

Visiting the California History Hall

With a little planning, your visit to the Natural History Museum will be one to remember. Below are some suggestions for making your visit a valuable learning experience for your students, as well as an entertaining one.

Tips for a Successful Museum Visit

Prepare Students for Being in a Museum

Studies have shown that students can learn more on field trips when they are not distracted by the novelty or "newness" of the location.

Have a Plan

Providing students with background information before their museum visit can help to make it a more valuable learning experience. You may choose to use the activities in this guide, or create some classroom connections of your own. Then, when you bring your class to the museum, you will have specific topics and concepts to focus on.

Encourage Interaction, not Passive Listening

As you explore the exhibits, encourage students to tell you about what they see rather than ask them to simply listen. Your guidance and open ended questions will help keep students focused, while still encouraging independent exploration.

And Don't Forget...

- Make your reservation well in advance.
- Bring the required number of adults (1 for every 10 children).
- Review proper conduct with your students before the visit.
- Instruct students to follow directions of museum staff.
- For their own safety, make sure students are always with an adult.
- Allow time for restroom visits.
- Inform chaperones of the day's schedule.



What You Can Do

If you are on a self-guided tour, there are a number of different techniques you can use to engage your students in the content of the hall. Some general suggestions for encouraging active learning are:

- Ask questions with more than one correct answer. “What do you notice about the diorama/display?” and “Describe the stagecoach” are excellent ways to get students involved in the action of the display.
- Use the label to help answer student questions. It’s impossible to know everything about everything. In addition, you can always enlist student help in asking them to come up with possible answers.
- Let students guide your time frame. All of the museum’s exhibits are educational. Allow students to make small decisions as to which displays they would like to spend more time with. This “authority” will help to make their visit more meaningful and relevant

Activity Suggestion

Some of the most memorable learning in museums can occur when students take control of their experience and make decisions about what exhibits they view and the concepts they focus on. This activity suggestion is one way to encourage independent exploration while still allowing educators to choose a general content focus.

Gather the students in front of the 'ap (the recreation of an early Chumash dwelling), a diorama, or other display. Ask an open-ended question that will encourage student discussion about a particular aspect of the display. For example, you might ask students to identify items from daily life in the 'ap display and how they think the people might have used the items. Encourage multiple responses.

Next, ask students to form small groups and spend five minutes visiting other displays or dioramas in the hall looking for more examples that relate to your earlier question. One example of a follow-up question that would match with the first question above is asking students to locate other objects people used in their daily lives throughout history and to think about what kinds of objects we now use for the same activities.

Give students a signal to listen for, such as a special hand-clap, and set a meeting place. After the five minutes have passed, use your signal to gather the group together and share what the students discovered. Encourage a variety of students to speak and make references to the original question whenever possible. This can be repeated as time allows. Showing students a brochure or pictures from our Web site will give them an idea of what they may see before they get to the museum. Discuss bathroom breaks and lunch plans before the trip so these questions don't distract students from exploring the exhibits.

Resources

Visit the Museum's Web Site at: www.nhm.org

The Natural History Museum's Web Site is a great resource for teachers. You can access different departments within the museum to check up on current happenings or browse through the latest in scientific research. The site also provides study guides on topics ranging from microbiology to African culture as well as activities for students. The California History Guide section of the Web site (www.nhm.org/education/cahistory) contains many exciting and educational activities for teachers and students. These activities include exploring a galleon, designing a brand, creating rock art, and building a compass.

Artifact Loans from the Museum's Loan Service

Enhance your classroom with “the real thing.” Historical artifacts, science specimens, and thematic Teaching Kits may be borrowed by individuals as a benefit of either museum membership or a *free* school membership. Visit the museum's Members' Loan Service, where a \$5 processing fee provides you with up to three exhibits for a two-week loan period. Artifact-rich Teaching Kits provide a complete unit of study packed into a portable trunk for an additional \$10 rental fee. Kits are available in a wide variety of science and history subjects that include *Early California Settlement* and *California's Gold Rush*. **The Members' Loan Service is open seven days a week from 3:00 to 4:45 p.m. For more information, call (213) 763-3345.**

Seaver Center for Western History Research

Interested educators may access a fascinating array of historic records at the Seaver Center for Western History Research. Its collections include – but are not limited to – manuscript materials, books, serials, pamphlets, broadsides, maps, posters, prints, and photographs. Highlights from the Seaver Center include the diary of a forty-niner on his voyage to the California gold fields, photographs of early Los Angeles, pamphlets and leaflets relating to local political campaigns, and ephemera from the 1932 and 1984 Olympic Games. **The Seaver Center is open to the public by appointment only from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday and Thursday. For more information, call 213-763-3359.**

Teacher Resources

De Graaf, L, Mulroy, K., Taylor, Q (Eds.). 2001. *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*. Autry Museum of Western Heritage & University of Washington Press.

Deverell, William. 1994. *Railroad Crossings: Californians and the Railroad*.

Hine, Robert V. & Faragher, John Mack. 2000. *The American West: A New Interpretive History*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Levy, Joann. 1990. *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush*.

Limerick, Patricia. 1987. *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. W. W. Norton & Co., New York.

Rawls, James J. and Bean, Walton. 1998 (7th Edition). *California: An Interpretive History*. McGraw-Hill, New York.

View a Video on Field Trips

Want to make that trip to the museum more than just a classroom vacation? A video, "Enhancing the Science Field Trip Experience," co-produced by the USC Rossier School of Education and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, provides teachers with suggestions for optimizing their museum visit by integrating it into the classroom curriculum. Based on recent findings in educational research, the 18-minute video presents helpful tips for creating a more relevant and enriching museum experience. This video is available to teachers and school administrators for a nominal fee. **Please contact the School Tours Office at (213) 763-3333.**

Student Resources

Curry, Jane. 1987. *Back in the Before Time: Tales of the California Indians*. Margaret K. McElderry Books, New York. Legends of California Indian Tribes. Fiction.

Knight, Margy Burns and Chan, Thomas V. 1994. *Who Belongs Here? Tilbury House, Maine. Exploration of contemporary immigrant issues, prejudice, language, and culture*. Fiction.

Lynghem, Linda. 1986, *Father Junipero Serra, the Traveling Missionary*. Langtry Publishers, Van Nuys, CA. A biography based on Serra's journals, letters, and other writings. Nonfiction.

Margolin, Malcolm & Montijo, Yolanda. 1995. *Native Ways – California Indian Stories and Memories*. Heydey Books, Berkeley, CA. California Indian culture and history, including ongoing cultural revival. Nonfiction.

O'Dell, Scott. 1978. *Zia*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Portrays Native Americans and mission life. Historical fiction.

Wolfman, Ira. 1991. *Do People Grow on Family Trees? Genealogy Book for Kids and Other Beginners*. New York. A guide to finding out one's own family history and how to record it. Nonfiction.

Yee, Paul. 1989. *Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World*. MacMillan Publishing, Co., New York. Historical Fiction.