

# USA Road Trip Adventure: A 3-Week Unit Study

## Week 1: The Pacific Coast

### Materials Needed:

- Large wall map of the United States
- A USA floor puzzle or tabletop puzzle
- Blank notebook or binder for a "Travel Journal"
- Construction paper, crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- Child-safe scissors and glue stick
- Stickers (stars, cars, etc.)
- Play-Doh in various colors
- Index cards or blank postcard templates
- Library books about the states being studied (e.g., "Good Night California," "Larry Gets Lost in Seattle")
- Access to a computer/tablet for state songs or short educational videos (optional)
- Snack-related items for "State Snack Day" (e.g., oranges/avocados for California, apples for Washington)

### Unit Goal (3 Weeks):

To foster a sense of curiosity and familiarity with the United States by creatively exploring its geography, landmarks, and unique cultural facts through hands-on, play-based activities. This is not about memorization, but about joyful discovery.

### This Week's Learning Objectives:

- Student will be able to identify California, Oregon, and Washington by shape and location on a map.
- Student will be able to name at least one unique fact or landmark for each of the three states.
- Student will create artifacts (drawings, models, postcards) for their Travel Journal that represent what they have learned.
- Student will practice fine motor skills through puzzling, cutting, drawing, and sculpting.

---

## Daily Lesson Plan (Flexible Schedule)

### Day 1: Let's Go on a Road Trip!

**Focus:** Introduction to the theme and our first state, California.

1. **The Big Picture (10 minutes):** Unroll the large wall map. Explain, "We are going on an imaginary road trip across the whole country! Where should we start?" Guide the student to the Pacific Ocean and the West Coast. Point out the three big states that touch the ocean: California, Oregon, and Washington.
2. **Puzzle Time (15 minutes):** Work together to complete the US puzzle. As you find the pieces for California, Oregon, and Washington, set them aside. Talk about their shapes. Does California look

like a sock? Does Washington look like a face looking sideways?

3. **Start Your Travel Journal (15 minutes):** On the first page of the journal, help the student write "My USA Road Trip." Let them decorate the page with car stickers and drawings. On the next page, write "California." Help them find California on the puzzle and place a star sticker on its location on the wall map.
4. **State Introduction (5 minutes):** Share one or two simple, fun facts about California. For example, "This is where Hollywood is, where they make movies! And giant redwood trees grow here that are taller than any building you've seen."

## Day 2: California Dreamin'

**Focus:** A deeper, creative dive into California.

1. **Story Time (10 minutes):** Read a picture book about California. As you read, point out landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge or Hollywood sign.
2. **Play-Doh States (15 minutes):** Get out the Play-Doh! Using the puzzle piece as a guide, have the student create the shape of California. It doesn't have to be perfect. This is a great way to learn the shape kinesthetically.
3. **Travel Journal Entry (15 minutes):** On the "California" page in the journal, ask the student to draw something they learned about the state. It could be the Golden Gate Bridge, a movie camera, or a giant tree. Help them write one word about their drawing (e.g., "BRIDGE").
4. **State Snack Time (10 minutes):** Enjoy a snack that connects to California, like orange slices or avocado toast. While eating, talk about how California grows lots of delicious fruits and vegetables because it's so sunny there.

## Day 3: Journey North to Oregon & Washington

**Focus:** Introducing the Pacific Northwest states.

1. **Map Review (5 minutes):** Go to the wall map. Point to California and ask, "Do you remember this state?" Then, move your finger north. "Our car is driving up the coast! The next state we get to is Oregon." Place a star sticker on Oregon. "And if we keep driving north, we get to Washington, right at the top next to another country, Canada!" Place a star on Washington.
2. **Puzzle and Compare (15 minutes):** Get out the puzzle pieces for all three states (CA, OR, WA). Lay them next to each other. Talk about their shapes again. Which is biggest? Which is the squarest? Put just those three pieces together to see how they connect.
3. **Introduction to the Pacific Northwest (10 minutes):** Show pictures (from a book or online) of Oregon and Washington. Focus on the nature. "These states have lots of rain, so they have huge, green forests and beautiful mountains. Lots of people here love hiking and camping." Share a fun fact for each, like "Oregon's Crater Lake is the deepest lake in the whole country!" and "The Space Needle is a famous tower in a big city in Washington called Seattle."

## Day 4: Postcards from the Road

**Focus:** Creative application and review.

1. **Choose a State (5 minutes):** Ask the student, "Of the new states we visited, Oregon and Washington, which one was your favorite and why?"
2. **Create a Postcard (20 minutes):** Give the student a blank index card or postcard template. On the blank side, have them draw a picture of something from their chosen state (e.g., Crater Lake for Oregon, the Space Needle for Washington). On the lined side, act as their scribe. Ask them, "What do you want to tell Grandma/Grandpa/a friend about this state?" Write down their sentence,

such as, "Dear Grandma, I am in Washington. I saw the Space Needle. Love, [Student's Name]."

3. **Travel Journal Entry (15 minutes):** Add new pages for "Oregon" and "Washington" to the journal. The student can draw a picture for each. The postcard they made can be glued into the journal on the correct state page.

### **Day 5: Weekly Wrap-Up & Map Quest!**

**Focus:** Assessment through play and planning for Week 2.

1. **Show and Tell (10 minutes):** Look through the Travel Journal together. Ask the student to tell you about their drawings for California, Oregon, and Washington. This is a relaxed way to see what they remember.
2. **Game: Map Quest! (10 minutes):** Play a fun game at the wall map. Give simple directions like:
  - "Our car is out of gas! Quick, drive it to California!" (Student points)
  - "I want to see the deepest lake in the country! Where do we go?" (Student points to Oregon)
  - "Let's go to the state at the very top of our road trip so far!" (Student points to Washington)Celebrate every correct answer enthusiastically!
3. **Look Ahead (5 minutes):** Show the student the map again. Say, "Next week, our road trip is going to turn east! We'll leave the ocean and explore states with deserts and giant canyons. I can't wait to see what we find!" This builds excitement for the next leg of the journey (e.g., Nevada, Arizona).