



Participate in History Unfolding in Williamsburg

History is not a static story in Williamsburg. It is unfolding in real time, every day. Nine active archeological digs provide visitors the opportunity to watch the process, ask questions, and participate in uncovering America's earliest beginnings.

Colonial Williamsburg

Archaeologists can be found in the field year-round, exploring the 301-acre historic area of Colonial Williamsburg more than 85 years after the first excavations began at the site of the Capitol building. The archeological lab is home to a collection of more than 60 million artifacts and counting.

Visitors have the unique opportunity to go “behind the fence” at any of Colonial Williamsburg’s current excavations including:

- **First Baptist Church of Williamsburg** - Colonial Williamsburg partnered with The Historic First Baptist Church of Williamsburg to locate the remains one of the oldest Black churches in the country founded by free and enslaved Black worshippers. Unearthed by chance when seeking to expand a parking lot, archeologists brought to the surface not only the original early 1800s church building the original congregation worshipped in, but 21 graves which all predate the 20th century, and more than 12,000 articles showcasing the parishioners’ lives that include: doll fragments, buttons, coins, and more than 50 straight pins used by the women to fasten their Sunday best clothing.
- **Custis Square** – Archeologists are in the middle of an exploration around the home of Martha Washington’s first father-in-law, John Custis, a bold and scientifically curious gardener who established an ornamental landscape that was unparalleled in the American colonies for its beauty and variety of plants. In January 2022, after nearly three years on-site, the Colonial Williamsburg archeological team discovered where Custis’ extravagant gardens once stood, inching them closer to their final goal: historical recreation and site interpretation.

Historic Jamestowne

Since 1994, an archeological project called “Jamestown Rediscovery” has been underway to uncover the site of the original James Fort (the first permanent English settlement in America), long considered lost to erosion in the James River. To date, approximately 80 percent of the original 1607 fort, 50 percent of the expanded 1608 fort, and numerous fort-period buildings and features have been excavated. Additionally, more than 3 million artifacts revealing more about the birthplace of modern America have been recovered, including human remains that display evidence of cannibalism. Students are invited get their hands dirty in the excavations and contribute to the research by participating in Jamestown Rediscovery’s annual Archaeological Field School from May 23 to July 1, 2022.