

What Do You Know About Cairo's Petrified Forest?

The Petrified Forest — also known as Gabal Al-Khashab, or Hill of Wood is located in the fifth settlement by the German University in Cairo. It was formed over millions of years ago during the Oligocene time. The area is a natural heritage site that holds fossils, stems and trunks of trees that have been completely fossilized.



It also holds fossilized plants, flowers and fruit from the Oligocene period, in addition to recent contents of plants and animals. It is home to rare plants, distinct reptiles, birds and animals such as the red fox. The forest was declared a Protected Area in 1989 and is currently represented as an exquisite scientific, touristic, and cultural site.



أعلنت الغابة المتحجرة "محمية طبيعية" بالقرار الوزاري رقم ١٩٨٩/٩٤٤ وتم تعديها مؤخراً بالقرار رقم ٢٠١٧/١٤٤٠ لأنها تمثل موقعا فريداً لما تحويه من تراث قومي علمي وسياسي وحضاري.

The Petrified Forest was declared a "Protected Area" by Ministerial Decree 9441/1989 and adjusted by decree No. 14401/2017 to represent it as an exquisite scientific, touristic, and cultural site.

مشروع الإستدامة العالية للمحميات الطبيعية
Financial Sustainability of Protected Areas Project

Sand quarrying and the dumping of waste and rubble from construction sites in New Cairo had been increasingly threatening the Petrified Forest. The construction programs nearby have led to most of the animals and wildlife disappearing from this area over the past 10 to 15 years.

Contractors and irresponsible visitors have been stealing the park's sand and petrified wood over the last decade. In 2015, Al-Masry Al-Youm reported to have found pieces of fossilized trees in a number of restaurants and villages used for decoration, while others are openly sold in special markets.



Egypt's Protected Area's Self-Financing Project was dedicated to **removing 45 tons of construction waste** previously accumulated in the forest over the years, as well as fixing the excessive violations in attempts to reserve the forest and make it ready for visitors.



In collaboration with The Ministry of Environment, together with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), EPASP project has been working on establishing a development plan for The Petrified Forest that focused on renovating the park's facilities, and ensuring that generated revenues are channeled towards the park's conservation needs.

DESIGN APPROACH

The proposed approach aims at emphasizing the site's environmental quality while protecting the natural assets of the site. It also aims at **enhancing its use value and visitors' experiences** through a set of **contextually sensitive interventions**, developed in close consultation with the different stakeholders. The interventions will incorporate a number of elements to establish an **open-air museum**, which will offer **innovative activities, quality services, and interpretation materials** while maximizing the use of local labor, environmentally friendly applications, and traditional techniques.



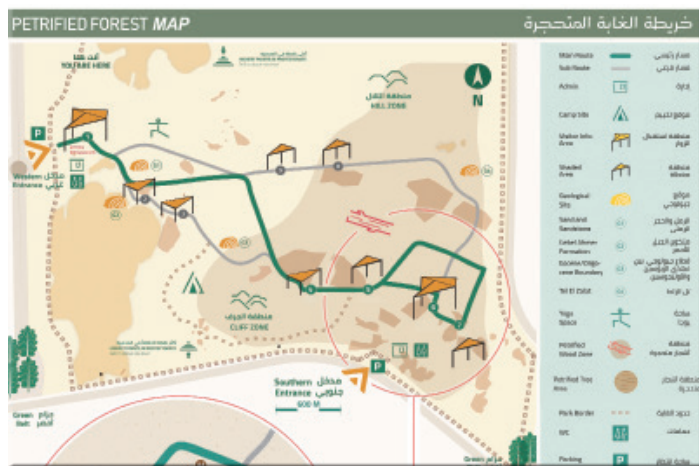
MAIN AIM

- To promote the petrified forest as a destination for New Cairo (and residents of the Greater Cairo Region) by: preserving the site and managing it in a sustainable manner, as well as, improve visitor's experience.

The project was committed to **building new walking trails, installing information panels, directional signs, information points, camp sites, and seating areas, and building the right facilities to ensure the inclusion of the persons with disabilities**, along with advancing the infrastructure and all visitors' facilities (water stations, bathrooms, information centers, and administrative offices).



The Petrified Forest was open to the public for the first time on February 10th, 2018, marking the petrified trees areas (the Open-Air Museum). The new facilities were celebrated in the presence of the Minister of Environment Dr. Khaled Fahmy, members of the parliament UNDP representatives, representatives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, universities, governmental bodies, press, partners and collaborators, as well as nature lovers and the general public.



On March 9th, 2018 - The Petrified Forest hosted its first running/yoga event where over one hundred people ran the six-kilometer-long running trail, and then gathered at the yoga site for an introductory yoga session out in nature. A comprehensive orientation was delivered by the park's manager Dr. Shaymaa Taha to welcome all visitors and inform them about the geological attributes of the park. A CPR training session was delivered by The American Heart Association before the run to show visitors how to respond to breathing and cardiac emergencies.

Hosted by Egypt Toughest Foot Race and Zamalek Runners, the event was themed "Save Your Heart", and aimed to promote a healthy lifestyle and to raise awareness against chronic heart diseases.



Orientation



The Running Trail



First Running Event



Yoga Site



First Outdoor Yoga Session

Egypt's Protected Areas Self-Financing Project (EPASP) operates with the purpose of developing and conserving protected areas (Mahmeyat) in Egypt. Headquartered in Maadi, Cairo - EPASP aims to reduce the persisting threats to biodiversity in Egypt, and to develop a sustainable plan for reserving Egypt's terrestrial and marine habitats that are of substantial global significance