

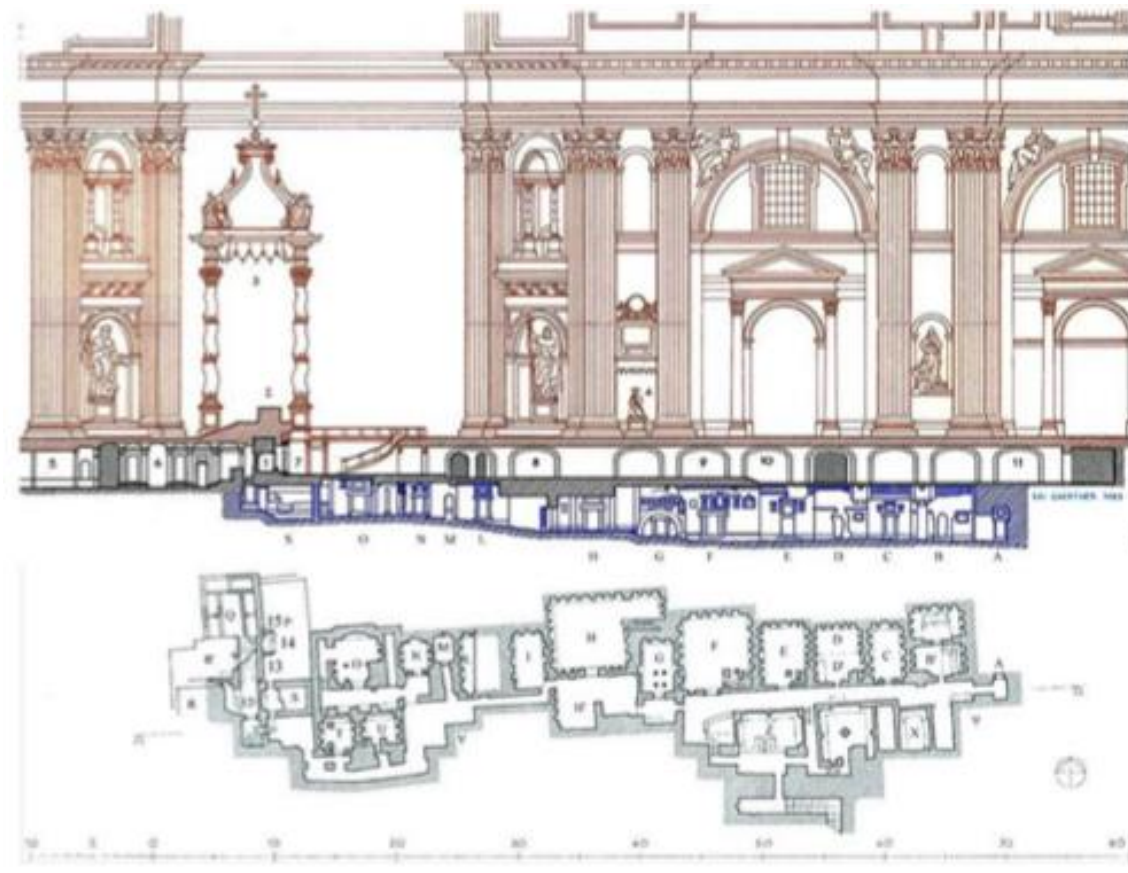
Tourism and religious traditional practices in historical religious sites: the case of the necropolis of Saint Peter in the Vatican

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The necropolis of Saint Peter was discovered in 1940's excavations 10 meters under the Basilica, an iconic symbol of Christianity

The tomb of the first Pope Peter was under church according to the Christian tradition:

- Oral traditions-pilgrimage and old itineraries (roads) that have been used over the centuries by those looking for sacred places
- Written records- historical sources or notes of visitors
- Archaeology- excavations- other tombs surrounding the tomb of the Apostle, the altars of both basilicas are above the tomb along with the so-called cupola (the dome of Saint Peter Basilica)



1) Section of the necropolis



2) Scottish soldiers at St Peter's in 1944 Under Saint Peter



4) Images 3 and 4 The archaeological excavations of the 1940s

Organization of the excavation office 1970s and 1980s: site management actions

- Guided tours with audio recording
- Guided tours with only a few tours a day and reservation system by phone or fax



5) Entrance to the archaeological area: metal detector and police service for public security

3)

Year 2000—Jubilee Holy Year: a sustainable religious site

More complex reservation through internet

A separate security service for people access

The number of visitors has risen to 60,000

together with enormous mass tourism which has involved the entire Vatican area in conjunction with the greatest events of Christianity.

- A specific entrance for visitors joining the tour not interfering with the queue of the Basilica
- Security check for reservation
- Special attention to the site conservation: groups every 15 minutes, limited number of visitors for each group (max. 12)
- Crowd management from the exit of the archaeological area to the Basilica
- More regular tours
- Professional guides trained to give historically correct information and to manage the tours on time.



6) Image of the queue at the high altar at the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI in December 2022



7) Picture from the necropolis with a very old image of Jesus in a restored mosaic (the archaeological area has been regularly monitored with intensive restoration projects)

The necropolis is part of a complex system that belongs to the Vatican with multiple values:

- Religious value: The tomb of Peter the first Pope
- Archaeological value: tombs of the Ancient necropolis dated back to 2nd century AD
- Historical value: a long and complex history of religion, architecture and significant historical events
- Architectural and artistic values: two churches built in 4th in 16th century
- Symbolical and spiritual values: the Popes have lived and live in the Vatican near the tomb of the first pope and where they have performed the most significant rituals and religious Feasts.
- Touristic value: simultaneous use of the area on different levels from the archaeological area, to the site where there are the tombs of the popes up to the Basilica

Managed by a traditional and old institution within the Vatican: Fabbrica di San Pietro

The Fabbrica di San Pietro has succeeded over the years in creating a sustainable model for guiding people into the heart of church history. The Fabbrica di San Pietro, the office in charge of the Basilica, has created a very inclusive system for people to visit the archaeological site and learn about religious history.