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Fact Sheet

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

What is SITES?

SITES—the largest traveling exhibition operation in the world—is the Smithsonian Institution’s main exhibits ambassador beyond Washington, D.C. For 60 years, the organization has traveled more than 50 exhibitions annually to hundreds of U.S. cities and towns from coast to coast, where they are viewed by millions of people. Every day across the country, SITES reaffirms the Smithsonian’s singular role as keeper of America’s shared national heritage.

On behalf of small-town USA, where resources to national cultural programming are especially limited, SITES initiated Museum on Main Street. The program began as a pilot project with one exhibit and five states. By 2012, nearly 1,000 rural communities in 46 states and Guam had welcomed Smithsonian exhibitions to town.

Exhibition descriptions and tour schedules are available at www.sites.si.edu.

How does SITES work?

In collaboration with Smithsonian curators and scholars, as well as experts at America’s finest museums and research centers, SITES creates engaging, three-dimensional exhibitions about diverse topics, using artifacts, photographs and interpretive materials. For each venue that presents an exhibition, SITES also provides educational resources, publications, public relations support, technical guidelines and insurance, allowing host institutions to offer a variety of quality museum-going experiences to their communities.

Where do SITES exhibitions go?

SITES exhibits are as much at home in large urban cities as they are in rural America. Venues range from mainstream museums, science centers, university galleries, historical societies, botanical gardens, aquariums and zoos to libraries, community recreation centers and municipal buildings. More than 400 communities nationwide host SITES exhibitions annually via national tour itineraries that range from two to five years, depending on the rarity of artifacts and the ability of exhibit structures to withstand the rigors of travel.

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