

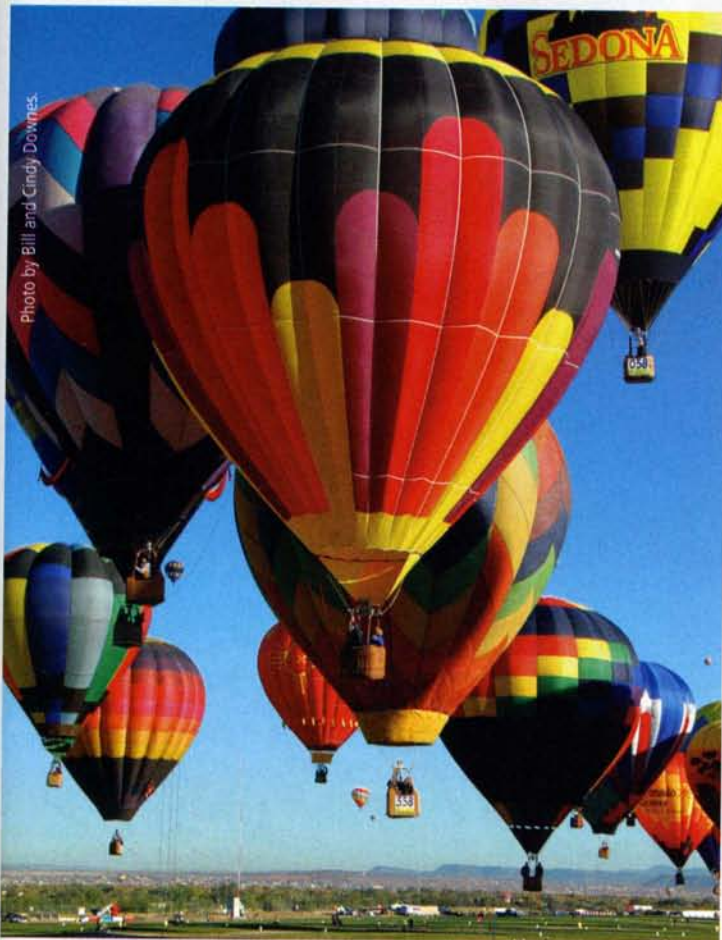
Travel Your Way to a Good Education

By Cindy Downes



“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.”





Ride through the sky at the world-famous Albuquerque Balloon Festival.

2 Set a time schedule.

Decide how long you'll spend on the unit and schedule it to be completed just before the trip begins. Two to three weeks is a good time frame for a local field trip unit, whereas a trip to a large city may require six weeks or more, depending upon how much you wish to cover.

As appropriate, replace regularly scheduled schoolwork with your travel unit. For example, if your unit covers history, art, music, literature, composition, and science, then substitute the work in this unit for regular classes in those subjects. Continue the remaining subjects as usual. *The Checklist* (www.oklahomahomeschool.com/checklist.html) is an excellent resource for keeping track of travel learning!

3 Write an outline of topics to cover in the time allotted.

You can't do everything! Choose what's most important for your children. In addition to academic skills, consider physical development, spiritual development, social skills, work ethics, business skills, and character traits.

A trip to the Albuquerque Balloon Festival, for example, creates an opportunity to study weather and transportation; a trip to the Grand Canyon presents the perfect occasion on which to learn about landforms, rocks, minerals, and creation science, while a trip to the Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Center offers a unique opportunity to talk about family values.

The words of Augustine remind us that there is no better way to learn than to walk in the places where history was made, touch the natural world that God created, and visit the homes and workplaces of the world's greatest artists, musicians, writers, and humanitarians.

As a homeschooling family, you have the unique opportunity of being able to take a few weeks off each year to travel, whether locally or around the world. Why not make the most of these experiences by creating lesson plans based on your travels? Not only will you stimulate your child's interest in the places you visit, but you'll also make learning more enjoyable and productive.

Here are some tips on how to create simple, multi-level lesson plans based on your travels:

1 Choose a focus.

Research your destination and answer questions such as the following: How does this destination relate to the history of our state, country, or world? On what person or event does this destination focus, either historically or in current events? What topics in science, Bible, art, music, literature, PE, health, business, etc., can be taught that relate to this destination?

For example, a field trip to the Oklahoma City National Memorial in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, will naturally focus on the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The focus for a trip to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, however, might be narrowed to a particular event such as the Underground Railroad, a particular person such as Benjamin Franklin, or even a particular animal in the Philadelphia Zoo.



Burros waiting to be adopted at the Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Center in Pauls Valley, Oklahoma.

Here is a sample topic outline for a Grand Canyon unit:

WEEK 1

Day 1: How the Grand Canyon was formed/creation

Day 2: Archaeological digs in Grand Canyon/careers

Day 3: Geology of the Grand Canyon/major landforms

Day 4: Rock and mineral identification

Day 5: Explorers of the Grand Canyon

WEEK 2

Day 1: Native Americans of the Grand Canyon/missions

Day 2: Native plants of the Grand Canyon

Day 3: Native animals of the Grand Canyon

Day 4: Business skills—running a tour guide service

Day 5: Mapping skills—location of Grand Canyon, Arizona, and your travel route

4 Make a list of resources needed to teach the unit.

Choose a variety of resources to cover all learning styles, including books, hands-on activities, audios, videos, worksheets, crafts, recipes, games, science labs, and composition projects. Think “outside the box” when looking for resources, and don’t forget to use the Internet! For example:

1. Google “visitor info” along with the name of the city to order travel brochures from visitors centers or a local Chamber of Commerce. These brochures are excellent resources for creating posters, brochures, reports, and scrapbooks. Check for coupons, too!
2. Google your topic and add “science,” “craft,” “worksheet,” “quiz,” “online game,” and “for kids.” For example, if you Google the words “Benjamin Franklin crafts for kids,” you’ll find directions for making a Ben Franklin stick puppet, a worksheet about Ben Franklin, a coloring page on Ben Franklin, instructions for making an almanac, how to make candles from wax, and how to set up a colonial print shop (www.daniellesplace.com/html/benjamin%20crafts.html). “Benjamin Franklin quiz”

will link to a quiz (www.pocantihills.org/franklin/quiz1.htm).

3. Google your topic and add the word “image” or use Google’s Images search. Images can be used for school compositions and multimedia projects. Be sure to obey copyright laws!
4. Resources like “Free Old Time Radio Shows” (www.radiolovers.com) provide entertaining and educational audio for your unit. For example, a radio show called “The Burro That Had No Name” would be a fun addition for a unit based on a trip to the Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Center.
5. Recipes can be found on The Food Timeline (www.foodtimeline.org). A recipe for hasty pudding, popular in the early 1700s, makes a good selection for the Philadelphia unit.
6. For science supplies, look through catalogs such as Home Training Tools (www.hometrainingtools.com) and Timberdoodle (www.timberdoodle.com). *The Geology Book* by Dr. John Morris, a compass for hiking, *The Grand Canyon Catastrophe* DVD, and a mineral study kit can be useful for the Grand Canyon unit. For the Balloon Festival unit, try “Balloon

Adventure,” a hands-on kit for teaching “rocket propulsion, air pressure, how to build a barometer and a fire extinguisher, and why the pressure of water can be used to inflate a balloon.”

- Use “hot air balloon” as a search criterion on **Amazon.com** and you’ll locate a model hot air balloon, several books about hot air ballooning and its history, and even a Boxcar Children’s Mystery called *The Mystery of the Hot Air Balloon*.

5 Teach the unit.

Begin with a read-aloud. Then work together as a family on activities in which everyone can participate. Finally, assign independent reading, research, worksheets, and composition projects according to each child’s ability. Be sure to take pictures of your children doing hands-on activities.

Sample day for a Wild Horse and Burro Adoption unit:

- Read Romans 8:23 and talk about adoption. Discuss the mission of the Wild Horse and Burro Adoption

Center. Compare it to God adopting us into His family.

- Begin a family read-aloud such as *Wild Horses I Have Known* by Hope Ryden or *Once Upon a Horse: A History of Horses—And How They Shaped Our History* by Suzanne Jurmain.
- Complete a hands-on activity. Today’s activity is assembling a model kit called “Visible Horse.”
- Assign independent work according to ability. All but the youngest children complete an anatomy worksheet (www.classbrain.com/artmovies/uploads/horse_anatomy_quiz.pdf) and a quiz on the history of the horse (teacher.scholastic.com/lesson-repro/reproducibles/instructor/el/cyberhunt/9906.htm). A child with an interest in horse careers interviews a stable owner and writes a report of his findings. The other children write about the horse using thematic writing paper found on the Internet (www.classbrain.com/artmovies/uploads/the_horse_story_ws_.pdf).
- Assign independent reading such as *Brightly of the Grand Canyon* by

Margaret Henry or *Wild Horse* by Sharon Siamon.

- Involve preschoolers by having them color a picture of a horse, put together a horse puzzle, or listen to you read a picture book such as *My First Horse and Pony Book* by Judith Draper.
- After dinner, the whole family can enjoy the video *Miracle of the White Stallions* starring Robert Taylor (1963).

6 Go on the trip.

Enjoy the day! Because you have prepared your children so well with the pre-travel unit, you won’t need to spend time “teaching” as you participate in the activity.

7 Record your experiences.

Francis Bacon cautioned, “When a traveller returneth home, let him not leave the countries where he hath travelled altogether behind him.” Take time after the trip to discuss how the trip related to what they learned. Have your children create a travel notebook. Label pictures from the trip and mount them on pages in the notebook. Make a list of books read and place it in the notebook. Add worksheets and composition projects that have been completed. Include photos of hands-on projects. Bind them together into a “book” and keep it in a safe place. You’ll not only have a record of your children’s work but also a memory album that can be enjoyed for many years after your family adventure.

For more information about field trips and a free Field Trip Unit Planning Guide, go to www.oklahomahomeschool.com/fieldtrip.html. 🏠

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All Photos by Bill and Cindy Downes.

