

GUIDELINES  
FOR  
GUIDING VISITORS TO  
ROCK ART SITES

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## Purpose of Guide

This document is a reference general enough for all tour guides, but specific in terms of how visitors should treat rock art sites. For this reason, the guide has different levels of information. To enhance the readability of the guide, important points are outlined in bold for quick review. Tour guides who deal exclusively with rock art sites—as opposed to those who point one out on a boat tour as they float past—will need more details, and these are provided for each bold category. The focus of this document is to prepare guides to lead trips safely and respectfully, while protecting and promoting the conservation of rock art. We encourage guides to protect the resource and to transmit accurate and up-to-date knowledge about the site.

## Preparation for Site Visit

### 1. Select sites to visit.

**a. Research available sites.** Find an appropriate site for the group size, age, and background. Additionally, a knowledgeable guide will inspire visitors.

- 1) Check books, articles, site reports, and brochures for information on the sites.
- 2) Consult local rock art researchers, archeologists, and tribal groups.

**b. Take people to known and protected sites.** Chances are higher that these sites have been fully recorded and management plans have been developed for them. Preference should be given to recorded sites, if they are available among protected sites in the area.

- 1) First choice should be established public and private parks.
- 2) Government monitored sites such as those on Forest Service or BLM lands developed for public viewing are also good choices.

**c. Obtain permission from the land owner to take a group to the site.**

- 1) If the site is on private land make sure the owner knows how many people will be there and when.
- 2) If the site is on public land, either:
  - (a) make a courtesy notification to the land manager (or archaeologist) letting them know you are taking a group in and when, or
  - (b) obtain any necessary permit to take a group of people to the site.

**d. Develop a tour plan prior to the first outing that includes details of the events.**

- 1) This may include preparing a one-page handout for participants on the dos and don'ts of rock art visitation. There are several etiquette or code of conduct site visitation lists already available that may be used (they can be obtained from rock art interest groups such as ARARA, from state or federal agencies, and from rock art visitation books), or the dos and don'ts section of this guide can be reproduced as a handout.

**2. Organization of participants.**

**a. Decide on the group size possible to handle at the selected site.**

- 1) Adults must accompany children so they can be monitored at all times.
- 2) Plan for all people to stay together.

**b. Determine if pets (usually dogs) will be allowed at the selected site.**

- 1) Pets may be prohibited at the site. If this is the case, be sure all participants are aware of this regulation.
- 2) As group leader you may not want any pets along on the site visit. If you do not want pets, be sure all participants are aware that pets are not permitted on the site visit.

- 3) If pets are permitted to accompany people to the site, the following points must be considered prior to the trip.
  - (a) Check on leash laws for the site area. In some areas pets (usually dogs) must be on leashes at all times. Even if leashes are not required, as group leader you may want to require leashes for the site visit.
  - (b) Bring bags to clean-up after pets.
  - (c) Control animals (especially dogs) and do not allow them on or near the rock art.

**c. Advance registration should include:**

- 1) **Liability release forms.** Necessary release form contents differ from organization to organization, from agency to agency, and from trip to trip depending upon the purpose of the visit, the size of the group, and the length of the visit. Therefore, no standard release form sample is included here, but samples can be obtained from rock art interest groups such as ARARA or from state or federal agencies that may be adjusted to meet the needs of your specific project.
- 2) **A schedule outlining where and when to meet.** Provide a map, if necessary.
- 3) **Provide a brochure or handout** (formal or simply a single typed page) with necessary information.
  - (a) General rules of conduct for site visitation.
  - (b) Specific guidelines for the particular tour.
  - (c) State and federal laws regarding cultural resources and vandalism.

d. **Carpool** to minimize vehicle impact to the site.

e. **Provide receptacles for garbage.** These should be bags or other containers that are taken with the group when they leave the site.

3. **Personal survival equipment to bring.** Prioritize depending on weather, length of trip, and amount of space.
  - a. **Clothing** (hat, coats, boots, sunglasses).
  - b. **Water** (amount depends on the length of the trip, temperature, availability of water at the site, and personal needs).
  - c. **Food** (lunches, light snacks, fruit).
  - d. **First Aid Kit** (sun block, lotion, bandages).
  - e. **Backpack** (necessary for transporting small items from personal survival equipment to personal viewing and recording equipment).
  - f. **Personal preference items**, such as a walking stick.
4. **Personal viewing and recording equipment to bring.**
  - a. **Camera and associated equipment** (film or digital cards, lenses, filters, reflectors, tripods).
  - b. **Binoculars.**
  - c. **Notebook.**
  - d. **Drawing supplies** (pens, pencils, scale, drafting board).
5. **Pre-visit talk to provide the group with general information.**
  - a. Discuss area history, archeology, and geology.
  - b. **Trail etiquette.**
    - 1) Stay together.
    - 2) Stay on existing trails (do not make new trails).
    - 3) Do not litter.
  - c. **Site etiquette.**
    - 1) Treat sites with respect.
    - 2) Explain the importance of rock art sites.

3) Cite state and federal cultural resource laws.

4) Do not litter.

5) Do not touch.

**d. Handout on site visitation rules if appropriate and not provided during advance registration.**

1) A handout may be necessary with a group new to rock art visitation who will not remember points just verbally discussed.

2) A handout may not be necessary with a group familiar with rock art visitation that only needs verbal reminding of site rules and etiquette.

**6. Drive on roads only.**

**7. Obey signs.**

## Site Visit

### *To Do List: Guides*

1. **Keep all people in sight at all times.**
2. **Provide information on the site.**
  - a. Distinguish between local legend and facts.
    - 1) Quote reputable references on the site.
    - 2) Consult archeological or rock art organizations for references.
  - b. Provide quality information on the age and cultural affiliation of the site.
  - c. **Do NOT give incorrect interpretations. Better to give none at all.**
3. **Monitor the site while there.**
  - a. Check for damage to site.
  - b. Pick up trash.
  - c. Report site damage to officials along with information about vandals.
    - 1) This includes new damage seen since the last visit.

### *To Do List: Guides and Visitors*

1. **Respect the pictographs and petroglyphs.**
  - a. They are an important part of our heritage.
  - b. They are irreplaceable.
2. **Take photographs.**
3. **Make notes and drawings. Drawings should be free-hand sketches that do not involve touching the rock art.**
4. **Report site damage to guide.**
5. **Keep children and pets under control.**

## *NOT To Do List: Guides and Visitors*

### **1. Stay off ALL rock art.**

- a. No walking, leaning, or climbing on panels, boulders, or cliffs as this causes scratches and deterioration from shoes, hands, and walking sticks.

### **2. Do not touch the rock art.**

- a. Direct contact with the rock art results in oils from your hands increasing the natural deterioration process of the rock that can add to the site's destruction and contaminate the figures for future chemical analysis. Hand oils also stain and wear away the rock art through abrasion.
- b. Do not trace pictures with sticks or other abrasive pointers to indicate figures.

### **3. Do not disturb the setting, which is part of the rock art site.**

- a. Do not leave trash.
- b. Do not start campfires near rock art panels.
- c. Do not collect rocks, artifacts, plants.
- d. Do not disturb the ground around and below the site.
  - 1) This area may contain cultural materials that provide information about the site age and function.
  - 2) Loose sediments in this area may create a dust cover on the rock art.

### **4. No physical enhancement of the rock art.** This speeds natural deterioration, destroys the figures for future dating, and is often inaccurate changing the form of the figure. Additionally, substances are disrespectful to the rock art.

#### **a. Physical enhancement includes:**

- 1) Chalking, whether to fill in or outline figures.
- 2) Painting squares or circles around figures.



- 3) Application of liquids to brighten figures for photography. This includes, but is not limited to, water (including distilled), soda pop, kerosene, gasoline, urine, cow manure.
  - (a) Liquid substances can cause the following kinds of damage:
    - (1) figures can run.
    - (2) hastens fading.
    - (3) destroys integrity for dating.
    - (4) stains the rock art.
    - (5) introduces potentially harmful substances to the surface.
  - 4) Any kind of aluminum or dusting powder.
  - 5) Repecking or repainting. These actions do not restore the figure but instead destroy the original form.
5. **No tracing or rubbing of the rock art.** The direct contact of plastic, cloth, or paper to a panel for purposes of tracing or rubbing can damage the panel.
  - a. These actions can weakened sections of the rock face can and often do break off.
  - b. Continual rubbing by many people over time wears down the figures.
6. **No mold or cast making.** Molds were an acceptable method of conserving rock art in the past, but they are not any longer. Although there are articles in the literature describing how to make a mold, this does not make it an acceptable recording technique.
  - a. Molding contaminates the figure for dating.
  - b. It can ruin the panel by spalling off pieces of the rock.
  - c. Pieces of the mold can remain on the panel after the removal process.
7. **Do not carve or write on rock art panels.**

a. Modern graffiti is considered a crime. This includes names, dates, and any other kinds of drawings.

b. Punishment includes fines and imprisonment.

**8. No shooting at rock art sites.**

a. Do not use rock art figures as targets.

b. Percussive noises can hasten rock falls.

**9. Do not remove anything from the rock art panel.** There are rock art conservators trained to do this kind of work. This kind of activity by an untrained person can be more damaging than the offending overlay. The following kinds of materials should not be removed:

a. Lichen, which may be dateable.

b. Any kind of animal (bird, mammal, or insect) droppings or nests.

c. Paint of any kind.

d. Chalk.

e. Graffiti.

**10. Do not attempt to remove the rock art. Take only pictures, leave only footprints.**

a. Removing rock art is illegal.

b. Removal destroys the integrity of the site.

1) Analysis is hindered at best, and it may be impossible.

2) The next visitor's experience is diminished.

## **Post Site Visit**

1. Inform all group participants whether or not they are allowed to return to the site on their own and whether or not they are allowed to bring others unescorted to the site.
2. Make sure all items brought to the site are packed out of the site. Subsequent visitors, including your grandchildren, will enjoy their visit more, if you work to keep it pristine.