

Ann's Amazing American Adventure: A Week-Long USA Geography Road Trip!

Materials Needed for the Week:

- A large blank map of the United States (or a large piece of poster board to draw one)
- Colored pencils, markers, and crayons
- Construction paper (various colors)
- Scissors and glue
- Modeling clay or LEGO bricks
- Access to the internet for short videos and research (e.g., YouTube, National Geographic Kids)
- A notebook or journal for "Travel Notes"
- For Day 3 activity: Ingredients for a simple regional recipe (e.g., cornbread mix, eggs, milk)
- For Day 4 activity: A shoebox, small pebbles, sand, twigs, and small plastic animals/trees
- For Day 5 activity: A plain piece of fabric or felt (for a flag), fabric markers or paint

The Weekly Itinerary

Day 1: Packing Our Bags & Mapping the Nation

Topic: The Five Regions of the USA

Learning Goal: Today, you will learn to identify the five major regions of the United States and understand their general location. This will be our road map for the week!

1. **Introduction (15 mins):** Let's start our adventure! Look at a completed map of the USA. Talk about its size and the number of states. Explain that to make it easier to study, we group states into "regions" where they share similar geography, climate, or culture.
2. **Mapping Time (30-40 mins):** Introduce the five main regions: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West. Using a color key that you create, carefully color in your large blank map, assigning one color to each region. As you color, say the names of a few states in each region out loud.
3. **Travel Journal Entry (10 mins):** In your "Travel Notes" journal, write down the five regions and one interesting fact or question you have about each one.

Today's Activity: Create a 3D Regional Map

Once your map is colored, let's make it pop! Use different materials to show a key feature of each region. For example:

- **West:** Glue small, crumpled pieces of brown paper to represent the Rocky Mountains.
- **Midwest:** Glue on some corn kernels or green felt for the plains and farmland.
- **Southeast:** Add a piece of blue yarn to trace the path of the Mississippi River.
- **Southwest:** Sprinkle a little sand or dirt to show the desert areas.
- **Northeast:** Draw small city skylines in the area of the major historical cities.

This map will be our guide for the entire week! Hang it on the wall where you can see it.

Day 2: A Trip to the Northeast - History Comes Alive!

Topic: Landmarks and History of the Northeast

Learning Goal: You will explore the historical significance of the Northeast by learning about two famous landmarks and what makes them important to American history.

1. **Morning Briefing (15 mins):** Let's "drive" our imaginary car to the Northeast on our big map! Discuss how this region is known for being where the country began. Watch a short, kid-friendly video about the Statue of Liberty and another about Independence Hall in Philadelphia.
2. **Research Mission (20 mins):** Choose one of those landmarks (or another famous one from the region, like Plymouth Rock). In your Travel Journal, write down three amazing facts you learned about it. Why is it so important?

Today's Activity: Build a Landmark!

Using either modeling clay or LEGO bricks, build a model of the landmark you researched! Don't worry about making it perfect; focus on including the key features. For the Statue of Liberty, be sure to include her crown, torch, and tablet. For Independence Hall, focus on the bell tower. When you are done, present your model and share the three facts you learned about it.

Day 3: Flavors of the South & Rhythms of the Midwest

Topic: Culture, Food, and Music of the Southeast and Midwest

Learning Goal: You will discover the cultural diversity of the Southeast and Midwest by exploring their unique contributions to American food and music.

1. **Tasting Tour (10 mins):** Let's travel south on our map. The Southeast is famous for its delicious comfort food! Look up pictures of classic southern dishes like grits, fried chicken, and pecan pie. The Midwest is the "breadbasket" of America. Discuss all the foods that come from this region (corn, wheat, dairy).
2. **Musical Journey (20 mins):** These regions have rich musical histories. Listen to short clips of different music genres that originated here. Try a blues song from the Mississippi Delta, a country song from Nashville, a Motown hit from Detroit, and a jazz piece from New Orleans. How does each one make you feel?

Today's Activity: Cook a Regional Treat!

With help from an adult, let's get in the kitchen! We are going to make a simple box of cornbread, a treat that is loved in both the Southeast and the Midwest. As you mix the ingredients, talk about how farming in the Midwest provides the corn, and how cooking in the South turns it into a delicious food. Enjoying something you made is the best way to remember a place!

Day 4: Wild West Wonders!

Topic: Landscapes and National Parks of the West and Southwest

Learning Goal: You will appreciate the vast and diverse geography of the West and Southwest by creating a model of a famous natural landscape.

1. **Exploring the Scenery (20 mins):** Our road trip is now heading to the West and Southwest! These regions are famous for their dramatic, wide-open spaces. Look at pictures and watch short video clips of the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone's geysers, the giant redwood trees in California, and the deserts of Arizona. Discuss how different these landscapes are from the forests and cities of the Northeast.
2. **Park Ranger Planning (15 mins):** Imagine you are a park ranger at one of these parks. In your Travel Journal, write a short welcome speech for visitors. What is the most important thing they should see at your park? What animals might they find?

Today's Activity: National Park Diorama

Choose your favorite landscape from your exploration (like the Grand Canyon, a redwood forest, or a desert). Using a shoebox, create a diorama—a 3D model of the scene.

- Paint the inside of the box to be the sky and background.
- Use sand or brown paper for the ground.
- Add small pebbles and rocks for mountains or canyons.
- Use twigs for trees (or big ones for redwoods!).
- If you have small plastic animals, add them to their natural habitat.

This is your own miniature national park!

Day 5: Your Turn to Be the Founder!

Topic: Culminating Project - Creating a New State

Learning Goal: You will apply everything you've learned about U.S. geography, culture, and symbols to design your very own, brand-new state!

1. **Review the Map (10 mins):** Look back at our big map. We've explored every region! Review the key features of each one: the history of the Northeast, the food of the South, the farms of the Midwest, and the landscapes of the West.
2. **Brainstorming Your State (20 mins):** Now, it's your turn. You get to add the 51st state to the USA! Where would it be? Would it be a new island? A territory that becomes a state? Or maybe you'll carve it out between other states. Decide on its geography: Is it mountainous, coastal, desert, or farmland?

Today's Final Project: Design "The State of Ann"!

This is your masterpiece for the week! On a large piece of paper or in your journal, create a profile for your new state. You must include:

- **State Name:** What will you call it?
 - **Location:** Draw where it is on a small map of the U.S.
 - **Capital City:** Every state needs a capital.
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- **Geography:** Describe its landscape (mountains, beaches, etc.).
- **State Symbols:** Choose a state bird, state flower, and state animal. Pick ones that would actually live in the environment you created!
- **State Flag:** On a piece of fabric or construction paper, design and create a flag for your state. The colors and symbols on the flag should represent something important about your state.

When you are finished, you will present your new state, explaining all your choices and officially welcoming it to the United States of America! Congratulations on completing your cross-country adventure!