

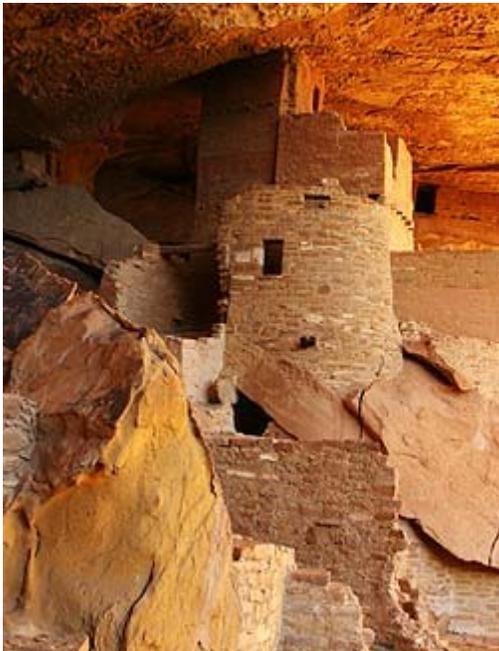


## Study Tour of Archeological Interpretation

### 4. Case Studies of Interpreting with Archeology

#### Case studies

Goal: To use examples from the National Parks as case studies of how archeologists and interpreters use their methods and resources to effectively interpret archeology to the public. To create a framework for evaluating your experience of museums or parks where archeological resources have been interpreted for the public.



Interpretation at Mesa Verde National Park is one case study of this chapter. NPS photo.

The plans included in this section

- Inform your knowledge about the synergy between archeology and interpretation as applied in the National Parks;
- Provide models for creating similar plans and guides at your own museum or park.

The *For Your Consideration* questions will help you to evaluate resources at your own site by examining the choices of others, and other sites that you visit. These questions will help you to think about the breadth of choices available, as well as the resources a park has to use in interpreting archeological resources. Your overall task is to find out how interpretation and

archeology work at a site and learn from others' experiences how the public gains an appreciation for the past.

### **For Your Information**

Review the following sections from Interpretation for Archeologists to learn about audiences and various approaches to take, and inform your knowledge about the synergy between archeology and interpretation as applied in the National Parks:

- [Interpretive Analysis Model](#)
- [Evaluating Compelling Stories](#)
- [Issues of Sensitivity](#)

### **Case study documents**

The following interpretive plans come from National Park Service sites struggling with the issues inherent to interpreting archeology to the public. They provide a look at how archaeological interpretation, from a planning/management perspective fits into the goals and structure of a park or museum.

[Long Range Plan, Jamestown, Colonial National Historical Park \(June 2000\)](#) (.pdf file)

The Plan provides a 5-10 year vision for the interpretation of Jamestown, considered the first permanent English settlement in the New World. The plan incorporates new information from historical and archeological investigations, and ideas on its application into exhibits and public programs.

[A Plan for the Interpretation of Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado \(May 1993\)](#) (.pdf file)

The plan was written to guide media planners and designers in the development and implementation of media production plans. It also provides guidance for park managers and interpretive program managers by identifying and delineating the various elements into time frames.

### **For your consideration**

The questions and issues below will help you to think through archaeological interpretation by looking at a site holistically - whether a case study or at your own museum or park. The questions should help determine interpretive opportunities and areas that need more attention or support.

*Site and Structure* questions establish the facts about the park. Consider:

- What is the background history of the place?
- What is its stated mission?
- What are its facilities and personnel?

- How do the institutional budget and other funding sources support interpretation and archeology?
- Are statistics or information kept about visitors? Who are the visitors?

*Content of Archeology and Interpretation* questions address the process of making interpretive choices in the plans. They also provide issues to consider when planning for your own park or museum. What kind of interpretation takes place (exhibits, public tours, etc.)? Consider:

- What kind of interplay occurs between interpreters and the public?
- What interpretive themes are presented?
- How does archeology fit or expand the mission?
- Can you tell what the relationship is between data collection and interpretation?
- Can you tell what the relationship is between the place and its region?
- What kinds of archeological resources are used in interpretation?
- How are archeological resources integrated with other kinds of resources for interpretation?
- What are some of the issues grappled with (i.e. authenticity, technology, contested history, putting forth different viewpoints)?
- Is stewardship explicitly addressed? What kinds of interpretive products address stewardship? How?
- How does archeological interpretation reach or address different audiences?