the monumental stone circle in the south-west of England, has held a unique fascination. Generations of people have visited this mysterious site and associated it with myths. Yet it is only the latest archaeological and scientific findings that allow us to better understand Stonehenge. Who built this colossal structure, when, how and why?

Over the past few decades, researchers have gained astonishing insights through extensive excavations and modern analytical methods. In doing so, they have examined not only the site itself, but also the surrounding cultural landscape and related archaeological sites across the UK. This has produced a lively picture of the communities that lived in this region some 4,000 to 5,000 years ago. The result: Stonehenge was not a sudden whim, but the outcome of a long process of development, deeply rooted in European prehistory. Centuries before its construction, the Salisbury Plain was already regarded as a sacred place. The first structure was erected around 3000 BC; some 500 years later, Stonehenge took on the monumental appearance we now associate with the name. Its history is one of change and human imagination. As the only known prehistoric stone circle with lintels, Stonehenge bears witness to astonishing architectural skill. The huge blocks, each weighing several tonnes, were transported over great distances to their final location, worked and assembled with precision. Set amidst a vast landscape of cultural and religious significance, the site served for centuries as a central place for burials, gatherings, rituals and, possibly, astronomical observations on the River Avon. Stonehenge emerged from a long tradition of monumental ancestor worship, which also gave rise to the stone alignments at Carnac and the megalithic tombs of northern Germany and southern Scandinavia: the so-called

Megalithic period. This came to an end on the eve of the Early Bronze Age, Europe's first 'golden age'.

The exhibition 'Stonehenge: Ancient Mysteries, New Discoveries' presents a comprehensive picture of this prehistoric World Wonder, based on the latest archaeological research. It shows how the people of that time lived, what techniques they used and what ideas united them. Around 600 original artefacts and high-quality replicas from the renowned collections of Salisbury Museum, Wiltshire Museum, the UCL London Curatorial Team and private lenders bring the world of Stonehenge impressively to life. Among the highlights are antler axes used in the construction of Stonehenge, as well as grave goods made of bronze, amber and gold. A unique exhibition design, video installations and life-size dioramas create an immersive sensory experience. For children, a sort of 'children's trail' in cartoon style has been created using multimedia stations. Following great success in North America and Canada, the exhibition is now on display in Central Europe for the first time, having been completely revised and expanded to include Bavarian finds. The exhibition was scientifically supervised by Prof Dr Michael Parker Pearson, Professor of Younger British Prehistory at University College London, fellow of the British Academy and one of the leading Stonehenge researchers. He has been leading the excavations at this fascinating site since 2003 and, since being named 'British Archaeologist of the Year' (2010), has been regarded as one of Europe's most distinguished prehistorians.

The exhibition is divided into the following sections:

1. Almost 1,000 years of research?
2. The oldest Stonehenge / The construction of Stonehenge / Stonehenge as a burial site
3. The later Stonehenge / The builders' village / A landscape of rituals
4. Stonehenge and Europe / The end of Stonehenge / The beginning of the Bronze Age

Stonehenge – a European Monument

One of the exhibition's focuses is on the links between Stonehenge and other European cultures. At the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, the so-called Bell Beaker culture emerged. The vessels that give the culture its name have been found from the Iberian Peninsula to Hungary, from southern Scandinavia to North Africa, and in Augsburg as well as in Munich. Why? Analyses of strontium isotopes in human remains carried out by the Max Planck Institute and LMU Munich show that people in the past were already connected through trade, but also through personal relationships such as marriage, and shared the same norms and values across great distances. Shortly after 2500 BC, the so-called 'Beaker People' also reached Great Britain. As a result, after centuries of relative isolation, the British Isles were once again more closely integrated into European development. Burial finds from that period bear witness to growing social inequality. For instance, precious metals, amber and other imported goods can be attributed to individuals of high status. One of the most significant artefacts from that period in Central Europe is a complex of finds from Markt near Augsburg in Bavarian Swabia which was provided by the Augsburg District Local History Society. These are grave goods from a wealthy woman's grave, comprising several gold sheets and rings, a

necklace made of (probably) Baltic amber, silver and copper objects, and three ceramic vessels, all in a state of preservation that is unique.

Stonehenge thus appears in a new light. Its history dates back to a time when Europe was increasingly connected through mobility, exchange and shared ideas. People, raw materials, status symbols, rituals and architectural concepts spread across great distances in all directions. The builders and users of Stonehenge had numerous connections extending as far as the northern Alpine region. The stone circle was, and remains, not an isolated British monument, but part of a shared European prehistory at the end of the Neolithic period (second half of the 3rd millennium BC) and is thus a monument of European significance. In Germany, the ring complex at Pömmelte near Magdeburg also demonstrates how far architectural concepts and the ideas underlying them could extend. With its concentric ditches, palisades and gate structures, it is reminiscent of British henge monuments. Its diameter is almost identical to that of Stonehenge. Pömmelte combines features that appear in various British sites.

Accompanying programme for all age groups

To complement the exhibition, the State Archaeological Collection is providing a variety of accompanying events. These include academic lectures, Stone Age workshops, the first Stonehenge pub quiz on the roof terrace of the State Archaeological Collection, and much more. At weekends, families and anyone interested can build their own Stonehenge using building blocks or take part in a sound journey. A collaboration with the Munich Public Observatory and the Society for Archaeoastronomy invites visitors to join in stargazing on the winter solstice (21 December) right on the museum roof. In addition to in-person guided tours, there will be an online guided (live) tour for the first time on 30 September, taking place as part of the vhs.wissen live programme. The Museum Education Centre offers a programme for schoolchildren and teachers. Further events and details can be found at:

<https://www.archaeologie.bayern/erleben/sonderausstellung/stonehenge>

The exhibition was produced by MuseumsPartner in collaboration with English Heritage, with additional content provided by the State Archaeological Collection.

Scientific Curator: Prof Dr Mike Parker Pearson, University College London

Assistant Curator: Dr Beatrijs de Groot, University of Edinburgh

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A catalogue accompanying the exhibition is available from the museum shop.

Price: € 14.90.

Admission fees:

Special exhibition:

Tue – Sun € 8 (concession € 5)

Permanent and special exhibitions (combined ticket):

Tue – Sat € 10 (concession € 6), Sun € 9 (concession € 5)

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