



Study Tour of Archeological Interpretation

1. Introduction

Welcome

Study Tour of Archeological Interpretation investigates the interdisciplinary issues faced by archeologists and interpreters while working together to provide effective and accurate interpretation of archeological resources to the public. Each section introduces choices and strategies for interpreting archeology in parks and historic sites.



Archeologists working at Hopewell Culture NHP. NPS photo.

Section 2 provides a review of the principles of effective interpretation of archeological resources and the goals of "shared competency" in archeology and interpretation. This section reminds archeologists, interpreters, and related professionals of the importance of working together and of training in each other's discipline in order to interpret archeological resources to the public.

Section 3 asks you to experience an archeological park or museum either in person or in the virtual sense, through websites, from the point of view of an expert, but uninformed visitor. Viewing the interpretation of archeological resources with "fresh eyes" helps put you in the role of the visitor. This, we hope, will help archeologists, interpreters, and other professionals to consider new questions about how a visitor might interpret messages about the past.

Section 4 showcases examples of effective interpretation of archeology and includes interpretive planning documents from sites and parks to download and examine. Review of these documents will help you to understand the inner workings of the process of interpretive decision-making.

Section 5 provides tools to apply lessons from this module into work at your own park or museum.

Section 6 gives information for submitting your *Voice from the Field* experiences as an interpreter of archeology.

Section 7 includes resources to continue learning about interpreting archeology.

In the end, we hope you find in this guide a number of valuable resources for further exploration. Please continue to check in with the module and the [NPS Archeology Program](#) web site for information, examples, case studies, professional modules, and more.

Who is this guide for?

Study Tour is designed for archeologists and interpreters who wish to learn more about interpreting archeological resources for the public. The Center for Heritage Resource Studies and the Archeology Program developed the program for archeologists, interpreters, cultural resource managers, and other staff who investigate, interpret, preserve, and share with the public information regarding archeological resources. We encourage professionals from outside the NPS who are involved in related fields and applications to take advantage of this module. This training was developed to support the National Park Service's shared competency for interpretation and archeology (IDP Module 440) in which: "Archeologists and interpreters work together to provide effective and accurate interpretation of archeological information and resources to the public."

The module is primarily designed for self-motivated learning, so you can make use of the resources at your own pace. Read through the information, visit the links, and answer the assessment questions as quickly or as slowly as your time allows. Our goal is for you to increase your base of knowledge about archeological resource interpretation with every visit to the module.

Format

Each section of the module contains information and guidance for you to consider the issues and questions that archeologists and interpreters face while developing interpretation for archeological resources.

For Your Information subsections include links to additional web resources that enhance the content of this module. Visit the resources for more background and discussion of key points and topics.

For Your Consideration subsections include discussion questions that encourage you to think through the issues and problems of interpreting with archeology, and apply your understanding to your own park or museum.

Review of curriculum

The goal for archeologists and interpreters who undertake the modules of *The Public Meaning of Archeological Heritage* is to gain experience and insight into the rich possibilities of combining their knowledge and approaches for the public. We also hope you will have fun in the process!

Goals for archeologists

- Learn about the purpose, philosophy, and techniques of interpretation
- Understand tools that will provide visitors with the opportunity to make intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance of archeological resources and their stories
- Describe the archeologist's obligation to provide public interpretation and educational opportunities to the public
- Emphasize the archeologist's responsibility to work with interpreters

Goals for interpreters

- Learn about archeological methods
- Understand how archeological interpretations are made
- Describe ways to encourage concern for the preservation and protection of archeological resources

For your information

Review the following interrelated resources for in-depth information:

- [An Inspiring Guide—Effective Interpretation of Archaeological Resources](#) provides an overview of the purposes and goals of the training.
- Read papers from [Module 1: Public Meaning of Archaeological Heritage](#), a session held in October 2004, to find out how archeologists use interpretation to reach communities, explore diversity, and discuss heritage. Some of these and other, additional papers were published in the [March 2005 issue](#) of SAA Archaeological Record.
- [Archeology for Interpreters](#) explores the world of archeology through online activities, illustrated case studies and fun facts. This guide introduces basic archeological methods, techniques and up-to-date interpretations. It also illustrates basic relationships between archeology, preservation, and preservation laws.
- [Interpretation for Archeologists](#) introduces the world of interpretation through online activities, case studies, fun facts, and more. This guide introduces the art and science of interpretation, methods and techniques for engaging the public with archeological resources, and the significant role interpretation can play in encouraging public stewardship.
- Check out [Voices from the Field](#) to learn about the kinds of projects archeologists and interpreters do.

- [NPS Module 440: Effective Interpretation of Archeological Resources](#) provides an overview of the purpose, goals and objectives of the shared competency in Archeology and Interpretation.

Note to potential instructors

The *Study Tour* is easily adapted to classroom instruction for credit. Some suggestions follow.

Section 4, in which participants visit a park or museum in-person or a website on-line, is best conducted as an organized field trip to one place or a series of places. Participants can provide each other with feedback about their experiences.

In Section 6, participants are asked to submit a Voice from the Field case study, which can be a final product of the course.

The *For Your Consideration* questions may be answered for assessment purposes. In the current version, these questions are meant to guide participants in thinking about their work. You may wish for participants to write out their answers to demonstrate their review of all the sections and grasp of the material.

We recommend that you ask participants to join in discussions electronically or in-person.

- A listserv, blog, wiki, email, or in-person discussions all offer opportunities for participants to talk about the module, ask each other (and you) for advice, and go over problems as a group. You can also use these discussions to talk about the questions included in each part of this guide, or have the questions be submitted in writing for review.
- If you opt for a listserv or other electronic form of dialogue, provide participants with basic information and how-to tips when they register for the course.

For your consideration

- What motivates you to explore archeology and interpretation together?
- What do you hope to gain from this course?