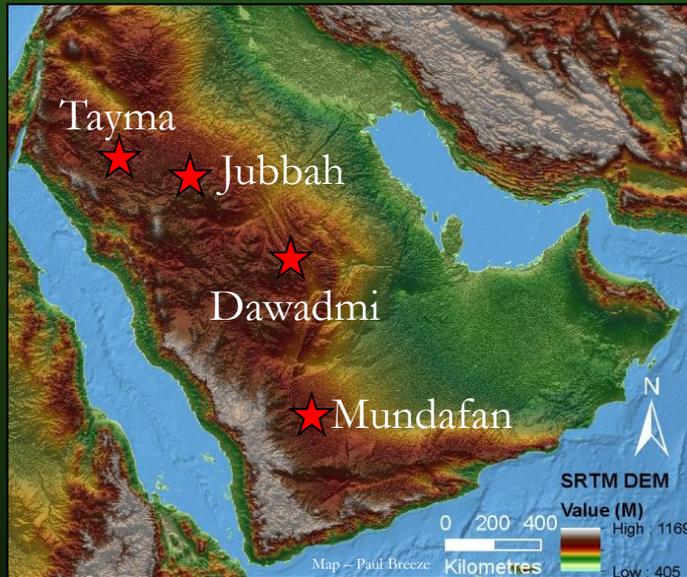


Stone tools of Saudi Arabia

Stone tools (or 'lithics') represent by far the most abundant form of evidence for the behaviour of early humans. This display features examples of lithics from Saudi Arabia, currently being studied by the Palaeodeserts Project. We are applying a variety of innovative techniques to their study, including 3D scanning, raw material characterisation and residue analysis. These artefacts tell the story of human populations in Saudi Arabia over the last million years or more. They tell us about the migrations of ancient populations, what kind of food they ate and how they responded to environmental change.



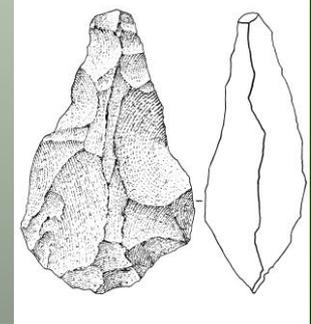
The sites

These tools come from archaeological sites recently discovered by the Palaeodeserts Project, in collaboration with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities. The sites at Jubbah, Mundafan and near Tayma are associated with ancient lakes, formed during periods of increased rainfall. The sites at Dawadmi are associated with raw material sources and prehistoric river systems. Ongoing research is clarifying their age and environmental context.

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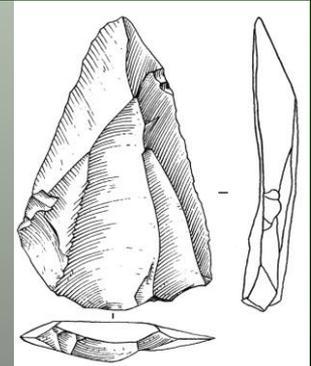
Case 1 – Lower Palaeolithic

The Lower Palaeolithic extends from more than 1,000,000 years ago until around 300,000 years ago. Our display features handaxes and a cleaver. These were probably handheld tools used for tasks like butchery. Areas such as Dawadmi feature some of the most important Lower Palaeolithic sites in the world, with whole 'Acheulean landscapes' preserved. Our recent findings near Tayma appear to date to the Late Lower Palaeolithic, demonstrating the chronological and spatial complexity of the Saudi Arabian record.



Case 2 – Middle Palaeolithic

The Middle Palaeolithic began around 300,000 years ago and ended 30,000 years ago. Stone tools became smaller in this period, and were often produced using 'prepared core' Technology, such as 'Levallois'. Middle Palaeolithic tools were often hafted, that is attached to wooden parts, to produce spears (such as at the Jubbah site of JKF-1) and other composite tools. Raw material transport distances began to increase at this time, being at least 15km at Mundafan. It is with the Middle Palaeolithic that we can detect distinct regional variations, which may stand as proxies for different populations.



Case 3 – Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic

The transition from the Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) to the Neolithic (New Stone Age) in Arabia is poorly understood, but we have made some important discoveries which cast light on this period. At Jubbah we have found the first Epipalaeolithic site in the Arabian Peninsula (Al Rabyah), and distinctive Neolithic arrowheads at Jebel Qattar-101. People used more varied and higher quality raw materials than they had tended to do so earlier. At Jubbah, high quality chert was imported. These finds demonstrate the importance of Saudi Arabia in understanding the origins of social complexity and agricultural/pastoralist societies.

