



U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR
INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



DOI-ITAP

Factsheet

Preserving and Managing Our Cultural Heritage

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is responsible for the identification, preservation and management of our cultural heritage on DOI lands, as well as the promotion of heritage education.

Cultural heritage is the legacy of the tangible assets (“cultural resources”) and intangible attributes that keep cultural identities and practices alive and have shaped us as a people and a nation. Examples of these irreplaceable assets include:

- Oral traditions & histories
- Archaeological sites & artifacts
- Natural features & landscapes
- Rituals & celebrations
- Historic sites & structures
- Sacred grounds & features
- Ethnographic research
- Music & songs
- Petroglyphs

DOI seeks to work with state, tribal, and local partners to identify heritage worthy of preservation and pursue opportunities on how these may contribute to local communities through economic development and heritage tourism.

Examples of DOI Cultural Heritage Expertise

- **Cultural Heritage Specialists:** DOI professionals include archaeologists, anthropologists, curators, historians, cultural landscape architects, ethnographers, and educators who are skilled in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.
- **Cultural Heritage Sites:** DOI coordinates the U.S. participation in the World Heritage Convention, which promotes the “preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.” DOI also administers the National Register of Historic Places and other inventories, to identify and preserve places of historic significance nationwide.
- **Tribal Policy and Outreach:** DOI assists federally recognized Indian Tribes develop and manage their own historic preservation programs, supporting applied anthropological research, youth programs, and inclusive interpretation.
- **Museum Collections:** DOI manages one of the world’s largest museum collections, containing over 205 million objects and archives.
- **Underwater Archaeology:** DOI has experience documenting, interpreting, and preserving shipwrecks and other cultural resources underwater, as well as reviewing potential oil drill sites on the ocean floor for evidence of cultural resources.
- **Cultural Heritage Interpretation:** DOI has extensive experience interpreting cultural heritage to visitors, including storytelling, interactive displays and exhibits, guided ranger walks, and more.
- **Additional DOI expertise:** Includes post-disaster cultural resource recovery, protection and repatriation of culturally significant items, law enforcement to prevent theft and looting, and permit applications for archaeological research and development projects.



DOI facilitates peer exchanges of indigenous leaders from around the world with their U.S. counterparts regarding the protection and management of their lands, natural resources and cultural heritage.

Photo: GSA Fine Arts Collection, Stephen Mopope, Ceremonial Dance (Indian Theme)

Cultural Heritage

DOI-ITAP and Cultural Resources – Examples of Technical Support

DOI's International Technical Assistance Program (DOI-ITAP) helps build cultural heritage management capacity in other countries by tapping into the diverse expertise of DOI employees. Examples of how DOI has provided technical support to strengthen cultural heritage capacities with host country governments are listed below.

- **Protecting Archaeological Sites in Guatemala:** Supports security measures and scientific research in select archaeological sites in the Maya Biosphere Reserve to prevent archaeological looting, protect the natural resources in the vicinity, and advance science.
- **Tanzanian Cultural Heritage:** Helped design a visitor center in a community-managed Wildlife Management Area. The center is used for sale of local crafts and foods, and for community gatherings.
- **Indigenous Leaders Peer Exchange:** Led a peer exchange for indigenous leaders and government officials from Colombia and Peru to the U.S. to review best practices for extractive industries on indigenous territories. The activity included exchanges with DOI/Bureau of Indian Affairs management in Colorado, and with the Crow Nation leadership in Montana.
- **National Park Assistance in Georgia:** Provided training on facility design and location, education and outreach, law enforcement, and visitor services for national parks in Georgia featuring unique natural and cultural resources, including ancient pagan and Christian architecture.
- **Traditional Medicinal Plants:** Worked with indigenous women from the Colombian, Peruvian, and Ecuadorian Amazon to consolidate and record for posterity the identification, preparation, and use of traditional medicinal plants -- practices that are less commonly being passed down through the generations.

"The spirit and direction of the nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage."

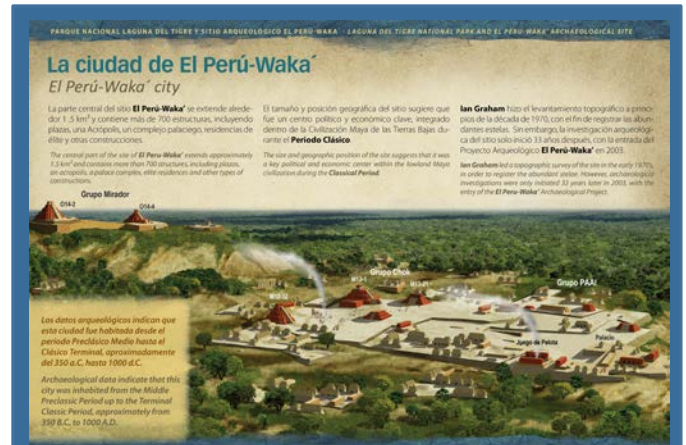
- National Historic Preservation Act (1966)

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DOI worked with archaeologists on the design, layout, and text for multiple interpretive panels to improve the tourism experience at the El Peru-Waka Archaeological site. Photo credit: DOI ITAP



DOI helped to establish a "Junior Ranger Program" for youth living near Jordan's Petra Archaeological Site, focused on celebrating natural and cultural heritage. Photo credit: DOI ITAP



DOI assisted with cultural heritage interpretation at cultural sites in Jordan. Photo credit: DOI ITAP