

YOUR GUIDE  
TO A VIRTUAL WONDER



# TOMB OF CHRIST

AN INTERACTIVE EXHIBITION

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NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC

MUSEUM

# WELCOME

FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

The city of Jerusalem is an awe-inspiring place where past is present and millions travel to experience the history of our human journey. In 2016, National Geographic was invited to document a major conservation project at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Many believe this ancient and iconic church contains the sites of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, which had been in dramatic need of repair and conservation for decades. This past year, engineers and preservation architects from Athens worked to secure the Tomb of Christ for future generations—and the results are magnificent.

Now, thanks to millimeter-accurate LIDAR scans, we have a complete, three-dimensional record of this important site, which we're sharing with you in this groundbreaking exhibition. You'll see how remote sensing technology can be animated into renderings, creating high-resolution digital images and a truly immersive experience.

Every day at National Geographic, we're experimenting with new technologies and platforms that allow us to bring you incredible stories in transformative

ways. We hope you enjoy this amazing experience at the National Geographic Museum.



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Vice President,  
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PHOTO: REBECCA HALE

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**EMILY ESTERSON**, Editor

**GLENNA STOCKS**, Art Director

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Jerusalem glows with light.



PHOTOS: ABOVE, SIMON NORFOLK, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE; ON OUR COVER, ARTWORK CREATED USING 3-D SCANS OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FELLOW COREY JASKOLSKI

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# ABOUT THE MUSEUM

Exhibitions at the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C., showcase bold people and transformative ideas in the fields of exploration, scientific research, storytelling, and education. With a wide range of changing exhibitions, the National Geographic Museum is a perfect destination for all ages. Visitors will get to know the work of National Geographic Explorers, photographers, and scientists through engaging, dynamic exhibitions featuring everything from iconic photography and world-famous artifacts to interactive learning stations and behind-the-scenes stories.

Centrally located in downtown D.C., just a few blocks from the White House, the museum is Metro accessible via the Red, Blue, Orange, and Silver Lines. Tickets for the exhibition can be purchased online or in person.

Visit [natgeomuseum.org](http://natgeomuseum.org) for more information.

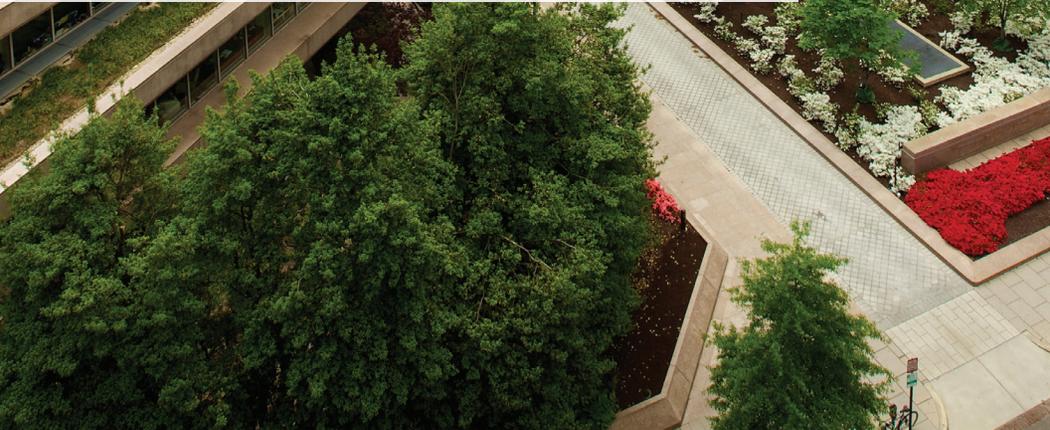


PHOTO: REBECCA HALE

## MUSEUM HOURS

10 A.M.–6 P.M.  
7 days a week

Last ticket sold at 5 P.M. daily

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The National Geographic Museum is Metro accessible via the Red, Blue, Orange, and Silver Lines.

1145 17th Street NW,  
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Ticket information at  
[natgeomuseum.org](http://natgeomuseum.org)

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#TOCExhibit

Get behind-the-scenes info and learn more.





# WELCOME TO JERUSALEM

The Holy Fire ceremony takes place the day before Orthodox Easter inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

PHOTOS: LEFT, NICOLAS RUEL; RIGHT, FREDRIK HIEBERT

## JERUSALEM IS AN ANCIENT CITY THAT STANDS AT THE CROSSROADS OF CIVILIZATION.

For the faithful, it is a place of pilgrimage and worship. For other visitors, it provides a remarkable look back at human history, filled with stunning art and architecture and tinged with both conflict and reconciliation. And for scientists and scholars, it offers an opportunity to explore some of the most enduring questions of the past.

Inhabited since 3500 B.C., Jerusalem owes its development to the Gihon Spring, where fresh water flows from a cave on the city's eastern slope. The City of David was originally built on a steep hill that could be easily defended. The magical light said to emanate from Jerusalem is attributed to the light-colored limestone from which many buildings in the Old City are constructed.

A view of Temple Mount, including the Western Wall and golden Dome of the Rock.



The entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



Jerusalem's history has been tumultuous. The city has been besieged, attacked, and captured dozens of times. It has been completely destroyed and rebuilt...twice. But despite such upheaval, art, architecture, culture, and religion have flourished here. And though Jerusalem's Old City occupies barely a third of a square mile, it stands at the intersection of three major world religions.

The Old City—which welcomes millions of visitors each year—is home to some of the holiest places in religious history. One such site is the Temple Mount, the location of the First Jewish Temple, built by King Solomon around 950 B.C., and the Second Temple, which took its place after the First Temple was destroyed. The remnant of the Second Temple—the Western Wall—is one of the holiest sites in Judaism. This same site is revered by Muslims as

the location of Muhammad's ascent to heaven.

Known as Haram al-Sharif, it is one of the holiest sites in Islam. And just a 10-minute walk away is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, considered by many Christians to be the site of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Six Christian denominations now share control of the Church of

the Holy Sepulchre, evocative of the spirit of cooperation that imbues this ancient city.

**INHABITED SINCE 3500 B.C.,**

JERUSALEM OWES ITS DEVELOPMENT TO THE GIHON SPRING, WHERE FRESH WATER FLOWS FROM A CAVE ON THE CITY'S EASTERN SLOPE.



Modern Jerusalem is home to a vibrant intersection of cultures. For centuries, the city has functioned as a crossroads for travelers coming east from Europe, north from Africa, and west from the Middle East and Asia. Its unique location, along with its significance to three major religions, has led to many conflicts over the years, as different groups have laid claim to the city. But today, about 40,000 people live in the Old City, surrounded by a bustling urban landscape that is both modern and culturally rich. The Old City remains divided into separate quarters, where Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Armenians preserve their cultures and religious traditions in close proximity, frequently walking shoulder to shoulder on their way to pray at the spiritual centers of their respective faiths.

Jerusalem was founded partly because of the Gihon Spring.

PHOTOS: OPPOSITE TOP, ROBERT HARDING, ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; OPPOSITE BOTTOM, DREAMTIME STOCK PHOTO; ABOVE, TED SPIEGEL



Members of the conservation team remove steel girders supporting the Edicule during restoration work at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City.

Above left: workers begin removing the worn marble that has encased the original burial shelf inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.



PHOTOS: ODED BALILTY, AP FOR NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

## THE SCIENCE OF CONSERVATION

**FOR NEARLY 130 YEARS**, the National Geographic Society has focused on conservation of all types—including cultural conservation. This relatively new discipline involves preserving and highlighting the world's cultural treasures—everything from photo records of Machu Picchu to the national treasures of Afghanistan. For this project, scientists from the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) conserved and stabilized the Edicule in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, while the National Geographic Society documented the process through film, print, and digital platforms.

The buildings and monuments of our past are under enormous pressure; time, neglect, weather conditions, development, and conflict erode these treasures and, along with them, the history of the people who created them.

The science of conservation requires a multidisciplinary approach. Conservators may have backgrounds in anthropology, archaeology, or art history, as well as in scientific disciplines such as materials science, engineering, biology, or chemistry. They use state-of-the-art technology specifically designed to be noninvasive, such as ground-penetrating radar, radiometry, and robotics, to gather information from sites. They couple their data and analyses with historic and cultural research to fully understand a site's importance and how best to conserve it.

For example, chemists may analyze paint materials to determine how best to preserve ancient frescoes and restore them without causing damage to the paintings themselves. Architects and engineers study structural integrity; materials scientists may study the makeup of the mortar used in an ancient

building to determine the mix of original ingredients. But mimicking the materials and structure used in an ancient building isn't enough—conservationists also study the conditions under which a monument must survive for generations to come, while retaining a site's cultural and historic authenticity.

Conservation science as we know it today dates back to the 18th century, when travelers began embarking on grand tours of historic sites in Europe and Asia, underscoring the importance of such places to the human experience. The losses of major monuments during the French Revolution and World War II added urgency to the need to conserve the world's great edifices and historically significant buildings. The positive result of these dark times was an

effort by the international community to restore and rebuild, leading to great advances in conservation science. Various groups, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, have fostered international cooperation in order to identify and conserve the world's great monuments.

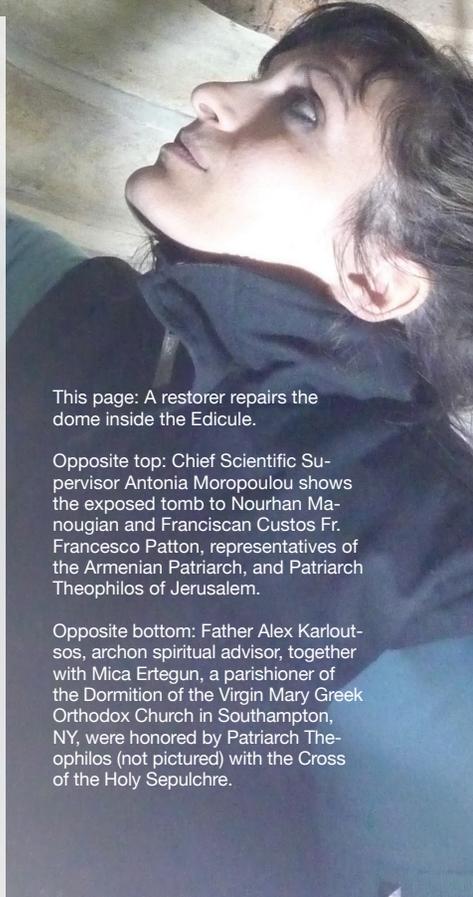
Today, the science of conservation uses the most advanced techniques and technologies to document and preserve cultural monuments as records of—and lessons about—our shared past.

# THE RESTORERS: THE NATIONAL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS



## LED BY PROFESSOR ANTONIA

**MOROPOULOU**, an interdisciplinary group of researchers, professors, engineers, stone masons, and graduate students from the NTUA has earned a reputation as the dream team of historical restoration, pulling off groundbreaking feats of engineering and preservation to save ancient historic monuments. Their projects range from the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul to the Acropolis in Athens and the Edicule of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In addition to the NTUA team's expertise, they have proven that they are willing to work odd hours and able to adhere to a tight schedule. Their painstaking restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre's Edicule was often carried out at night, so as not to disturb the millions



This page: A restorer repairs the dome inside the Edicule.

Opposite top: Chief Scientific Supervisor Antonia Moropoulou shows the exposed tomb to Nourhan Manougian and Franciscan Custos Fr. Francesco Patton, representatives of the Armenian Patriarch, and Patriarch Theophilus of Jerusalem.

Opposite bottom: Father Alex Karloutsos, archon spiritual advisor, together with Mica Ertegun, a parishioner of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church in Southampton, NY, were honored by Patriarch Theophilus (not pictured) with the Cross of the Holy Sepulchre.



of religious pilgrims who visit the sacred site each year. And the restoration was completed precisely on time, allowing for the various Christian orders and denominations that worship at the church to celebrate Easter in April 2017—just a year after starting the project—without obtrusive tarps and scaffolding.



Workers used special arc welders to cut through the steel cage that has encased the Edicule for decades.

PHOTOS: COPYRIGHT NTUA, 2016-2017  
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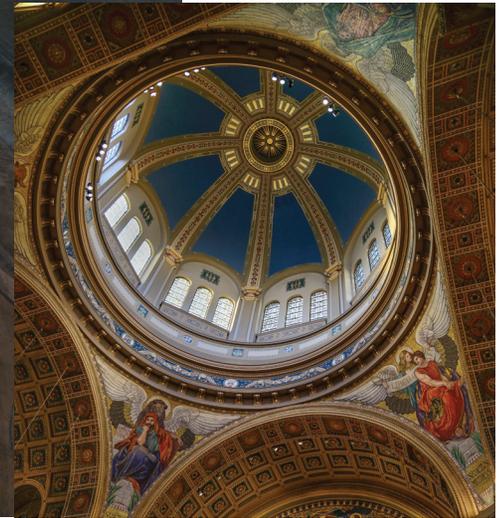
The \$4 million planning and restoration project received a major gift of \$1.5 million from Mica Ertegun, a trustee of the World Monuments Fund.

Upon the completion of the Edicule's restoration, Dr. Moropoulou warned that significant work still needed to be done to reinforce the structural foundation of the

Edicule and the rotunda that surrounds it, in order to avoid their near-imminent collapse. Using ground-penetrating radar and robotic cameras, the NTUA team found that much of the foundation in question sits on mere rubble left over from previous structures and has deteriorated significantly due to centuries of moisture damage. The potential loss of a site of such profound historic and cultural significance would prove devastating. If church leaders agree to Dr. Moropoulou's proposal, the NTUA restoration team will jump right back into the work they know best.



Oculi, such as these found at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and (right) the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, provide light and temperature regulation.



PHOTOS: LEFT, SIMON NORFOLK, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE; RIGHT, EYE UBIQUITOUS, ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

## INSPIRED BY JERUSALEM

**EVERYONE, WHETHER DEVOUT OR NOT**, can feel a spiritual power when visiting holy sites such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, home to what many Christians believe is the site of Jesus' burial and resurrection. But whether you consider yourself a devout believer, a curious agnostic, or simply a lover of culture and travel, the dramatic history, cultural significance, and stunning art and architecture of such places can captivate us all.

For those not able to journey to famed global landmarks such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, there are numerous holy buildings of note right here in our nation's capital. These churches contain architectural elements inspired by famous sites around the world. Below, we take you on a tour of some of the most awe-inspiring churches in Washington, D.C., while pointing out architectural details that they share with the legendary Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

### DOMES AND LIGHT

One of the most prominent features of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is its domed rotunda, a soaring structure that has been a part of several versions of the church, including the one that stands today. The District's own downtown Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle boasts a similarly splendid dome, with windows that let in natural light to showcase the church's beautiful frescoes. Though more simply decorated, the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is just as dramatic, with warm, golden rays that stream out from its center oculus. (Latin for "eye," an oculus is a round opening at the top of a dome.)



The Franciscan Monastery's dome and center edicule are reminiscent of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Serving as both a monastery and a church, the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America in the Brookland neighborhood of D.C. also contains an oculus placed at the center of its richly decorated dome.



The National Cathedral's neo-Gothic architecture includes three dramatic towers.

Oculi were intended to let in natural light and to allow rain into the building to cool it. They were used widely in both the later Byzantine and neoclassical design styles. In religious buildings, an oculus also has a spiritual connotation, as it fills a place of worship with heavenly light from above.

#### CHAPELS

The many chapels within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are among the most intimate spaces in the church. The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in the Northeast quadrant of D.C. is the largest Roman Catholic church in North America and home to the most expansive collection

of contemporary ecclesiastical art in the world. The basilica holds 70 unique chapels within its walls, maintained by groups



The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

D.C.'s leafy Northwest quadrant. While the Church of the Holy Sepulchre also houses a storied bell tower, located to the left of the church's main facade, today it is less than half its original size, diminished over the years by numerous reconstructions of the church itself and the varying architectural styles imposed during those building periods.

ranging from American immigrant organizations to religious orders. Each chapel displays pieces of the religious art for which the basilica is now famous.

#### TOWERS

Washington National Cathedral's three iconic towers, which jut out dramatically from the church's main neo-Gothic structure, cut an imposing silhouette against the backdrop of

it is less than half its original size, diminished over the years by numerous reconstructions of the church itself and the varying architectural styles imposed during those building periods.

PHOTOS: OPPOSITE, GUILLERMO OLAIZOLA, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; ABOVE, ORHAN CAM, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; LEFT, © BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Right: Dr. Moropoulou and her team share the images with church leaders.

# SAVING THE CHURCH

## THE RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION OF THE EDICULE

—the shrine to the tomb of Christ—in Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre were very delicate matters. The sheer number of visitors to the site, coupled with the passage of time and destructive effects of water, humidity, and candle smoke, had long taken a toll on the building. “You could see the stone walls of the Edicule starting to buckle outward. If something wasn’t done soon, there was a good chance that the Edicule would collapse,” says Fredrik Hiebert, the National Geographic Society’s archaeologist-in-residence.

In 2015, researchers from the National Technical University of Athens, documented by the National Geographic Society, employed a mix of advanced technology and historical research to carefully plan the conservation project. The conservators first studied ancient maps and written descriptions of the site to visualize what might be hidden under the many layers of masonry.

The conservation team used LIDAR, a laser scanning technique, to create an incredibly detailed 3-D model of the Edicule. They



Conservators used ground-penetrating radar to scan for voids in the structure.

employed temperature-sensing thermographic cameras to see beneath the soot accumulated from oil lamps and candles burning in the church. The resulting images revealed dome and wall frescoes hidden for perhaps more than a thousand years. The team also used ground-penetrating radar devices to scan through the walls of the Edicule to identify voids (holes) in the masonry that needed to be repaired.

Since the 1940s, the Edicule had been cloaked in reinforcing iron scaffolding. The research model indicated that to stabilize the stone structure enough to remove the cage, the voids needed to be filled with liquid mortar. By the spring of 2017, the mortar had set and the conservators were able to safely remove the iron framework.

Data from the ground-penetrating radar revealed that the Edicule was built around portions of the original limestone tomb in which Jesus’ body is said to have been buried. The team installed a crystal window so visitors can now see part of the holy rock, which had been hidden from view for centuries. They also methodically documented, cleaned, and reinforced every inch of the shrine.

## YOUR VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

National Geographic planned “Tomb of Christ: The Church of the Holy Sepulchre Experience” to transport guests to the church in Jerusalem—without ever leaving its headquarters in Washington, D.C.—by harnessing cutting-edge technology. The exhibition development team used scans of the church, along with recorded video and audio, to develop the exhibition’s immersive media experience. Guests are transported to Jerusalem, pay a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and even experience the church’s famed Holy Fire ceremony, all through 2-D and 3-D video, virtual-reality goggles, 3-D-printed replicas, and more.

Conserving the Edicule afforded an unprecedented opportunity to use the latest science and technology to study one of the world’s holiest places. By analyzing the data they collected, both the conservation and exhibition teams discovered surprising secrets about the church and its history. And thanks to this data, they can share these secrets with you in “Tomb of Christ: The Church of the Holy Sepulchre Experience.”

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, ca 1915-1920.



PHOTOS: DETROIT PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION

## THE STORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

**LIKE ITS HOME CITY OF JERUSALEM,** the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (completed in A.D. 335) has been attacked, burned, and reduced to rubble many times throughout its history, only to rise again each time and reclaim its place in the ancient city.

The story of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre begins with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, which, according to ancient texts, is said to have taken place just outside the ancient walls of Jerusalem on a hill called Golgotha (literally “place of the skull”). After

his crucifixion, Jesus’ body was laid in a nearby rock-cut tomb, or sepulchre, also outside the city walls. A few years after Jesus’ death, however, the city’s walls were extended, bringing these sites within Jerusalem’s boundaries.

In about A.D. 325, the Roman Emperor Constantine, who had converted to Christianity, tasked the bishop of Jerusalem with locating Jesus’ tomb. The bishop discovered that the tomb lay beneath a Roman temple, built some two centuries earlier, that was likely dedicated to the goddess Venus. Constantine ordered the temple’s destruction and erected the first church dedicated to the tomb—called the Holy Sepulchre—in its place. During the construction, Constantine’s mother, Helena, claimed to find the remains of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. Helena’s discovery confirmed for

## RECONSTRUCTIONS AND RESTORATIONS

### A.D. 325

The Roman Emperor Constantine begins construction on the first Church of the Holy Sepulchre at the site believed to contain the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth.

### A.D. 614

The church is damaged by a fire during an invasion led by King Khosrow II, leader of the Persian Sassanid Empire.

### A.D. 1009

Muslim Fatimid armies from northern Africa nearly destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

### A.D. 1095

The First Crusade begins, in part to win back Jerusalem—and the tomb of Jesus—for Christendom.

### A.D. 1555

The Franciscan order rebuilds the Edicule that houses Jesus’ tomb, located within the church.

### A.D. 1808

The dome over the Church of the Holy Sepulchre’s rotunda collapses in a fire, leading to yet another reconstruction effort.

### A.D. 2017

A master team of experts from the National Technical University of Athens completes a yearlong restoration of the Edicule.



Pilgrims come from all over the world to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

PHOTO: ODED BALILTY, AP FOR NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

her son that this was indeed the site of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has seen its share of violence and intrigue in the centuries since, beginning with Persian invaders who captured Jerusalem in the seventh century and targeted the church. In the 11th century, the Fatimids, a Muslim group from North Africa, significantly damaged the building and killed the head of the church, called the patriarch. Christian Europe was incensed and embarked upon the First Crusade, capturing Jerusalem in 1099 and rebuilding the church in the prevailing Romanesque style of the time.

In the years after the crusaders' victory, the church fell into disrepair through nearly constant use. In 1555, the Franciscan order rebuilt the Edicule, the ornate shrine to Jesus' tomb that sits at the center of the church's soaring rotunda. In the years that followed, natural disasters took their

toll, and a devastating fire finally led to the collapse of the church dome in 1808. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was rebuilt yet again, this time in the Ottoman Baroque style. (The Ottoman Empire ruled the majority of the Middle East and Eastern Europe for more than 500 years; "Baroque" is an elaborate style of architecture typical in Europe.) This is the building that still stands today, welcoming millions of visitors each year through its storied doors.

Six Christian orders now use and manage the church: Greek Orthodox, Franciscan, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syrian Orthodox. These groups must unanimously agree on all changes and repairs to the church, so the building has slowly started to crumble. Recently, all six groups agreed to a plan for restoring the Edicule, which had seen significant structural damage and neglect through the years. The restored shrine was revealed in March 2017.

# TOMB OF CHRIST

AN INTERACTIVE EXHIBITION

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