

# Terrain Walk

**Target Audience: All Personnel**

## *Purpose*

- To present a unique and persuasive method of conveying a lesson of the past to a present-day leadership application.
- To provide case studies in leadership, at any level desired.
- To provide case studies in unit cohesion.
- To encourage officers to study their profession through the use of military history.
- To kindle or reinforce an interest in the heritage of the U.S. Air Force and increase the commitment towards our core values.

## *Description*

Terrain walks bring to life leadership tactics, strategy, communications, and most importantly the psychology of military leaders and other members in operations at the location where historic encounters took place or in museums and other venues which commemorate these encounters. These historical studies offer valuable opportunities to not only understand our heritage but also help to develop professional Airmen. The key question to answer after completing the terrain walk is “So what?”

Leaders should view terrain walks as an opportunity to develop fellow unit members. Its focus should vary according to the desired leadership and professionalism principle. Whatever form it takes, the terrain walk is a continuing professional development exercise which will outlive any leader’s tour.

## *Employ*

1. Choose the right location. Contact your local historian to discuss and identify significant historical events and or landmarks at your installation or the surrounding area. Choosing the right location is one of the most important aspects to this process because it allows you to emphasize the key leadership principles you’d like for members to take away from the experience. It is also important to perform a site survey of the location early in the process in order to help prepare you for the actual terrain walk.
2. Study the significance. Study the background and historical significance of the selected location so that you are the subject matter expert. Be able to identify all important facets of an extremely complex human event and understand how these facets relate to each other and how employing professionalism and leadership impacted the outcome of the event. An understanding of current Air Force doctrine and terminology will be greatly beneficial.
3. Coordinate logistical support as required. Depending on the location and duration of the chosen location, this may require transportation, billeting, and messing facilities. The participating member’s attention should be completely focused on the intellectual aspects of the terrain walk and not distracted by inadequate logistical support.
4. Prepare the audience for the selected location. Although various mediums can be used (lecture, readings, etc..) it is best to know your audience and which medium will best engage them in the learning process based on the context of the leadership trait to be discussed. The best audience preparation will accomplish the following tasks:
  - a) A clear understanding of the purpose of the exercise.
  - b) Active involvement in the exercise and not being a passive spectator.
  - c) A basic knowledge of the selected location to include the significance of the location tactically and/or strategically, biographical/personality data of significant leaders involved, and a chronology of significant events.
  - d) The impact, if any, on current operations and its application from a leadership perspective.

- 
5. Execute the terrain walk. The execution should be designed to visit all significant locations associated with the operation being emphasized. If only a portion of the location can be visited, the project officer must summarize what occurred elsewhere so that participants comprehend the operation as a whole.
    - a) The route should be designed to visit sites in chronological order to avoid confusion and unnecessary complexity.
    - b) Planned stops should be selected for historical significance, visual impact, vignette suitability, or logistical necessity. No stops should be made simply in the hope that something may turn up.
    - c) If participants have investigated certain topics beyond the level of general background knowledge, both planned and spontaneous stops provide opportunities for them to share their findings and stimulate discussion.
    - d) If available, primary sources describing vivid personal accounts or period photographs should be used to help drive home the desired learning objective and leadership principle.
  
  6. Sustain the process. Like all recurring training exercises, the terrain walk process should be sustained. In order to ensure sustainment, the project must be passed to other project officers in order to help share the time commitment associated with the process. This also affords others to become experts in the process and also increases the likelihood the process will be carried to other organizations once a project officer PCS's. The documentation from previous terrain walks should remain with the unit and does not leave with a commander or project officer. The local history office would be a good place to coordinate with to help keep the documentation stored.
-