

Natchez Trace Parkway

MISSISSIPPI • ALABAMA • TENNESSEE

The story of Natchez Trace is the story of the people who used it: the Indians who traded and hunted along it; the "Kaintuck" boatmen who pounded it into a rough wilderness road on their way back from trading expeditions to Spanish Natchez and New Orleans; and the post riders, government officials, and soldiers who, from 1800 to 1830, made it a link between Mississippi Territory and the fledgling United States.

Natchez Trace Parkway is a modern recreational roadway that preserves a good part of the history associated with the original frontier road. When completed, the 450-mile parkway will roughly follow the route of the original Natchez Trace through the States of Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, connecting the cities of Natchez, Jackson, Tupelo, and Nashville.

Enrich your trip by taking the time to explore the many archeological sites, historical landmarks, nature trails, and recreational areas off the parkway. You can walk or ride over typical sections of the old trace and see for yourself what a frontier road looked like. Here and there you will find obscure remains—a house, an abandoned mine, or an old stream crossing—all associated with the people who lived on or traveled over this thoroughfare.

A WILDERNESS TRAIL TO THE GULF

When the French arrived on the gulf coast in 1699, they found the Old Southwest occupied by the Natchez, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indians. These Indians were relative latecomers to the region, for archeological evidence found in the many mounds

and village sites indicates human habitation as long ago perhaps as 8,000 years. By 1733 the French had explored the area well enough to draw a map showing an Indian trail running from Natchez to the Choctaw villages near present-day Jackson, Miss., and then on to the Chickasaw villages in the northeastern part of the State. French traders, missionaries, and soldiers frequently traveled over the old Indian trade route.

In 1763 France ceded the region to England, and under British rule a large population of English-speaking people moved into the area around Natchez. British maps of the period show a trail called "Path to the Choctaw Nation."

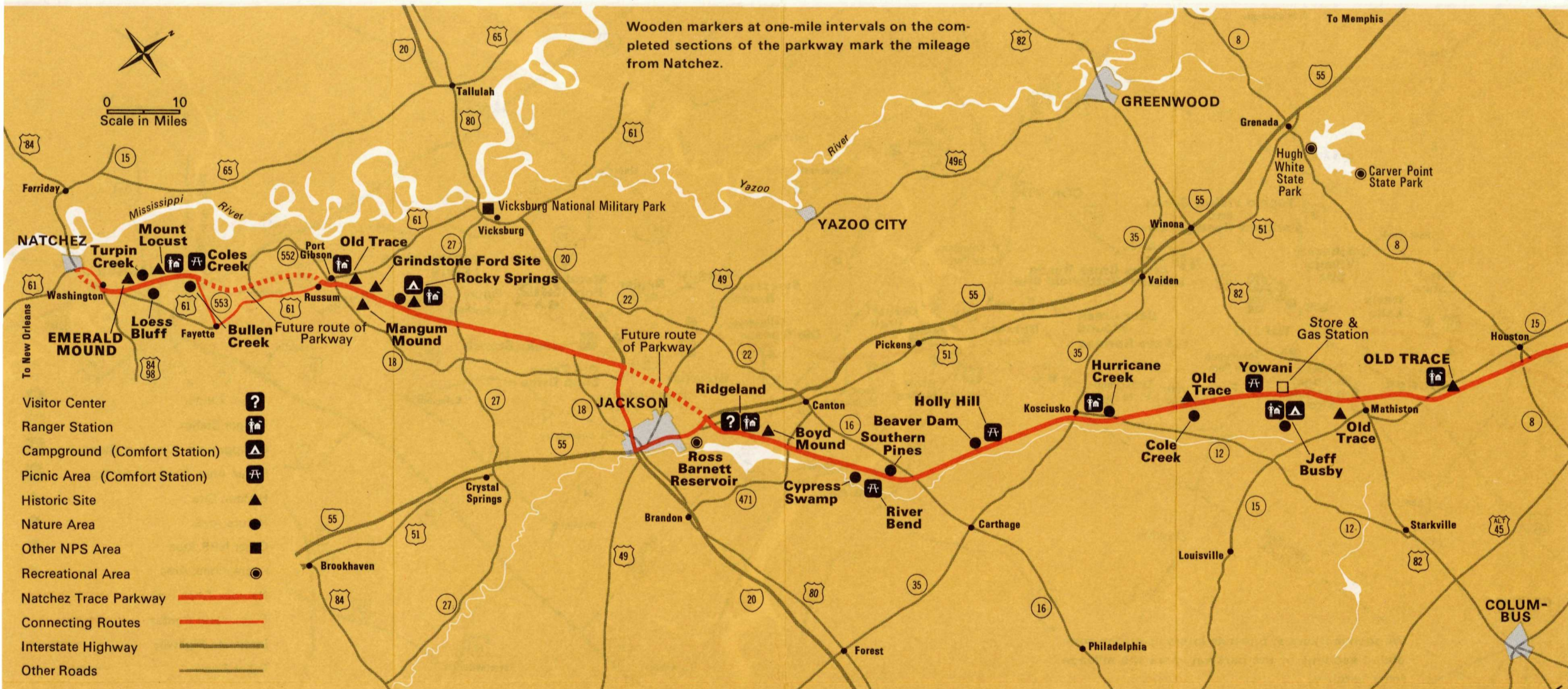
During the American Revolution, Spain went to war against England and, as a result of the British defeat, claimed all the land between the Mississippi and the Chattahoochee Rivers and northward beyond present-day Memphis.

Beginning about 1785, men from Ohio, Kentucky, and other parts of the western frontier floated products such as flour, pork, tobacco, hemp, and iron down the Mississippi to the markets at Natchez and New Orleans. Once downriver the only way home was either to walk or ride the 450-mile trail from Natchez to Nashville. The volume of traffic grew until these colorful "Kaintuck" boatmen had trampled the trace into a crude road. For years the pioneer economy was largely based upon the Spanish silver they carried home.

The transformation of the boatmen's trail into the Natchez Trace in 1798 came when Spain surren-



Not far from Mount Locust the Old Natchez Trace is a sunken road, worn deep into the soil.



Visiting Landmarks Along the Trace

The northern part of the parkway runs through ridges and rolling hills. The central section goes through wooded hills and rich, fertile bottom lands. Farther south the land becomes gentle and rolling with agriculture mingling with forests, rivers, and streams. The southern section of the parkway is low in some areas and has intermittent swamps. Hardwood is the predominant forest type.

A film about the Natchez Trace story is shown in the Tupelo Visitor Center. Parkway information and assistance may be obtained from any uniformed park employee along the road. Self-guiding nature trails, wayside exhibits, and interpretive markers are located at points of interest. Picnic tables are available in some areas.

Major points of interest and historic sites along the parkway are shown on the map and described in some detail below. If you enter the parkway from the south, the points of interest are in sequence. If you enter the parkway from the north, turn the folder over and read in reverse order. The parkway is under development in several areas, and State roads must be used to travel from one completed section to the next.

Emerald Mound. *This ceremonial Indian mound is one of the largest in the United States. Built about A.D. 1600, the mound covers nearly 8 acres and measures 770 by 435 feet at its base.*

Turpin Creek. *Nature trail along a creek bank. The plants found in wet lowlands and near streams are identified.*

Loess Bluff. *Nature area. This bluff shows a deep deposit of topsoil (loess) blown into the area during the ice age.*

Mount Locust. *This restored inn, with its frontier furniture and utensils, was one of the first inns on the trace. An exhibit shelter traces the history of this structure. Living history demonstrations.*

Coles Creek. *Rest stop and shaded picnic tables by attractive creek.*

Bullen Creek. *Nature trail through a mixed hardwood-pine forest. The trail illustrates the constant struggle for survival present in nature.*

Old Trace. *A fine example of the deeply eroded and sunken Old Natchez Trace. A short trail allows you to walk along this sunken road.*

Mangum Mound. *Copper ornaments and other artifacts found in the hilltop graves revealed the story of the early Indians who once lived here.*

Grindstone Ford Site. *Burnett's stand, or inn, once stood near the river. Across the river, and headed north, early-day travelers considered themselves to be in wild country.*

Rocky Springs. *Campground, picnic area, nature trail to historic spring site. A section of the Old Trace may be explored. There is a trail to the historic townsite.*

Ross Barnett Reservoir. *A part of the Pearl River water conservancy district. Camping, picnicking, marina, and boat landing facilities are available.*

Ridgeland. *Wayside museum.*

Boyd Mound. *These mounds were built more than 500 years ago by different Indian groups who heaped new graves on top of old ones.*

Cypress Swamp. *Nature trail through a Tupelo-baldcypress swamp. Elevated walkway takes you through the plant communities typical of a southern swamp.*

River Bend. *Rest stop. Picnic tables stand beside a scenic bend in the Pearl River.*

Southern Pines. *Nature trail features several species of southern pine and other native plants.*

Beaver Dam. *Nature trail along a beaver dam and an exhibit shelter that tells the story of the beaver.*

Holly Hill. *Rest stop and shaded picnic tables.*

Hurricane Creek. *Nature trail along a creek and up a hillside. The type of plants found in different soil conditions are identified.*

Cole Creek. *Nature trail through a Tupelo-baldcypress swamp that is in the process of changing into a mixed hardwood bottom-land forest.*

Old Trace. *The historic trace winds through the woods.*

Yowani. *Rest stop and picnic area. Named for a small clan of Choctaw Indians.*

Jeff Busby. *Rest stop, gasoline station, campground, and picnic area. Nature trail identifies native plants and their uses by the pioneers.*

Old Trace. *The original Natchez Trace leads into the woods along the modern roadway.*

Old Trace. *A section of the original Natchez Trace crosses the parkway at this point.*

dered all claims to lands north of the 31st parallel. The United States in the same year created the Mississippi Territory with Natchez as its capital. Adequate communication between the Territory and Washington, D.C., became important, and in 1800 Congress extended mail service to Natchez. The road was still a wilderness trail, and the Postmaster General complained that it could be used only "at a great expense to the public on account of the badness of the road which is said to be no other than an Indian footpath very devious and narrow." In 1801 President Thomas Jefferson ordered the U.S. Army to clear the road between Nashville and Natchez, but the few troops assigned the task could not hope to complete it without substantial assistance. So, in 1808, Congress appropriated \$6 thousand to allow the Postmaster General to contract for improvements, and within a short time the old Indian and boatmen trail became an important frontier road.

The Government encouraged the erection of inns, or "stands" as they were then called, along the trace. The first was built in 1804, and by 1820 more than 20 were in operation. Usually half-breed Indians or white men with Indian wives operated these wayside rest stops. Except for Mount Locust and Red Bluff, all were rather crude inns.

In 1812 the United States declared war on England. Because Spain was an ally of Britain, Gen. Andrew Jackson's Tennessee militia was ordered down the Natchez Trace to protect New Orleans from a threatened Spanish invasion from West Florida.

The invasion did not materialize, and Jackson was ordered to disband the militia. He refused and marched his troops back up the Natchez Trace sharing their hardships and earning the nickname "Old Hickory." In 1815, the British attempted to seize control of the lower Mississippi, but Jackson stopped them at the Battle of New Orleans. The victors then followed the trace northward to their homes. Because of Jackson's victory march, his name has been associated with the trace more than that of any other man.

From 1800 to 1820 this rough road was the most heavily traveled in the Old Southwest. Boatmen, soldiers, postmen, missionaries, Indians, and pioneer settlers moved along the road sharing its discomforts and dangers. Steaming swamps, floods, insects, accidents, sickness, unfriendly Indians, and occasional robbers plagued travelers on the trace.

In January 1812 the steamer "New Orleans" made its first appearance at Natchez. By 1819, 20 steamboats were operating between New Orleans and such interior cities as St. Louis, Louisville, and Nashville. No longer was it necessary for the traveler to use the trace in journeying north. Thus, steamboats, new roads, new towns, and the passing of the frontier finally reduced the trace to a quiet forest lane.

Today only a few sections of the historic trace remain. A paved parkway too smooth for yesteryear's traveler to imagine takes us through this land of historic adventure and natural beauty.

PARKWAY REGULATIONS

Uniformed park rangers patrol the parkway. They are there to help you have an enjoyable trip and to enforce the laws that govern the parkway's use.

Posted speed limits must be obeyed at all times. Speed limits are enforced through the use of radar.

Commercial hauling and trucking are not permitted.

Hunting and the use of firearms are prohibited.

All natural, historical, and archeological objects must be left undisturbed.

Tent and travel-trailer camping are permitted only at authorized campgrounds.

Build fires only in fireplaces. Carefully extinguish all cigarettes and matches; never throw them or other debris from vehicles.

Report all accidents, fires, and emergencies to the nearest uniformed park ranger. Check the map for the ranger station locations, or ask the telephone operator to connect you with the nearest park ranger residence or station.

A WORD ABOUT SAFETY

Drive defensively and make rest stops regularly. Slow down at sundown and during rainstorms.

ACCOMMODATIONS

There are no overnight facilities along the parkway. Motels, hotels, and restaurants may be found in nearby towns and cities. The only service station is at Jeff Busby Park. Campgrounds are at Rocky

Springs, Jeff Busby, and Meriwether Lewis Parks. Campsites cannot be reserved; stays are limited to 15 days during periods of heavy visitation.

SEASONAL CHANGES

Summer weather is generally hot and humid. The winter is usually cold and damp with occasional warm periods. Spring and autumn are mild and warm. Insect netting and repellent are recommended for camping.

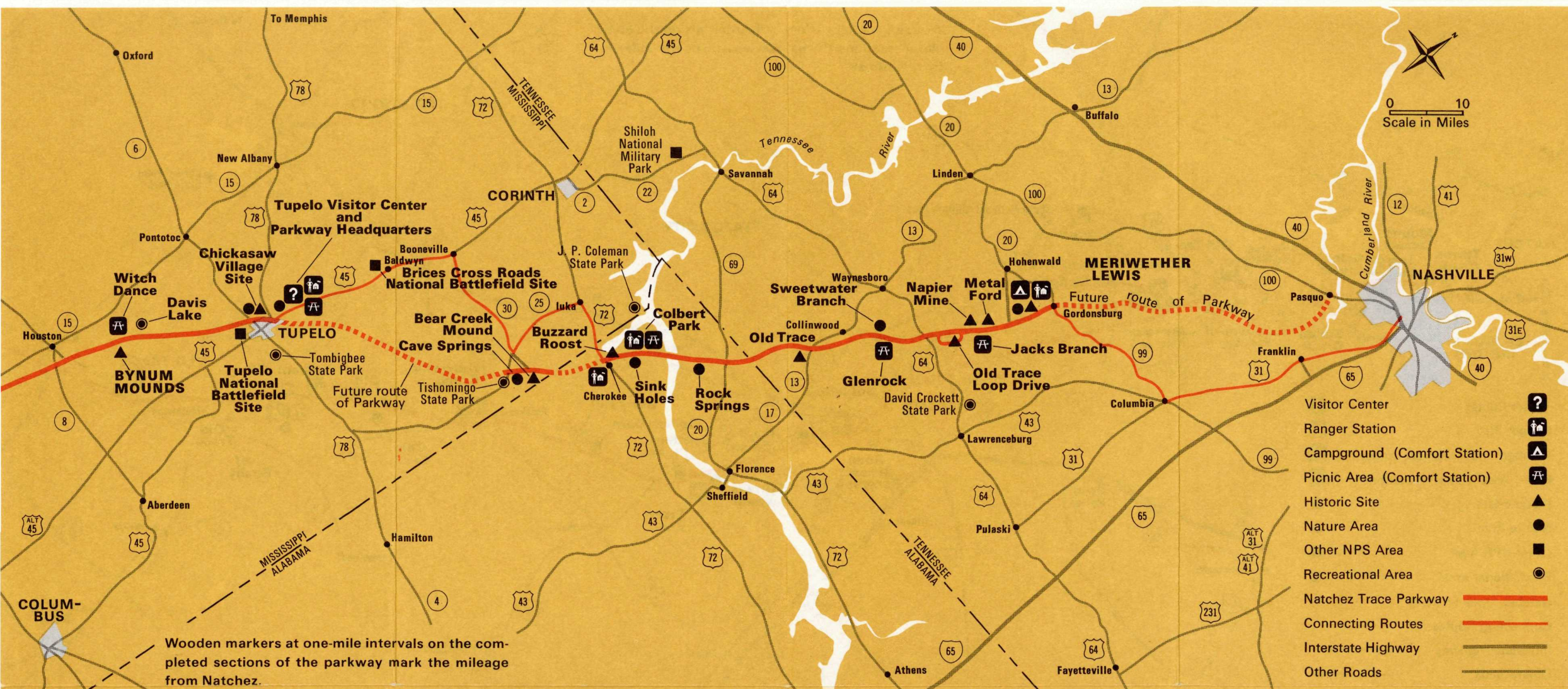
The elevations above sea level along the parkway range from 105 feet in Mississippi to 1,020 feet in Tennessee.

ADMINISTRATION

Natchez Trace Parkway is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, with offices in the Tupelo Visitor Center, is in immediate charge. Send all inquiries to him at Rural Route 1, NT-143, Tupelo, MS 38801, or telephone (601) 842-1572.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



From Bynum Mounds To Meriwether Lewis

Bynum Mounds. Village site of prehistoric and historic Indians. About A.D. 700, Indians who lived at this site built the burial mounds which can be seen today. An exhibit shelter with an audio station presents information about their daily lives.

Witch Dance. Rest stop and picnic tables in wooded area.

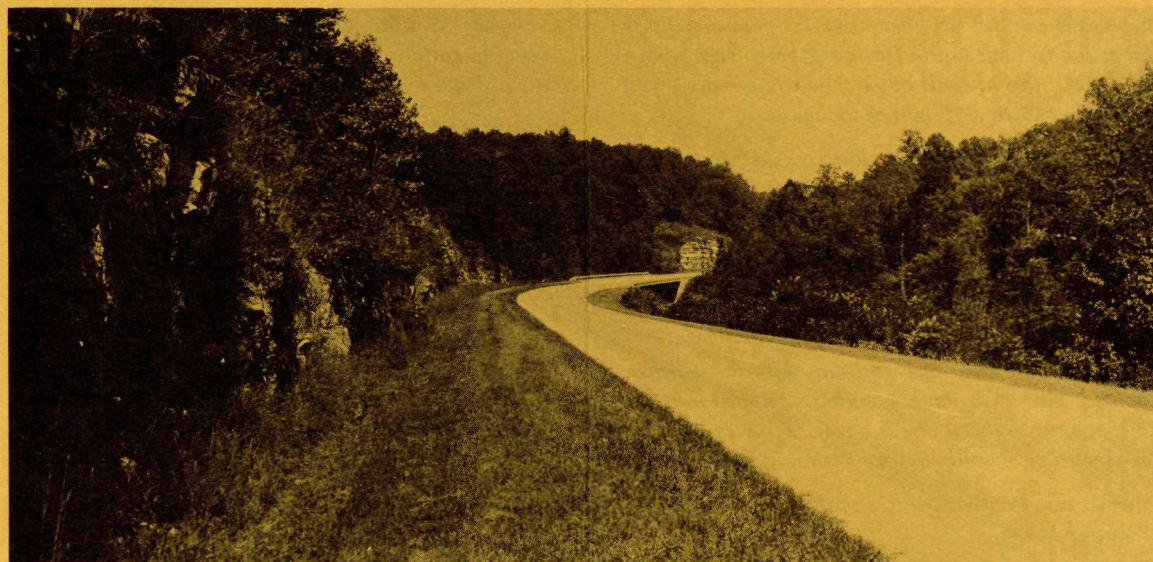
Davis Lake. A Forest Service area that provides camping, picnicking, swimming, and boating.

Tupelo National Battlefield Site. Site of an attack upon Union forces commanded by Gen. Andrew J. Smith by Confederate cavalry under command of Generals Stephen D. Lee and Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Chickasaw Village Site. A Chickasaw village was once located at this site. An exhibit shelter tells the story of these Indians, and a nature trail features plants used by the Indians.

Tupelo Visitor Center and Parkway Headquarters. Parkway information and exhibits. The visitor center theater offers a program, "Path of Empire," which tells of people and events associated with the historical Natchez Trace. Nearby the Beech Spring nature trail tells the story of forest regrowth.

Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield Site. Scene of one of Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest's victories. Located 6 miles west of Baldwyn on Miss. 370.



More than 70 miles of Natchez Trace Parkway have been completed in Alabama and Tennessee. This northern portion traverses hilly country with sharp ridges, deep valleys, and exposed outcrops of limestone.

Cave Springs. Trail to cave site.

Bear Creek Mound. Early Indian temple mound.

Buzzard Roost. An exhibit shelter tells the story of Levi Colbert, a Chickasaw chief, who owned an inn near this site.

Sink Holes. Short nature trail features karst formations.

Colbert Park. Recreational and historical area on the Tennessee River. When completed, this area will provide facilities for camping, picnicking, swimming, and boating.

Rock Springs. Nature trail along Colbert Creek to a clear flowing spring. Bottom-land plants are identified.

Old Trace. The Old Trace changed directions to avoid mudholes. Here we see three sections of the original road.

Sweetwater Branch. Nature trail through bottom-land forest. Plants are identified by markers along the trail. Seasonal display of wildflowers.

Glenrock. Two rest stops. Picnic tables in wooded areas beside a stream. A short trail connects the two areas.

Old Trace Loop Drive. A 2½-mile, one-way drive over a section of the Old Natchez Trace. This narrow paved roadway winds along a ridge with several scenic overlooks. Exhibits describe the hard conditions that early travelers faced. The drive is not recommended for trailers.

Jacks Branch. Rest stop. Shaded picnic tables arranged among large boulders.

Napier Mine. An exhibit shelter illustrates this open pit mine and shows how the ore was processed.

Metal Ford. Travelers on the trace forded the Buffalo River here. An exhibit presents the story of an early iron industry.

Meriwether Lewis. Campground, picnic area. This park is a tribute to one of the foremost explorers of the West, who died while traveling the Natchez Trace. His grave is marked by a monument.