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 **ARCHAEODIGIT**



# Report on transnational study visits – D2.1.2



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<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The document will illustrate the main findings of the knowledge exchange process among project partners, conducted through the transnational visits (transnational as Italian project partners will go to Croatia, and Croatian ones will go to Italy).</p> <p>This report summarises the transnational knowledge exchange within the ARCHAEODIGIT project, focusing on study visits to Italian and Croatian cultural heritage sites. Visits to the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara and the Classis Museum and Archaeological Park in Ravenna showcased inclusive, interdisciplinary, and digitally enhanced approaches to heritage preservation and interpretation. Examples included tactile 3D-printed artefacts, augmented reality (AR), laser scanning, and multimedia installations aimed at improving accessibility and visitor engagement.</p> <p>Similarly, study visits to Šibenik (Fortress St. John, Fortress Barone and St. Mihovil) and Kaštela (Barbarinac) highlighted innovative digital solutions and inclusive practices, such as tactile panels and accessible pathways, that enable meaningful participation of people with disabilities. Emphasis was placed on collaborative governance involving public institutions, heritage foundations, and local communities to support sustainable management and cultural revitalisation.</p>





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The insights gained from these visits directly inform the development of pilot actions, management plans, and the digital platform strategy within ARCHAEO DIGIT project. The report underlines the project commitment to fostering digital innovation, social inclusion, cultural sustainability, and transnational cooperation to advance cross-border cultural tourism in the Italy–Croatia region.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The transnational study visits conducted within the ARCHAEODIGIT project provided an essential foundation for strengthening the shared understanding of digital interpretation, heritage management, accessibility, and sustainable tourism. By engaging partners in structured knowledge exchange across Italian and Croatian heritage sites including Ferrara, Ravenna, Šibenik and Kaštela, the visits offered a wide spectrum of practical examples, governance models, and digital tools directly relevant to the project's methodological development and upcoming pilot actions.

Across the eight project partners, a strong convergence of learning emerged. Partners consistently highlighted the value of immersive museum technologies, multisensory interpretive methods, and inclusive access tools that enhance visitor engagement while respecting archaeological authenticity. Observations from Ferrara and Ravenna showcased advanced approaches where holography, 3D reconstructions, AR layers and pedagogically designed narrative frameworks help bridge complex archaeological data with public understanding. These experiences provided partners with clear insights into how digital tools should be conceptualised, integrated and maintained within a broader interpretive system.

The Croatian visits complemented these observations with equally important lessons in governance, community engagement, and multifunctional heritage use. The Šibenik Fortress System demonstrated how coordinated management structures can successfully combine conservation, cultural programming, education and tourism into a financially sustainable model. The examples from Kaštela highlighted how even modest digital and multisensory solutions when grounded in accessibility principles and local identity can significantly improve visitor experience and visibility of archaeological assets, including underwater heritage.

A cross-analysis of the partner reports indicates that the study visits reinforced five key areas of strategic importance for ARCHAEODIGIT:

- the need to balance digital innovation with archaeological accuracy
- the importance of integrated, sustainable governance
- the relevance of inclusive interpretation as a defining project element
- the value of cross-border collaboration in shaping shared methodologies
- the need for scalable, adaptable digital solutions that can evolve beyond the project lifespan.

The findings directly support the development of Management Plans (A3.2), the Digital Platform (A1.3), and the Pilot Actions (A3.3). In particular, the study visits demonstrated how digital elements should be introduced through clear narrative concepts, tested iteratively, and aligned with both accessibility standards and conservation requirements. They also confirmed that pilot actions should





emphasise layered storytelling, multisensory engagement, modular AR tools, and active participation of local communities.

Overall, the knowledge exchange strengthened a shared project vision in which archaeology becomes not only a subject of preservation, but also a dynamic resource for cultural awareness, digital innovation, education and sustainable tourism. The insights gained through the study visits position ARCHAEODIGIT to develop meaningful, context-sensitive and internationally aligned solutions in the next stages of implementation.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ARCHAEODIGIT project, implemented within the Interreg Italy–Croatia 2021–2027 Programme, aims to valorise, revitalise, interpret, and manage archaeological heritage by introducing innovative digital tools and inclusive approaches that modernise current heritage management practices. The project seeks to develop an effective methodology supporting the preservation, understanding, and enhancement of archaeological areas across the cross-border region. In this context, the transnational study visits conducted in Italy and Croatia represented a pivotal learning opportunity for all participating organisations, enabling partners to observe, analyse, and compare a variety of heritage practices in diverse institutional, technological, and socio-cultural settings.

The study visits engaged eight partner organisations: Municipality of Macerata (MAC), Archaeological Park of Sepino and the Samnite Museum of Campobasso – Regional Directorate Museum Molise (SEP), Municipality of Omišalj (OMI), City of Kaštela (KAS), ETT S.p.A. (ETT), University of Macerata (UMC), Juraj Dobrila University of Pula (UNIPU), and the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce (AIC). Together, these institutions form a multidisciplinary partnership, bringing together archaeologists, museum professionals, digital innovation specialists, municipal authorities, educators, academics, and cultural managers. Their combined perspectives provide foundation for understanding the complexities and opportunities inherent in contemporary archaeological heritage management.

The study visits were designed to facilitate structured knowledge exchange, allowing partners to explore practical examples, governance models, and digital tools directly relevant to the project methodological development and upcoming pilot actions. Study Visits took place in Ferrara and Ravenna in Italy, Kaštela and Šibenik in Croatia.

In Italy, the visits focused on advanced museological and digital practices that balance innovation with archaeological accuracy and accessibility. At the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara, partners engaged with tactile 3D-printed artefacts, multisensory stations, and interpretive tools for visually impaired and neurodivergent audiences, demonstrating inclusive design principles. The Classis Museum and Archaeological Park in Ravenna showcased holographic reconstructions, augmented reality layers, interactive multimedia, and layered narratives that illuminate complex historical landscapes, highlighting collaborative development with content experts and archaeologists.

In Croatia, the study visits highlighted different governance and operational models. The revitalised Šibenik Fortress System—comprising St Michael, Barone, and St John Fortresses—exemplified integrated heritage management, combining conservation, cultural programming, education,



tourism, and sustainable revenue generation. Kaštela offered insight into small- and medium-scale digital interventions, including VR experiences, touchscreen panels, and tactile maps with audio descriptions. These examples demonstrated that impactful interpretation can be achieved without large-scale technology, emphasizing clarity of narrative and alignment with local identity.

Across all sites, partners consistently observed that digital innovation is most effective when embedded in evidence-based storytelling, complemented by multisensory and inclusive interpretive strategies, and supported by active community engagement. Local involvement emerged as critical for ensuring authenticity and fostering long-term cultural sustainability.

A cross-analysis of partner observations highlighted five key strategic priorities for ARCHAEODIGIT:

- balancing digital innovation with archaeological accuracy
- implementing integrated, sustainable governance models
- promoting inclusive interpretation as a core project element
- leveraging cross-border collaboration to refine shared methodologies
- developing scalable and adaptable digital solutions for long-term use.

The visits provided practical guidance for the development of Management Plans (A3.2), the Platform development (A1.3), and Pilot Actions (A3.3). Partners emphasized the importance of introducing digital tools through clear narrative concepts, iterative testing, accessibility compliance, and alignment with conservation requirements. Effective pilot actions should combine layered storytelling, multisensory engagement, modular AR tools, and active participation of local communities.

Partner insights further enriched the shared knowledge:

- governance, visitor engagement, and resilient digital tools integration
- multisensory interpretation, accessibility, and small-scale digital interventions supporting conservation
- digital visualization of coastal and underwater heritage, VR/3D applications, and environmental safeguards
- inclusive digital devices, cross-departmental coordination, and small-scale technological solutions for enhanced local engagement
- technical feasibility, modular AR/VR deployment, lifecycle management, and sustainable roll-out
- pedagogical narrative design, stakeholder co-creation, accessibility, and integration into management plans
- methodological frameworks linking archaeological authenticity with digital mediation, ensuring robust quality control



- communication, branding, tourism promotion, and narrative-based outreach strategies.

Overall, the study visits strengthened a shared project vision: archaeology can serve not only as a field of preservation but also as a dynamic resource for education, cultural awareness, digital innovation, and sustainable tourism. The insights gained provide a solid foundation for ARCHAEODIGIT to develop context-sensitive, internationally aligned, and impactful solutions in its next implementation phases.



## 2. STUDY VISITS: AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

The study visits carried out within the ARCHAEODIGIT project were conceived as a core mechanism for strengthening the collective understanding of how archaeological heritage can be interpreted, managed, and revitalised through contemporary, people-centred, and digitally enhanced approaches. Situated within the wider goals of the Interreg Italy–Croatia 2021–2027 Programme, the visits were designed to offer partners a structured opportunity to engage directly with exemplary heritage contexts in Italy and Croatia, observe innovative methodologies in practice, and reflect critically on their relevance to the project’s future activities.

At the heart of these study visits was the ambition to deepen partners’ competence in combining archaeological research with modern interpretive solutions. By exposing organisations to museum environments, open-air archaeological sites, underwater cultural landscapes, revitalised fortification complexes, and technologically advanced exhibition environments, the visits enabled participants to examine how different institutions navigate the challenges of authenticity, visitor engagement, accessibility, sustainability, and community involvement. The sites selected for the programme such as the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Ferrara, the Classis Museum and Archaeological Park in Ravenna, the Šibenik Fortress System, and the underwater archaeological zone of Kaštela offered diverse yet complementary perspectives that together form a broad foundation for mutual learning.

A central aim of the visits was to allow partners to explore how digital technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality, 3D modelling, holography, interactive media, and multisensory tools can enrich visitor understanding of archaeological contexts when used responsibly and in dialogue with scientific evidence. Partners were encouraged not only to assess the potential of these tools, but also to critically examine issues of accessibility, maintenance, long-term sustainability, and narrative coherence. This proved particularly relevant for the development of the ARCHAEODIGIT digital platform and the design of the upcoming pilot actions.

Equally important was the objective of strengthening partners’ insights into heritage governance and operational management. The study visits demonstrated a variety of ways in which cultural organisations coordinate restoration activities, educational programmes, event production, and tourism services. The Šibenik Fortress System, for example, provided a living illustration of an integrated governance model grounded in long-term planning, financial sustainability, and continuous community engagement. Such examples are directly relevant to the Management Plans (A3.2) that each partner will develop for their archaeological area.

Beyond technological and managerial perspectives, the visits also foregrounded the importance of narrative design, intangible heritage, and community-focused interpretation. Partners observed how storytelling, co-creation with local communities, and multisensory engagement can help visitors



connect more deeply with archaeological sites. This inclusive approach aligns strongly with ARCHAEO DIGIT's commitment to making heritage more accessible to people of all abilities and backgrounds.

In summary, the study visits were designed to achieve several interconnected objectives: to expose partners to a wide spectrum of digital and interpretive practices; to help them understand different governance and operational models; to support the development of inclusive and multisensory approaches; and to encourage reflection on how these practices can be adapted to their respective archaeological contexts. The following sub-chapters examine these aims in more detail, outlining the specific learning goals identified by each partner, the thematic frameworks explored during the visits, and the ways in which these experiences contribute to the methodological direction and strategic planning of the ARCHAEO DIGIT project.

## 2.1. Main Aim of the Transnational Study Visits

The aim of the transnational study visits was consistently articulated as follows:

To gain first-hand understanding of how archaeological heritage can be preserved, interpreted, revitalised, and integrated into sustainable tourism frameworks through innovative digital tools, inclusive practices, and participatory management models.

This main aim is fully aligned with the broader objectives of the ARCHAEO DIGIT project, particularly:

- the modernisation of archaeological management practices
- the strengthening of partners' skills in digital interpretation
- the enhancement of accessibility and inclusiveness
- the development of methodologies for integrated, sustainable tourism.

The visits enabled partners to observe real-world examples of:

- immersive digital technologies (AR, VR, holographic reconstructions)
- multisensory and accessible interpretive tools (tactile artefacts, audio descriptions)
- governance and management models (municipal-led cultural strategies, institutional partnerships)
- revitalised heritage infrastructures (fortresses, industrial heritage, underwater archaeology).

While each partner emphasised different aspects, all agreed that the aim was to collect transferable knowledge connected to:



- Management Plan development (A3.2)
- Development of the ARCHAEODIGIT digital Platform (A1.3)
- Pilot Action preparation (A3.3)

## 2.2. Specific Learning Objectives

The analysis of specific learning objectives reveals a rich diversity of priorities, shaped by different roles, heritage contexts, and long-term strategic needs. Although all participants attended the same study visits, their focus varied considerably, demonstrating the broad applicability of observed practices.

Some objectives emphasised visitor engagement and digital storytelling, exploring how three-dimensional narratives and interactive content can enrich the visitor experience. These also included the governance frameworks of revitalised heritage complexes, recognised as relevant benchmarks for future site development.

Other objectives centred on inclusive access, digital reconstruction methodologies, and community involvement, highlighting approaches that support both tangible and intangible heritage. Particular attention was given to multisensory and accessibility-focused practices, strengthening the connection between archaeological interpretation and local narratives.

A focus on digital and tactile tools for underwater and coastal heritage was also evident, aimed at improving visibility of submerged sites and exploring how AR and other interpretive technologies can compensate for limited physical access.

Several objectives targeted operational and governance structures supporting multifunctional use of heritage complexes, including evaluating the transferability of effective management models to other sites. These aimed to integrate heritage preservation with broader infrastructural and community needs.

Advanced digital innovation was another key focus, involving benchmarking of AR, VR, holographic installations, and other high-end technologies, with particular attention to technical and financial sustainability.

Educational and interpretive objectives included narrative construction, co-creation with communities, and the integration of digital tools into pedagogical frameworks, enriching the interpretive narrative without compromising archaeological authenticity.



Methodological and scientific perspectives emphasised the interface between archaeological research and digital interpretation, as well as governance implications, ensuring that technological tools support rather than overshadow the heritage content.

Communication, branding, and tourism objectives focused on enhancing visibility, strategic outreach, and the creation of wider cultural networks, contributing to sustainable promotion and audience engagement.

Taken together, these varied objectives demonstrate a complementary and multidimensional learning landscape. They show how study visits provided insights tailored to different needs and priorities, confirming that observed practices are not only informative but also strategically relevant for future project phases.

### **2.2.1. Study Visit Structure and Activities**

The transnational study visits were designed as a three-day progressive learning experience, enabling participants to gain a holistic understanding of archaeological heritage management, digital interpretation, and inclusive cultural tourism practices. The visits followed a carefully curated sequence, moving from museum-based sessions to technologically enhanced exhibitions, and finally to outdoor and site-based learning, allowing participants to gradually build knowledge and contextualise insights.

Museum-based sessions introduced participants to interpretive frameworks and storytelling techniques, including the use of digital reconstructions, layered historical narratives, and exhibition layouts designed to guide visitors through complex timelines. These sessions also provided insight into institutional governance, curatorial decision-making, and strategies for balancing scientific accuracy with public accessibility.

Immersive and digital environments demonstrated innovative methods such as augmented and virtual reality applications, holographic projections, and interactive installations. Participants observed the technologies in action and discussed their conceptual and technical rationale with specialists, exploring both the possibilities and limitations of integrating digital tools into permanent exhibitions.

Outdoor and site-based visits encompassed revitalised fortresses, archaeological parks, coastal and underwater heritage zones. These visits highlighted challenges in visitor management, spatial organisation, and environmental protection, while demonstrating how digital visualisation can



enhance access to sites that are physically limited or sensitive. Participants also observed examples of heritage spaces combining archaeological authenticity with contemporary cultural programming.

Throughout the programme, in-depth interactions with archaeologists, museum professionals, digital developers, tourism experts, educators, and heritage managers facilitated knowledge transfer, critical reflection, and preparation for future project phases.

The overall learning experience emphasised:

- digital innovation and interpretation, using technology to enhance rather than overshadow archaeological narratives
- integrated heritage management, demonstrating sustainable governance, visitor management, and community involvement
- narrative construction and storytelling, combining tangible and intangible heritage elements
- accessibility and inclusiveness, showing practical tools for engaging diverse audiences
- tourism and community engagement, highlighting links between heritage interpretation, cultural identity, and local economic development.

## 2.3. Cross-Partner Analysis: Commonalities and Differences

A review of all eight partner reports reveals a more nuanced and layered set of objectives than initially summarised. While the overarching aims of the study visits were shared among partners, the details of what each organisation sought—and ultimately gained—from the experience demonstrate a complex interplay between institutional priorities, site-specific challenges, and the evolving needs of ARCHAEODIGIT.

The expanded analysis presented below offers a deeper interpretation of recurring patterns, divergences, and thematic priorities that emerged across the partnership.

### 2.3.1. Common Specific Objectives

Several objectives appeared consistently across nearly all reports, reflecting a strong collective focus on developing a more integrated, digital, and accessible approach to archaeological heritage interpretation.



### ***Advancement of digital interpretation competencies***

Partners repeatedly highlighted the need to better understand how technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), 3D modelling, holography, and immersive projection systems can be used to communicate archaeological narratives more effectively. The Italian visits, particularly in Ravenna and Ferrara, were repeatedly cited as exemplary models of how digital tools can:

- visualise vanished or transformed structures
- reconstruct historical landscapes
- enable deeper engagement through emotional and multisensory experiences
- support accessibility for visually impaired and neurodivergent visitors.

Digital interpretation was recognised as a cornerstone of ARCHAEODIGIT, not merely as a technological asset but as a core interpretive method requiring careful conceptualisation.

### ***Understanding integrated governance and management structures***

A prominent learning objective involved analysing how complex heritage sites are managed, financed, programmed, and sustained. Partners were particularly impressed with:

- the Šibenik Fortress System integrated tourism-heritage-management model,
- the coordinated operations between archaeological parks, museums and municipalities in Ravenna.

These examples illustrated:

- multi-stakeholder cooperation,
- diversified revenue streams,
- the balance between conservation and public use,
- the use of strategic cultural programming to sustain visitor numbers.

### ***Balancing digital innovation with archaeological authenticity***

Across all reports, partners emphasised the importance of avoiding “technological overshadowing.”

They observed that:

- digital content must be anchored in scientific accuracy
- interpretive tools should support, not replace, the archaeological record



- authenticity must remain at the centre of visitor experience.

This objective remained consistent across both Italian and Croatian visits.

### ***Strengthening accessibility and inclusive interpretation practices***

Many reports devoted considerable attention to how museums and heritage sites:

- use tactile objects
- provide audio descriptions
- incorporate multisensory tools
- design accessible exhibition spaces.

Partners noted the value of adapting archaeological interpretation to audiences with different needs—a practice especially evident in Ferrara and Kaštela.

### ***Identification of transferable good practices for pilot sites***

All partners approached the visits with a clear intention to map:

- what is transferable directly
- what requires adaptation
- what could serve as inspiration for the pilot actions.

They highlighted the importance of building pilot activities on tested, evidence-based examples observed during the study visits.

## **2.3.2. Frequently Mentioned Objectives**

A second group of objectives appeared across multiple reports but reflected more differentiated institutional interests:

### ***Connecting archaeological sites with local communities and intangible heritage***

Project partners noted the significance of embedding heritage interpretation in local narratives, rituals, traditions, and collective memory. They emphasised the value of:

- participatory interpretation



- co-created storytelling
- linking archaeological findings with contemporary identity.

### ***Designing coherent visitor pathways and layered interpretive narratives***

Partners noted the importance of:

- spatial navigation
- interpretive sequencing
- layering information across different points of engagement.

Examples from Šibenik and Ravenna demonstrated how to create smooth, coherent interpretive flows both indoors and outdoors.

### ***Assessing sustainability of digital installations (technical, financial, managerial)***

Project partners highlighted concerns regarding:

- operational costs of high-end digital technologies
- staff training and maintenance
- risks of technological obsolescence.

Partners saw this as critical for planning sustainable pilot actions.

### ***Tackling challenges specific to underwater or fragmentary sites***

There was particularly focus on strategies for:

- visualising submerged structures
- overcoming physical inaccessibility
- integrating ecological considerations into interpretations.

Objectives were shaped by the unique constraints of their maritime archaeological environments.



### 2.3.3. Unique or Partner-Specific Objectives

Some objectives reflected the specialised mandates, interests and expertise of individual partners.

#### ***Industrial heritage reuse***

The visits to Ravenna, a city marked by layered history and industrial transformations, triggered reflections on:

- how to reinterpret industrial archaeological remains
- how to integrate industrial and ancient histories in narrative design.

#### ***Cultural branding and tourism-network integration***

In terms of tourism-network integration, few objectives were noticed:

- how cultural sites develop recognisable identities
- how they are positioned within wider tourism routes
- how cross-border visibility can be enhanced.

#### ***Development of training modules and academic frameworks***

Project partners placed strong emphasis on:

- pedagogical aspects of interpretation
- student involvement
- connections between academic research and digital outputs.

#### ***Maritime identity and ecological interpretation***

Given the coastal context, particular attention was given to understanding:

- how to merge environmental and archaeological narratives
- how to interpret changing shorelines and submerged settlements
- how to involve local diving and fishing communities.



### ***Benchmarking of high-end digital technologies***

In terms of digitalisation, the focus was on:

- evaluating technological feasibility
- comparing hardware/software approaches
- examining options for scalable deployment.

#### **2.3.4. How the Objectives Reflect the Diversity of the Partnership**

The expanded analysis shows that while the ARCHAEODIGIT partners share a strong common foundation, particularly regarding digital innovation, inclusive interpretation, and sustainable management, each organisation brings unique perspectives shaped by its institutional identity, local context and pilot site characteristics.

The diversity of objectives is not a challenge; rather, it is a strategic advantage. It ensures that:

- the project methodology will be rich and multidimensional
- the pilot actions will reflect real-world needs
- the digital platform will be grounded in a wide spectrum of interpretive approaches
- cross-border cooperation translates into practical, site-specific innovation.

Ultimately, the variety of learning objectives underscores the strength of the ARCHAEODIGIT partnership: a constellation of different expertise areas working towards a shared vision of revitalising archaeological heritage through digital, inclusive and sustainable means.

## **2.4. Individual Study Visit Reports (provided as annexes)**

Individual Study Visit Reports have been prepared using a common template, with one report per partner:

- Municipality of Macerata – MAC
- Archaeological Park of Sepino and Samnite Museum of Cmpobasso – Regional Direction Museum Molise – SEP
- Municipality of Omišalj – OMI
- City of Kaštela – KAS



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- ETT S.p.a. – ETT
- University of Macerata – UMC
- Juraj Dobrila University of Pula – UNIPU
- Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce – AIC.

These reports are provided as separate annexed documents accompanying this report and include objectives of the study visit, sites visited and programme overview, participants, key observations and lessons learned, relevance for ARCHAEO DIGIT implementation.



### 3. ALIGNMENT WITH ARCHAEODIGIT THEMATIC AREAS

The ARCHAEODIGIT project is structured around three core thematic pillars that shape its approach to innovative, inclusive and sustainable management of archaeological heritage. During the study visits, all partners explored these themes to varying degrees, depending on their organisational mandates, expertise, and the specific challenges of their archaeological areas.

#### 3.1. Overview of the Thematic Alignment

Across the eight partners, the study visits addressed the three ARCHAEODIGIT themes as follows:

##### ***Theme 1: Management of Archaeological Areas through an Integrated Tourism Ecosystem Approach***

This theme was highly relevant to most partners, particularly to municipalities and institutions managing heritage sites.

Partners observed:

- governance models of Šibenik fortresses
- institutional cooperation between museums and municipalities
- multi-layered visitor flows and spatial organisation
- integration of cultural events, community activities, and tourism services.

##### ***Theme 2: Capturing the Uniqueness of Cultural Sites (Tangible and Intangible Heritage)***

This theme was explored broadly across all partners, with particular emphasis on:

- narrative design and storytelling
- reconstruction of past environments
- multisensory and emotional interpretation
- inclusion of local identities and intangible dimensions.



### ***Theme 3: Use of Advanced Digital Tools and Immersive Technologies***

This was the **most prominently addressed theme**, especially for partners with digital or technological mandates, but also recognised as essential by site managers and municipalities.

The visits showcased:

- AR and VR applications
- holographic projections
- 3D reconstructions
- interactive touch tables
- digital mapping of underwater archaeology.

## **3.2. Thematic Coverage**

The thematic alignment table illustrates how each of the eight project partners engaged with the three core themes of ARCHAEODIGIT during the study visits. While all partners explored each theme to varying degrees, the depth of engagement differed depending on their institutional roles, the nature of their archaeological sites, and their technical or managerial responsibilities within the project. The narrative below provides a comprehensive explanation of these variations, drawing on the patterns observed across all individual reports.

### **3.2.1. Engagement with Theme 1: Management of Archaeological Areas Through an Integrated Tourism Ecosystem**

Theme 1 was widely addressed and considered highly relevant to operational challenges and future planning. Strong engagement was observed throughout, indicating its importance to the overall programme.

The significance of integrated management models was highlighted, particularly in examples where restoration, tourism, cultural programming, and digital interpretation are coordinated within a unified governance structure. Attention was also given to management mechanisms for coastal and underwater heritage, focusing on visitor routing, maintenance strategies, and the integration of archaeological sites into broader tourism frameworks. Strategic and institutional aspects of theme-based management were noted, with multi-stakeholder cooperation and clearly defined responsibilities seen as key to long-term sustainability. Some contexts showed exceptionally strong



resonance with this theme, particularly where direct responsibility for managing coastal and underwater heritage assets aligns with sustainable tourism planning. Observed management models were considered highly relevant for informing future strategies. In contrast, certain perspectives addressed this theme with lower intensity, reflecting a focus on heritage interpretation rather than direct site management.

### **3.2.2. Engagement with Theme 2: Capturing the Uniqueness of Cultural Sites (Tangible and Intangible Heritage)**

Theme 2 received the broadest and most sustained attention, particularly in relation to interpretation, storytelling, education, and cultural identity.

There was strong interest in interpreting both tangible artefacts and intangible traditions, emphasising connections between archaeological remains, local narratives, sensory experiences, and inclusive interpretation practices. Narrative construction, educational value, co-creation with communities, and the symbolic meanings embedded in archaeological layers were key focal points. These approaches align naturally with broader cultural and interpretive concerns. Attention was also given to how cultural uniqueness can be communicated through multisensory interpretation, reconstructed narratives, emotional storytelling, and engagement with community memory. The technological dimension was considered, with a focus on how digital tools can enhance communication of cultural distinctiveness. Additionally, the role of cultural identity in branding, tourism promotion, and regional storytelling was noted as significant.

Overall, Theme 2 emerged as a unifying thread, underpinning a commitment to deepening interpretive quality and enhancing audience engagement across all examined contexts.

### **3.2.3. Engagement with Theme 3: Use of Advanced Digital Tools and Immersive Technologies**

Theme 3 showcased the greatest diversity of engagement, reflecting differences in technical competencies, institutional roles, and resource availability.

Particular emphasis was placed on advanced digital technologies, including holography, 3D reconstruction, immersive environments, and AR/VR applications. The focus was on exploring how these tools can enhance archaeological interpretation and create engaging, multisensory experiences. Significant attention was also given to digital visualisation for underwater and site-specific archaeology, recognising the value of AR/VR in making otherwise inaccessible contexts



interpretable to visitors. Methodological and academic perspectives highlighted the importance of integrating digital tools while maintaining archaeological authenticity, ensuring that technological innovation supports, rather than overshadows, the heritage content. Moderate engagement was observed for practical, resource-conscious digital solutions, such as tactile panels with QR codes, AR storytelling layers, and other multisensory interpretive tools. These approaches allow for effective digital interpretation without relying on high-cost immersive technologies, while remaining adaptable to site-specific constraints.

#### **3.2.4. Cross-Partner Observations**

A holistic analysis of the table reveals several patterns:

- all partners engaged with all three themes, confirming the relevance of the study visits to the project as a whole. none of the themes were ignored or marginalised, demonstrating the coherence between project needs and the learning opportunities provided
- theme 2 (cultural uniqueness) was the strongest and most consistently explored theme, reflecting the fact that interpretive quality is central to both archaeological authenticity and visitor experience
- theme 1 (management models) was particularly important for municipalities and heritage managers, whose responsibilities require integrated governance and sustainable tourism frameworks
- theme 3 (digital tools) generated enthusiasm but also caution, as partners expressed interest in innovation but recognised limitations regarding costs, maintenance, and technical expertise
- differences in emphasis reflect the diversity of partner roles from universities to municipalities, from technology firms to cultural institutions and this diversity strengthens the project by providing complementary perspectives.

### **3.3. Strategic Insights for Future Development: Strengths, Gaps and Opportunities**

The thematic alignment emerging from the study visits, as well as the gaps identified across partner observations, provides a clear strategic picture of where ARCHAEODIGIT stands at this stage of implementation and which areas require further attention. The collective insights reveal both strong foundations and meaningful opportunities for targeted development across the upcoming project phases.



### 3.3.1. Strengths

The patterns identified across the eight partner reports demonstrate that the study visits achieved a high degree of relevance for the project's core thematic areas. This relevance translates directly into project activities, offering a practical roadmap for the next steps.

#### ***Strong narrative orientation strengthens the digital platform (A1.3)***

Partners highlighted the importance of storytelling, intangible heritage, and emotional engagement as essential elements of archaeological interpretation. This emphasis will be particularly valuable for the development of the project's digital platform, which must integrate layered narratives, multimedia content, and scientifically accurate reconstructions.

The study visits provided numerous examples—such as multisensory storytelling in Ferrara or holographic interpretation in Ravenna—that illustrate how narrative consistency can elevate digital experiences. These insights give a solid conceptual basis for shaping the platform interpretive framework.

#### ***High engagement with governance and management models informs the Management Plans (A3.2)***

Partners repeatedly noted the relevance of the Šibenik Fortress System model, which demonstrated how heritage sites can achieve sustainability through diversified programming, cross-sector collaboration, and professional management structures.

Observations from Šibenik and Kaštela will directly support the development of Management Plans by illustrating how archaeological sites can be embedded in broader tourism ecosystems, how economic sustainability can be achieved, and which governance mechanisms ensure long-term resilience.

This constitutes a crucial foundation for A3.2.

#### ***Interest in modular, sustainable digital tools shapes Pilot Actions (A3.3)***

Across the reports, partners emphasised:

- interest in AR as a flexible and cost-effective tool
- the need for simple digital layers supported by strong narratives
- the importance of maintenance strategies
- the potential of digital visualisation for inaccessible or underwater sites.



These insights match well with the intended Pilot Actions, confirming both feasibility and demand. The study visits therefore not only inspired technological ideas but also helped partners define realistic scopes for the pilots.

### ***Overall strategic readiness***

Taken together, the thematic alignment suggests that the partners have developed a cohesive understanding of how digital innovation, accessibility, governance and storytelling should interact within the project. This provides ARCHAEODIGIT with a strong, shared knowledge base from which to advance its upcoming deliverables.

#### **3.3.2. Thematic Gaps**

While the study visits covered a broad thematic spectrum, partners also identified several gaps that will require attention in the next stages of the project.

#### ***Need for methodologies to assess long-term sustainability of digital tools***

Although partners observed many innovative digital solutions, few sites offered clear frameworks for evaluating:

- long-term maintenance costs
- software/hardware updates
- technical obsolescence
- staff capacity for operation and troubleshooting.

Given the project's digital ambitions, the development of such methodologies will be essential.

#### ***Limited examples of co-created digital content involving the community***

Despite the strong role of community identity in several visited sites, there were few concrete examples where local residents actively co-created digital interpretive outputs. For ARCHAEODIGIT which emphasises participatory approaches this represents an important area for development, particularly within pilot actions.



### ***Insufficient fully accessible digital interpretation***

Although partners saw tactile tools, multisensory elements and some accessibility adaptations, partners noted the absence of fully inclusive systems that address:

- mobility impairments
- sensory sensitivities
- cognitive accessibility
- multilingual accessibility.

This gap is especially relevant given the project's mission to enhance inclusiveness.

### ***Limited presence of green and energy-efficient digital solutions***

Sustainability in terms of energy use, material impact, and eco-friendly digital design was largely absent from the visited examples.

Given EU priorities and heritage site sensitivities, ARCHAEODIGIT has an opportunity to lead in this area.

### **3.3.3. Opportunities for ARCHAEODIGIT**

The identified gaps open significant opportunities for the project to demonstrate leadership and innovation in the field of digital archaeology and heritage management.

### ***Setting benchmarks for inclusive, multisensory, and accessible digital interpretation***

ARCHAEODIGIT can position itself as an EU-level example by ensuring that all pilot actions:

- integrate multisensory components
- include tactile tools
- provide audio descriptions and accessible interfaces
- adopt cognitive-friendly interpretive principles.

This would significantly advance the state of practice.



### ***Strengthening the methodological link between archaeology and digital design***

The project has the opportunity to develop clear guidelines describing:

- how archaeological research informs digital content
- validation processes
- levels of accuracy vs. creative interpretation.

This is crucial for credibility and long-term value.

### ***Integrating governance models into Management Plans***

Effective management practices:

- organisational structuring
- cross-sector partnerships
- financial sustainability
- diversified programming.

These principles can be adapted and applied to all pilot sites through A3.2.

### ***Enhancing visibility of underwater archaeology with new digital layers***

Partners stressed the importance of visualisation for submerged sites.

Pilot actions can innovate by developing:

- AR reconstructions
- 3D models of underwater landscapes
- VR sequences
- interpretive panels linking land and sea heritage.

This will be particularly impactful for coastal pilot sites.



## 4. GOOD PRACTICES THROUGH STUDY VISITS

This chapter gathers all good practices reported by the eight ARCHAEODIGIT partners during the transnational study visits. It provides an overview of whether practices correspond to those identified in deliverable D.1.1.2, detailed descriptions of each major practice observed, cross-cutting observations, and reflections on innovation potential and transferability.

The merged partner reports reveal a rich variety of practices ranging from digital interpretation and immersive technologies to management models, accessibility tools, and narrative strategies.

### **4.1. Identification of Good Practice connected to the D1.1.2 Good practices in the management of archaeological areas in touristic ecosystems**

Across the eight partner reports, a significant number of the practices observed during the study visits were recognised as examples that correspond to, or strongly resonate with, the good practices previously catalogued in deliverable D.1.1.2. Although the extent to which partners explicitly referenced the D.1.1.2 catalogue varied, the majority identified clear parallels between the visited sites and the pre-existing body of knowledge compiled earlier in the project.

Project partners clearly stated that the visited examples directly align with the good practices identified in earlier research. These partners particularly emphasised the Šibenik Fortress System as a strong embodiment of integrated and sustainable heritage management, as well as the multisensory and accessible interpretation models observed in Italian museums. The interpretive strategies of Ravenna and Ferrara also reflected best practices in digital storytelling, educational approaches, and the integration of tangible and intangible heritage.

Partial alignment was also observed. The main value was found in benchmarking digital technologies, AR/VR applications, and immersive installations, which, although innovative, needed careful evaluation before being classified strictly as good practices. The relevance of communication, branding, and tourism-related models was acknowledged, but these were not necessarily considered full good practices according to the D.1.1.2 criteria.

Overall, partners recognized the visited examples as clear instances of good practice. This indicates a strong alignment between field observations and the prior analytical work conducted in the project,



confirming that the study visits served to reinforce, rather than supplant, the conceptual foundation laid during the initial phase of ARCHAEODIGIT.

## 4.2. Description of Key Good Practices

The study visits offered a diverse panorama of practices and innovations spanning digital interpretation, governance, accessibility, narrative design, and the revitalisation of archaeological and historic sites. Rather than isolated examples, these practices form a series of mutually reinforcing approaches that together illustrate how archaeological heritage can be made more engaging, inclusive, and sustainable.

Below is a narrative description of the major clusters of good practices observed, previously summarised in table form. Each cluster draws on multiple partner reports and synthesises recurring thematic elements, reflecting what partners perceived as most impactful and potentially transferable.

### 4.2.1. Practice 1: Integrated Management of Revitalised Heritage – The Šibenik Fortress System

The Šibenik Fortress System emerged as one of the most influential good practices observed across the entire partnership. The revitalised complexes of St Michael, Barone, and St John have become a flagship example of how architectural heritage can be transformed into dynamic, multifunctional cultural assets. These fortresses offer a sophisticated blend of archaeological authenticity, architectural restoration, contemporary design, cultural programming, digital content, and tourism infrastructure.

What makes this practice particularly innovative is its holistic governance model, combining cultural, educational, and entertainment functions under a unified management structure. Partners repeatedly highlighted the consistency and clarity of decision-making processes, the strong identity-building strategy, and the ability of the fortress system to generate diversified revenue streams, ranging from ticketing and events to commercial partnerships and educational services. The model demonstrates that heritage can be sustainably managed while simultaneously supporting community well-being and regional tourism.

Implementation required staged restoration projects, extensive collaboration between public and private stakeholders, and investment in both digital interpretation and event infrastructure. From a



resource perspective, the system relies on a multidisciplinary team of archaeologists, architects, cultural managers, marketing professionals, and technicians.

The impact has been substantial: the fortresses now serve as cultural anchors for Šibenik, significantly increasing visitor numbers, revitalising surrounding neighbourhoods, and strengthening the city's cultural profile within Croatia and internationally. Although maintaining such sites involves challenges particularly regarding operational costs and conservation Šibenik strategic planning offers replicable solutions for ARCHAEO DIGIT partners.

#### **4.2.2. Practice 2: Immersive Digital Interpretation – Ferrara and Ravenna Museums**

Across multiple partner reports, the museums in Ferrara and Ravenna were cited as exemplary in their use of state-of-the-art digital technologies. These institutions demonstrate how holographic projections, immersive audiovisual rooms, 3D modelling, interactive screens, VR sequences, and augmented reality can be woven into archaeological storytelling without overshadowing the scientific foundation of the displays.

The innovation lies in the precision and narrative coherence of the digital content. Reconstructions are not merely visual enhancements—they are carefully grounded in archaeological research and designed to guide visitors through complex historical environments. At Ravenna's Classis Museum, for instance, layered digital content illustrates the transformation of the ancient landscape and harbour structures, enabling visitors to visualise entire urban systems that are no longer visible.

Implementation involves collaborative workflows between digital developers (such as ETT), museum curators, archivists, and archaeologists. The process is iterative, with content reviewed and tested to ensure both accessibility and narrative clarity. Resources include advanced hardware, specialised software, and trained in-house technicians to support maintenance and updates.

Partners observed a strong impact on visitor engagement: digital elements help make abstract archaeological concepts tangible and enhance learning for all age groups. Challenges include the cost of high-end hardware and the need for continuous investment in updates. Nevertheless, this practice is highly relevant for ARCHAEO DIGIT, offering a methodological blueprint for designing scientifically grounded, visitor-centred digital content.



### 4.2.3. Practice 3: Multisensory and Accessible Interpretation Tools

One of the most widely referenced examples across the partner reports relates to the multisensory interpretive solutions implemented in several Italian and Croatian museums. These tools include tactile models, 3D-printed replicas, textured panels, audio descriptions, sensory-triggered lighting, soundscapes, and accessible signage.

The innovation of these practices lies in the deliberate inclusion of visitors with visual or hearing impairments, cognitive differences, and other accessibility needs. This approach shifts accessibility from a supplementary activity to an integral part of interpretive design. For instance, tactile replicas at Ferrara enable visitors to experience the shape and texture of artefacts otherwise kept behind glass, while audio descriptions enrich the experience of visually impaired visitors.

The implementation of these tools required consultation with accessibility experts, collaboration with designers, and investment in high-quality replicas and accompanying digital content. While resource-intensive at times, the benefits include broader inclusivity, enhanced emotional engagement, and higher educational value. Partners identified few, but important, challenges: specialised equipment can be costly, and regular maintenance is needed to ensure usability.

For ARCHAEODIGIT, the value of this practice is significant. Multisensory methods can be applied to digital content on the project platform and integrated into on-site pilot actions, ensuring greater accessibility across archaeological areas.

### 4.2.4. Practice 4: Underwater and Coastal Heritage Interpretation – Kaštela (Barbarinac)

The Kaštela site introduced partners to a distinct category of archaeological interpretation, one that deals with the particular challenges of submerged and coastal heritage. The site demonstrates how digital tools can overcome physical inaccessibility and environmental fragility, making underwater archaeology visible to visitors on land.

Innovative elements include 3D reconstructions of submerged structures, VR experiences simulating underwater exploration, environmental monitoring tools, and interpretive panels that merge maritime narratives with archaeological findings. This practice bridges scientific underwater research with public interpretation, allowing visitors to engage with heritage that would otherwise remain hidden.



Implementation involved underwater surveys, photogrammetry, multidisciplinary cooperation between archaeologists, divers, digital developers, and environmental specialists. The process was shaped by considerations of safety, ecological protection, and technological feasibility.

The results demonstrate strong potential for tourism diversification, community engagement, and educational outreach. Challenges include weather conditions, limited accessibility for fieldwork, and the need for specialised equipment. Nevertheless, this practice is highly transferable to sites with coastal or underwater dimensions within ARCHAEODIGIT.

#### **4.2.5. Practice 5: Narrative-Based Interpretation and Intangible Heritage**

Partners drew attention to the significance of storytelling in heritage interpretation. Museums and sites in both Italy and Croatia demonstrated sophisticated use of narratives that link archaeological evidence to broader cultural themes such as daily life, rituals, local memory, and evolving landscapes.

The innovation lies in the combination of emotional resonance and scientific accuracy. Stories deepen the visitor's relationship with the site, while intangible heritage provides cultural context that extends beyond physical remains. Sites demonstrated the use of performative narratives, oral histories, and community involvement to enrich interpretation.

Implementation involves research into community traditions, scriptwriting, collaboration with educators, and integration with multimedia tools. These narratives often guide the structure of exhibitions, digital content, and visitor routes.

The approach enhances memorability and inclusiveness, supporting the idea that archaeological heritage is a living cultural resource rather than simply a record of the past. This practice is highly aligned with the aims of ARCHAEODIGIT, particularly in developing a coherent narrative for the digital platform and pilot actions.

#### **4.2.6. Practice 6: Mixed-Use Cultural Heritage Spaces**

The use of revitalised heritage spaces as multifunctional cultural venues was observed most prominently in Šibenik but echoed in other sites as well. These spaces combine archaeology, performing arts, education, gastronomy, and public gatherings, transforming heritage sites into living, socially relevant places.



Innovation arises from the balance between preservation and contemporary use. Adaptive reuse strategies incorporate modern infrastructure—such as lighting, sound systems, and seating—without compromising historical integrity. This approach attracts diverse audiences and ensures financial sustainability.

Implementation relies on interdisciplinary teams of urban planners, architects, conservation specialists, and cultural managers. Continuous programming keeps spaces active, while strict conservation guidelines maintain authenticity.

The impact is evident in revitalised urban areas, increased cultural participation, and improved site sustainability. For ARCHAEODIGIT, this practice highlights how heritage interpretation can extend beyond exhibitions and digital content into holistic cultural development.

### 4.3. Key Cross-Cutting Observations

Analysis of all eight partner reports revealed several recurring observations that transcend individual practices and provide broader methodological insights for ARCHAEODIGIT.

#### 4.3.1. Most Innovative Aspects

Partners consistently identified the following as the most forward-looking elements:

- the use of high-quality holography and immersive environments in Ravenna, which set a benchmark for digital storytelling
- the integrated management of Šibenik fortresses, showing how heritage can become self-sustaining through multifunctionality
- digital visualisation techniques employed in Kaštela to interpret underwater archaeological remains
- multisensory interpretive tools that expand accessibility and create emotional engagement for diverse audiences
- methods for reconstructing intangible heritage narratives, which enhance visitor understanding of past societies.

These aspects were praised not merely for their technological novelty but for their strategic coherence, scientific grounding, and adaptability across different heritage contexts.



### 4.3.2. Elements with Highest Transfer Potential

Despite the diversity of sites visited, partners shared a strong belief that several practices could be realistically transferred to their own archaeological areas, including:

- modular AR applications that can be scaled to suit modest budgets
- tactile and multisensory tools that increase accessibility
- simplified digital reconstructions, animations, 3D models, annotated images, that support visitor understanding
- community-engaged storytelling practices adaptable to local traditions
- governance approaches based on multi-stakeholder collaboration.

These practices align well with the expected scale and financial constraints of ARCHAEO DIGIT pilot actions.

### 4.3.3. Critical Success Factors Identified

Across reports, partners highlighted several conditions that make good practices successful:

- cross-sector cooperation between heritage institutions, municipalities, tourism organisations, and digital agencies
- sustainable financial models, combining public funding with earned revenue
- continuous technical maintenance, ensuring digital tools remain functional and up to date
- scientific accuracy driving the design of digital and narrative content
- strong branding and communication, which increases visibility and strengthens identity.

These factors will be essential for the long-term success of ARCHAEO DIGIT pilots.

### 4.3.4. Main Barriers to Implementation

Partners also identified potential challenges that may limit the replication of certain practices:

- high costs associated with creating and maintaining sophisticated digital installations
- limited technical expertise within smaller institutions
- environmental constraints, especially for underwater and coastal sites



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- balancing increased visitor numbers with conservation needs
- difficulty engaging communities in areas with limited cultural infrastructure.

Identifying these barriers early will help partners design pragmatic, context-sensitive pilot actions.



## 5. REVELANCE TO ARCHAEODIGIT IMPLEMENTATION

The insights collected during the study visits hold significant value for the ongoing and forthcoming phases of ARCHAEODIGIT. Across all eight partners, the practices observed in Italy and Croatia were assessed not only in terms of innovation, but also in relation to their practical applicability within the project's long-term framework. This chapter synthesises how study visit findings inform the development of the Management Plans (A3.2), the digital platform (A1.3), and the forthcoming Pilot Actions (A3.3–A3.4), while also examining the transferability of observed practices to the specific archaeological areas represented by the partners.

### 5.1. Transferability of Observed Practices to Partner Archaeological Areas

Across the partnership, the study visits provided a rich catalogue of approaches—ranging from multisensory museum interpretation to large-scale fortress revitalisation, underwater archaeology visualisation, branding strategies, and immersive digital installations. Each participant assessed the extent to which these practices could be meaningfully adopted or adapted within their own local contexts.

Strong potential was identified in visitor-centred interpretation, augmented reality storytelling, and integrated governance models. While some high-end digital installations would require substantial adaptation due to budget and infrastructural considerations, the core principles of audience engagement, layered narrative design, and institutional coordination were seen as transferable and relevant for strengthening local cultural offerings.

The applicability of inclusive and multisensory interpretation approaches was emphasised. Tactile artefacts, accessible signage, and narrative framing strategies were considered directly transferable to both museum and outdoor archaeological contexts. Digital reconstruction methodologies, although requiring technical support, were also deemed highly relevant for enriching visitor understanding.

A strong alignment was observed between the underwater and coastal heritage interpretation models and local needs. Practices related to digital visualisation of submerged environments, narrative integration of maritime identity, and combined tactile/AR tools were identified as directly transferable due to pilot focus on underwater archaeology.



The revitalisation and multifunctional use of fortresses provided a compelling framework for broader heritage landscape management. While specific underwater sites require unique digital and environmental solutions, the strategic management models, community-oriented programming, and interpretive layering techniques were recognised as valuable references.

From a technological perspective, advanced digital practices—such as holography, VR environments, and immersive sensory installations—were identified as relevant for informing technical development. Although not all solutions are intended for direct replication, they contribute to refining technical parameters for future platform and pilot implementation.

Narrative-based interpretation, intangible heritage integration, and educational frameworks were highlighted as highly relevant. The approaches observed during the visits strengthen methodological design and support the development of pedagogical materials for pilot actions.

Methodological processes and interpretive strategies were found to be directly applicable. The study visits reinforced the role of ensuring coherence between archaeological research, digital outputs, and interpretive authenticity, which will be essential in preparing management plans and supporting pilot development.

Communication and branding strategies were recognised as relevant, providing substantial inspiration for enhancing visibility and cross-border communication approaches, even if direct transfer requires contextual adaptation for tourism networks.

Taken together, the study visits demonstrated a high overall level of transferability, particularly regarding interpretive strategies, inclusive tools, and modular digital solutions. Even practices not directly replicable offered significant conceptual value, serving as reference points for planning and designing pilot actions.



## 5.2. Connection to Key ARCHAEODIGIT Activities

Study visit findings feed directly into the operational structure of ARCHAEODIGIT, supporting the advancement of several key activities.

### 5.2.1. Contribution to A3.2 – Management Plan Development

The visits provided partners with a clearer understanding of how heritage sites can be managed in a balanced, sustainable and interdisciplinary manner. The Šibenik Fortress System, in particular, served as a tangible benchmark for effective governance, demonstrating:

- the benefits of unified management structures
- the value of integrating cultural programming with heritage conservation
- the importance of long-term maintenance strategies for both physical and digital assets
- the role of diversified revenue models in ensuring financial sustainability.

Partners also gained a deeper appreciation for visitor flow design, zoning strategies in historical environments, and the complexities of aligning archaeological integrity with tourism expectations. These insights will directly inform the structure, content, and priorities of the Management Plans, ensuring that they are both visionary and operationally grounded.

### 5.2.2. Contribution to A1.3 – Digital Platform Development

Across all visits, digital interpretation emerged as a central area of interest. Partners repeatedly noted the importance of:

- building digital content on strong, evidence-based narrative foundations
- ensuring accessibility through tactile tools, simplified interfaces, and multisensory layers
- adopting modular and cost-efficient digital solutions to ensure long-term sustainability
- balancing high-quality design with scientific accuracy
- creating flexible digital formats that can support both on-site and off-site engagement.

The platform must therefore operate not only as a technological product but as a coherent digital narrative ecosystem capable of highlighting the uniqueness of each archaeological area while enabling cross-border cohesion.



### 5.2.3. Contribution to A3.3 – Preparation of Pilot Actions

The study visits generated concrete ideas for pilot development. These include:

- designing AR layers that reveal submerged or lost archaeological features
- incorporating tactile objects, audio descriptions, and multilingual materials
- using narrative-based digital mapping to guide visitors
- adopting event-based formats that blend heritage with contemporary cultural use
- creating digital prototypes that allow experimentation and testing with local communities.

The pilots will serve as testing grounds for many of the practices observed during the visits, allowing partners to experiment with digital tools, evaluate user responses, and refine interpretive methods before final implementation.

## 5.3. Strategic Relevance for the Project

The insights gained through the study visits, when viewed as a whole, provide several strategically significant benefits for the ARCHAEODIGIT initiative. One of the most important outcomes is the partners strengthened ability to maintain a meaningful balance between archaeological scholarship and digital innovation. Partners not only explored a wide range of technological tools, but also developed a clearer understanding of how such tools must remain firmly anchored in archaeological evidence, scientific accuracy, and narrative coherence. This sensitivity to balance ensures that digital solutions serve as interpretive supports rather than as dominant or distracting features, an aspect that will greatly enhance the project's long-term credibility and professional integrity.

Equally valuable was the consolidation of knowledge regarding sustainable cultural tourism. By observing different models of heritage revitalisation in Italy and Croatia, partners gained a deeper awareness of how culture, tourism, education, and community identity intersect within successful heritage destinations. The examples encountered, ranging from the multifunctional fortress system in Šibenik to the technologically enriched museum environments in Ravenna and Ferrara, demonstrated that sustainable management is only achievable when archaeological sites are integrated into broader cultural, economic, and social ecosystems. This integrated understanding will directly inform the creation of the Management Plans, guiding partners towards approaches that are both culturally responsible and economically viable.

The study visits also provided substantial inspiration for developing more inclusive and accessible interpretive solutions. Exposure to tactile replicas, multisensory installations, and clear interpretive



signage encouraged partners to view accessibility as a core design principle rather than a supplementary feature. This shift in perspective positions ARCHAEODIGIT to evolve into a regional benchmark for inclusive archaeological interpretation, ensuring that pilot actions and digital outputs serve a wide and diverse audience.

Another key impact of the transnational exchange lies in the enhancement of cross-border collaboration. Visiting different institutional contexts allowed partners to compare their approaches, reflect on their strengths, identify shared challenges, and appreciate the added value of working within a cross-border framework. This mutual learning process reinforced the importance of shared methodologies and common interpretive standards across the partnership.

Finally, the study visits helped reinforce methodological consistency across the project. By grounding forthcoming activities such as digital platform development, management planning, and pilot action design in practices that were directly observed, analysed, and discussed collectively, the partnership can approach the next phases with a coherent conceptual and operational framework. This coherence will support a more unified implementation of digital tools, interpretive strategies, governance models, and community engagement processes, ensuring that ARCHAEODIGIT progresses with clarity, alignment, and shared purpose.



## 6. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND LESSONS LEARNED

The transnational study visits represented a central learning mechanism within ARCHAEODIGIT, providing partners with the opportunity to observe, analyse, and critically reflect upon diverse approaches to archaeological heritage interpretation and management across Italy and Croatia. Rather than functioning as isolated excursions, these visits formed an interconnected learning pathway that progressively deepened partners' understanding of how digital innovation, narrative construction, accessibility principles, and governance models can be meaningfully embedded within archaeological contexts. The visits were described by partners as both enriching and transformative, allowing them to confront practical realities, compare institutional frameworks, and position their own sites within a wider cross-border heritage ecosystem.

Through direct engagement with museums, archaeological parks, underwater heritage sites, and revitalised fortress complexes, participants developed a clearer vision of the challenges facing contemporary heritage institutions. They also gained invaluable insight into the practicalities of implementing digital tools, sustaining heritage infrastructures, designing inclusive visitor experiences, and fostering community participation. Partners emphasised that the encounters with experts, curators, digital developers, archaeologists, and cultural managers contributed not only to their technical knowledge but also to a broader appreciation of how heritage can shape collective identity, support territorial development, and inspire sustainable tourism practices.

The reflections documented across the eight partner reports reveal a remarkable degree of convergence, demonstrating that although each site and institution has its own particular context, the challenges and opportunities facing the Italy–Croatia region are deeply shared. This chapter summarises the principal lessons learned, the unexpected insights that emerged during the visits, the new competencies partners acquired, and the mechanisms through which this knowledge will be disseminated within the partners and beyond.

### 6.1. Key Takeaways

The study visits generated numerous insights, many of which were repeatedly emphasised across the partner reports. One of the most prominent takeaways concerned the importance of narrative coherence in heritage interpretation. Partners agreed that digital tools, no matter how sophisticated, have limited value unless they are grounded in a well-constructed narrative that conveys both archaeological accuracy and emotional resonance. The experiences in Ferrara and Ravenna, where holography, AR, and immersive rooms were used to support carefully layered historical storytelling, were repeatedly cited as exemplary.



Another key takeaway was the central role of accessibility. Partners gained a deeper understanding of how tactile artefacts, audio-described content, inclusive signage, and sensory-responsive installations can open heritage spaces to a wider range of visitors. The multisensory stations and tactile replicas in Ferrara, like the audio-supported interpretation systems in Kaštela, reinforced the idea that inclusive design is not an “added feature” but a core requirement for modern heritage interpretation.

Partners also highlighted the significance of strategic governance and long-term planning, particularly inspired by the Šibenik Fortress System. Observing how these fortresses function as financially sustainable, multi-purpose cultural hubs—balancing events, education, conservation, and tourism—provided concrete models from which partners could draw inspiration when preparing their own Management Plans.

The study visits additionally demonstrated that high-quality digital experiences do not necessarily require extensive budgets. Several partners noted that simple AR layers, touchscreen panels, and small-scale multimedia elements can be just as effective as complex immersive rooms when implemented with clarity, intention, and accuracy.

Finally, partners observed the uniquely complex challenges associated with underwater and coastal archaeology. The Kaštela site made clear that environmental conditions, limited accessibility, and preservation constraints require customised digital solutions, including virtual reconstructions, remote sensing, and interpretive platforms accessible from the shore.

## 6.2. New findings

Although the visits were planned around specific learning objectives, partners encountered a variety of insights that were not initially anticipated. One such discovery involved the extent to which community participation can influence the success of heritage revitalisation. The Šibenik experience showed that local residents involvement, from attending cultural programmes to contributing knowledge, can strengthen the authenticity and sustainability of heritage initiatives. This highlighted the potential for ARCHAEODIGIT pilot sites to integrate community collaboration more deeply into their interpretive strategies.

Another unexpected finding concerned the increasing importance of emotional interpretation. Several partners noted that digital tools and multisensory environments can provoke powerful affective responses, helping visitors connect with sites in ways that extend beyond factual



understanding. This reinforced the idea that heritage interpretation should not only inform but also inspire.

Environmental considerations, particularly at underwater sites, were also more complex than partners had initially expected. Issues such as sediment movement, biological growth, and water visibility influence not only conservation but also the feasibility of digital capture and visualisation. These constraints underscored the need for adaptive, long-term monitoring solutions.

Finally, partners were surprised by the degree to which modest, low-tech interpretive interventions could shape visitor experience. In several locations, simple displays and narrative signage were as impactful as digital installations, reaffirming that interpretive clarity often outweighs technological sophistication.

### 6.3. New skills and competences

Throughout the study visits, partners strengthened a wide range of competencies that will directly inform the next phases of ARCHAEODIGIT. Digital and technical skills developed significantly, with participants gaining a clearer understanding of how AR, VR, 3D modelling, holography, and interactive multimedia can be integrated into both museum and outdoor environments. Partners also improved their ability to evaluate the practical requirements of such technologies, including hardware limitations, environmental conditions, and long-term maintenance needs.

Interpretive and educational skills were similarly enhanced. Exposure to different narrative frameworks, multisensory installations, and inclusive design principles enabled participants to refine their approaches to content development, visitor engagement, and educational programming. Several partners emphasised that they now feel more capable of designing interpretation that bridges tangible and intangible heritage.

In terms of management and governance, partners gained valuable insights into how sustainable heritage institutions are structured and operated. Learning from the Šibenik Fortress System and other host institutions helped participants understand how to integrate cultural programming, tourism infrastructure, event planning, and financial strategy into heritage management plans.

Archaeological competencies also grew, particularly concerning the transformation of scientific data into accessible digital content. Underwater archaeology specialists, for instance, benefited from seeing how other institutions handle fragmented evidence or difficult-to-access sites through reconstructions and multimedia storytelling.



Finally, the visits enhanced partners communication and tourism-related skills. Exposure to branding strategies, interpretive signage, marketing practices, and tourism route integration (particularly in Istria, Dalmatia, and Emilia-Romagna) broadened partners' perspectives on how archaeological sites can strengthen destination identity.

## 6.4. Knowledge Sharing Plans

Partners outlined a clear commitment to disseminating the knowledge gained from the study visits both internally and externally. Within their own organisations, partners plan to organise internal briefings, training sessions, and collaborative workshops to ensure that staff across all departments benefit from the insights gained. These sessions will support organisational alignment as partners prepare Management Plans, pilot actions, and contributions to the digital platform.

At the local level, partners intend to share outcomes with relevant stakeholders, including municipal departments, heritage authorities, tourism boards, local associations, schools, and community groups. Through public presentations, stakeholder meetings, and thematic roundtables, partners aim to stimulate dialogue and co-create site-specific solutions inspired by the practices observed during the visits.

At the project level, partners plan to continue mutual exchange throughout upcoming phases, particularly during the development of the ARCHAEODIGIT platform, the creation of Management Plans, and the preparation of pilot actions. This ongoing collaboration is expected to strengthen methodological consistency and ensure that each partner benefits from the shared pool of knowledge. Furthermore, the systematic documentation of practices and reflections—already initiated in the merged reports—will be carried forward as a resource for both internal development and external dissemination.



## 7. FINAL REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The insights accumulated across the study visits offer an important lens through which to understand the broader ambitions and operational direction of ARCHAEODIGIT. When examined together, the observations collected by the eight partners reveal not only the diversity of approaches encountered in Italy and Croatia, but also the growing maturity of the partners in conceptualising archaeological heritage as a dynamic, accessible, and socially embedded resource. The study visits encouraged each partner to critically assess how archaeological knowledge is transformed into meaningful visitor experiences, how digital tools can enhance or complicate interpretation, and how governance structures shape long-term heritage sustainability.

The reflections presented in this chapter, while informed by partner-specific contexts, ultimately demonstrate that the partners have developed a shared vision and a solid foundation for the next phases of the project. They highlight the strengthening of internal capacities, the consolidation of methodological thinking, and a heightened awareness of the complexities involved in managing archaeological heritage in contemporary cultural and tourism ecosystems.

### 7.1. Final Reflections

Across the multiple institutional perspectives represented in the merged reports, several core reflections emerge with clarity and consistency.

#### 7.1.1. **A strengthened understanding of the relationship between archaeology and digital innovation**

Partners repeatedly noted that the study visits enabled them to observe how digital tools, whether immersive, interactive, or multisensory, can be effectively incorporated into archaeological storytelling without compromising scientific integrity. The importance of grounding every digital layer in verified archaeological data was highlighted in Ferrara and Ravenna, where digital reconstructions were meticulously aligned with excavated evidence. This careful balance reassured partners that innovation does not need to overshadow authenticity; rather, it can serve as a bridge connecting the public to sites that are otherwise difficult to interpret. This insight is set to guide ARCHAEODIGIT future outputs, ensuring that digital content remains a support mechanism rather than the interpretive core itself.



### **7.1.2. A broader appreciation for integrated and sustainable tourism models**

Examples from Šibenik, particularly the successful fortress system, revealed the importance of treating heritage sites as multifunctional spaces embedded within wider cultural, social, and economic structures. Partners recognised that sustainable heritage management requires long-term planning, diversified revenue streams, and strong cooperation between municipal authorities, tourism boards, and cultural institutions. This observation deepened the understanding of heritage as part of a living urban ecosystem, rather than an isolated conservation object. This holistic perspective will significantly inform the Management Plans developed under A3.2.

### **7.1.3. A heightened focus on inclusivity and multisensory interpretation**

One of the strongest collective reflections relates to inclusive design. From tactile replicas in Ferrara to accessible digital panels and audio descriptions in Kaštela, partners were exposed to practical examples demonstrating how accessibility measures benefit not only visitors with disabilities but all audiences. The study visits encouraged partners to embrace interpretive solutions that appeal to diverse sensory, cultural, and cognitive needs. As a result, ARCHAEODIGIT is now well positioned to become a regional reference point for inclusive archaeological interpretation.

### **7.1.4. Reinforced value of transnational collaboration**

The visits fostered a deeper sense of shared identity among partners and highlighted the mutual benefits of cross-border knowledge exchange. Observing sites outside their local contexts encouraged partners to critically reflect on their own heritage challenges and to appreciate the strengths of alternative governance, technological, or interpretive models. This cross-fertilisation of ideas supports a more aligned and coherent methodological approach across the project.

### **7.1.5. Strengthened internal coherence and methodological alignment**

By grounding future project actions in observed real-world practices, the study visits have laid the foundations for greater consistency across different work packages. Partners now share a clearer understanding of how narrative development, digital design, governance frameworks, and community engagement interrelate and reinforce each other. This coherence will be crucial as ARCHAEODIGIT approaches the phases of digital platform development and pilot implementation.



## 7.2. Recommendations for Future ARCHAEO DIGIT Activities

Building upon these reflections, the partners have identified several recommendations that should inform the next stages of the project. These recommendations draw directly from examples seen in Ferrara, Ravenna, Kaštela, and Šibenik, while remaining sensitive to the specificities of each partner's archaeological area.

### 7.2.1. Emphasise the primacy of narrative before technological design

The visits repeatedly demonstrated that digital tools can only succeed when they are anchored in well-developed stories and interpretive frameworks. As such, partners should prioritise narrative clarity, archaeological accuracy, and visitor relevance before selecting the appropriate digital format. In practice, this means investing time into layered storytelling, co-creation with experts, and testing narrative comprehension across diverse audiences.

### 7.2.2. Adopt flexible and scalable digital solutions

High-budget immersive rooms and holography offer important inspiration, but modular solutions—such as AR applications, animated sequences, or simplified reconstructions—prove more sustainable and adaptable, especially for smaller archaeological sites. Partners should consider adopting digital components that can evolve over time, ensuring maintenance and updates remain feasible.

### 7.2.3. Strengthen inclusive interpretation as a core project principle

The emphasis on multisensory interpretation encountered during the visits underlines the need to make accessibility an integral part of the project. Partners are encouraged to embed inclusive strategies early in content development, ensuring that digital tools and physical interpretation are accessible to visually impaired visitors, children, elderly audiences, and neurodivergent users.



#### **7.2.4. Promote active community engagement**

The study visits demonstrated that heritage thrives when local communities are involved in interpretation, programming, and storytelling. Partners should explore participatory models such as involving local associations, schools, craftspeople, or divers in the creation of content for pilot actions and Management Plans. This will enrich authenticity and foster long-term support.

#### **Build multidisciplinary teams inspired by successful governance models**

The example of Šibenik showed how diverse expertise strengthens decision-making and enhances site sustainability. Partners should consider forming or strengthening teams that bring together archaeologists, educators, digital developers, tourism planners, communicators, and municipal stakeholders. This interdisciplinary collaboration will ensure that each pilot action is both scientifically robust and publicly engaging.

#### **7.2.5. Plan for sustainability from the outset**

The long-term operation of digital tools requires careful planning, including budgeting for updates, technical support, and staff training. Partners should incorporate sustainability strategies into their pilot action planning and include them as required components of Management Plans.

Coordinate visibility and tourism positioning within broader cultural networks

Heritage sites only realise their full potential when integrated within larger cultural routes and tourism strategies. Partners should ensure that their interpretive approaches, branding efforts, and digital outputs align with regional and cross-border tourism frameworks, as illustrated by the practices observed in Šibenik and Ravenna.

#### **7.2.6. Tailor pilot actions to each site's unique characteristics**

The diverse examples seen during the study visits reinforce the importance of designing pilot actions that respond directly to the material, environmental, and cultural conditions of each archaeological area. Underwater contexts, for instance, require digital augmentation tailored to constrained accessibility, while museum contexts may benefit from multisensory or educationally focused approaches.



### **7.2.7. Continue fostering cross-border dialogue throughout implementation**

The value of shared learning was a recurrent theme during the study visits. To maintain this momentum, partners should organise focused exchanges—whether virtual or in-person—on topics such as AR content creation, accessibility design, narrative development, or methodological evaluation.

### **7.2.8. Ensure conceptual alignment across Management Plans, the Digital Platform, and Pilot Actions**

The final recommendation emphasises internal coherence: the interpretive frameworks developed during the study visits must guide the structuring of the Management Plans, the digital platform’s content, and the design of pilot actions. Ensuring conceptual continuity across these outputs will reinforce the project’s impact and long-term sustainability.



## 8. CONCLUSION

The insights gathered from the transnational study visits across Italy and Croatia have substantially strengthened the strategic direction and operational readiness of the ARCHAEODIGIT project. By engaging with a wide spectrum of heritage environments, ranging from technologically sophisticated museums in Ferrara and Ravenna to revitalised fortresses and community-oriented archaeological zones in Šibenik and Kaštela, partners have been able to observe first-hand how archaeology, digital innovation, inclusive access and sustainable management can be harmonised into coherent and impactful heritage practices. This breadth of exposure has enabled the partnership to refine its collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in contemporary heritage interpretation within the Italy–Croatia cross-border area.

The Italian experiences offered compelling demonstrations of how immersive digital technologies such as augmented and virtual reality, holographic projections, 3D reconstructions and interactive mapping can be successfully integrated into museum narratives. These tools were shown to be most effective when used to clarify archaeological complexity rather than to replace or overshadow it. Museums in Ferrara and Ravenna illustrated how digital resources can maintain scientific rigour while simultaneously broadening interpretive accessibility, serving both specialist audiences and general visitors. Equally important were the multisensory approaches observed in these institutions, tactile replicas, audio guides, sensory-triggered installations and accessible interpretive panels, which collectively exemplified a high standard of inclusive design. Such approaches resonate strongly with ARCHAEODIGIT commitment to developing experiences that serve diverse publics, including those with visual, hearing or cognitive impairments.

Complementing these observations, the Croatian study visits provided valuable insights into integrated management, sustainable operations and the socio-cultural role of revitalised heritage. The Šibenik Fortress System emerged as a particularly strong model of how coordinated governance, carefully designed visitor flows, dynamic event programming and robust financial planning can transform archaeological structures into vibrant, multifunctional cultural assets. This example underscored the importance of long-term planning, multidisciplinary collaboration and the strategic alignment of conservation with tourism and educational priorities. In Kaštela, partners examined approaches to underwater and coastal heritage where smaller-scale but contextually meaningful digital solutions, such as VR experiences, touchscreens and tactile panels, demonstrated how digital tools can increase visibility and understanding of fragile or inaccessible heritage. These examples also highlighted the essential role of local communities, whose participation strengthens authenticity, reinforces identity and supports sustainable site stewardship.

Taken together, these experiences provide practical and conceptual foundations for the development of the ARCHAEODIGIT Management Plans. The lessons indicate clearly that future



interventions should integrate digital technologies within well-defined archaeological narratives and should emphasise clarity, accuracy and audience engagement. They further demonstrate that digital solutions are most successful when implemented progressively, allowing teams to evaluate technical performance, visitor response and maintenance requirements over time. The study visits also revealed the importance of developing governance structures that balance heritage protection with cultural programming, community participation and tourism development insights that will directly inform the organisational frameworks proposed for each pilot site.

In a wider sense, the exchanges have reinforced a shared vision of heritage as a dynamic driver of social inclusion, cross-border cooperation, environmental awareness and sustainable cultural tourism. The transnational nature of the visits fostered a deeper understanding of regional similarities and differences, encouraging partners to reflect critically on their own approaches while learning from the experiences of others. This kind of cross-border dialogue is essential for building the methodological coherence required by ARCHAEODIGIT, ensuring that the digital platform, pilot actions and management plans are not developed in isolation but emerge from a common conceptual framework supported by real-world examples.

Ultimately, the knowledge gained through the study visits provides a strong, well-informed foundation for the next stages of the project. The observed practices, whether technologically advanced or modest in scale, demonstrate that successful archaeological interpretation relies on a careful balance of digital innovation, archaeological credibility, inclusive design and sustainable management. As the partnership now transitions towards implementing pilot actions and developing the digital platform, these lessons will guide decision-making and reinforce the project's commitment to creating meaningful, accessible and future-oriented heritage experiences across the Italy-Croatia region. Through this shared understanding, ARCHAEODIGIT is well positioned to contribute lasting value to cultural heritage management, digital transformation and cross-border cooperation.



## ANNEXES

### Study Visit Reports

1. Annex 1\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_UNIPU
2. Annex 2\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_OMI
3. Annex 3\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_KAS
4. Annex 4\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_AIC
5. Annex 5\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_MAC
6. Annex 6\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_SEP
7. Annex 7\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_UMC
8. Annex 8\_Study Visits A.2.1\_Report\_ETT

### Photo and video evidence

9. Annex 9\_Study Visits\_Photo evidence
10. Annex 10\_Study Visits\_Video Evidence

### Signature list

11. Annex 11\_2025\_6\_17\_Signature List
12. Annex 12\_2025\_6\_18\_Signature List
13. Annex 13\_2025\_10\_07\_Signature List
14. Annex 14\_2025\_10\_09\_Signature List

