



## Heritage Sites

### Heritage Sites

#### Definition

The term 'heritage sites' is a broad one — including museums, libraries, archives, science and exploratory centres, monuments, religious or public buildings, gardens or parks, archaeological sites and historic houses. A heritage site holds historical significance in terms of its buildings, land or collections. Galleries house specifically artistic work; some have permanent collections of significant historical and/or contemporary works and others are home to temporary exhibitions.

Most heritage venues are acquirers of valuable items. They are home to expert conservators and academic researchers; and rather than simply presenting their collections, they actively promote understanding and enjoyment through experience-based learning.

It is not always easy to distinguish between different sorts of heritage sites and galleries and sometimes you can miss them altogether. Your local library might have a small museum of local history attached. Your town hall might house an archive, museum or art collection. Your local park might be home to an archaeological site, or might once have been part of a grand local estate. So look carefully and look locally for some hidden treasures.

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#### Learning opportunities

Visits to heritage sites provide the following learning opportunities:

- Authentic experiences, curiosity and creativity — whether through seeing, touching, hearing or feeling, a young person visiting a heritage site, museum or gallery experiences a distinct environment and genuine artefacts which stimulate thought and bring academic study to life.
- A new study environment — out of the classroom and in the presence of experts, and authentic materials, young people are able to challenge their preconceptions and think in new ways.



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- Exploring culture and identity — heritage sites offer us routes to our past, present and future, drawing on the material evidence of human lives all over the world. They provide a valuable route to understanding cultural diversity and our own place in the world.
- Access to professionals and experts — young people meet and work with leading experts giving them a deeper insight into their subject. They may also think differently about study, its purpose and how it might relate to an occupation.
- Building local communities — heritage sites are often hubs for the local area. Many actively seek to connect with local communities and are sources of information about the locality and the different groups of people living there. They can therefore provide a sense of continuity and cohesion.

Some schools create 'heritage features' within their grounds — such as an archaeological digging site. They may first be introduced to techniques and practices within their grounds before using these on visits. In a similar way they could return to their site to develop skills used on a visit.

Students may look at what heritage means to them, through investigating their school grounds as well as visits off-site, then gathering these ideas to make changes to their site. These investigations could be used to create features that reflect an aspect of local heritage, such as the species planted in a hedge or an artwork reflecting local industry.

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### Range of provision

- **Freelance educators:** there are a number of freelance education professionals working in England. They are experienced in delivering museum and gallery learning projects in partnership with schools and learning providers. Visit [www.gem.org.uk](http://www.gem.org.uk) to access their database of freelance education professionals.
- **Local authorities:** a number of your local galleries and museums will be run by your local authority. Some local authorities will deliver learning programmes through these sites as part of their Heritage Services offering.
- **Public museums and galleries:** a large number of national and regional museums and galleries are now free to visit. All of these provide learning programmes facilitated by education professionals.
- **English Heritage:** the custodian of a significant amount of public heritage in England. Sites vary enormously in size, and not all are staffed.



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- **The National Trust:** runs a national network of historic houses, estates, heritage sites and buildings.
- **Independent museums and galleries:** private museums and galleries are run by private individuals and organisations or by charitable trusts. Many of these organisations have learning provision of high quality. Museums can be contacted to see what they have to offer.
- **Learning projects:** there are a number of learning projects run by heritage or arts organisations, often focusing on the local environment. These projects partner schools or their equivalents with museums and galleries for the development of progressive learning programmes.
- **One-off events:** there are a number of short programmes or one-off events which enable free or unrestricted access to museums and galleries. Museums and Galleries Month is one of these. Heritage Open Days is another.

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### Learning support

Heritage sites often offer different types of learning support. This might include the following.

- **Dedicated education officers:** heritage sites often have dedicated learning and education officers who are trained to deliver learning activities and programmes that meet subject and skills focuses of the National Curriculum. They may be available to work with the young people on your visit or provide ideas and materials for self-led visits.
- **Other professionals:** in many heritage sites, you will also sometimes have the opportunity to meet professionals from many walks of life, such as scientists, conservators, archivists, librarians, artists, etc.
- **Interactive materials:** a number of heritage sites have interactive materials on site such as video conferencing facilities, interactive screens, audio guides, etc.
- **Handling collections:** many heritage sites have artefacts and other materials which help to make the visit come alive.
- **Web-based materials:** many heritage sites have developed resources such as lesson plans, worksheets, activity ideas that are downloadable from their website. These websites often have interactive capacity and provide a fun way of accessing information about the site.
- **Pre-visit tours:** often provided free of charge to teachers and group leaders. They offer an opportunity for familiarising yourself with a site and give you material to be used to prepare learners for their forthcoming visit.



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- **Help with evaluation and planning:** heritage education professionals are very experienced in providing planning support for a visit and will often help with evaluation of learners experiences after a visit so that you can judge how learners have benefited and what could be done to plan a successful future visit.
- **Outreach projects:** a number of heritage sites develop long term relationships with schools and learners and as part of that, or as part of a preparation for a single visit, organise to visit the learners in their own environment.
- **Freelance educators:** experienced in delivering heritage learning projects may be able to come to your site, perhaps appearing in role. They may also offer advice for self-led visits.

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### Heritage Web resources

[www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/etc/teah/teahindex\\_gfx\\_en.html](http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/etc/teah/teahindex_gfx_en.html)

Culture24 provides resources for teachers looking for learning outside the classroom activities in the UK's museums and galleries. Many museums and galleries have resources on their own websites.

[www.hha.org.uk/metadot/index.pl?id=23068&isa=Category&op=show](http://www.hha.org.uk/metadot/index.pl?id=23068&isa=Category&op=show)

The Historic Houses Association is a membership body for privately-owned historic houses in the UK. This part of their website allows you to search for members' organisations which have education provision.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-chl/w-learning\\_discovery/w-schools.htm](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-chl/w-learning_discovery/w-schools.htm)

The National Trust offers extensive education guidance and resources as well as specific education schemes including School Arts Partnerships and School Guardianships that seek to connect schools to their local National Trust properties and develop sustainable learning partnerships.

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.1571](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.1571)

English Heritage offers a wide range of learning provision across the UK. This education section of their site provides a link to Discovery Visits which have been specifically developed as cross-curricular opportunities for learning outside the classroom.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/museums/database/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/museums/database/)

The teachernet museums and galleries database can be searched to find organisations that have provision matching your curriculum requirements.

[www.mla.gov.uk/home](http://www.mla.gov.uk/home)

The MLA Partnership is the government's agency for museums, galleries, libraries and archives. It delivers strategic leadership in England and in each of its regions and collaborates with partners across the UK. There are links to MLA sites in each of the nine English regions, and some have case studies and information of use to teachers and leaders. Some museums and galleries work in partnership groups or hubs to provide educational resources.

[www.4children.org.uk/whatwedo/view/node/19](http://www.4children.org.uk/whatwedo/view/node/19)



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Part of the 4Children Charity, these centres for curiosity and imagination provide hands-on learning for young people in their communities, focusing on out-of-school time.

[www.heritageeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.heritageeducationtrust.org.uk)

The Heritage Education Trust oversees the Sandford Awards which are given annually to heritage sites for excellence in education provision. The site contains lists of winners which are a good source of ideas for school visits and other links.

[www.gem.org.uk/pubs/pubs\\_menu.html](http://www.gem.org.uk/pubs/pubs_menu.html)

A source of education research reports that focus on education provision in the heritage sector and include a large number of case studies. The site also has a searchable database of freelance educators.

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