

## Press release

Paris, December 3, 2025

### **New permanent exhibition at the Dadan archaeological site: “Illuminating Discoveries: Uncovering the Layers of Dadan’s History” reveals five years of major discoveries**



**For its reopening on 3 December 2025, the Dadan archaeological site highlights five years of archaeological discoveries made by the Saudi-French mission. Today, AIUla represents the largest active archaeological research project in the world, illustrating the remarkable scale and momentum of the ongoing explorations.**

Located at the heart of one of the most influential ancient kingdoms of the Arabian Peninsula, the site of Dadan occupies a fundamental place in the history of Saudi Arabia. A commercial crossroads and a political and religious center for centuries, Dadan played a decisive role in the development of the civilizations of northern Arabia. Research carried out in recent seasons has revealed remarkable archaeological wealth, offering new insights into the evolution of ancient Arabian societies and the heritage that shaped the region.

To mark its official reopening, the Dadan archaeological site unveils a permanent exhibition entitled “Illuminating Discoveries: Uncovering the Layers of Dadan’s History”. This new milestone represents an important step in the enhancement of AIUla’s archaeological heritage. It presents to the public the treasures uncovered over the past five years by the Saudi-French archaeological mission at Dadan, and



highlights the extraordinary potential of the Umm Daraj mountain, explored last season by another Saudi-French team.

The result of a scientific collaboration between the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) and the French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA), with support from CNRS, this achievement reflects the shared ambition of Saudi Arabia and France: to make AIUla an international model of heritage, scientific, and cultural cooperation.

Designed by French scenographer Nathalie Crinière, the exhibition showcases more than 100 exceptional archaeological objects, many of them being displayed for the first time. The exhibition combines artefacts, excavation imagery and digital reconstructions, offering visitors an unprecedented immersion into the research carried out on one of the most emblematic and significant sites in Saudi Arabia's history.

“The opening of this permanent exhibition fully embodies the spirit of cooperation and trust that unites France and Saudi Arabia in AIUla. This achievement highlights the vitality of the Saudi-French partnership in the service of research, culture and heritage, and reflects our shared commitment to knowledge and dialogue between civilizations. It allows the public to discover the major advances of the Saudi-French archaeological mission and to appreciate the universal significance of Dadan in the history of the Arabian Peninsula.” **Jean-Yves Le Drian, Chairman of AFALULA**

The opening of this permanent exhibition enriches the destination's cultural and experiential offering while reaffirming its commitment to preserving and sharing the heritage of the region's ancient civilizations.

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#### **About AFALULA (French Agency for AIUla Development)**

The French Agency for AIUla Development (AFALULA) was established to support its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AIUla, in the transformation of the AIUla region into a worldwide cultural and touristic destination. Born from an intergovernmental agreement signed by Saudi Arabia and France in April 2018, AFALULA opened its Paris office in July 2018. The Agency is organized around specialized centers of expertise, namely: architecture, development, culture and heritage, archaeology, tourism and hospitality, human capital, environment and infrastructure, perfumes and botany, agriculture, equestrian and security. AFALULA has been establishing several partnerships with French and international experts, companies and operators, which include representatives from both the academic and architecture realms. Under the terms of the intergovernmental agreement of December 4, 2021, the Agency is responsible, on behalf of the French Government, for the Villa Hegra's cultural, educational, and artistic program.

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#### **About RCU (Royal Commission for AIUla)**

The Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU) was established by Royal Decree in July 2017 to preserve and develop AIUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in north-west Saudi Arabia.

Its long-term development plan encompasses a broad range of initiatives across archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts, reflecting a commitment to meeting the economic diversification, local community empowerment, and heritage preservation priorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's *Vision 2030* program.

It is founded on a sustainable approach that aims to preserve the natural and historical heritage of the region while positioning AIUla as an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

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