

Teacher's Self-Guided Walking Tour

Purpose

The purpose of this self-guided program is to allow you, the teacher, the opportunity to provide your students with a meaningful experience while visiting the park. You are strongly encouraged to review these materials before you visit the site. The walking tour is a 1-mile round trip from the Visitor Center (Allow 40-50 minutes for the walk). School buses cannot drive to the mounds due to a historic railroad tunnel with an 8-foot clearance.

Please keep the following in mind:

- Climbing on the mound slopes is not permitted.
- Be aware of the weather. Please have the children dress appropriately. Temperatures can range from the 40s -100s depending on the time of year.
- There is no water available past the Visitor Center area. It is a good idea to carry water with you.
- Have the students wear comfortable walking shoes.
- The only restrooms are located inside of the Visitor Center.

Overview

There are 5 major sites for you to explore during your hike

- The Earth Lodge: A council chamber/religious building.
- The Trading Post: A British trading post used in the 1700s.
- Lesser Temple Mound: The second-largest mound in the park; used by the second chief.
- Great Temple Mound: The largest mound in the park at five stories tall; used by the chief of the village.
- Funeral Mound: A burial mound used for the elite members of society.

Earth Lodge

(Only 10 students will fit inside the Earth Lodge at once.) The Earth Lodge was a council chamber used by the Mississippian Culture between 900 CE-1250 CE. The fifty seats in the Earth Lodge bring to mind images of men gathering for political and ceremonial (religious) meetings. Distinct features of the floor include the bird of prey effigy platform with three seats, a depressed fire pit, and forty-seven "raised bench" seats that extend around the circular wall and drop in elevation as they approached the entrance, suggesting that the closer a person sat to the platform, the higher his status in the society. The Mississippians eventually burned down the building; possibly as some kind of cleansing ritual, or for the simple reason that the building was no longer safe for use. Fragments of clay, charred timber and river cane from the ceiling/roof lay in a spoked-wheel pattern on top of the floor and were carbon dated to 1015 CE. A large pottery vessel was the only artifact found in the Earth Lodge when it was rediscovered in 1934.

Potential Questions for Students: What did the Mississippians meet here for? What important issues might they have discussed? Why is the seating arranged like it is?

British Trading Post

In 1690, English traders from Charleston built a trading store adjacent to the traditional Creek trading path that went from Augusta, Georgia to the lower Creek Towns along the Chattahoochee River, a distance of 215 miles. A stockade wall and a shallow ditch surrounded the trading store for protection from attack. The Creeks

traded skins for European goods, including guns, iron pots, knives, and cotton cloth, in exchange for fur and skins. The Creeks moved back to the Chattahoochee River and abandoned the village after the Yamasee War erupted in 1715 in protest against the British corruption related to fur trade practices.

Potential Questions for Students: What items did the Mississippians trade to the British? What items could they get in return?

Great and Lesser Temple Mound

The Mississippians were mound builders who constructed mounds for elite members of society. Relatively little is known about these mounds except that they were topped by rectangular wooden structures most likely used for religious and ceremonial purposes. A staircase descended from the summit of the mound to the plaza level below. The size and presence of it is another indication of the advanced society that built and used it, probably for the important ceremonies and rituals. Scientists can only suggest what might have been, as true archeological proof does not exist. The Mississippians were master farmers, as evidenced by the extensive old fields that remain. The number of mounds suggests that a large number of healthy individuals labored intently to build the village and structures and to produce the food necessary to sustain a large population. There had to be strong leaders present in their society to organize and to maintain such a large population. The successive stages of the development of the mounds suggest a long period of occupation. The recovered artifacts further suggest an elite class of priests and/or chieftains who were carefully honored in their death, another sign of the advanced culture of the Mississippians.

Potential Questions for Students: What were the mounds built for? Who used them?

Funeral Mound

(Can be seen from the top of the Great Temple Mound with the parking lot in front of the Funeral Mound.) The Funeral Mound is the burial mound for the elite members of Mississippian society. Over 100 burials were discovered within the mound, as well as log tombs and other structures at different levels. Archeological evidence suggests that this mound was built in seven stages. A structure was built on top of each stage, probably to prepare the dead for burial and for the accompanying ceremonies. The present height of the mound is at the third stage. At the seventh and final stage of construction, it is estimated that the mound may have measured as much as 280 feet long, 100 feet wide and 25 feet high. Before the park was established in 1936, the Central of Georgia Railroad destroyed a portion of the northeast corner of the mound during its construction in the 1870's.

Potential Questions for Students: Who was buried here? Why were these people given a special place for burial while the common people weren't

