

Leap of Faith

Welcome to homeschooling! You have embarked on a journey of epic proportions where you and your family have no limits besides your energy level and your wallet! Never fear though, my fellow matrons, for there are many field trip opportunities for the brave of heart but light in pocketbook! This month's *Leap of Faith* is dedicated to those adventurous souls who defy the normal limits of what "school" is, and throw out the textbooks only to put the mini van to work and learn by doing! For you, the following "ABC's of Homeschool Excursions" is printed. Most of these are personally recommended as favorites of my own family and some of those I have only heard about. I wish you a wonderful, memory filled time! Enjoy!

A

Atlanta Botanical Gardens: This can be a little pricey but well worth it in the Spring. There is a butterfly house as well as acres of beautiful gardens and a children's garden full of really interesting plants. Tuesdays are \$2 off which can help some!

Atlanta History Center: Although the center itself can be a little expensive, December 15 is Homeschool Day and admission is \$6. Don't miss this one!

Andersonville: Phenomenal trip which includes the National Prisoner of War Museum, the recreated Andersonville prison camp, and the cemetery. This is an all day event! Ask for a copy of the scavenger hunt for your kids to work on as they walk through the facility and be sure to get the taped tour. Best of all, it is FREE!!

American Village: Want to really experience American History but just can't afford Williamsburg? Then plan a trip to Montevallo, Alabama (south of Birmingham) for the closest thing south of the Mason Dixon Line! Painstaking attention was paid to building replicas of Mount Vernon, Independence Hall and several other historic structures but the best part is in the costumed interpreters hamming it up with the kids. Programs are reasonable and homeschoolers can just step right in with other groups or make one of their own. We have been three times and like it more each time!

B

Brasstown Bald: Take a hike up the tallest mountain in Georgia and stand on the observation tower where you can see peaks from neighboring states. The Path is mostly paved and is a workout but is stroller accessible.

C

Cyclorama: A Classic of the Atlanta area and a must see for visitors. If you are studying the Civil War, this is where you should go. Right next to the zoo. \$5 for adults

Calloway: A Plethora of fun family activities! Be sure to check their website and don't miss their butterfly house, Fantasy in Lights or the Birds of Prey Show. Something for everyone.

Cumberland National Seashore: It's a hike and a half but it is like entering another world. Only accessible by ferry and inhabited by armadillos wild horses and a huge abandoned mansion. Looking for a weekend get away? Have any Lord of the Rings Fans? Then you can't miss this one! February is the best month- no bugs and little heat!

Camping is available.

Coca Cola Space Science Center: Have any future astronauts? Then don't miss this one! At home in Columbus, this space center is made of a planetarium, an observatory, a Challenger Learning Center for simulated experiences, and a theater. How much? \$6 for adults and \$4 for kids.

College Fairs: Have high schoolers? Kids who need a vision? Be looking for the Atlanta College Fair in February which includes hundreds of higher education institutions from all over the nation.

Cochran Mill Park and Nature Center: A wonderful park right here in Palmetto. Take a picnic or take a walk. The kids love the water and you will just love the feeling that God is right beside you. The nature center has plenty of animals and reptiles.

D

Dauset Trails: If you love animals and need a relaxing afternoon, this is the answer! Dauset Trails is a native Georgia wildlife rehabilitation center, has a working farm, wonderful walking trails, picnic area and even has a campground for organized groups. Even better is the price: Free!

E

Charlie Elliot Nature Center: Operated by the Georgia Dept of Wildlife Resources this 6,400 acre preserve is packed full of things! Kids Fishing events, gun safety, Nighttime hikes, nature identification, astronomy events, archery, group nature programs, and camping only scrapes the tip of what to do. Contact the center for a schedule at 770-784-3059. It takes about two hours to get there (Mansfield, Ga) but the price is right- free!

ENCHEA Co-op: Got kids? Looking for friends? Then call Angela Dennis (770-253-2514) and reserve your spot. This is a parents led co-op offering fun classes to homeschoolers of all ages!

Etowah Indian Mounds: Drive up to Cartersville for a fun afternoon learning about the Native Americans in our area. Any day is fun to visit but on Oct 7, the Mounds will host a Survival Skills event where participants learn about flintknapping, pottery, basketry and weaponry and then take a torchlit tour of the Ancient city. How much? \$2.50-\$4.00. Visit the Ga state parks site for more info.

F

Fernbank Science Center: Located right down the road from it's better known and more expensive namesake, the Science Center is home to a planetarium, a nature center and a lovely forest. Cost- \$4 adults, \$3 for children

Four H: What a treasure! The Coweta County 4H has clubs for Archery, shooting sports, rabbits and covies, chickens, horses, goats, forestry competitions, public speaking competitions, Fun Foods contests, Pumpkin Carving... whew! Cost is about \$10 but the fun lasts a lifetime! Call the Coweta County Extension Service for more info.

FD Roosevelt State Park: Home of the Little White House, FDR's beloved retreat. Walking into the home is walking back in time. Not only is this a historical field trip but the Park is full of other things to do. It is located on Pine Mountain, check out the Ga state park website for more info. \$3 admission per vehicle to park

Funk Heritage Center: Reinhardt College in Canton houses a wonderful collection of Southern Indian artifacts and art as well as tools and trade implements of early settlers, petroglyphs, a movie on the Southern Indians, a frontier settlement recreation, and much more. A wonderful supplement to a Native American unit or one on early pioneers. Adults \$6 children \$4

G

Georgia Football League: So, Junior is 13 and loves football but too old to play Rec League. Is his career over? No way! The Georgia Football League comes the rescue. This league is for Homeschoolers or small Christian schools without a football program and it is real highschool pigskin! Interested? Check out their website at www.georgiafootballleague.com

Georgia Aquarium: You would have had to have lived in a cave to not hear about the largest aquarium in the world that just so happens to right here in Atlanta. I haven't been there myself but I have heard it was wonderful!

H

High Museum: Looking for a little culture? Look no further than Atlanta's High Museum of Art which has recently undergone a multi-million dollar renovation and opened a new collection with a share agreement with none other than the Louvre. It's not cheap but the benefits are great!

J

JapanFest: Need to expose the kids to another culture? Why not Japan? Sept 23-24 Stone Mountain will be hosting this multi-cultural event which should prove to be a feast for the eyes and the stomach. Even better, students can attend for free if you register online by Sept 1.

Jimmy Carter Presidential Library: If you are studying modern history, be sure to include a visit to Georgia's only Presidential Library. A permanent exhibit of Carter paraphernalia, a full size replica of the oval office during his administration, displays of his challenges as president and many other traveling exhibit. Adults \$8, Students 16 and below free.

K

Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield: The Civil War has left many scars across Georgia and Kennesaw Mountain is where some of those battles were waged. Home to cannon, earthenworks, an interpretive film, and over 17 miles of walking trails one can almost see the rag tag Southern army taking a last ditch effort against Sherman's boys in blue. Free

Knight's Baseball: Not only is there Homeschool Football but there is our national pastime as well: Baseball! Check out their website at www.atlantaknights.org

L

Little Grand Canyon: With gas prices so high, many of us are just unable to take the trips we dream of like the Grand Canyon. Well, how about Georgia's Little Grand Canyon, otherwise known as Providence Canyon! This amazing structure was actually created because of poor farming practices in the 1800's. The colors and flora are absolutely beautiful. Studying Geology? Then don't miss Oct 1 as a local professor will take visitors on a tour of the bottom of the canyon. Parking is \$3 per vehicle, the tour is \$1 per person.

Lacrosse: So, the kids didn't really like baseball and basketball wasn't their thing. A little small for football... have you tried Lacrosse? This is the hottest thing to hit Georgia and a great sport to get in on the ground floor! Fayette County has a fall ball rec league www.fayettelax.com and the spring league has students sign up through the YMCA which plugs participants in to play for their local middle or high school Homeschoolers welcome!

M

Male Academy: This building in downtown Newnan was actually a school for boys before the Civil War and now houses a museum holding a hodge podge of Civil War era relics, and other artifacts from Newnan's past. \$2 adults, children free.

Museum of Patriotism: About 5 years ago several Atlanta businessmen sat at a kitchen table discussing the problems with America. Instead of leaving the conversation at the table, they birthed an idea that would make a difference and inspire love of country. The museum is moving to a huge new space but until then I highly recommend a visit with your children. We all need to remember that Freedom isn't free. \$12 adults, \$10 7-18, under 7 free.

Michael C Carlos: Studying Ancient History? How about Greece? Egypt? South America? This is the place for you. I couldn't do the place justice as it is one of those places we go to over and over again. Be sure to check out their children's programs. On the campus of Emory University. \$7 admission.

Mountain Adventure Weekend: Amicalola Falls State Park is hosting this annual event full of fall color hikes, hayrides and campfires. All for \$3 a carload! Oct 28-29

N

Naval Museum of the Civil War: Columbus Georgia was a shipbuilding center during the war between the states. It's largest ship, the CSS Jackson was two weeks from completion when it was captured by the boys in blue, looted burned and set adrift where it burned for two weeks before sinking to the bottom of the river. It was recovered in the 1960's, all 500,000 lbs of it and sits as the central exhibit in this fascinating museum. This is definitely a don't miss! Adults \$4.50 Students \$3.00

O

Ocmulgee National Monument: A fascinating historic site in Macon made up of mounds from the Mississippian Indian Civilization around 900 AD. A number of mounds exist including one that can be entered to see where the tribal council would be held. Group programs are available. No fee

P

Pow-Wow and Indian Festival: Head to Stone Mountain from November 2-November 5 to enjoy the song, dance, weapons, displays, etc of a number of Indian tribes.

R

Rock Ranch: This is a 1,200 acres working cattle farm owned by none other than Truet Cathy. Tours can be taken and a Pioneer/Pilgrim days program is running from September through mid-November. A Maize Maze is also on the property. \$6.00 Conestoga wagons are available for rent to established groups. Be sure to see there website. www.therockranch.com

Renaissance Festival: It's close to home, right here in Fairburn! April 14-June 3 of 2007. Definitely a fun afternoon but if you are a "gentlewoman" you may consider attending on School Day or Mother's Day.

Red Top Mountain State Park: Always a breath of calm, Red Top Mountain is a popular destination for native Atlantans. There is never a lack of what to do! Sept 23-24 brings the 75th anniversary of Harvest Time at the Homestead with skilled interpreters presenting skilled crafts, and harvest in the 1800's. Oct 7-8 is also the Reenactment of the Battle of Allatoona Pass. Take a guided tour as reenactors demonstrate cannon and musket firing. \$3 per vehicle

S

Sprewell's Bluff: This is about the closest thing to a swimming hole I've ever found but is actually a bend in the Flint River. I grew up on the Flint: a muddy, slow moving, brown river but at Sprewell's Bluff the water is crystal clear, lined in river stones and even has a hug boulder to jump from. Bring an inner tube and let the water swing you around the curve or just have fun playing at the shore, for \$3 (per vehicle) and a picnic, it is a blast .

Science Olympiad: Need a science this year? Then start up a Science Olympiad team. Make rockets or gliders, bridges and catapults, study geology or the water table and then test you skills against others! This year ENCHEA is planning on having its own competition so look for more information. And remember: SCIENCE IS A BLAST!

Scouts: You are fortunate to live in an area that has homeschool Boy Scout, Cub Scout and Girl Scout Troops! A great place to jump in and get to know other kids and grow under the careful eye of caring adults. For more info, contact Cokes Chapel UMC.

Sailing: Lanier Sailing Academy will take families out for a three hour tour (sound familiar?) on one of there rigs? Perfect for a study of the age of exploration, or *Carry on Mr Bowditch*. \$10 each

Smithgall Woods Conservaion Area: Close to Helen in Norht Georgia, this state park is home to one of the most popular trout streams in Georgia. Take a hand at fly casting or enjoy one of their many programs including Wildflower Days, Nature Photography Workshop, Southern Appalachian Mushrooms, Fall Celebration and more. Visit their website for more info but all events require only a \$3 park pass.

Silver Comet Trail: How about a fall bike ride with the family over rushing creeks, in between rock cliffs and through towering trees? How about the rails to trails wonder, the Silver Comet trail! Grab your bikes and head to the intersection of South Cobb Drive and the East West Connector in Smyrna. Then ride as far as your legs will take you- the trail is 60 miles long!

Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History: Be sure to head over to Kennesaw to hit this new museum and home to "The General." Watch a movie on the Great Locomotive Chase, see how industrial life during the mid to late 1800's was, view some amazing historical artifacts. This museum has some amazing homeschool days with tons of living history geared toward their age group. Homeschool Day admission is \$6 adults and \$4 children.

T

Teenpact: This is an absolute must for older kids age 13 through high school! Spend the week at the capitol interviewing lobbyists and congressmen, writing and arguing bills, listening to speakers and learning about our government. Then take a prayer walk with your group, praying for the decisions made by our elected representatives. But that is only the beginning! Once you have attended a 4 day program, you can attend Teenpact Student Project or Survival, Media Camp or Judicial Camp, Challenge or Teenpact Ranch. This is worth saving for now, the caliber of kids and adults is unparalleled. www.teenpact.com

Tubing: Is the hot weather getting to you? Throw on your swim suit and head to Helen for a tube down the river. Take a leisurely float through town, pass cabins and just in God's world and come out a renewed and refreshed person. \$6

Tallulah Gorge: This is another of Georgia's fabulous state parks and calling it a gorge is an understatement. When my husband and I discovered this area I couldn't believe it. Two miles long and 1,000 feet deep, trails exist all along the rim for access to this spectacular site (however, I wouldn't bring small kids). Free permits are also granted to hike along the river bank at the bottom of the gorge. On Dec 9 they also have a Christmas event that sounds like a lot of fun. Enjoy!

U

Upwards Basketball: Although we have never participated in this organization, I have known many who have and loved it. The group focuses on building character as game skills develop. A cheer squad also exists for sisters who would rather be on the sidelines gathering support for brothers.

Unicoi: This is one of my family's favorite state parks and we have gone here for years. Hiking and biking is popular here, nestled in the North Georgia Mountains. Many events run throughout the year including the Outdoor Adventure day in September where enthusiasts learn to catch a trout, paddle a canoe, shoot shotgun, rifle, skeet, air gun, take a hay ride and tie a fly. Or maybe you'd rather come for the Deck the Halls event on Dec 2. Or even better, just spend the day letting the kids play in the creeks, finding crawfish while you just relax.

V

Volleyball: This girls sport is growing in popularity and open to homeschool girls ages 12 and above. Call Heritage School on Hwy 34 in Thomas Crossroads.

Chief Vann House: This is the birthplace of the Cherokee Nation and a must see for those studying these people. Tie your visit in with the Cherokee Homecoming in October for a fuller picture. \$3

Vogel State Park: One of Georgia's oldest state parks lies at the base of Blood Mountain which puts on a particularly colorful show in the fall. Don't miss their old fashioned Country Hoedown in October which includes hayrides, cake walks, bonfires and storytelling. Great memories built here!

W

Warner Robins Museum of Aviation: For the airplane enthusiasts in the family don't miss this free opportunity to indulge your fancy! This is one of those treasures no one knows about and is free! The number of displays is amazing and shouldn't be missed.

Westville: This 1850's living history museum is a treasure in the middle of no where! Over 30 era-buildings have been carefully refurbished to house spinners, farmers, bakers, and much more. Free admission for groups of 15 students or more. See the website for their festival dates which are wonderful!

Wild Animal Safari: Do you have an up and coming Crocodile Hunter in your household? Then drive over to Wild Animal Safari on Pine Mountain for an up close and personal visit with zebras, giraffes, water buffalo, camel, rhino, antelope and much more. This 500 acre park has 3 ½ miles of winding paved roads on which your family drives through the Serengeti plains. \$15.95 for adults and \$13.95 per student (under 2 free). See the website for discounts.