In celebration of International Archaeology Day take a tour of sites from around the world!

Print our your own Archaeologist’s Journal and complete the scavenger hunt using the information here!

Thank you to the Mt. San Jacinto College anthropology students who prepared the site slides for this activity.
Laetoli, Tanzania

Mary Leakey discovered an 88ft long track with a series of over 70 footprints dating back to 3.7 million years. What was most remarkable is that these footprints were of two clearly bipedal hominins (hypothesized to be *Australopithecus afarensis*).

This site is important because it shows that early hominins were able to efficiently and effectively walk bipedally early on in their evolution.

https://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/laetoli/laetoli_images.html
https://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/behavior/footprints/laetoli-footprint-trails
Kokiselei, Kenya

The items recovered at this site were more or less the Homo erectus’ “swiss army knife”. They were a form of Acheulean technology that can be classified as hand axes that served many purposes. This is one of the earliest Acheulean sites, dating to 1.7 million years ago.

This site is of great importance due to its value in determining a massive turning point in human history and evolution. These tools are important both for the purpose they served for early humans, but also the change they mark for us in the future.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4920301/
https://anthromuseum.missouri.edu/exhibit/oldowan-and-acheulean-stone-tools
Rising Star Cave, South Africa

- Located in the Rising Star Cave Complex, in South Africa’s, Transvaall region, dating to the Middle Pleistocene 335,000 - 236,000 years ago.
- There were 1,550 remains found from 15 individuals discovered October of 2013 to March of 2014. There is also evidence that the remains were purposely placed in the chamber of the cave.
- It is important because the site remains the single largest group of a single hominin species found in Africa.

Madjedbebe, Australia

Location:

Australia 65,000–53,000 years ago

Overview/Importance:

Madjedbebe, formerly Malakunanja II, is a rock shelter archaeological site in Northern Territory, Australia. It is the oldest known site showing Aboriginal presence of more than 50,000 years with artifacts found there that include stone axes with sharpened polished edges, stone spear tips, seed-grinding tools (mortars and pestles), animal bones, seashells, and a large amount of ground ochre.

https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-14723-0;
https://www.britannica.com/place/Madjedbebe;
http://ancientnews.net/2017/07/20/aboriginal-australian-artefacts-up-to-80000-years-old-uncovered-at-the-madjedbebe-rock-shelter/
Murujuga RockArt Site, Australia

- Ancient petroglyphs were discovered at the site and are considered to be the largest collection of rock art in the world. It consists of over 1 million petroglyphs across 36,857ha of the peninsula and surrounding the Dampier Archipelago.

- The oldest petroglyphs at the site date back to around 40,000 years ago.

- The site was created by the Aboriginal people, who are the longest continuing surviving culture in the world.

- The Murujuga site is also home to the first known depiction of the human face.

- The site still holds great significance to the Aboriginal people of Australia today.

Sources:
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murujuga
Feldhofer Cave (Neander Valley), Germany

• Discovered in 1856, this is the original Neanderthal specimen.
• The skeleton dates to around 40,000BP
• Remains found were of a low, sloping skullcap, part of a pelvis, thick limb bones.
• One of the first prehistoric human fossils, discovered before Darwin’s work, contradicted the Church on age of the Earth.
• Due to this, the public believed the bones belonged to an extinct bear, etc.

http://factsanddetails.com/world/cat56/sub400/entry-5970.html
https://images.app.goo.gl/P4Ct96xLT2UTZ7A7
https://anthropology.net/neander-valley/
Cave of Altamira, Spain

Located in Cantabria, Spain.

- The site is important because it contains some of the oldest cave paintings, dating to 36,000-22,000BP.

- These caves are described as masterpieces of creative genius and as humanity’s earliest accomplished art. It was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985.

- Sanz de Sautola, who was in charge of excavating the site, published descriptions of his finds in 1880, however, most prehistorians of the time dismissed the paintings as modern forgeries and it wasn't until the 19th century that they were accepted as genuine.

- Experts assume that the paintings inside the cave were created by those who inhabited it during different periods of time. Most of the paintings in Altamira are located in the “Polychrome room” And range from hands to stick figures, to multiple types of animals.

Sources:
https://www.oldest.org/culture/archaeological-sites/
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/310/
https://www.ancient.eu/Altamira/
Cactus Hill - Southeastern Virginia, United States

- Site dated to 15,000 years ago, using carbon materials present at the site.

- Lithics found at the site include two Clovis points, fluted points, and blades. Along with 20 specimens of faunal remains including debris and animal bones.

- Site provides evidence of a pre-Clovis population in North America, and challenges established ideas of Paleoindian migration.

- Site named for the prickly pear cacti found growing there

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cactus_Hill
http://lithiccastinglab.com/gallery-pages/cactushillbrokenpreclovisptlrg.jpg
http://lithiccastinglab.com/gallery-pages/cactushill2earlypointshand.jpg
Göbekli Tepe, Turkey

- Consists of multiple temples, possibly the oldest found in the world (11,500 - 10,000 BP) predating Stonehenge by 6,000 years. So far only 6 have been found, but archaeologists suggest there are up to 18.

- Sites built by groups of hunter gatherers in the pre-pottery, Neolithic Age. They are one of the first manifestation of human made monumental architecture and are a great example of Mesolithic hunter/gatherers transitioning into Neolithic society.

- The site was most likely used for ritualistic purposes, such as social events, as well as funerals, and possible animal sacrifices, indicated by the number of animal bones and butcher marks. Also present are animal carvings on the pillars that were carved to represent the human form, possibility suggesting the first hierarchical society.

- There is still debate over how the stones were moved into the location and how the temples were built, due to the fact that metal tools were not used, although some remains of tools have been discovered in the area, it is unclear to what age the tools belong.

- Each pillar is made from limestone, and each sites ranges from 30 - 100 feet in diameter, the tallest pillar in each site is about 16 feet tall and weighs about 40 - 60 tons each with some pillars stack.

Ain Ghazal, Jordan

- The site dates from about 9250-7000 BP.
- Artifacts found at the site include small figures of animals and women, dating from 8500 BP. A few figurines had two heads. Figures have been interpreted as being an important part of the local culture, indicating a part in ancestor worship.
- The site has evidence of domestication of goats and domesticated grains.
- DNA evidence indicates knowledge of agriculture did not come from outside but was developed by local communities.

https://www.britannica.com/place/Ain-Ghazal
https://www.wmf.org/project/ain-ghazal
Mehrgarh, Pakistan

Located on the Kacchi Plain of Balochistan, Pakistan

Mehrgarh was inhabited between about 7000 and 2600 B.C. It is the earliest known Neolithic site in the Indus Valley. It was found to be an early farming settlement where they harvested wheat and barley, as well as herded cattle, sheep, and goats.

They also found large numbers of terracotta figurines located in layers of dirt located at Mound MR3.

The sites importance lies in that is was found to be along part of a trading connection established between East, South, and Central Asia.

Sources:  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mehrgarh
https://www.livehistoryindia.com/history-of-india-000-years/2020/02/08/mehrgarh-the-dawn-of-a-civilisation-8000-bce-2500-bce
Valley of the Kings, Egypt

Located in Egypt, west of the Nile River in Upper Egypt.

The Valley of the Kings served as a royal cemetery for almost all of the Pharaohs of the 18th, 19th, and 20th dynasties during the New Kingdom from about 1550 to 1069 B.C.

Found in these tombs were pharaohs such as Tutankhamun, Seti I, and Ramses II, as well as queens, high priests, and the many sons of Ramses II.

There is evidence in these tombs for elaborate preparations for the next world as seen through mummification of the deceased as well as material goods such as golden masks, jewelry, furniture, and even food and wine for a feast in the afterlife.

Sources: https://www.britannica.com/place/Valley-of-the-Kings
https://www.world-archaeology.com/features/the-valley-of-the-kings-revisited/
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/archaeology/valley-of-the-kings/
The Acropolis of Athens (The Sacred Rock), Greece

- Located in Athens, Greece, the Acropolis is dedicated to its patron goddess of the city, Athena.
- It is home to the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the Erechtheion, and more temples dedicated to various god and goddess associated with Athena.
- There was also several statues of the goddess on the acropolis, one being the 30 foot tall statue made of bronze known as the Athena Promachos, which stood in between the Parthenon and Propylaea. Another being the infamous Athena Parthenos, a statue made of chryselephantine that stood inside the Parthenon.
- The Acropolis is significant to the world of archaeology because of its complex structures and beautiful architecture. Built by some of the most brilliant minds of that time, it showed us that they worshipped these gods day in and day out, revolving their lives around them. The level of craftsmanship they had in this time is astonishing.

https://ancient-greece.org/art/athena-promachos.html
https://www.ancient.eu/article/785/athena-parthenos-by-phidias/
https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-greece/acropolis
Xian and the Terracotta Warriors, China

- The site was discovered in 1974 when locals were digging for a well in Shaanxi Province, in Northwest China.
- The 22 acre site contains the tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi, the self proclaimed 1st emperor of China in 221 BC.
- The site is over 2,000 years old.
- The clay figures that were found at the site include an estimated 7,000 warriors, along with horses, chariots and royal court members and entertainers. Of the warriors only about 1,900 have been excavated.
- Many figures have very individual details and provide a look into the life and times of the emperor.

https://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shaanxi/xian/terra_cotta_army/map.htm
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/terra-cotta-soldiers-on-the-march-30942673/
Pompeii, Italy

* Located near the Bay of Naples in the Campania region of Italy, this Roman city was dedicated to Venus, the goddess of love and beauty.

* Known as a vacation getaway for the elite of Rome, the bustling of the city came to an end in 79 A.D. with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The eruption also destroyed the neighboring cities of Herculaneum, Stabiae, and Torre Annunziata, killing a total of 16,000 people.

* With excavation beginning in 1748, all types of archaeological evidence has been discovered including, 1,600 bodies of the reported 2,000 victims of Pompeii, the Temple of Apollo, the House of the Faun, Villa dei Misteri, and so many more beautiful structures and forms of art.

* The discovery of Pompeii not only gave the world a look into ancient Roman life, but it gave way to the modern science of archaeology as we know it today.

Sources: https://www.britannica.com/place/Pompeii#ref5859 https://www.ancient.eu/pompeii/
Teotihuacán “Abode of the Gods”
Ancient Mesoamerican City, near present Mexico City

- Teotihuacan itself is home to massive pyramids, temples and elite residences.
- A 1,800 year-old tunnel and underground chamber were discovered in the Pyramid of the Moon. The walls and roof of the tunnel glittered with dust made out of pyrite and magnetite.
- The tunnels are symbolic representations of what the city priests and rulers perceived of The Underworld.
- Artifacts found within the tunnel included finely carved stone sculptures, jewels, shells, obsidian blades, and arrow heads.
- 2,600 fragments of human and animal remains were found.
- 500 fragments of Mayan mural painting, which includes motifs and depicts images of 2 major deities; Great Goddess and Storm Lord (Tlaloc).

Sources: https://bit.ly/33WBwA4
Pueblo Bonito, New Mexico, USA

- Pueblo Bonito is the largest of the Pueblo sites in Chaco Canyon. Built by the Ancestral Puebloans between AD 850-1150. The pueblo has around 800 rooms organized into a D-shape, with 32 kivas (circular, subterranean ceremonial room) and 3 great kivas.

- Archaeologists are still trying to determine whether Pueblo Bonito was a permanently inhabited site or if it was a regional center that drew people from communities all throughout the San Juan Basin of Northern New Mexico.

http://www.chacoarchive.org/cra/chaco-sites/pueblo-bonito/
https://www.nps.gov/chcu/planyourvisit/pueblo-bonito.htm
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pueblo_Bonito#/media/File:Pueblo_Bonito_Aerial.JPG
Chichén Itzá
Pre-Hispanic City of Chichén Itzá
Located in Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula

The most recognizable structure was the Temple of Kukulkan or known as “El Castillo”

The Temple of Kukulkan is of huge importance to the Mayan Astronomy.

With the 365 day calendar that the Mayans created, it shared a phenomenon that allowed a shadow fall down the pyramid in a shape of a serpent twice a year during the spring and autumn equinox.

Pyramids, temples, columned arcades and other stone structures of the chichén Itzá were sacred to the Mayans. It was an urban center of their empire from AD 750 to 1200.

Archaeologists believe it was a powerful economic city starting around 600 AD.

Fun Fact: The term Chichén Itzá means ‘the mouth at the well of Itzá’. Itzá means ‘water magicians’, that derives from the Mayan Itz for ‘magic’ and á for ‘water’.

Sources: [link](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/world-heritage/chichen-itz/)  
Image: google search
Hope you enjoyed traveling through time and exploring archaeological sites from around the world!