FACT SHEET

Natchez Trace Parkway
2680 Natchez Trace Parkway
Tupelo, MS 38804
1-800-305-7417
www.nps.gov/natr

Superintendent: Dale Wilkerson, Acting

Established: Authorized by Congress on May 18, 1938 (52 Stat. 407)

Background: The Old Natchez Trace was a series of paths carved out of the landscape by large animals, American Indians, European explorers, and American settlers. Over time, the paths were gradually linked and used for transportation, communication, and trade. For more than two decades, the Old Trace was the most significant highway of the Old Southwest and one of the more important roads in the nation. From 1785 to the 1820s, it was an avenue of exploration, international rivalry, warfare, trade, settlement, and development. During this "Boatmen Period", owners of agricultural products, livestock, coal, and other materials from the Ohio River Valley floated their goods down the Mississippi River to ports in Natchez and New Orleans. Once the goods were sold, the "Kaintucks" sold their boats for the lumber and hiked or rode horses toward home via the Old Trace. In 1800, it was designated a national post road for the delivery of mail. General Andrew Jackson used the Old Trace to march troops from the Battle of New Orleans back to Nashville after defeating the British at the end of the War of 1812. The Old Trace was traveled by many, including Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians, "Kaintuck boatmen", Andrew and Rachael Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Aaron Burr, Henry Clay, James Audubon, Meriwether Lewis, and outlaws such as John Murrell, the Harpe brothers, and Samuel Mason. New roads, the development of the steamboat and the rerouting of portions of the national post road led to the decline of the Old Trace as a major transportation corridor by the mid 1820s.

In 1905, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) began a grassroots effort to place granite markers in every Mississippi county through which the Old Trace ran. Other dedicated individuals embraced this wonderful vision and enhanced it by suggesting that a paved parkway be constructed to permanently memorialize the Old Trace. These individuals included Mrs. Roane Fleming Byrnes and other members of the Natchez Trace Parkway Association; local, state, and federal political leaders; and other devoted supporters too numerous to mention. Over many decades they, and their successors, generously gave of their time and resources to ensure that this vibrant symbol of America's heritage was developed to remind current and future generations of what the Old Southwest had been, and what it had become.

Designations: The Parkway is one of America's 150 National Scenic Byways including 31 All-American Roads (1/11). The Parkway is unique among federal recreational motorways because it commemorates an earlier transportation route. Official designations (dates): National Parkway (National Park Service—5/18/38), National Forest Scenic Byway (14-mile segment that bisects the Tombigbee National Forest—U.S. Forest Service—12/4/90), AAA Scenic Byway (American Automobile Association—4/10/91), and All-American Road and National Scenic Byway (Federal Highway Administration—9/23/96). Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail (5 segments parallel to Parkway—3/28/83).

Awards: Biennial Award for Engineering Excellence in Highway Design, US Department of Transportation, 1982 and 1994; Award of Excellence, Post-Tensioning Institute, Steam Mill Hollow Bridge, 1987; Nine design awards for the Double Arch Bridge including Presidential Design Award, National Endowment for the Arts, 1995; Presidential Award for Design Excellence, Outstanding Achievement in Design for the Government of the U. S. of America, 1997; Grand Award of Engineering Excellence (Florida Institute of Consulting Engineers, 1994, American Society of Landscape Architects 1899-1999 Centennial Medallion, National Landmark for Outstanding Landscape Architecture; Partnership Award, NPS Southeast Region, 2002; National Fire Plan Excellence in Community Assistance, 2005; Best Practice of Southern Tourism, Southern Governors' Association, 2005; Award of Excellence, (Overall Public Relations Campaign), Southern Public Relations Federation, 2005; Official Southern Treasure, Southern Traveler Magazine, 2005; Tourism Promotion of the Year, Mississippi Tourism Association, 2006; Excellence in Highway Design Merit Award, Federal Highway Administration, 2006; and Readers Choice Award—Favorite Scenic Drive, Southern Living Magazine, multiple years.

Location: The Parkway is located in three states: Mississippi (MS)—309 miles, Alabama (AL)—33 miles, and Tennessee (TN)—102 miles. It traverses 7 counties in TN (Davidson, Williamson, Maury, Hickman, Lewis, Lawrence, and Wayne), 2 counties in AL (Lauderdale and Colbert) and 16 counties in MS (Tishomingo, Prentiss, Itawamba, Lee, Pontotoc, Chickasaw, Clay, Webster, Choctaw, Attala, Leake, Madison, Hinds, Claiborne, Jefferson, and Adams). Headquarters are located in Tupelo, MS.

Congressional Districts: (District-Party) **MS Senators:** Cochran (R) and Wicker (R). **MS Representatives:** Nunnelee (1st-R), Thompson (2nd-D), and Harper (3rd-R). **AL Senators:** Sessions (R) and Shelby (R). **AL Representatives:** Brooks (5th-R). **TN Senators:** Corker (R) and Alexander (R). **TN Representatives:** DesJarlais (4th-R), Cooper (5th-D), and Blackburn (7th-R). (As of September, 2012)

Size: 52,289 acres covering a distance of 444 miles. The Parkway averages 800 feet in width.

FY13 Budget: $10.8 million authorized budget.

FTEs: 140 Full Time Equivalent employees, including an average of 35 seasonal employees.

Visitation: The Parkway is the seventh most visited unit in the National Park System with 5.6 million recreational visits in 2012. The total number of visits to the Parkway in 2012 was 14.5 million.

Economic Impact: A National Park Service report for 2011 shows that 5.7 million recreational visitors to the Natchez Trace Parkway spent $93 million in the communities surrounding the Park. This spending supported over 1,200 jobs in the local area.

Sites Administered by the Parkway: Tupelo National Battlefield, Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield Site, Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail. In 1961, Congress, through legislation, delegated administration of the Meriwether Lewis National Monument (Meriwether Lewis Death and Burial Site) and Ackia Battlefield (now the Chickasaw Village Site) to the Parkway. Today historians believe that the Ackia Battlefield is not within the Parkway boundary.

Scenic Resources: The Parkway's scenic vistas encompass a traditional southern landscape that offers travelers manicured grassy roadsides and native tree plantings intermingled with a mosaic of hardwood and softwood forest communities, wetlands, prairie landscapes, agricultural croplands, abundant wildlife, and architecturally significant bridges and structures.

Cultural Resources: More than 180 separate segments of the Old Trace have been identified within the Parkway's boundaries and represent about 97 miles of the historic route. Other historic properties include structures, roads, Civil War battlefields and campsites, an open pit iron ore mine, historic inn sites, historic houses, and some 36 known cemetery sites on or adjacent to the Old Trace. Some of the most significant properties include the Mount Locust Plantation near Natchez, Mississippi; the John Gordon House in Tennessee; and the Meriwether Lewis Monument, also in Tennessee, which marks the grave of the renowned explorer. A complex of 35 dwellings built in the mid-1930s as a federal subsistence experiment, located near Parkway Headquarters in Tupelo, Mississippi, is recognized as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places. More than 356 archeological sites are located on NATR lands, highlighted by six American Indian mound sites interpreted for visitors. The most significant of these sites is Emerald Mound near Natchez, Mississippi, the second-largest ceremonial mound in the United States and a designated National Historic Landmark.

Natural Resources: Approximately 1,500 species of plants help support 33 species of mammals, 134 species of birds, 70 species of reptiles/amphibians, and a variety of other vertebrates and invertebrates. The Parkway provides critical habitat for three federally listed species: the Slackwater Darter (threatened) the Cumberlandian combshell (endangered), and the oyster mussel (endangered). There are 5 other threatened and endangered species within its boundaries.

The Parkway represents a transect of the physiographic provinces and communities of the Midsouth. These provinces include Southern Pine Hills, North Central Hills, Flatwood, and Pontotoc Ridge. It also passes through six major forest types, two prairies (Jackson and Black Belt), several river systems (the Tombigbee, Lower Mississippi, Pearl, and Tennessee rivers) and four main waterways/watershed areas (Tennessee, Buffalo, and Duck rivers and Bear Creek).

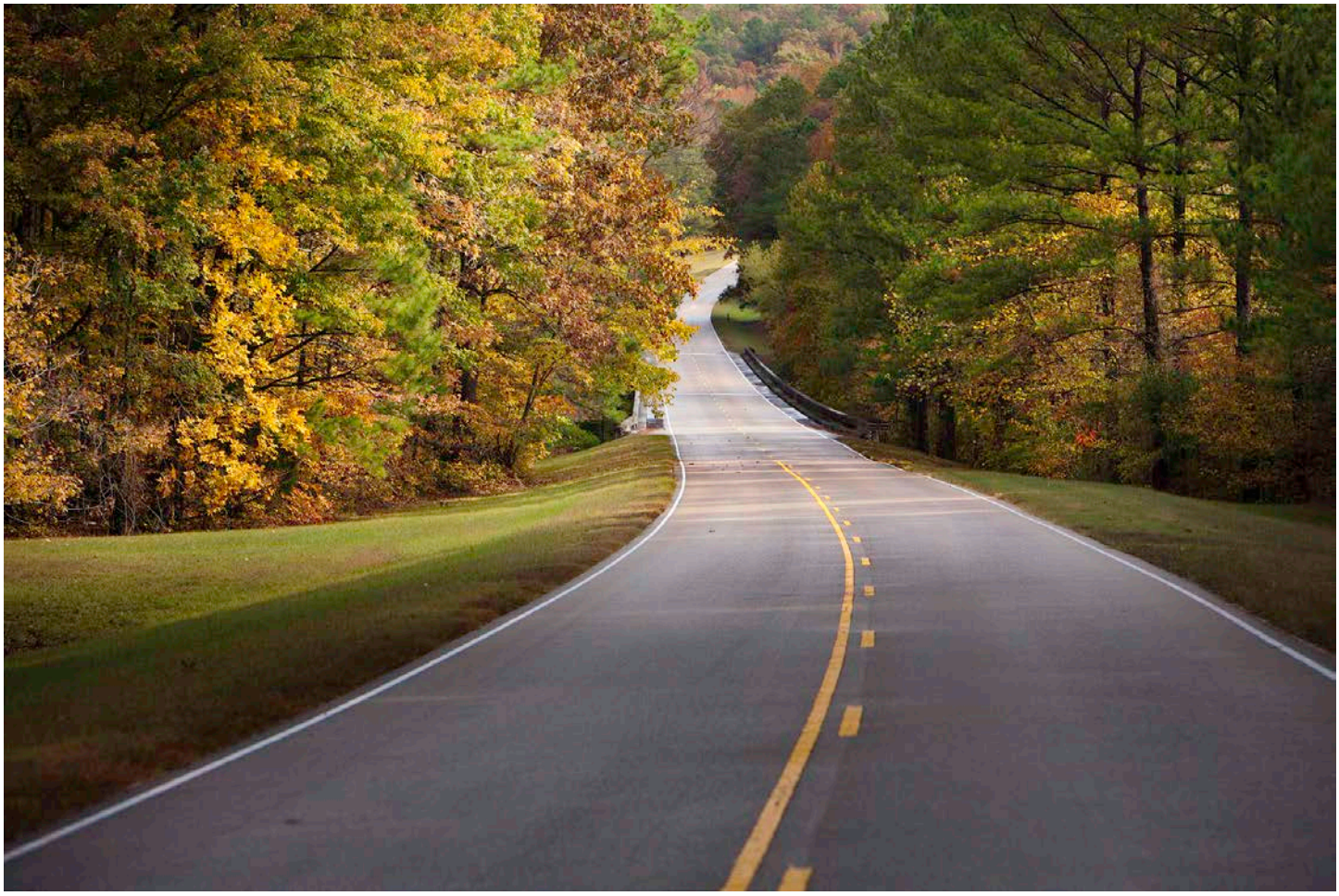
Recreational Resources: The Parkway's 87 mile trail system consists of 53 nature, hiking, or horse trails, including five National Scenic Trail segments (65 miles). There are over 10 miles of multi-use trail adjacent to the Parkway near the community of Ridgeland, Mississippi.

Significant Parkway Sites:

- Double Arch Bridge: Received the Presidential Award for Design Excellence in 1995 for its innovative design. It rises 155 feet above the valley and eliminates the use of spandrel columns. (Milepost 438)
- Gordon House and Ferry Site: One of the few structures (constructed in 1818) from the heyday of the Old Trace that survives today. (Milepost 407.7)
- Jackson Falls: Named for President Andrew Jackson, the falls are a beautiful Parkway water feature. (Milepost 404.7)
- Meriwether Lewis Death and Burial Site: On October 11, 1809, Meriwether Lewis, the noted explorer, was found dead of two gunshot wounds at Grinder's Stand (inn). The site includes a cabin built in the style of the inn and Lewis' gravesite and monument. (Milepost 385.9)
- Colbert Ferry Site: In the early 1800s Chickasaw Chief George Colbert operated a stand and a ferry crossing the Tennessee River. The site is one of the best recreational areas on the Parkway and includes a boat launch, picnic areas, and a bike-only campground. (Milepost 327.0)
- Pharr Mounds: One of the most significant groups of Woodland culture mounds in the southeast. (Milepost 286.7)
- Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield Site: Site of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest's tactical victory during the Civil War. Excellent example of "winning the battle but losing the war". (Milepost 281)
- Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center (Parkway headquarters): Located midway between Natchez and Nashville, the visitor center provides exhibits, a 12 minute introductory film, and monthly events and programs. (Milepost 266)
- French Camp: Louis LeFleur established a stand here in 1812. It became a school in 1822 and remains one to this day. (Milepost 180.7)
- Cypress Swamp: The nature trail takes you through a water tupelo/bald cypress swamp. (Milepost 122.0)
- Parkway Information Cabin: Reopened in 2009 as a visitor contact station. (Milepost 102.4)
- Rocky Springs: The old, abandoned town site can be reached by a short trail. (Milepost 54.8)
- Sunken Trace: Walk through a deeply eroded section of the Old Trace at Parkway. (Milepost 41.5)
- Mount Locust: This restored historic house, one of the first stands in Mississippi, has daily interpretive programs. Originally a cotton plantation, it also provides a glimpse into the Mississippi 19th century African American experience. (Milepost 15.5)
- Emerald Mound: Ancestors of the Natchez Indians built this ceremonial mound about 1400 C.E. (current era). The second largest of its type in the nation, it is a designated National Historic Landmark that covers nearly 8 acres. (Milepost 10.3)

Popular Parkway Scenic Overlooks:

- Water Valley Parking Area (Milepost 411.8)
- Baker Bluff Overlook (Milepost 405.1)
- Old Trace Drive (2) (Mileposts 403 and 375.8)
- Swan Valley Overlook (Milepost 392.5)
- Freedom Hills Overlook (Milepost 316.6)
- Twenty-Mile Bottom Overlook (Milepost 278.4)
- Black Belt Overlook (Milepost 251.9)
- Little Mountain Overlook at Jeff Busby (Milepost 186.7)
- Reservoir Overlook (Ross Barnett) (Milepost 105.7)



The Natchez Trace Parkway at milepost 315. *NPS /©Marc Muench*