



There's so much to see from "sea to shining sea!" Invite readers to join you on a fun, story-filled journey to explore the American Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, West, and Midwest.

SETTING THE SCENE

Maps Are a Must! Display a large road map of the United States. Surround it with regional "Reading Road Trip" posters. Mark likely travel routes within regions, using a different colored marker for each region. Use matching colored ribbon or yarn to connect routes to the appropriate theme poster. Invite kids to add stickers to the states they have visited on the large map. On a table nearby, set out a selection of state, regional, and entire U.S. maps featuring major geographical features, important landmarks, tourist attractions, elevations, climate information, etc.

Vehicle Seating. Borrow or make a road trip reading space using a rocking car like those at www.pedalcarzone.com/pink_sports_car_rocker_wood.html or http://pedalcarzone.com/cabriolet_rocker.html; a pedal car (with

wheels removed), like the ones at <http://pedalcarzone.com/index.html>; or a car bed (with low chairs in it), like the one at www.sportskids.com/superstore/Bedding/General+Sports+Bedding/Toddler+Beds/p/711494.html?mktid=cashback&ovcpn=Bedding&ovcrn=711494-Stock+Car+Racer+Bed&jftid=2:272ff197-caf4-489b-9c5d-bed440424368. Stock it with paper and pencil game books designed to entertain young travelers en route, or just make it cozy for theme-inspired readers. Add a set of "Reading Road Trip" posters on the walls to suggest exciting destinations.

The Rubber on the Road. Make space for a large floor map or puzzle of the United States. Provide toy cars and let children "hit the road" on fantasy journeys. Do the same with a smaller U.S. road map on a table, and supply matchbox-sized cars for older kids to trace actual routes across the country.



Landmarks Book Display. Set up a display of books about America's states and regions. Feature state books from publisher series along with books about specific attractions that various parts of the country are known for, such as Maestro's *The Story of the Statue of Liberty* or Cuyler's *That's Good! That's Bad! In the Grand Canyon*. Cover the country in one display, or rotate through the regions.

USA Puzzle. Set out a jigsaw puzzle of the United States with a few pieces assembled to entice kids to work on it when they visit the library.

GAMES/CONTESTS

Alphabet Games. Challenge groups of kids to move through an alphabet for each region of the U.S., including words that name geographical features, tourist attractions, foods, crafts, states, cities, or famous people from the region. Or, try an alphabet of items you'd pack for a family road trip. Assign regions, time the groups, and award small prizes to the group that completes a region-appropriate alphabet fastest.

Are We There Yet? In-the-Car Activities. Take suggestions from kids, gather materials, and play some games that help pass the time in the car. Include paper-and-pencil puzzle games, "I Spy," a sing-along, coloring books and colored pencils or markers, a spelling bee, alphabet games, hunts for unusual town names on maps, magnetic or travel games (tic-tac-toe, Connect Four, etc.), and so on.

American Geography Games. Have a game day using several widely available board or card games. Try the card game titled *The Scrambled States of America* (based on Laurie Keller's book), *Snapshots across America* from Talicor, *Postcards from America* from Rolette LLC, or *Professor Noggin's Geography of the United States* from Outset Media. Award small prizes to participants or winners.

Genre Destinations. Encourage kids to sample different literary genres. Make copies of the car patterns on pages 8–9 using a different color for each genre pattern. Cut them out, shuffle them, and place them in a basket or bowl. Invite kids to pick a car at random and read a book in that genre. Give "extra credit" for these books, counting two spaces instead of one on their theme reading records. You might be more specific in nonfiction by using the blank pattern to indicate a specific subject or Dewey number, such as 796.334 or 639.3.

USA Trivia Quiz. Challenge kids with a United States trivia quiz. You'll find printable quizzes online at www.triviaplaining.com/198-%20trivia-for-kids.htm, www.triviachamp.com/pdf/US%20Tourist%20Attractions.pdf, and www.triviachamp.com/pdf/American%20States.pdf. Let them search classroom or library resources for answers. The child or team that answers the most questions correctly in the shortest time wins. Answers should be easy to find in standard children's atlases or general reference books.



Road Signs Bingo. Visit this website for printable bingo cards: www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/Roads/TrafficMaintenanceEngineering/TrafficSignBingo.aspx.

SNACKS

Travel Foods. Serve standard road trip snack fare like trail mix, jerky, juice boxes, granola bars, etc.

Regional Recipes. Try some state favorites from *The United States Cookbook* listed in the resources section (pages 5–7), or search online for regional recipes appropriate for young chefs and young appetites.

Perfect Roadside Picnic. Invite kids to nominate their favorite roadside picnic foods; create a perfect on-the-road picnic menu from them. Then enlist volunteers to make the picnic happen on school or library grounds.

MUSIC

Listen, Sing, Dance Along. Find songs to travel with, and let the tunes carry you down the road. Check out this video clip of a song titled “Reading Road Trip USA,” at www.totlol.com/watch/BLVwSTrcRYg/Reading-Road-Trip%2C-Usa!/0. If YouTube access is a problem, there’s a shorter audio version at <http://freesongsforkids.com/audios/reading-road-trip-usa>. Listen to songs about travel from PBS’s *Postcards from Buster* at <http://pbskids.org/buster/songs/index.html>. Look for suggestions in *The Everything Kids’ Travel Activity Book*. You might introduce this program by reading *Punk Farm on Tour* from the bibliography (pages 5–7).



ARTS/CRAFTS

Regional Crafts. Set up a workshop for kids to try traditional regional crafts. You’ll need five tables or work stations; one for each region. Choose one or two crafts per region, assemble supplies, and make samples to display. Add pictures of each craft, or of other crafts from the same part of the country. Instructions for craft projects abound in print and on the Internet. You’ll want volunteers who have made each craft item to help at the work stations. Here are some suggestions and sources to get you started.

- Northeastern quilting (Look at *Kids’ Easy Quilting Projects* by Terri Thibault from Williamson Publishing, 2001)
- Southeastern basket weaving. Display *Circle Unbroken* from the resources list (pages 5–7), along with other books on Gullah culture or sweetgrass baskets.
- Southwestern sand paintings (www.kinderart.com/multic/sand.shtml has directions)
- Western shell crafts (See [www.parenting-our-kids.com/sea shell crafts for kids.html](http://www.parenting-our-kids.com/sea_shell_crafts_for_kids.html) for ideas)
- Midwestern corn husk dolls (See www.snowwowl.com/naartcornhuskdolls2.html for instructions)

Travel Brochure. Visit a travel agency and collect brochures from around the country. If you call in advance, staff may save you some outdated posters, brochures, or magazines. Have kids choose a landmark, monument, or other tourist attraction that they want to visit. Using geography and travel books from your collection, as well as information and pictures from

the travel literature you collected, have them create brochures about their destinations that are designed to entice tourists to visit. Let them use their brochures to introduce these exciting destinations to each other.

Vanity Plates. Have upper elementary kids design personalized license plates that express something about themselves, their families, or their destination. They will create the vanity plate message from letters and numbers and add appropriate slogans and logos. Check out <http://maine.gov/sos/kids/fun-games/vpgame.htm> for examples to get started. There's a pattern on page 10.



MATH ACTIVITIES

Road Miles. Make up a variety of math problems related to travel distances, or let kids make up challenges for each other. Use maps and charts to figure out distances between locations. Convert miles to kilometers. Work with map scales. Use the online worksheet at www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/TM/WS_parks_trip_shtml to calculate total mileage for trips kids would like to take. *Are We There Yet? Using Map Scales* from the bibliography (pages 5–7) is a good resource.

Travel Budget. Challenge upper elementary kids to choose a destination for a weekend family mini-vacation and create a trip budget based on the questions at www.practicalmoneyskills.com/calculators/calculate/travelBudgeting.php?calcCategory=family. They'll use keyword searches to gather cost information for hotel rooms, meals, gasoline, and admission to attractions they want to visit.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Maps and More. Host a workshop introducing kids to different kinds of maps, map reading, compasses, and GPS units. Call on a local cartographer who also has a way with kids and likes to share his or her knowledge.

Expedition Exhibition. Turn your classroom or children's room into an exhibit hall celebrating travel around the U.S. Feature maps, globes, travel posters and brochures, crafts, movies, music, and (of course) books from across the country. You might set up a center for each region. Serve refreshments sampled from regional cuisines and invite other classes, families, or neighbors to join you.



Travelogue. Has someone in your community taken interesting road trips to explore the country? Invite these veteran travelers to come and share souvenirs, pictures, and stories from their journeys. This could be a family event with refreshments that reflect the tastes of regions featured in the presentation.

Tourist Fashion Show. Try this by itself or use it as a fun extension of another program. Invite kids to come dressed in their best interpretation of tourist attire. They might dress for hot or cold climates; adopt the classic tropical explorer's garb (pith helmet and all); or simply go for maximum silliness, with sunglasses, ill-matched shirt and shorts, camera around the neck, etc.

WRITING PROJECTS

Alphabet Books. After playing the Alphabet Games above, invite kids to craft their alphabets into illustrated books. Make a book for each region or cover items you'd pack for a road trip.

Road Trip Rhymes. Introduce *My America: A Poetry Atlas of the United States* and read some selections about



specific destinations. “Watercolor Maine,” “Kentucky,” and “Grand Canyon Colors” are good choices. Have children write poems about favorite places they’ve visited or would like to visit.

Postcards from the Road. Have kids imagine an unusual traveler—perhaps a pet like *Fly Guy* or an inanimate object like *Oliver K. Woodman*. They will write three or four postcards to friends back home as if they were that animal or object on a road trip around the country. Have them illustrate the front with a picture of their current location, and you have an art project, too!

Regional Tall Tales. Display and share some tall tales, set in different regions of the country. Invite kids to think about natural landmarks in your state and make up a bigger-than-life character to star in an original tall tale about how those landmarks came to be.

Imaginary Itinerary. Encourage imaginative thinking by inviting kids to make up a fictional destination for their reading road trip. It might be their own dream version of a Disney theme park, a national park featuring a fantasy natural landmark, a city designed entirely for kids, etc. They will write short speeches to encourage people to visit their imaginary destinations.

INTERNET ACTIVITIES

www.netstate.com lets you choose a state and sample snippets of information about its geography, history, economics, and landmarks.

Online Games. Bookmark these sites where kids can play online U.S. geography games: <http://pbskids.org/buster/games/coasttocoast/index.html>, www.kidsgeo.com/geography-games/united-states-america-map-game.php, www.weeklyreader.com/kids/games/geography.asp.

Native American Lands. Using these sites, find out where various indigenous nations had their traditional homes. Then choose specific Native nations and use keyword searches to learn where they own lands or congregate today. www.flickr.com/photos/28601488@N05/3061389470/in/pool-card, www.comanchelodge.com/indian-nations.gif, and http://library.thinkquest.org/J0110072/navigation/native_american_territories.htm.

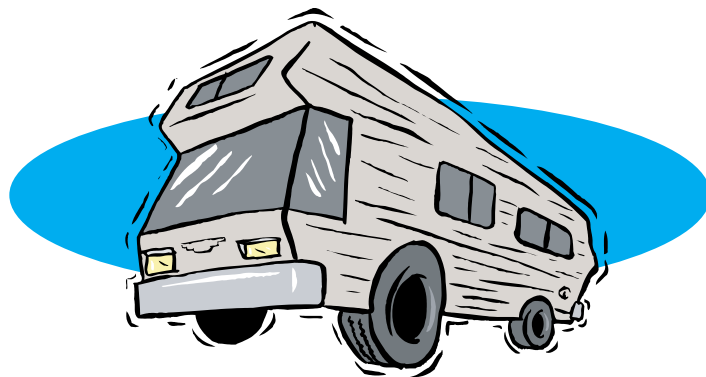
ROAD TRIP USA RESOURCES

Publishers Series on the States

- America the Beautiful series from Children’s Press. 4–6.
- Count Your Way across the USA from Sleeping Bear Press. K–3.
- From Sea to Shining Sea from Children’s Press. 3–5.
- Rookie Read–About Geography: States from Children’s Press. K–2.

General Resources on Traveling the USA

- *Americana Adventures* by Michael Garland. Dutton Juvenile, 2008. 1–5.
- *Are We There Yet? Using Map Scales* by Doreen Gonzales. Capstone Press, 2008. 1–4.
- *The Everything Kids Travel Activities Book: Games to Play, Songs to Sing, Fun Stuff to Do—Guaranteed to Keep You Busy the Whole Ride!* by Erik A. Hanson. Adams Media, 2002. 3–6.
- *Fly High, Fly Guy!* by Tedd Arnold. Cartwheel Books, 2008. P–3.
- *The Journey of Oliver K. Woodman* by Darcy Pattison, illustrated by Joe Cepeda. Harcourt Children’s Books, 2003. K–3.
- *My America: A Poetry Atlas of the United States* selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins. Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing, 2000. 3–6.
- *Our 50 States: A Family Adventure Across America* by Lynne Cheney. Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing, 2006. 2–5.
- *Punk Farm on Tour* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2007. P–3.



- *Sienna's Scrapbook: Our African American Heritage Trip* by Toni Trent Parker. Chronicle Books, 2005. 3–6.
- *Tally O'Malley* by Stuart J. Murphy. HarperCollins, 2004. K–3.
- *The United States Cookbook: Fabulous Foods and Fascinating Facts from All 50 States* by Joan D'Amico. Wiley, 2000. 4+.
- *The Vacation* by Polly Horvath. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 5+.

Northeastern Resources

- *Dillon Dillon* by Kate Banks. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 4–6.
- *Fiona Finkelstein—Big Time Ballerina* by Shawn K. Stout. Aladdin, 2009. 2–4.
- *From Dawn Till Dusk* by Nancy Kinsey–Warnock. Sandpiper, 2006. 1–3.
- *The Hanging Hill* by Chris Grabenstein. Random House Books for Young Readers, 2009. 4–7.
- *How Tia Lola Came to (Visit) Stay* by Julia Alvarez. Knopf Books for young readers, 2001. 4–6.
- *The Legend of the Cape May Diamond* by Trina Hakes Noble. Sleeping Bear Press, 2006. 3–6.
- *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McClosky. Puffin, 1999. K–3.
- *Morgy Coast to Coast* by Maggie Lewis. Sandpiper, 2008. 3–5.
- *The Story of the Statue of Liberty* by Betsy and Giulio Maestro. HarperCollins, 1989. 2–5.
- *The Wicked Big Toddlah* by Kevin Hawkes. Dragonfly Books, 2010. K–3.
- *Where I Live* by Eileen Spinelli. Penguin, 2007. 2–5.
- *You Can't Take a Balloon Into the Metropolitan Museum* by Jacqueline Preiss Weitzman. Penguin, 2001. K–4.

Southeastern Resources

- *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo. Candlewick, 2009. 4–6.
- *Cajun Through and Through* by Tynia Thomassie. Little, Brown and Company, 2000. 2–4.
- *Chicken Joy on Redbean Road: A Bayou Country Romp* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin. Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2007. K–3.

- *Circle Unbroken: The Story of a Basket and Its People* by Margot Theis Raven. Square Fish, 2007. 1–4.
- *Each Little Bird That Sings* by Deborah Wiles. Harcourt, 2005.
- *Jack Adrift: Fourth Grade Without a Clue* by Jack Gantos. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 4–6.
- *The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo* by Jean Craighead George. HarperCollins, 1993. 4–6.
- *Monticello* by Michael Burgan. Compass Point Books, 2003. 4–6.
- *Philip Hall Likes Me, I Reckon Maybe* by Bette Greene. Puffin, 1999. 4–6.
- *Smoky Mountain Rose: An Appalachian Cinderella* by Alan Schroeder. Puffin, 2000.
- *Stink and the Great Guinea Pig Express* by Megan McDonald. Candlewick, 2009. 2–4.
- *Swamp Angel* by Anne Isaacs. Puffin, 2000. K–3.
- *Today is Monday in Louisiana* by Johnette Downing. Pelican Publishing, 2006. P–3.
- *Witch Catcher* by Mary Downing Hahn. Clarion Books, 2006. 4–6.

Southwestern Resources

- *Big Moon Tortilla* by Joy Cowley. Boyds Mills Press, 2004. 1–3.
- *Bluebonnet at the East Texas Oil Museum* by Mary Brooke Casad. Pelican Publishing, 2005. K–3.
- *Coyote Autumn* by Bill Wallace. Aladdin, 2002. 4–6.
- *Enchanted Runner* by Kimberley Griffiths Little. Camelot, 1999. 4–6.
- *Heart of Texas: A Lone Star ABC* by Laura Krauss Melmed. HarperCollins, 2009. K–3.
- *Jingle Dancer* by Cynthia L. Smith. HarperCollins, 2000. K–3.
- *Journey to the Alamo* by Melodie A Cuate. Texas Tech University Press, 2006. 4–6.
- *The Music Thief* by Peni R. Griffin. Henry Holt and Co., 2002. 4–6.
- *Pecos Bill* by Steven Kellogg. HarperCollins, 1992. K–3.
- *The Secret of the Circle-K Cave* by Anna Jane Hays. Kane Press, 2006. 2–4.
- *That's Good! That's Bad! In the Grand Canyon* by Margery Cuyler. Henry Holt and Co., 2002. K–2.
- *Tortilla Sun* by Jennifer Cervantes. Chronicle Books, 2010. 3–6.

Western Resources

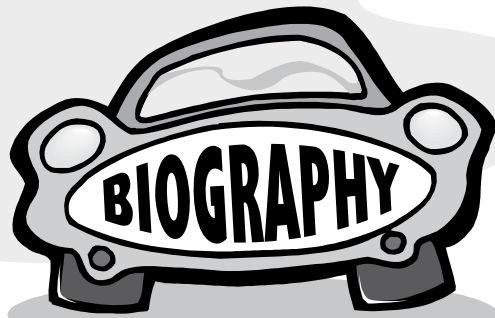
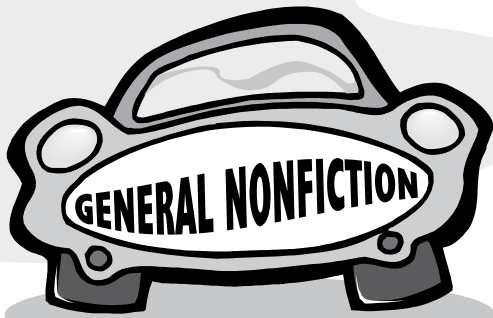
- *Amelia's Are-We-There-Yet Longest Ever Car Trip* by Marissa Moss. Simon & Schuster, 2006. 3–6.
- *Blind Mountain* by Jane Resh Thomas. Clarion Books, 2006. 4–6.
- *Buster Hunts for Dinosaurs* by Marc Brown. Little, Brown Books for Young readers, 2006. K–3.
- *Fire Storm* by Jean Craighead George. HarperCollins, 2003. 1–4.
- *Ghost Horses: A Mystery in Zion National Park* by Gloria Skurzynski. National Geographic Society, 2007. 3–6.
- *Grandma and Me at the Flea/Los Meros Meros Remateros* by Julia Felipe Herrera. Children's Book Press, 2002. 1–3.
- *Hannah West in Deep Water: A Mystery* by Linda Johns. Penguin Group, 2006. 3–6.
- *High Tide in Hawaii* by Mary Pope Osborne. Random House Children's Books, 2003. 2–4.
- *Sitka Rose* by Shelley Gill. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2005. P–3.
- *Sockeye's Journey Home: The Story of a Pacific Salmon* by Barbara Gaines Winkelman. Soundprints, 2000. K–3.
- *Weird Stories from the Lonesome Café* by Judy Cox. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000. 2–4.
- *Wind-Wild Dog* by Barbara M. Joose. Henry Holt and Co., 2006. K–3.

Midwestern Resources

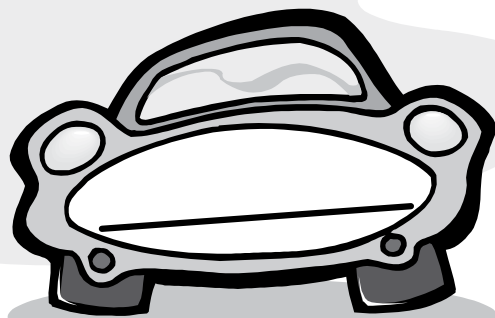
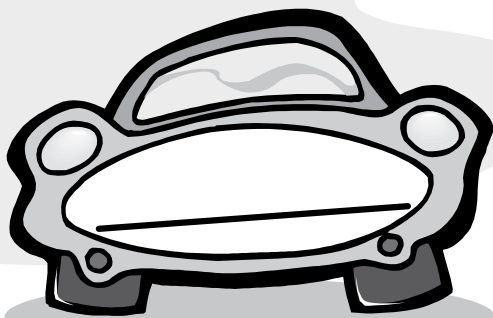
- *Aunt Minnie and the Twister* by Mary Skillings Prigger. Clarion Books, 2002. P–2.
- *Cows, Cats and Kids: A Veterinarian's Family at Work* by Jean L. S. Patrick. Boyds Mills Press, 2003. 3–6.
- *Ida B: And Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World* by Katherine Hannigan. Greenwillow Books, 2006. 4–6.
- *Indy 500* by Mark Stewart. Children's Press, 2003. 4–6.
- *McBroom's Wonderful One-Acre Farm* by Sid Fleischman. Greenwillow Books, 1997. 4–6.
- *Minn from Minnesota* by Kathy-jo Wargin. Ann Arbor Media Group, 2006. K–3.
- *Oliver's Travels: An Ohio Adventure* by Cynthia Furlong Reynolds. Mitten Press, 2009. K–3.
- *River Friendly, River Wild* by Jane Kurtz. Aladdin, 2007. K–5.
- *Room One* by Andrew Clements. Aladdin, 2008. 3–5.
- *Rotten Richie and the Ultimate Dare* by Patricia Polacco. Philomel, 2006. 1–3.
- *The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs* by Betty G. Birney. Atheneum, 2007. 3–6.
- *Uh-oh, Cleo* by Jessica Harper. Putnam Juvenile, 2008. K–3.



Literary Genres



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Vanity Plates

