

All Across America

Preparing a Travel Guide for a Cross-Country Journey



Objectives:

Students will:

1. Share and identify their travel experiences on a map of the United States.
2. Learn about Matt Gross' journey across the United States by reading and discussing the article "Finally, Exit From New York."
3. Identify and present highlights for travel itineraries based on historical or cultural themes.
4. Write travel guides to a selected stop on their itineraries.

Assignment:

1. Read the article "Finally, Exit From New York"

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20070524thursday.html, and answer the following questions:

- a. What is the purpose of Matt Gross' trip?
- b. Where will he start his journey? Where will he end it? What does he plan to see in between?
- c. What are the "rules" of his trip?
- d. How is he deciding where to stop?
- e. How would you describe his writing or narrative style?
- f. What was his first stop and what details does he provide readers about that destination?
- g. How do you think he feels about that stop?
- h. Why might Mebane be considered an unconventional tourist destination?
- i. What did he encounter there?
- j. How does he describe his experience in Mebane?
- k. Do any of his stories inspire you to visit those locations? Why or why not?

2. Create an itinerary for a road trip to two or three locations in the United States based on a theme listed below:

HISTORICAL THEMES

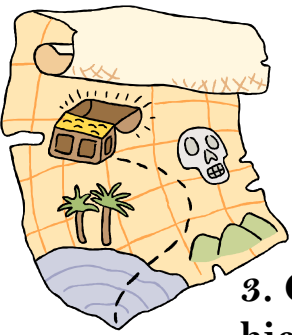
- Birthplaces of U. S. Presidents
- Birthplaces of notable Americans (such as women, African-Americans, inventors or writers)
- Stops along the Pony Express
- Battlefields of the Revolutionary War, Spanish-American War or Civil War
- Milestones in the Civil Rights Movement
- Notable locations in literature, music or movies
- American centers of industry (such as auto factories, coal mines, oil fields, technology labs or financial centers)
- Notable laboratories of invention (cotton gin, airplane, electricity, telephone, locomotive, etc.)
- American Indian reservations
- National parks or monuments
- Zoos, aquariums or amusement parks
- Major league baseball ballparks, football stadiums or NASCAR racetracks
- Pop culture landmarks
- Notable, regional cuisine



Consider the following guiding questions:

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What makes this site a worthwhile destination for visitors?
- What might be the historical or cultural importance of this location?
- When did an important or notable event take place in this location?
- What noteworthy story might be told about the people that live here and/or the events that took place here?
- What are the precise locations of sites travelers should visit?
- How do these compare with and/or relate to the events and people of the past?
- What images or stories might entice visitors to this location?



3. Complete a travel guide for one stop on their itinerary, highlighting the following features:

- a scenic or noteworthy site related to the theme
- the historical or cultural importance of that site, if applicable
- another type of local entertainment or culture
- a lodging recommendation
- a dining recommendation

Further Questions for Discussion:

-Why might you want to take the advice of a person who has been to a travel destination you are planning to visit? What information might you want from that person? How much experience or expertise would you want that person to have in order to be considered credible?

-Have you ever recommended a travel destination to a friend based on your own experience there? Why did you want to share that experience? What did you hope your friend might gain from the experience?

-Have you ever visited a place off the beaten path that you never expected to visit but that made an impression? What did you take away from the experience? Would you recommend it to anyone else?

-Are there places in your own community that you consider to be off the beaten path? Why might people not know about it? Why should they?

-Why do people travel? What do people hope to gain or learn from their travels?

-What would you consider your ideal travel destination? Why?

Extension Activities:

1. Read a book by a noted travel writer such as "On the Road" by Jack Kerouac, "The Grapes of Wrath" by John Steinbeck, "Blue Highways: A Journey Into America" by William Least Heat-Moon or "A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail" by Bill Bryson. Write a critique of the book that addresses the impact of the writing on your own views of America and/or the locations featured in the story. How might the story influence your own desire to visit that place or those places? What impression do you have of that place as a result of the writing?

2. Write a one-page unit for your American history textbook on an important historical event, place or person in your town or city. Visit your local history museum, library or

archive as a resource for your investigations. What are the important facts? How might you present those facts in a way that is both informative and interesting to learners? How does the local history fit into the context of United States history? Write a quiz for the unit that includes an answer key for teachers. If possible, print the test in the school newspaper and invite students to send in their answers. Publish the correct answers in the next issue of the paper.

3. Write a message to Matt Gross on his blog at <http://frugaltraveler.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/05/22/frugal-traveler-tell-matt-where-to-go-in-georgia-and-alabama/#respond> recommending a place they think he should visit. Why do you want to go there? How do you know about it? What have you heard about it? What experience are you looking for him to have?

4. Track Matt Gross' travels on a large-scale map of the United States posted in the hallway outside of your classroom. Collect words, phrases and images from his reports and tack them onto the map.

Interdisciplinary Connections:

Economics

- Prepare a travel guide for visitors to your area that offers suggestions on what they might do for \$100 a day. Include the daily cost for lodging, food, entertainment and gas. What sites or events off the beaten path might you include? What creative measures can you suggest for saving money in your area? Submit your guide to the local tourism board as a resource.

-Create a budget for a two-week road trip to the destination of your choice. Research options for frugal travel in that location. What creative measures might you use to cut costs? What are some of the essential expenses you would not skimp on during your trip?

Fine Arts - Create a mural that captures the feeling of your town or city to display in a tourist location in your area. Try to include both historical and contemporary images in the work.

Global Studies - Create a travel itinerary for teenagers traveling to a foreign country. Include both historical and current information. Consolidate finished works into a travel guide to submit to the school library as a resource.

Journalism - Write a travel essay about a location of your choosing to be featured in the school newspaper. Your essay should incorporate the history of the place and your own experience visiting or living there, as well as historical and current images. How will the information you relate inform or encourage potential visitors? What details can you include to help guide visitors? How might knowing the history of the place influence travelers to visit the location? Work as a class to create a special summer travel section of the school newspaper featuring your essays.

Teaching with The Times - Read the Travel section of The Times every day for twelve weeks and clip the Frugal Traveler articles. Which of the featured locations would you

like to visit? Why? To what degree did his writing inspire you, if at all? If you were to visit that place, would you follow recommendations? Write a reflection that responds to these questions and includes your own recommendation of at least one thing to do or see in that locale. To order The New York Times for your classroom, [click here](#).

Technology - Create a three-minute video postcard in the spirit of Matt Gross', found at http://video.on.nytimes.com/index.jsp?fr_story=acc9cc11b735b18ee710d3d5a0267c14394d5def, that features the unique sites in your area. What out-of-the-way places should visitors experience? How will you narrate your postcard in a way that's informative and fun? Share videos in class.

Other Information on the Web

Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com/>) allows users to plan a trip and to create a customized map (http://maps.google.com/help/maps/mymaps/index.html#utm_campaign=en&utm_source=en-ha-na-us-google&utm_medium=ha&utm_term=my%20map) with text, photos and videos.

See America (<http://www.seeamerica.org/>) offers resources and recommendations for travelers in the United States, including maps and local visitor guides.

National Geographic (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/destinations/>) offers resources and recommendations for travelers in the United States.