

Welcome autumn at Cahokia Mounds

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COLLINSVILLE, Ill. – Cahokia Mound State Historic Site offers a unique chance this month to explore the world as Native Americans knew it 1,000 years ago. Visitors can welcome the autumn equinox, hike among the amazing mounds and have an expert identify ancient artifacts.

The action begins on Saturday, Sept. 19, when an archaeologist and a naturalist will lead a three-mile nature and culture hike from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The hike will depart from the Interpretive Center and follow trails through grassland, marsh, and forest. Participants will discover how plants and trees were used for food,

fiber, medicine and dyes, and will learn what excavations tell us about the Mississippian culture that built this prehistoric city.

The hike is free, and no registration is required. Participants should dress for the weather and bring water and insect repellent. The hike will be canceled if it rains.

The next day, Sunday, Sept. 20, visitors get to see the sun rise at the reconstructed “Woodhenge” – the circle of wooden posts that people of the Mississippian culture used as a calendar. Woodhenge is about one-half mile west of the 100-foot-high Monks Mound on Collinsville Road.

Participants should arrive by 6:30 a.m. to hear about the discovery and function of this ancient calendar, which was built and rebuilt five times from AD 1100-1200. No rituals or ceremonies will be held out of respect for Native Americans.

Then in the afternoon, Cahokia Mounds holds its annual Artifact Identification Day in the Interpretive Center. From noon to 4, archaeologists will be on hand to determine the age, culture, function and material for artifacts brought in by the public. No monetary appraisals will be given.

The historic site’s mounds are the largest Native American earthworks north of Mexico. They were part of a huge city created by the Mississippian culture that flourished 1,000 years ago in the Midwest and South.

Administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Cahokia Mounds is just eight miles from downtown St. Louis in Collinsville, Ill., off Interstates 55/70 (exit 6) and Interstate 255 (exit 24), on Collinsville Road.

There is no admission fee but a suggested donation of \$7 for adults, \$5 for seniors, \$2 for students and \$15 for families.

For more information, call (618) 346-5160 or visit www.cahokiamounds.org.