

# Bicycling the Natchez Trace

Natchez, MS to Nashville, TN

May 8-18, 2007

*700 miles in 9 days!*



*Armadillos*



*10 flat tires*



*"Death March Across Mississippi"*

*Wrong turn in Tupelo*



*sleeping under the town water tower*



*Loveless Cafe*



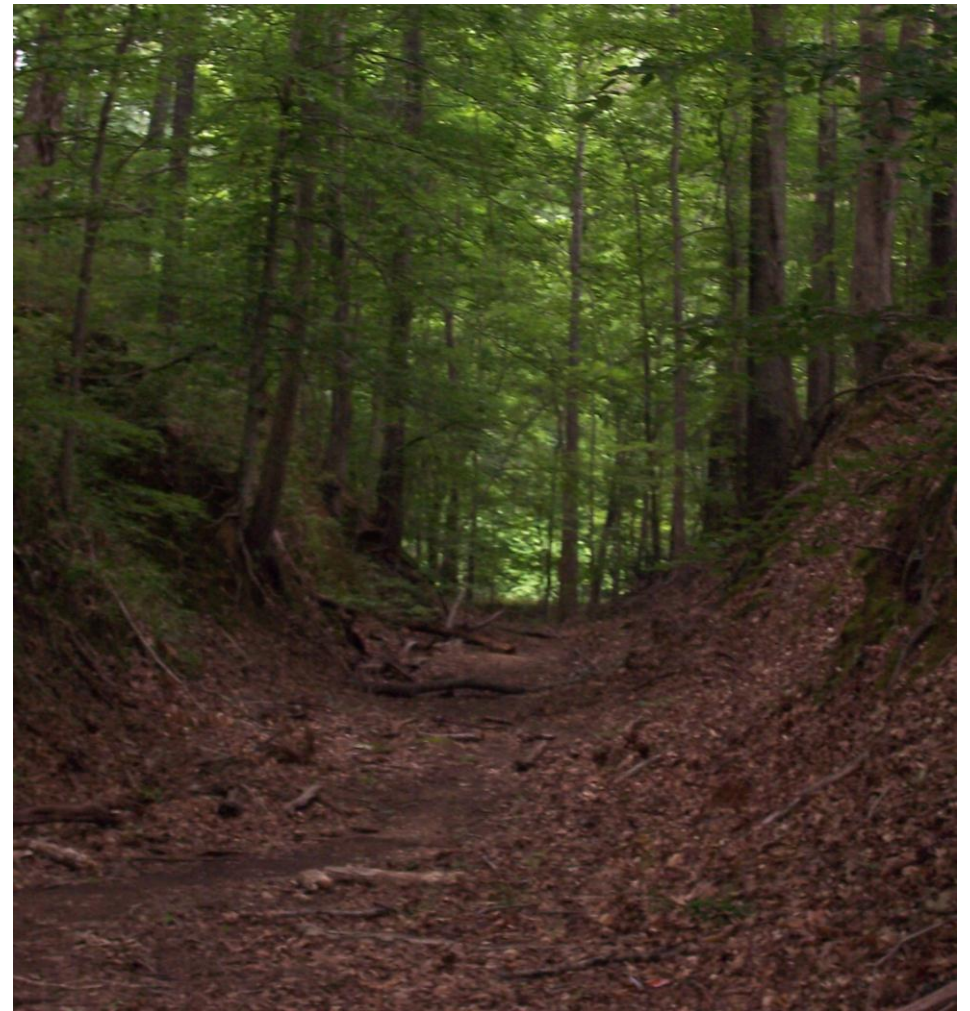
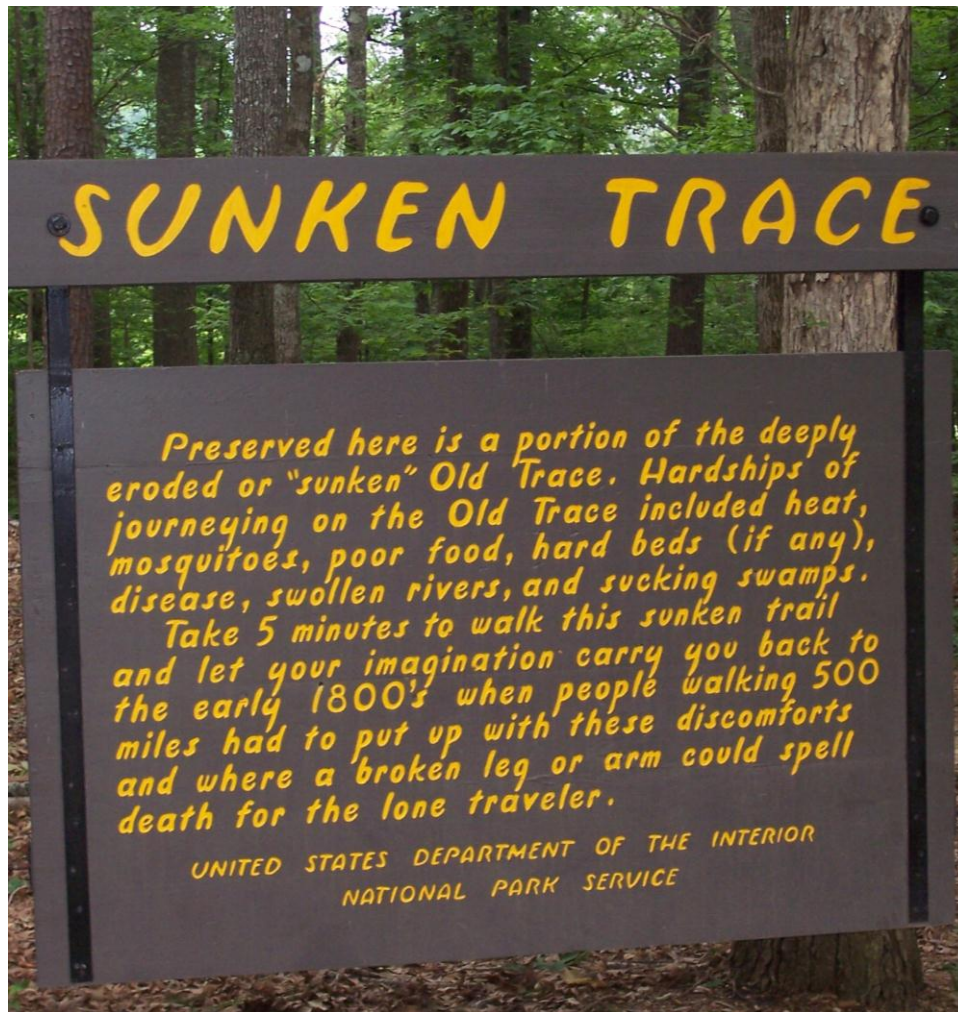
*Cypress Swamps*





Our group of 6 cyclists started our trip in Clinton, MS.  
Pictured left to right are Dean (ME), Paul (VA), AJ (NC), Tom (TN),  
Bruce (VA) and Marshall (PA).





The Natchez Trace is a 442-mile long national parks parkway that follows trails used by Indians and settlers. The trace was used so heavily that in many places it was deeply worn and rutted, causing travelers great difficulty in wet weather. The trace lost its usefulness in the early 1800's due to the use of railroads and the Mississippi River.





Crossing the Mississippi from Vidalia, LA to Natchez, MS





The Natchez Trace in southern Mississippi was home to many of these bald cypress/tupelo swamps. Some travelers before us had just seen an alligator in this swamp, but we missed it.





One of our favorite parts of bicycle touring is stopping by little country stores. We meet lots of nice people – and a few characters!





After 6 days of cycling in Mississippi, we finally made it into Alabama. Later the same day we crossed into Tennessee.





The Natchez Trace is ideal for cycling. It is a national park with light traffic and commercial vehicles are not allowed. The southern part of the trace in Mississippi is relatively flat and features farmland or forests with towering pine trees.





We stopped for photos after crossing this beautiful bridge 4 miles from the northern end of the Natchez Trace.





The northern end of the Natchez Trace in Tennessee features many cut rock walls as we approached the mountains. The vegetation was also different, including dense forests, clear streams, and lots of wildlife.





We took a 17 mile detour through Tupelo, MS and happened across an arts festival in the historic downtown area. We stopped by the birthplace of Elvis Presley. We also missed a turn on the detour which added 8 miles more!





Camping in Tishomingo State Park in northern Mississippi. Each cyclist carried about 40 lb of gear, including camping equipment, food, clothes, tools, etc.





Sunrise at Tishomingo State Park. We were treated to many beautiful sunrises as we were typically up by 6am and on the road by 7am.





The wildlife and flowers along the Natchez Trace were beautiful.  
Unfortunately, there are lots of dead armadillos along the road!





The friendly people of Collinwood, TN allowed us to camp for free under the town water tower. Some kids that lived nearby were fascinated by our bikes and tents and came by to visit.





We took a detour from the Natchez Trace to visit the Vicksburg National Military Park. The 16-mile road through the park is ideal for bicycles and features over 1300 monuments dedicated to this famous Civil War battle site.





We reached the end of the Natchez Trace and cycled to the nearby famous Loveless Café and Motel. We then continued another 20 miles into downtown Nashville. We stopped along the way as Dean had a flat tire. Flats aren't usually too common, but Paul and Dean each had 5 on this trip!





After 4 days of cycling, we reached French Camp, a Christian ministry that provides homes for over 200 troubled youth as well summer camps. As summer camps hadn't started yet, they let us stay in the cabins (a treat compared to tents) and eat in the cafeteria with the kids. We received a warm welcome from everyone we met there.





After touring Vicksburg, we headed back to Jackson, MS. We cut through the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton, MS and found an eclectic restaurant named ***Gravity*** located in a beautiful old house next to the campus. Just as we arrived, a big thunderstorm struck. They invited us to put our bikes on their huge porch and we enjoyed a great lunch and some leisure time waiting for the rain to pass.



<b>Date</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Finish</b>
May 8	107.0	Clinton, MS - MP 89 (Milepost 89)	Vidalia, LA (just across the Mississippi River from Natchez, MS – MP 0)
May 9	98.0	Vidalia, LA	Vicksburg, MS (detour off the Natchez Trace)
May 10	72.5	Vicksburg, MS	Timberlake Campground (MS) – 8 miles off the Natchez Trace from MP 103
May 11	89.1	Timberlake Campground	French Camp (MS) – MP 180
May 12	71.0	French Camp	Davis Lake Recreational Area (MS) - MP 243
May 13	85.7	Davis Lake Recreational Area	Tishmingo State Park (MS) Also took detour through Tupelo, MS - MP 302.8
May 14	63.4	Tishmingo State Park	Collinwood, TN – MP 354 Traveled through MS, AL, and TN today. Included detour through Cherokee, AL.
May 15	44.6	Collinwood, TN	Fall Hollow Campground (TN) - MP 391
May 16	73.3	Fall Hollow Campground	Nashville, TN Reached the end of the Natchez Trace at MP 442 and continued 20 miles into Nashville.
Total:	700.6		



