News *from the* Field

Bilkent University's Department of Archaeology continued its active involvement in archaeological research across Türkiye during the 2026 field season. From the Konya Plain and Cappadocia to Pisidia and southeastern Anatolia, Bilkent-affiliated projects combined archaeological excavation, regional survey, conservation, scientific analysis and public engagement. Alongside advancing research, these projects provided valuable fieldwork and specialist training opportunities for Bilkent students. The following highlights present some of the main achievements of the 2026 season.

EXCAVATIONS

Aphrodisias

R.R.R. Smith



Bilkent student **Meryem Konuş** at work

© Aphrodisias Excavations

In the **House of Kybele** at **Aphrodisias**, excavators found a ritual tablet bearing pseudo-Egyptian texts written in Greek letters. The tablet lay in a deposit in a newly exposed section of the house's underground pagan cult complex. At the **Governor's House**, the second Late Antique residence excavated this season, the team uncovered an elaborate private bath complex.

The team restored sections of the **Sebasteion** and **Tetrapylon Street**, returning surviving architectural elements to their original positions through *anastylosis*. At the Sebasteion, work included the Temple, North Building and paved avenue. A new visitor route connects the two areas. The team also began a multi-year project to create public walkways through the **Place of Palms**, the city's Late Antique park.

Students received practical training in excavation, documentation, surveying, inventory management, finds analysis and conservation.



View of the **Sivrihisar** area
© GABAR project

REGIONAL SURVEY

Güzelyurt

Anaïs Lamesa

The **GABAR Survey** team collected about 2,800 pottery fragments and recorded 170 structures and 23 small finds in its mapping database. During the survey's second season, from 1 to 28 June 2026, 19 specialists covered four areas on foot in **Güzelyurt, Sivrihisar and Akyamaç** (Aksaray Province).

The team began cataloguing and counting medieval pottery and took samples of mortar, painted plaster, geological material and agricultural soils for analysis. Students from Turkish and international institutions trained with specialists in GPS-guided survey, pottery processing, drawing, photography and digital microscopy.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT (SARP)

Sagalassos

Peter Talloen

Excavators at **Sagalassos** fully exposed the **Trajanic Fountain** in the **Stadium**. In Late Antiquity, the fountain served as a sacred spring (*hagiasma*). The team recorded its architectural blocks in 3D for reconstruction. The campaign at this Hellenistic to Byzantine city in ancient Pisidia brought together 44 specialists and 26 students, 17 of them from Bilkent University.

Evidence at the **Early Christian Basilica** suggests that a *martyrium* (a shrine honouring a martyr) formed part of a larger pilgrimage complex. Along **Southeast Street**, the team traced how the paving and water channels developed in Late Antiquity. Excavations at the **Odeion** provided further evidence of urban infrastructure falling out of use in the Early Byzantine period.



Bilkent student **Dilara Uysal** at work
© SARP

Alongside excavation and conservation, specialists studied inscriptions, coins, sculpture and pottery. They also examined evidence of past human communities, plants and animals. Local children took part in a pottery workshop, and the team opened the **Funerary Garden**, where visitors can see monuments from the city's cemeteries.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT (TKAP)

Türkmen-Karahöyük

Michele Rüzgar Massa



Drone picture of the **TKAP** 2026 excavation team
© TKAP archive

The **Türkmen-Karahöyük Archaeological Project** investigated a large cemetery at the edge of the ancient city on the Konya Plain. Its burials offer clues to the lives and funerary practices of the city's inhabitants. The project traces the city's development between 3000 and 50 BCE and its influence on neighbouring communities and the landscape.

To map the city and locate major buildings, the team combined excavation with geophysical surveys of buried features and geoarchaeological studies of soils and sediments. It also used drone-based 3D modelling and analysed thermal images of the site.

Researchers began tracing the origins of materials found at the site. This work, known as provenance analysis, will help clarify the city's place in Eastern Mediterranean trade networks and its links with other regions.

About 150 people joined the international team this season. Six Bilkent students took part in the intensive Field Training programme. Five returning Bilkent students prepared for supervisory roles on the excavation and in on-campus laboratories.

EXCAVATIONS

Zeugma

Kutalmış Görkay



House of the Muses
© Zeugma Archaeological Project

In the **Eastern Residential Sector** at **Zeugma**, excavators uncovered a marble-paved street with steps and the remains of two large houses belonging to the Roman elite. The street, a *decumanus* (typically an east–west route in a Roman town), ran through an affluent neighbourhood. At the **House of the Muses**, the team completed conservation work and continued preparing a comprehensive study of the building for publication.

Often called the "Pompeii of the Roman East", Zeugma stood on the Euphrates in southeastern Türkiye. It was a major military and commercial centre where different cultures met on Rome's eastern frontier. Sasanian attacks in 252/253 CE destroyed much of its residential architecture. The surviving houses preserve an unusually detailed record of everyday life on the frontier.

> Through these projects, Bilkent University continues to contribute to the investigation, documentation and preservation of Anatolia's rich archaeological heritage. Equally importantly, its archaeological fieldwork provides students with opportunities to develop practical skills, engage with interdisciplinary research and gain first-hand experience in the study and conservation of the past.