

The Natchez Trace Parkway



Imagine a country road. Imagine a country road with perfectly-cut grass on both sides. Imagine a country road without litter. Imagine a country road without advertising billboards, supermarkets and McDonalds. It is very quiet. You can hear birds singing. There are very few cars. Sometimes there is only one: yours! But if you break the speed limit (50 miles per hour, or 80 kilometres per hour), the police will arrive immediately.

ON THE ROAD

Where is this strange place? It is the Natchez Trace Parkway, 444 miles (715 kilometres) of road between Nashville, Tennessee, and Natchez, Mississippi. It offers a great “on the road” journey, with beautiful scenery and towns, fascinating history and even archaeology. The scenery changes gradually as you drive south, from the waterfalls in the north to the swamps in the south.

ROCK'N'ROLL!

The Natchez Trace Parkway crosses three states: Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi. The Visitor Center is exactly half-way on the Parkway, in Tupelo, Mississippi. Is the name Tupelo familiar? Yes? That’s right, it’s the birthplace of Elvis Presley! Here you can see the little house where he was born and the hardware store where his mother bought him his first guitar. There’s also the Automobile Museum of Tupelo, where there are more than 100 cars, one for every year since 1886. Which is the best one? The Tucker. It was a revolutionary invention, but the automobile industry boycotted it.

PREHISTORIC

Rock’n’roll and cars are symbols of modern life, but the Natchez Trace Parkway is prehistoric. It was originally a migration route for bison. Later Native American tribes used it. Then came the European settlers, who travelled by horse and wagon. You can still see their tracks in parts of the Parkway. Today the Parkway is a road for cars, but animals like deer and wild turkeys have the right of way! The Natchez Trace Parkway is a great journey if you’re not in a hurry. It is an adventure. You will discover new places and make new friends along the way. And when you complete your journey you will want to turn around and do it all again, driving in the opposite direction.

IF YOU GO...

You can drive the Natchez Trace Parkway in both directions. It takes between two and five days, depending on the number of stops you make. But please remember that there are no hotels, restaurants or gas stations on the Parkway: you must go onto other roads to find these. This will offer a good opportunity to see the small communities which are the heart of America. To find information and to download a detailed map, go to the official Natchez Trace Parkway (NTP) website: www.nps.gov/natr

Read the article and the information box and answer the questions.

1. What makes the Natchez Trace Parkway special?
2. What happens if you drive along it too fast?
3. In what part of the road do you see waterfalls?
4. What is the connection between Tupelo and Elvis Presley?
5. What was the Tucker?
6. Why wasn't it a success?
7. What tracks can you see in some parts of the Parkway?
8. What do you have to do if there are deer or wild turkeys on the road?
9. How long does it take to drive from one end of the Parkway to the other?
10. How many service stations are there along the road?

KEY

1. There's no traffic, the scenery is beautiful and it's so quiet that you can hear birds singing. 2. The police will arrive immediately. 3. In the northern part. 4. Elvis Presley was born in Tupelo. 5. It was a car. 6. Because the automobile industry boycotted it. 7. The tracks of the wagons used by settlers that travelled along the road. 8. You have to stop for them. 9. It takes two to five days. 10. There aren't any. You have to leave the Parkway and go onto other roads to find them.