

Google Arts and Culture Launches Virtual Tour of Heritage Sites

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Category : Technology/Innovations

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **heritage** / **ˈhɛr ɪ tɪdʒ** / (adj) – relating to history or tradition
Example: The 100-year-old park is one of the country’s most popular **heritage** sites.
- 2. **platform** / **ˈplæt fɔrm** / (n) – a program that helps computers or other programs function
Example: We are developing a **platform** for a new social media app.
- 3. **showcase** / **ˈʃoʊ keɪs** / (v) – to present something
Example: The exhibit will **showcase** new tech products.
- 4. **capture** / **ˈkæp tʃər** / (v) – to record or document something
Example: The camera can **capture** high-quality images.
- 5. **break new ground** / **breɪk nu, nyu graʊnd** / (idiom) – to create or do something that has never been done before
Example: The company is **breaking new ground** with its new virtual program.

Article

Read the text below.

Google Arts and Culture has recently launched the Open **Heritage** Project, a virtual reality (VR) **platform** that features historic sites.

The project, which is in collaboration with digital nonprofit organization CyArk, aims to preserve and rehabilitate various ancient sites that are susceptible to destruction and have been damaged by human activity and calamities. CyArk CEO John Ristevski explained that a virtual tour is the best and easiest way to let the public experience these sites, especially the remote ones.

The virtual tour will **showcase** 3D replicas of around 26 heritage sites from 18 countries. Among these sites are the Temple of Kukulcan in Mexico’s Chichén Itzá / tʃiˈtʃɛn itˈsɑ, ˈit sɑ / , parts of Rome’s Pompeii /pɒmˈpeɪ, -ˈpeɪ i /, Colorado’s Mesa Verde National Park, and Cambodia’s iconic Angkor Wat.

To recreate the historic places, CyArk **captured** 360-degree shots of the sites using advanced cameras and drones. The 3D effects were created using light detection and ranging (LIDAR), a technology that can identify the locations and features of distant objects. In addition, Google’s Poly 3D viewer has been integrated to let users view the sites from various angles.

According to Google Arts and Culture program manager Chance Coughenour [kawf-en-our], the company is **breaking new ground** with the Open Heritage Project. He stated that this is the first time that 3D heritage sites are integrated on their platform.

Google Arts and Culture has also collaborated with over 1,500 museums from more than 70 countries to transform their collections into a virtual experience. Google hopes to let users experience the world’s culture through initiatives like the Open Heritage Project.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- Would you be interested to join the Open Heritage Project’s virtual tour? Why or why not?

- Would you also like your country’s heritage sites to be featured in a virtual tour? Explain.

Discussion B

- Aside from heritage sites, what other places do you think can benefit from a virtual tour (e.g. theme parks)? Discuss.

- Do you think people would rather participate in a virtual tour than actually visit the places? Explain.