



# Natchez Trace Parkway Parks as Classroom

---

## **Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom**



A thematic unit on historic and environmental awareness featuring:

A Sensory Discovery Hike

Meets Mississippi Curriculum Objectives for

**Kindergarten**



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



## Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

---

### TO THE TEACHER

Thank you for participating in the Natchez Trace Parkway's education program. The program provides an interdisciplinary learning experience for students on the natural and cultural resources of the parkway using Mississippi curriculum objectives.

The theme of your program is "historic and environmental awareness." Students will learn about the natural resources of the Site by participating in activities that engage each of their senses. The pre-visit activities included in this packet are specific to the theme of your program and should be presented prior to your visit. The Park Ranger conducts the on-site instruction with assistance in discussion and discipline by the teacher. The post-site activities are designed to reinforce and build upon the site experience. Please feel free to contact the parkway at (662) 680-4027 if you have any further questions.

---

### CLASSROOM PARAMETERS

Target Class Size:	25-50 Kindergarten students
Curriculum areas:	Language Arts, Social Studies, and Math
Site:	Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom
Learning Strategies:	Use listening skills to communicate with the Ranger. Communicate with the Ranger during question and answer sessions. Observe unique characteristics of their surroundings by using their sense of sight, hearing, smell, and touch. Participate in both small group, and individual activities.
Pre-Site:	Pre-site activities: a classroom discussion on the five senses, and safety discussion
On-Site:	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (we are flexible). A Park Ranger will provide an introduction to include the purpose of the National Park Service, and an overview of the day's activities. Students will participate in a Ranger lead discovery hike, as well as hands on activities to increase their awareness of their senses and environment.
Post-site:	Post-site activities: art projects, sound map comparisons, discussions, and evaluation.



## Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

---

### LOGISTICAL INFORMATION Important Reminders for a Successful Program

- Map:** A map of the visitor center and surrounding area is included in this guide. If you need specific directions to the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center, please contact us at (662) 680-4027 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. central standard time.
- Where to meet:** All students, teachers, and chaperones will meet the Park Ranger in front of the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center. The introduction will begin in the open area just south of the building.
- Restrooms:** Restrooms are located in the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center. It is important that students use the restroom when arriving.
- Lunch:** Lunches will be kept on the bus for the duration of the program. There is an area north of the visitor center that has a few picnic tables and a grassy area for students to have lunch. Visitor center restrooms are available. Teachers will need to discuss other alternatives in the case of adverse weather.
- Weather Conditions:** Please remind students the day before your visit to wear appropriate footwear and clothing for a program that includes some outdoor time. Flip flops and sandals are not recommended. Temperatures and weather may be unpredictable. Call the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center at (662) 680-4027 if weather is a concern.
- Discipline:** The teacher is responsible for discipline during the program. Please remind your chaperones that they will be expected to assist with this duty.
- Chaperones:** The program is designed for a class of 50 students. The group will be divided in half. We require that a minimum of one teacher and/or chaperone be available for every eight students to maintain a positive and rewarding learning experience. Please share materials with the chaperones so that they may be prepared for the program and have the opportunity to interact with the students.
- Safety:** Please review and be aware of safety concerns addressed in the pre-site lesson. Notify the Park Ranger of any special concerns or medical conditions.
- Cancellations:** Should anything unforeseen occur preventing you from keeping your appointment, please contact the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center at (662) 680-4027 to notify us of your late arrival or cancellation. Late arrivals may impact other scheduled groups so being more than 10 minutes late will result in an activity being cut from the program. Being more than 15 minutes late may result in your forfeiting your entire program.



## Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION Site Description

---

**Nat'l Park Service:** The National Park Service is charged with the management and preservation of the nation's most precious natural and cultural resources. These resources are woven into our natural heritage, and they provide opportunities for recreation, appreciation of beauty, historical reflection, cultural enrichment, and environmental education.

The future vision of the service includes protection of Park resources; access and enjoyment for all people; education and interpretation to convey contributions of each Park unit and the Park system to the nation's values, character, and experience and continuing science, research, and resource management to effectively manage and protect Park resources.

**Natchez Trace Parkway:** The Natchez Trace Parkway was established to commemorate the historic significance of the Old Natchez Trace – a primitive trail stretching some 500 miles through the wilderness from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee. The Trace probably evolved from the repeated use of meandering game trails by the earliest human inhabitants. Over time, these paths were traveled by prehistoric American Indians, the known civilized historic American Indian Tribes, European explorers, American Traders, and others.

History has witnessed several phases in the development of the Natchez Trace, each with a distinct origin and purpose. Consider these words from the booklet, "The Natchez Trace – Indian Trail to Parkway":

"The modern concept that a road follows a fixed route does not apply to the Natchez Trace. During the short time that the road was a major line of communication, its location shifted to meet the rapidly changing needs of the old southwestern frontier. Only rarely do all of the various locations coincide to make it possible to say, 'this is the Natchez Trace.'"

Word spread among the early white settlers that it was possible to travel by foot between Nashville and Natchez through the Indian Nations. Traffic increased along this, the "Boatman's Trail," with men returning home to the north after floating the Mississippi and selling their cargo, flatboats included, which were sold for their lumber, at Natchez or New Orleans.



In 1798, Spain surrendered all lands north of the 31<sup>st</sup> parallel. The Mississippi Territory was then established with Natchez as its capital. Traffic on the Trace increased dramatically, to the point where the public was demanding that a new road be built to replace the crude Boatman's Trail. At Natchez by 1800 it was often referred to as the Nashville Road. In Tennessee it was referred to as the Natchez Road.

In 1801, Congress proclaimed this route a post road and, with the concurrence of the Indian Nations, ordered the army to clear a new road between Nashville and Natchez. Added usage caused discontent to grow even stronger concerning the harsh conditions of this new road. In 1806, Jefferson directed the Postmaster General to oversee an additional road improvement project, which incorporated strict engineering criteria using \$6,000 appropriated by Congress.

Unfortunately, funds for maintenance were not included in the appropriation. Complaints concerning conditions on the rugged wilderness trail flooded in as river trade boomed along with the increasing population. The war years of 1812-1815 witnessed the all-time heaviest travel along the Natchez Trace.

Before improvements were made, the need for them diminished. After his victory at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, Andrew Jackson marched his troops home along the Trace – an event that signaled not only the war's end, but also the decline of the Natchez Trace's importance as a transportation corridor. By 1820, steamboats were common on the Mississippi River, making upriver travel easy. Boatmen now chose to return home by water rather than by the overland route.



## BEECH SPRINGS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

---

### INTRODUCTION Kindergarten

In this kindergarten curriculum guide, we will be discussing the theme of “Environmental Awareness.” Using the historic and natural setting of the Natchez Trace Parkway, Students will use their senses to gain knowledge of a forest ecosystem, and some unique features of this environment. They will become more aware of their five senses, and the importance of becoming familiar with their environment.

In the Pre-Site lessons, students will become familiar with their five senses through classroom discussion. The pre-site lessons will assist the students in preparing for their visit to the Natchez Trace Parkway by providing the needed background information and foundation knowledge. This curriculum-based education package is designed to provide opportunities for students to interact with and learn about the natural environment with a safe, interactive approach. Upon completion of this program, students will have a broad knowledge base of their five senses, what makes a forest a forest, and the importance of being aware of their environment. This package is designed to allow the students to use hands-on activities to demonstrate their understanding of the principles taught. Students will make observations, work as a member of a team, and share with their classmates through discussion, while learning about the Natchez Trace Parkway and its resources.

In the On-Site lessons, students will be exposed to a forest ecosystem, participate in hands on activities, and discuss their findings with classmates. Students will learn more about their surroundings, including the importance of the Natchez Trace Parkway and its resources. These activities emphasize awareness of student’s immediate environment and the importance of understanding how we gather information, as well as how animals in a forest ecosystem gather information.

Finally, in the Post-Site lesson, students will participate in classroom projects similar to those at the park to compare and contrast various environments. Art projects and activities will help reinforce the information presented in a fun, diverse way.



Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

---

## MISSISSIPPI CURRICULUM CORRELATIONS Kindergarten

Language Arts Skills to be explored:

- Use words that describe and represent real-life objects and actions
- Use new vocabulary through stories and explicit instruction
- Demonstrate comprehension of passages heard by retelling stories and by answering questions.
- Demonstrate skills in recalling information
- Demonstrate listening skills to gain information by asking questions, discussing ideas, and relating events to daily life
- Demonstrate skills in identifying sequencing events

Social Studies skills to be explored:

- Demonstrate initial ability to display information in graphic form
- Demonstrate skills in locating new information and expressing understanding of the new information in classroom projects
- Recall value of rules and social conformation
- Identify characters and events from history and demonstrate the effect of one person's behavior upon another
- Identify various environments
- Describe reasons for change in the environment
- Identify Park Rangers and their role in the community

Mathematics Skills to be explored:

- Comparing numbers and sets of objects
- Using appropriate vocabulary associated with mathematics
- Describing relative location using positional terms
- Using vocabulary associated with measurements
- Measuring with non-standard units
- Measuring the passage of time



## Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

---

### VOCABULARY

Environment:	All of your surroundings. This includes plants, animals, and people (living things) and the air, water, rocks, buildings, and roads (things that are not living)
National Park:	An area of land protected by the government for the enjoyment of citizens. This area also includes plants, animals, streams and historic buildings
Park Ranger:	Someone who is responsible for protecting everything in a National Park
Observation:	Carefully viewing something to notice details
Protecting:	To keep something from being hurt

---

### SUGGESTED READING:

My Five Senses  
By Alike

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do I See?  
By B. Martin Jr.



# Natchez Trace Parkway Parks as Classroom

We are glad you had the opportunity to participate in the education program at Natchez Trace Parkway. Please help us continue to improve and develop this program by taking a few minutes to complete this form. We know how valuable your classroom time is, and we want to insure our curriculum and programs are serving your needs. Thank you for your time. Please return to Natchez Trace Parkway, Division of Resource Education, 2680 Natchez Trace Parkway, Tupelo, MS 38804.

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_  
Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Ranger(s): \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about this program? \_\_\_\_\_  
Was the reservation system convenient? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  
Did you have everything you needed to prepare for the Trip? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  
Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you prepare for the visit? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the program/presenter and any methods/materials utilized. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What was the best part of the educational experience? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please circle your response to the following questions:  
1 (high/agree)    2 (medium/okay)    3 (low/disagree)

Overall Evaluation			
Usefulness from curriculum standpoint:	1	2	3
Quality:	1	2	3
Interest level of students:	1	2	3
Age Appropriate:	1	2	3
Program:			
Relevant to curriculum:	1	2	3
Suitable for class size:	1	2	3
Appropriate Length:	1	2	3
Content for age group:	1	2	3
Use program in future:	1	2	3
Ranger effectiveness:	1	2	3



## Student's Classroom

---

### PRE-SITE LESSON The Five Senses

Duration:	30-45 minutes
Location:	School Classroom
Materials:	
Thematic unit:	Environmental awareness
Curriculum areas:	Language Arts, Social Studies, and Mathematics

---

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Learning Objectives:	The students will be able to: 1) list the five senses, 2) identify which body part is used for each of the five senses.
Teacher Task (set):	Introduce the five senses through discussion.
Teacher task (overview):	Explain to students that they will be learning about the five senses.
Teacher task (introduction):	Identify each of their five senses. Students can participate by pointing to the body part that is used for each sense. (Example: eyes for sight, etc.)
Student task:	Students will participate in the discussion, and classroom activities.
Teacher task (closure):	Review the importance of our five senses, and how we use them to gather information about our surroundings. Discuss what it may be like if we couldn't use one or more of our senses.
Student assessment:	Student's physical and oral participation in activity.



Student's Classroom

---

## PRE-SITE LESSON Safety

Duration:	15-20 minutes
Location:	School classroom
Materials:	Teacher discussion sheet on safety (Next Page)
Thematic units:	Environmental awareness
Curriculum areas:	Social studies

---

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Learning objectives:	The students will be able to: 1) discuss three methods to keep them from getting lost; 2) identify the most important thing to do when lost; 3) discuss and identify three dangers on the fieldtrip and know how to avoid them.
Teacher task (set):	Discuss the safety sheet and dangers students may encounter in the park.
Teacher task (Overview):	Identify behavior that students should exhibit to reduce safety hazards.
Teacher task (instruction):	Discuss methods to keep from getting lost and identify the most important things to do if lost.
Student task:	Participate in the discussion.
Teacher task (closure):	Summarize safety issues discussed during the lesson.
Student assessment:	Participation in the discussion.
Challenge activities:	Create a list of clothes and shoes that are necessary to safely visit the Natchez Trace Parkway.
Plans for re-teaching:	Post-visit summary and discussion.



## Student's Classroom

---

### PRE-SITE LESSON Safety Lesson-Teacher Discussion Sheet

- Dangers on fieldtrips:** Discuss crosswalks, staying as a group, staying on a trail, and possible weather conditions.
- Avoid dangers by:**
- Staying together as a group
  - Not running or playing rough
  - Watch where you put your hands and feet
  - Understanding crosswalks
  - Listening to instructions
- Avoid getting lost by:**
- Staying with a group
  - Be aware of landmarks
  - Understanding maps
  - Letting others know where you are and when you will return
- If you get lost:** Stop, wait, and stay calm, look at everything in your environment to see if you recognize anything or anybody.
- Words to the wise:** The Natchez Trace Parkway is a park where all things are protected by law. The area around the site can be a busy place with many people so not paying attention can get you lost. There is a busy road, but people in cars can see adults and groups easier than they can see one small child.
- Items for a safe visit:**
- | <b>Necessary</b>   | <b>Do not bring</b>                       |
|--------------------|---|
| Day pack           | Chewing gum                               |
| Bottled water      | Sandals, flip-flops, or other loose shoes |
| Lunch or snack     | Sharp objects                             |
| Rain gear          | Heavy or awkward items                    |
| Good walking shoes |   |



## Beech Springs Nature Trail

---

### ON-SITE LESSON Discovery Hike

<b>Duration:</b>	30 minutes
<b>Location:</b>	Beech Springs Nature Trail
<b>Materials:</b>	Scavenger Hunt Cards, dry erase markers
<b>Thematic Unit:</b>	Environmental and historic awareness
<b>Curriculum areas:</b>	Social Studies, Science, and Language Art

---

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Learning Objectives:	The students will be able to: 1) use all of their senses to investigate and gather information; 2) identify characteristics of a forest ecosystem; 3) follow directions so that the activity will be done effectively.
Teacher task (set):	Explain to students that they will be taking a discovery through a forest. They will be using all of their senses to learn more about their natural environment.
Teacher task (overview):	Explain to the students that early visitors to the Natchez Trace (animals, American Indians, boatmen, etc.) needed to be aware of their natural environment to ensure survival. One of the environments that they entered was a forest ecosystem.
Student task (instruction):	Have the students complete a sensory scavenger hunt in groups of two to five with the help of an adult. As they are walking on the trail, be on the lookout for different colors, smells, sounds, and textures. At different spots along the trail, ask students what animals may live here, what types of plants they see, how this is different from home and school, etc.
Student task:	Follow instructions and work as a team. Observe the sights and sounds of their environment
Teacher task (closure):	Ask students what colors they saw, sounds they heard, things they smelled, etc. Ask students what makes a forest a forest.
Student assessment:	Participation in the activity and follow up discussion.
Plans for re-teaching:	Ask students to compare what they saw at the Natchez Trace Parkway to what they see close to their school or home. Draw pictures of a forest, or collect leaves around school or home to do leaf rubbings or other art projects.



## Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

---

### ON-SITE LESSON Sound Map

Duration:	10-20 minutes
Location:	Open area north of visitor center
Materials:	Paper, crayons, pencils
Thematic Unit:	Environmental and historic awareness
Curriculum areas:	Social Studies and Language Arts

---

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Learning objectives:	The students will be able to: 1) Use their sense of hearing to become more familiar with their environment; 2) Identify that some animals may need a stronger sense of hearing to survive. 3) Draw a map of the sounds they hear.
Teacher task (set):	Explain and demonstrate how important our sense of hearing is.
Teacher task (overview):	Explain to students that there are many animals that depend on their sense of hearing for survival. (owls, predators, etc.) Perform a demonstration by having all of the students sit in a circle quietly. Instruct the students to close their eyes. You will be walking around the group clapping your hands or using a noise maker. Have the students point in the direction that the sound is coming from. After a few tries, encourage the students to make a cup around their ears, to make their ears larger, like a deer, and help funnel the sound in.
Teacher task (instruction):	Explain to the students that they will be drawing a map of all the sounds they hear. They can draw a picture of what is making the noise (ex: a car). They can draw wavy lines, long and dark for loud sounds or short and light for quiet sounds, etc. Show an example of a sound map.
Student task:	Students will draw a sound map by drawing themselves in the middle of a blank piece of paper. When they hear a sound, they will place it on the paper where they think it is coming from.
Teacher task (closure):	After the students complete the sound map, encourage them to share their maps with the group. Ask students why the sense of hearing is important to us.
Student assessment:	Participation in the activity and post activity discussion.
Plans for re-teaching:	Post-site summary and discussion. Students will draw a sound map of their classroom, or school yard. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two. Students can make their own sound maker with dried beans and paper cups or plates, etc.



## Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

---

### ON-SITE LESSON Touch Box

Duration:	10-15 minutes
Location:	Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom
Materials:	Wooden or cardboard box, common items (ex: spoon, fork, marble, crayon,)
Thematic Unit:	Environmental and historic awareness
Curriculum areas:	Social Studies and Language Arts

---

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Learning objectives:	The students will be able to: 1) use their sense of touch to identify common objects 2) name an animal that depends on its sense of touch
Teacher task (set):	Explain and demonstrate how important the sense of touch is to specific animals. (Snakes and spiders use vibrations in the ground, cats use their whiskers, etc.)
Teacher task (overview):	Explain to students that we use our sense of touch every day to become more familiar with our environment, just as animals do. If we can't use one or more of our senses, our sense of touch may become more sensitive.
Teacher task (instruction):	Explain to students that they will not be able to see some objects that they may see everyday of their lives. They will be challenged to identify these objects by using only their sense of touch.
Student task:	Students will use their sense of touch to guess what some common items are.
Teacher task (closure):	After the students participate in the activity, ask students what was easy and difficult about identifying the objects. Ask students if they have ever walked barefoot in sand, on gravel, etc. Discuss feeling not just with hands, but other body parts
Student assessment:	Participation in the activity and post activity discussion.
Plans for re-teaching:	Post-site summary and discussion. Continue to introduce students to new textures through art projects, class discussions, etc. Develop a touch box for your classroom



## Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom

---

### ON-SITE LESSON Mystery Scents

Duration:	10-15 minutes
Location:	Beech Springs Outdoor Classroom
Materials:	24 Film canisters, 24 Cotton Balls, 12 different extracts, spices, lotions, etc. with a strong scent
Thematic Unit:	Environmental and historic awareness
Curriculum areas:	Social Studies and Language Arts

---

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Learning objectives:	The students will be able to: 1) use their sense of smell to find a “scent match” 2) name an animal that depends on its sense of smell to survive
Teacher task (set):	Explain and demonstrate how important the sense of smell is to specific animals. (Predators use their sense of smell to find their prey, nocturnal animals can't rely on their sense of site, so may have increased sense of smell, etc.)
Teacher task (overview):	Explain to students that we use our senses every day to become more familiar with our environments, just as animals do. Ask them when they use their sense of smell. If we can't use one or more of our senses, our sense of smell may become more sensitive.
Teacher task (instruction):	Explain to students that they will each receive a film canister that has a specific scent. They will need to find a person in the class that has the same scent that they do. Brainstorm with the group for ways to determine if they have found their match. To avoid complete chaos, suggest that they form two lines, and take a turn smelling each others canister.
Student task:	Students will use their sense of smell to find their partner.
Teacher task (closure):	After the students complete the activity, ask them whether it was easy or difficult to find their partners. What is it like when you can't smell? (Have a cold, etc.) When do animals need to use their sense of smell?
Student assessment:	Participation in the activity and post activity discussion.
Plans for re-teaching:	Post-site summary and discussion.