

Natural History along the Natchez Trace Parkway



Field Trip:

Outdoor Appreciation: (codeOAK12)

► Grade:

ALL

Subject Areas:

Science, art, music, self improvement, health, Physical Education, history

Summary: Students will sit quietly and make observations. They will record what they hear, see, feel, and smell. This may be adapted for any outdoor area.



Materials Needed: Clipboard, pencil/pen, notebook or printed recording sheet. Optional: digital camera

Rangers may be available to participate in field trips. Funds may be available to pay for buses. Call 1-800-305-7417 for more information or to schedule, a trunk, a ranger, or a trip.

Instructional Information

State Objectives: Dependent on objectives teacher chooses.

Learning Objectives: The students will connect to the natural community by using their senses and creativity. Students will learn ways to get more enjoyment from the out of doors.

Teacher Set: Arrange for a field trip to the Natchez Trace Parkway. The Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail is an option that will work well, but there are many places on the Trace that will make excellent locations for this activity. Contact a park ranger for suggestions. Review safety precautions and behavior expectations the day before the field trip as well as at the field trip site. The teacher will guide the students in making their own observations.

Teacher Overview: Besides sixty-seven miles of Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail (NATT), the Natchez Trace Parkway (NATR) has many short trails. All are excellent for an outdoor experience. Students who are aware of the historical and natural features, of the NATR and NATT, will develop a sense of place and pride in this national resource that is at their own backdoors. They will also learn about a resource where they may participate in healthy outdoor activities. The Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail is in 5 sections that are connected by the Natchez Trace Parkway, a scenic roadway that is 444 miles long.

In the 1700s, traders called boatmen, or Kaintucks floated down local rivers that emptied into the Mississippi. They were on their way to sell their goods in the thriving port city of Natchez. Useless for travel back upriver, the flatboats were broken down, and the lumber was sold so the Kaintucks walked home hundreds of miles on the Old Trace. Winding through Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, the historic 444-mile long Natchez Trace Parkway was established in 1938 to commemorate this historic travel route. The roadway was completed in 2005.

The Old Trace was a critical element in the founding of the southeastern United States. Prior to Hernando de Soto's arrival on the Trace, it was a long-used travel route for American Indian people such as the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Natchez. Later during the Indian removal, it was crossed by the Trail of Tears in four locations. It was a federal postal route and was used by military giants such as Andrew Jackson and U.S. Grant. The Trace is where Meriwether Lewis took his final steps on this earth.

Some specific resources

- Seven different ecological regions
- Over 2000 species of plants and animals including threatened and endangered species
- More fish species than any other national park
- Streams, swamps, rivers, and reservoirs
- Over 100 miles of walking trails, a multi-use trail
- Seven Indian Mound sites, including second largest in US.
- Four intersections with Trail of Tears
- 1800 Postal Route
- Sections of the Old Sunken Trace, traveling corridor
- Significant military history from War of 1812 and Civil War

While walking and sitting on the trail and boardwalk is generally safe, students should be warned to look before they put their hands, feet or other body parts on anything. The swamp is a natural area with animals that naturally occur in swampy areas. All animals and plants along the Natchez Trace Parkway are protected by law.

The teacher will choose which activities are to be done by students. Teachers should gauge the expectations for activities for the grade level of their students.

Students may:

Map sounds: K-12

Draw something they see: K-12

Photograph the natural area: K-12

Sensory Inventory: 1-12

Identify plants and/or animals: 5-12

Student Task:

✂ Sound mapping: K-12 (each student will need clipboard, blank paper, pencil)

Students will be shown a safe place to sit (older students may choose to stand).

Students will draw a circle in the middle of the paper to represent themselves. They will then sit and listen for sounds and put a mark (complexity of mark depending on grade level) in the relative direction where they hear the sound.

There should be no talking while they are listening.

Listening time should be no longer than 30 seconds times the grade level.

- Kindergartners should listen in 30 second increments,
- first graders in one minute increments,
- second graders in one-and-a-half minute increments
- and so forth... with 12 grade listening 6 minutes

Listening sessions can be repeated at the teacher's discretion.

Mark Complexity recommendations:

- Kindergartners: a dot
- First grade: a small circle or a small x
- Second grade: a small circle for natural (outdoor sounds) and an x for man-made sounds
- Third grade: B for bird, i for insect, A for animal, M for man made
- And so forth...

✂ Sound feedback:

Lower elementary:

Ask the students what they think is making the sounds. If appropriate for age level, have them imitate the sounds.

Upper Elementary, Middle and High School:

Have the students listen for a sound with a rhythm and have the students repeat the rhythm by tapping or clapping or relate the rhythm to a song that they know.

✂ Drawing;

- Lower elementary: Have the students do “air drawing”. Have the students look at a tree and “draw” the outline in the air with their pointer finger. Next have them “draw” branches, leaves, walkways, or anything else.
- Middle Elementary – Middle School: have the students find a place where the sun is creating shadows from the trees and leaves. Have them place their paper where there are contrasting light and dark, and trace around the shapes. They can then color them in, or create an imaginary swamp creature from the shape.
- Art students: have students concentrate on organic shapes, contrast organic with man-made (if any), do a newsprint size enlarged drawing of something small like the back of a leaf, or light and dark/positive and negative spaces.

✂ Photography: Students can photograph images for artistic composition, or for science identification.

✂ Sensory inventory:

K-3rd: Younger students “observe” all senses for 30 second intervals. After one interval, the teacher can call on students to describe what they see, hear, smell, or feel.

4th – High School: Needed: Copy of time sheet, clipboard, pencil.

Each line on the time sheet represents thirty seconds. The teacher or chaperone will clap every 30 seconds indicating that the student should move to the next line. The students will record what senses they used each section. The teacher may choose to tell them to close their eyes for a thirty second interval.

✂ Science Inventory: (digital cameras or plant identification books, or sheets; notepad)

- Students will identify plants or animals and research their scientific names.

Students should work in pairs. They will spend time in the swamp area photographing different types of plants and recording information about the plant in a notebook.

Information to include:

- Photo graph number:
- Location of plant or animal: (hill, water, flat land)
- Type of plant: vine, shrub, tree, herb, grass
- Size of animal:
- Comments: any other information that would help to identify the plant or animal.

Extension: Discovery Hike: See the attached identification work sheets. Or use Scenic Trail Discovery Hike lesson plan. Visit a local zoo or arboretum and do the sensory searches.

Teacher Closure: Discuss with the students what they learned and ask if making observations with more than just their eyes helped them to better understand what was around them.

Student Assessment: Participation in the activity.

Sensory Time Sheet

You will be recording the number of times you hear, see, smell and feel something in intervals of thirty seconds. When your teacher claps move down to the next line.

In each line of time, when you hear a sound, put a tally mark in the “Hear” column for that time. If you smell something, put a tally mark in the smell column. If you feel something, put a tally mark in the feel column. Since we see so much, making tallies for “See” will be a little different. Every time you see something that you did not see before, put a tally mark in the “See” column. (No tasting, please!)

Time	Hear	Smell	Feel	See (new)
30 seconds				
1 minute				
1 minute 30 seconds				
2 minutes				
2 minutes 30 seconds				
3 minutes				
3 minutes 30 seconds				
4 minutes				
4 minutes 30 seconds				
5 minutes				
5 minutes 30 seconds				
6 minutes				

Search for and list, 5 things that show evidence of being eating by something else.

Botanical Worksheet- Herbaceous Plant

Family _____ **Date/Location** _____

Common Name _____

Scientific Name _____

Plant Growth Habit:

Forb/Herb (broad leaves) Grass-like Lichen-like (flat moss-like) Moss-like Mushroom-like Vine

Plant Shape:

Climbing Vertical Horizontal Irregular Fountain-like Rounded

Foliage Color:

Dark Green Green Gray-green Red White-gray Yellow-green Natural-spotted

Habitat:

Light: Full Sun Part Sun Full Shade

Ground: Slope Flat Some Wet Wet

Soil: Sand Clay Mixed Loam

Abundance Rank: Only Plant Extremely Abundant Common Sparse Rare

Sketch or describe flower or fruit or seed.	Sketch or describe the plant shape.
Sketch or describe the leaf shape. Include veins and leaf margin.	