

MOUND BUILDERS OF THE USA

WITH DR TIMOTHY PAUKETAT



**FAR
HORIZONS**
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TRIPS

Updated February 2026





MOUND BUILDERS OF THE USA

with Dr. Timothy Pauketat

Tour the Great Mound Builder Remains, Including the UNESCO Sites of Poverty Point, Cahokia, and Hopewell

Centuries before the Giza pyramids of Egypt were built and long before Nero infamously fiddled while Rome burned, indigenous people of North America were constructing vast mounds. Using baskets to carry soil, clay, or stones, they shaped remarkable ceremonial and burial landscapes, mainly in the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

Early archaeologists coined the term 'Mound Builders' for the ancient cultures behind these earthworks. Recent research reveals that these sites were the product of diverse cultures—such as the Woodland, Adena, Hopewell, and Mississippian—evolving over thousands of years by the fertile riverbanks.

In this region, several major centers rose to prominence. We'll focus on the most significant ones, including three UNESCO World Heritage sites: Poverty Point, Cahokia, and Hopewell. Join Dr. Timothy Pauketat, who has spent years studying Cahokia, and a select group of thirteen others on a ten-day archaeological journey to explore these captivating ancient sites.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in New Orleans

Arrive in New Orleans. Take the hotel shuttle to a New Orleans Airport Hotel. Meet in the lobby for a brief orientation before our festive welcome dinner party. (D)

Day 2

Poverty Point

Depart early for our four-hour drive to Poverty Point, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northern Louisiana. This extraordinary National Monument was built 3,400 years ago. Remarkably, it was contemporary with the Olmec of San Lorenzo and La Venta in Mexico. Archaeologists have not found any human remains in these monumental earthworks, thus Poverty Point has been interpreted as a vast pilgrimage site and an epicenter for religious ceremonies rather than a 'city' filled with inhabitants. An engineering marvel, six imposing concentric half-circles, 4 to 6 feet high in places, face towards a plaza covering an astounding 43 acres. Here, we join Diane Greenlee, the archaeologist who has been conducting research at Poverty Point for more than a decade. Dr. Greenlee will tell us about her discoveries.

Before leaving, we will enter the museum to view a wide assortment of finds from Poverty Point. In the late afternoon, cross the mighty Mississippi River before arriving at our hotel for one night in Greenville, Mississippi. (B/L/D)

Day 3

Winterville, transfer to Memphis

Winterville is a National Historic Landmark just north of Greenville along the Mississippi River. The park includes more than twelve large platform mounds arranged around an enormous plaza. This ceremonial center thrived from about 1000 AD to its abandonment in 1450 AD. The Mississippian period was an intensive time of mound building and this site echoes influences springing from celebrated Cahokia in Illinois. According to archaeological evidence, a great fire during the late 14th century destroyed the structure atop the 55-foot central mound. We return to Greenville for lunch and then drive to Memphis where we will spend two nights. (B/L/D)



Day 4

Plum Bayou Mounds Archaeological State Park

We depart this morning to Plum Bayou Mounds Archaeological State Park (formerly Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park). Here, three mounds remain where eighteen once stood. In the past, it was enclosed by a lofty 100-foot-tall earthen embankment, and a portion is still visible today. Most likely, a small permanent group of religious and political leaders and their families resided here. But remains of scattered villages and hamlets in the surrounding countryside suggest that the community was chiefly made up of farmers. The displays in the onsite museum contain artifacts found during excavations, including arrowheads created from crystal and conch shells from the Gulf of Mexico. While here, we will meet privately with an archaeologist from the [Toltec Mounds Research Station](#).

Return to Memphis with dinner on our own. (B/L)

Day 5

Cahokia, transfer to St. Louis

Travel north from Memphis to Cahokia, across the mighty Mississippi River from St. Louis. A thousand years ago, Cahokia was the largest pre-Columbian settlement north of Mexico and the largest mound center in what is now the United States. This was the pre-eminent example of a cultural, religious, and economic center of Mississippian culture. This culture extended throughout the Mississippi Valley and the southeastern United States. We will enjoy a special treat when we meet University of Illinois archaeologists, under the direction of Dr. Alleen Betzenhauser. They are working at one of several archaeological sites under investigation in the bottomlands around Cahokia. During our visit (and if available), Dr. Betzenhauser will take us into their lab to view some of the excavated artifacts.

Overnight for two nights at the Drury Plaza Hotel St. Louis at the Arch. (B/L/D)

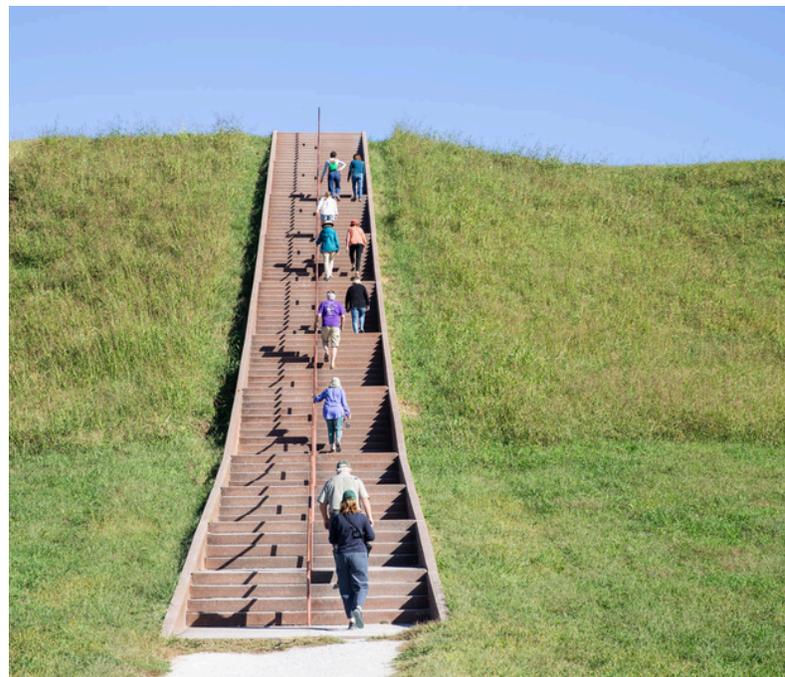
Day 6

Cahokia: Monks Mound, Emerald Acropolis

Today is our Cahokia day! This UNESCO World Heritage Site is the richest archaeological region on the continent north of central Mexico. Originally it was composed of three boroughs connected via waterways, and trails. The city and nearby communities extended across the river floodplain for miles. The Cahokia Interpretation Center is not to be missed. It focuses on the uniqueness of Cahokia as an urban center with singular features. It has the most and the largest earthen pyramids north of Mexico City, great upright wooden posts, distinct earthen causeways, and lagoons, as well as evidence of elaborate sacrificial offerings. We will climb Monks Mound, the largest prehistoric earthwork in the Americas. At the summit, we will learn about Cahokian religion, based around the sun, moon, thunder gods, and agricultural cycle.

After that, we will retrace the travels of Charles Dickens in 1842 to Cahokia's remarkable lunar-aligned Emerald Acropolis. We will enter private and state property, 15 miles east of the ancient city. Dr. Pauketat has been working here since 2012.

Dinner is on our own tonight. (B/L)



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 7

Gateway Arch, Gateway Arch Museum, transfer to Evansville

Our morning walk takes us to the iconic Gateway Arch rising elegantly more than 600 feet into the sky. Here, we will board the tram to proceed to the top for spectacular views over St. Louis, the great Mississippi River, and the surrounding landscape. While here, we will enter the Gateway Arch Museum featuring 200 years of history within six exhibit areas.

In the afternoon, a three-hour drive takes us from St. Louis to Evansville, Indiana, where we overnight for one night. (B/L/D)

Day 8

Angel Mounds, transfer to Cincinnati

Nearby Angel Mounds is located on the banks of the Ohio River. Spanning 600 acres, the historic site includes 11 earthen mounds built with the special purpose of elevating important buildings in the vast city where people lived, worshiped, and worked by 1250 AD. This once-powerful city highlights the cosmology of the people – how they may have understood their place in the universe and how everything is connected. It remains a sacred place to today's tribal nations and is one of the best preserved "Mississippian" sites for its period.

After lunch, a four-hour drive takes us to Cincinnati, Ohio, where we spend three nights in the Hyatt Regency Cincinnati downtown. Dinner is on our own. (B/L)



Day 9

Newark Earthworks, Ohio History Connection Museum

Located near Newark, Ohio, the Newark Earthworks are three distinct sites, all credited to the Hopewell culture. We will visit two of them. The Great Circle Earthworks is massive. 1,200 feet across with a tall, protective wall enclosing it. Only a fragment of The Wright Earthworks can be seen. It forms an almost perfect square with part of the enclosure wall still standing. Adena Tablets were a rare type of artifact engraved in deep bas-relief and associated with the Adena culture.

In the afternoon, we will explore the Ohio History Connection, a museum and research center in Columbus. Here, we will see many Adena and Hopewell artifacts that are on display. A highlight will be the clever effigy pipes depicting human and animal figures.

Return to Cincinnati with dinner on our own. (B/L)



Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

Day 10

Hopewell, Great Serpent Mound

Today we will explore Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, recently inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here, we will visit the Mound City Group, the only fully restored Hopewell earthwork. The complex covers a vast area larger than ten football fields. When constructed, protective walls encircled more than two dozen mounds. The visitor center displays fascinating artifacts found in excavations.

Then it's on to Serpent Mound, the largest effigy earthwork in the world. The 1,370-foot-long site is shaped like a curved snake with an open mouth and an egg inside. The site, believed to have been constructed by the Adena people, includes a museum about this culture. Enjoy our farewell dinner this evening. (B/L/D)

Day 11

Depart for Home

Independent transfers to the airport for our flights home. (B)

PLEASE NOTE: This is a sample itinerary that is typical of our trip offerings. In general, you can expect a very similar program, though days may be swapped depending on availability, opening hours, and other affecting factors.



Why Take This Tour?

**Led by
Timothy Pauketat,
who has worked at
Cahokia for over a
decade**

**Specially arranged talk
by the Poverty Point
archaeologist**

**See the UNESCO World
Heritage Sites of
Poverty Point, Cahokia,
and Hopewell**

**Private tour of Plum
Bayou Mounds
(formerly Toltec
Mounds) by the
archaeologist working
there**

**Private tour of
excavations in the
Cahokia area**

**Tram to the top of the
Gateway Arch**

**Opening of private
property to view
Emerald Mound**

**Limited to 14
participants**

Tour Information

Pricing

For current pricing, please visit farhorizons.com and navigate to our trip page.

Inclusions

Price based on double occupancy and includes:

- Internal flights during the trip (if applicable/unless otherwise noted)
- The accompaniment of your scholar throughout the entire trip
- Local English-speaking guide
- Hotel accommodations (3 or 4 stars; or best available based in the area)
- Ground transportation
- Airport transfers for arrivals and departures
- Most meals as noted in the itinerary
- Entry fees to all included sites and museums
- Gratuities to guides, drivers, and restaurant and hotel staff
- Coordination for any private presentations or tours

Trip prices are based on a minimum number of participants. If this minimum number is not met, trip prices are subject to change. Should the prices need to change, Far Horizons will reach out to registered guests to discuss directly.

Single Supplement

Should a roommate be requested and one not be available, the single supplement will be charged.

Exclusions

- International round trip airfare
- A separate donation check of \$150.00 per person to a designated donation project
- Passport or visa fees
- Required vaccines or tests
- Airport or departure taxes
- Alcoholic drinks, beverages or food not included on set menus
- Excess baggage charges
- Personal tips and hotel incidental expenses
- Laundry or other items of a personal nature

Donation Checks

As a tour company that benefits from the cultural and natural riches of our destinations, we have a policy of donating to the scientific and cultural sites and projects which we visit. This has created a bond between Far Horizons and the academic and local communities that has helped us establish an extensive list of lecturers and contacts in each of our destinations. We ask that each participant donate to the noteworthy project we designate. The donation amount is \$150.00 per person. Note that the donation is required as part of your registration for the trip and that it is non-refundable.

Exchange Rate Fluctuations

Prices are based on currency exchange rates keeping below a projected level. While it is unlikely, if the exchange rates should change substantially, Far Horizons reserves the right to charge an additional amount to the trip cost.

Registration

A deposit of \$1000 per person is required along with your registration & health forms, which will be linked in the email confirmation you receive once you pay your deposit on our booking platform. Final payment is due 120 days before departure. Prior to departure, you will be sent a reading list and a tour bulletin containing travel information.



Tour Information *(cont'd)*

Cancellation

Cancellations received in writing at least 120 days before departure will receive a refund less a \$500 per person administrative fee.

Cancellations received less than 120 days before the departure date will not receive a refund. If for any reason you are unable to complete the trip, Far Horizons will not reimburse any fees. Upon registering for the tour, the purchase of travel protection with both trip cancellation and emergency evacuation is strongly advised. Links to recommended insurance policies will be included in the email you receive confirming receipt of your deposit.

Expectations During Travel

Our trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active, have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We have designed this trip to be as comfortable as possible, while also aiming to visit some remote or unique sites that other companies do not attempt to include in their itineraries. There may be days where we have very long drives and the conditions of the roads may vary. Hotels and transportation in some remote areas may not be up to western standards. There may be times when no bellhops are available; please pack with the understanding that you need to be able to handle your own luggage at times. Sometimes we may be walking over uneven trails for a mile or more; hiking boots are strongly recommended. Not every meal will be haute cuisine and several lunches may be picnics or box lunches. By maintaining a flexible attitude we will soon be captivated by the beauty of the natural scenery, the hospitality of the local people, and the fascinating sites we will see. Your flexibility and patience will be appreciated.

Air Ticketing

International round trip flights are not included in the cost of the trip. If Far Horizons must change the trip dates or cancel the trip for any reason, Far Horizons is not responsible for any air ticket you may have purchased. Please send your complete air schedule as soon as you have it. NOTE: Please contact Far Horizons if you would like for us to handle your air ticketing.

Private Tours and Talks

The private tours of archaeological sites and talks by specialists are scheduled in advance and include a donation to each. Specialists working at these sites are excited about showing their work to interested enthusiasts. However, please be aware that there may be times when the director or a member of the staff may not be on site when our groups arrive due to other commitments.

Walking and Standing

Far Horizons expects all participants to be physically active and able to walk and climb independently throughout the full touring days. This includes walking over uneven terrain (uphill and downhill) for 2 miles or more at each site. You should expect to be on your feet for much of each day, averaging as much as 5 miles of walking per day. **As such, each participant should be able to walk unaided at a pace of 3 miles per hour for at least an hour at a time, and to stand unsupported for at least 60 minutes.** Bearing this in mind, we suggest that, if you have not already done so, you begin walking several miles every day, ideally including stairs and hills. If you have questions about your ability to keep up with the group or the strenuous nature of this trip, please contact the Far Horizons staff.



Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you consider purchasing travel insurance. Should illness or an unforeseen event force you to cancel your travel plans after your final payment or during your trip, it would be doubly unfortunate to incur a significant financial loss. Trip cancellation protection will enable you to be reimbursed for the loss of your payment if you are unable to travel for any of the covered reasons in the "Outline of Coverage" section, or should you have an accident or suffer from any medical conditions during the trip.

Far Horizons offers customized protection plans through Travel Insured International (a Crum & Forster Company) with the following benefits:

- Trip Cancellation and Trip Interruption for covered reasons
- Trip Delay
- Baggage Loss and Baggage Delay
- Emergency Medical Expenses and Emergency Medical Evacuation
- 24-Hour Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- 24-Hour Travel Assistance & Concierge Services
- Option to upgrade to 'Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR)

We recommend reviewing the language in detail so you are aware of specific parameters; Depending on the policy, to waive the Pre-Existing Medical Condition Exclusion or to upgrade to CFAR coverage, the plan must be purchased within 14 to 21 days of the initial trip deposit, full trip cost must be insured, and traveler is medically fit at time of plan purchase. Otherwise, coverage may be purchased at any time prior to departure.

To obtain a personalized quote and/or purchase a plan through Far Horizons/Travel Insured International, simply click [HERE](#). For specific questions regarding the Worldwide Protector Plan, please contact Travel Insured International's Customer Care Center at 1-800-243-3174 or by email at customer care@travelinsured.com, and refer to Far Horizons' account number: 54070.

Itinerary Changes

Changes in our itinerary, accommodations, and transportation schedules may occur while traveling. While we are committed to keeping as close to the published details as possible, sometimes it is simply not possible. Weather events, government affairs, or other factors out of our control sometimes come into play. A good book to read as well as patience, flexible attitude, and a sense of humor are essential.





Meet Your Study Leader...

Dr. Timothy Pauketat

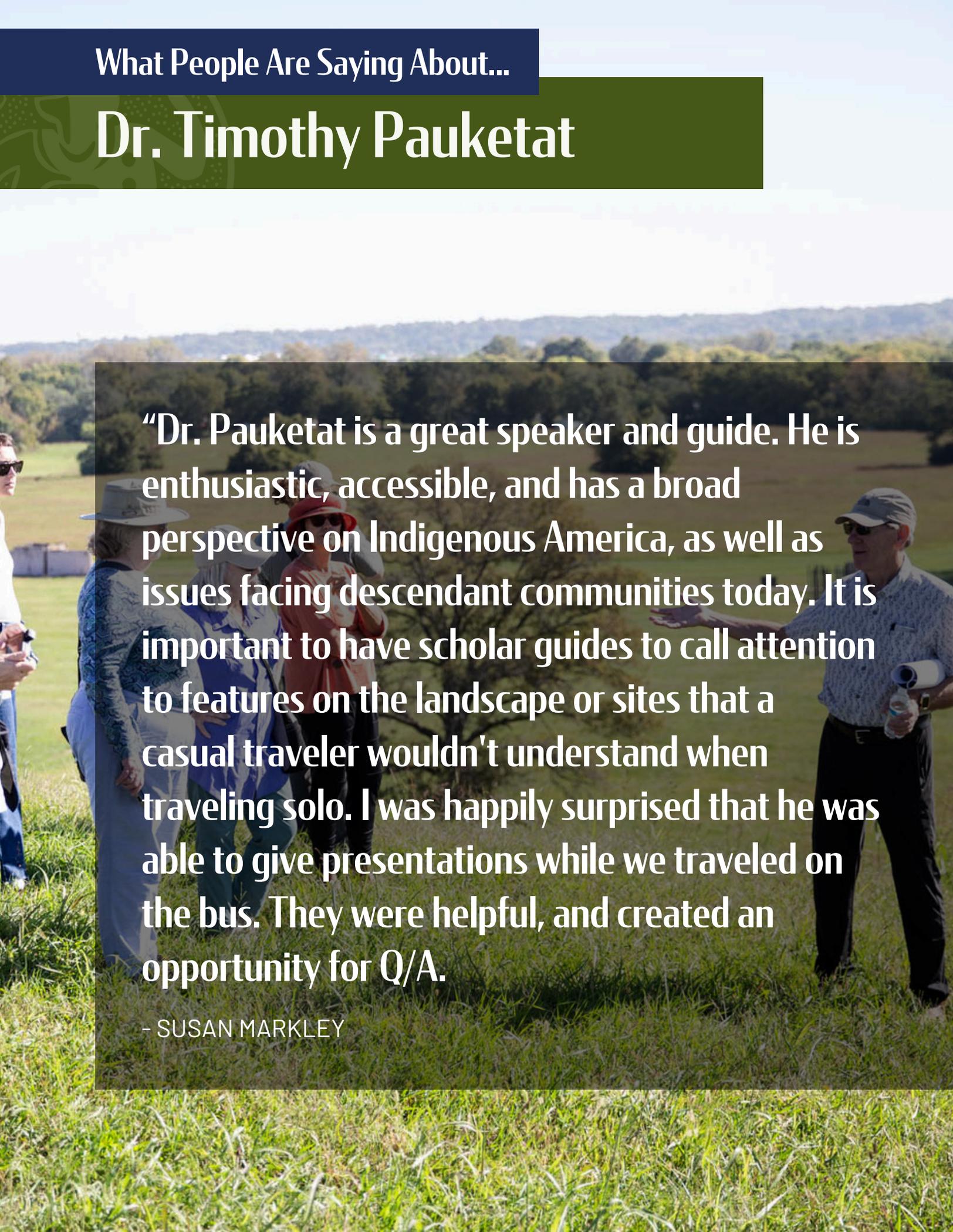
Professor Timothy R. Pauketat received his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Michigan. He is a professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and is the Director, State Archaeologist, and Senior Research Scientist for the Illinois State Archaeological Survey at the same institution.

Professor Pauketat has published extensively on his research at Cahokia and other Mississippian sites, and has written or edited 16 books, including *The Archaeology of Ancient North America*, *Medieval Mississippians: The Cahokian World*, and *Cahokia: Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi*. Dr. Pauketat has been the invited speaker for lectures and at conferences throughout the United States and internationally. A renowned scholar, he was the on-screen consultant for the PBS Series, 'Native America,' and has been interviewed by NPR, BBC News, and by both *Archaeology* and *American Archaeology* magazines.



What People Are Saying About...

Dr. Timothy Pauketat

A group of people, including a man in a light blue shirt and dark pants who appears to be speaking, are standing in a grassy field. In the background, there is a dense line of trees and a clear sky. The scene is outdoors and well-lit.

“Dr. Pauketat is a great speaker and guide. He is enthusiastic, accessible, and has a broad perspective on Indigenous America, as well as issues facing descendant communities today. It is important to have scholar guides to call attention to features on the landscape or sites that a casual traveler wouldn't understand when traveling solo. I was happily surprised that he was able to give presentations while we traveled on the bus. They were helpful, and created an opportunity for Q/A.

- SUSAN MARKLEY



Why Travel with Far Horizons?

With over forty years of experience, and an 85% customer return rate, we have stood the test of time. Remind yourself what makes Far Horizons so unique.

✦ Scholar Led Tours

Every tour is led by a well-respected PhD scholar with expertise in the subject & regions we visit.

✦ Trusted Partnerships

Trusted Partnerships: Every tour is led by a well-respected PhD scholar with expertise in the subject & regions we visit.

✦ Behind the Scenes Access

Our groups have private access to closed areas and on-site specialists.

✦ Unique Trips

Our itineraries are designed to showcase sites that are off-the-beaten path; we explore places that many travelers never see.

✦ Personalized Service

We love knowing our guests and helping with the decision process. We are here to assist you.

✦ Small Groups

Our tours have a maximum of 14 travelers. So you can trust that you will have a boutique experience every time.



READY TO TRAVEL? MOUND BUILDERS OF THE USA

WITH DR TIMOTHY PAUKETAT

Email with Questions

journeys@farhorizons.com

Book Now

[click to visit our booking page](#)

See Full Details

farhorizons.com



FAR HORIZONS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TRIPS

