
Stop 9. Natchez Trace Parkway

Arrival datetime: Saturday April 13, 6:30PM
Sites visited: Natchez Trace Parkway
Accommodations: Comfort Inn
States traveled: Arkansas, Mississippi

On the way out of Hot Springs, we stopped at the local water bottling company and got a case of the stuff for the road. Not only was the water very tasty and supposedly very healthy, the bottles lasted through numerous refills without crinkling or breaking. We finally threw them out after using them a few weeks just because it was most likely unhealthy to keep reusing them without properly sterilizing them. Again, on the drive out of town, Michael wondered aloud why Arkansas was not pronounced “R-Kansas.” Again, it was too late to ask anyone.

We drove around the Mississippi River to try and find a place to have lunch overlooking the water, but found only industrial looking neighborhoods. We drove by a penitentiary with a sign warning us not to pick up hitchhikers. We picked up the Natchez Trace Parkway in Kosciusko. The Trace was a modern road built on or alongside a popular trail used by various travelers to walk between the Gulf and points north. In particular, farmers who brought harvests on barges down the Mississippi often walked back on the foot trail. To our surprise, the first Visitors Center we saw along the Trace did not emphasize the history of the Parkway, but the life of the Polish revolutionary war hero, General Kosciusko. It was full of



A "sunken" segment of the original Natchez Trace highway.

pictures of New York and the Hudson River. The connection to the Trace must have simply been proximity to the town of Kosciusko.

We had driven out of our way to take the Trace rather than the standard highways, and it was worth it. The entire experience was scenic and pristine. Even the view from the Trace to a potential exit was grass and tree lined and aesthetically pleasing. However, once actually off the parkway and back on the

local road to which the exit led, there was road kill of armadillo and turtle, as well as just plain litter, ugly shacks and storefronts. We had seen the natural phenomenon that was featured on the Trace from the standard highway. These included beaver dams, tupelo and bald cypress trees emerging from deep ponds, flowering trees, and wildflowers. But we waited until we got to the Trace to stop and examine these things in a safe and pleasant setting.

There were few cars on the road, but we were not the only tourists. As we emerged from one of the many little man-

made paths, a fellow tourist told us she had seen alligators in a pond we had just been gazing at from a bench. As we emerged from another, at Myrick Creek, a guy on a bicycle asked us for water. He had as much packed on his bicycle as we have both portercases plus the toiletry bag. It was on a trailer with training wheels that doubled the length of his vehicle. We gave him a liter of Hot Springs mineral water, letting him know how privileged he should feel to be drinking it. But he seemed to take it for granted. Hot Springs must be a local brand here.



*Tupelo
and Bald
Cypress
Trees
growing
in water
along the
Natchez
Trace
Parkway.*

There were at least eight different colors of green trees thickly lining either side of the two-lane drive and green grass on either side as well. Fields of grass and wildflowers sometimes revealed small farms in the distance, sometimes just stretched a few hundred yards back to be met by another thick green treeline. For variety, a reservoir lined the drive for 8 miles. It was 80° and sunny even at 6:00PM. We spent about 10 minutes at each stop between Kosciusko and Jackson, but enjoyed the drive in between just as much.

It was the first night for which we had no reservations, but decided to stop on the highway when we had had enough driving for the day. We sloughed off the highway and into an Applebees in our t-shirts and shorts. We sat at the bar and tried to order a beer on draft. There was no beer on draft. Why? The bartender explained that we were in the “silly” town of Clinton Mississippi, where beer was illegal but wine and cocktails were readily available.

As we were shown to our table, a teenage couple came in. The girl was in chiffon

frills and the boy in a tuxedo. We thought that they may have come from a wedding, but they were soon joined by another couple. The second girl looked like she had stepped out of a Janet Jackson video and the man wore a white tux with tails and a matching sultan tunic. Soon, we were surrounded by quiet, nervous teenagers in black tie attire. Actually, the style was more white tuxedo and mundo accessories. One young man even had a white stocking cap. Gowns ranged from pretty-in-pink to grammy-night-glitter. We felt sorry for them that Applebees appeared to be the best restaurant in town. We could not help what we were wearing, but Jennifer fixed her makeup so as not to bring them down with completely unglamorous company.

The Comfort Inn was reservation-free, clean and reliable. But the continental breakfast had no cereal and the waffle batter and cream cheese both seemed spoiled and sour. We ate dry toast and coffee and got back on the Natchez Trace Parkway.

Miles traveled:	404
Departure datetime:	Sunday April 14, 8:10AM
Departure weather:	Cloudy 66°