

a sensation-al trip to THE ARBUCKLES

Planning a trip to the Arbuckle Mountains, but worried because your kids are packing their special needs? I recently traveled with my young adult daughter who has **sensory processing disorder (SPD)**. Here are some things that helped us enjoy the journey.

These ideas can be utilized for hyperactive and/or sensory seeking children who range in age from second grade on up to young adulthood. That's because sensory experiences often help hyperactive kids channel their energies appropriately and modulate their responses while kids who have been diagnosed with SPD may also benefit from a variety of targeted activities. This "sensory diet" is beneficial for kids who crash, jump, bump, and wiggle their way through the day.

Individuals with SPD struggle to respond appropriately to environmental input that may include classroom fluorescent lights, shirt tags, tornado sirens, or even the texture of

cafeteria meatloaf. SPD can be successfully addressed by experienced occupational and physical therapists.

Here's my most important piece of advice: Be physically active. The morning of your excursion, offer to pay your child to clean the inside and outside of your vehicle. Bending over and down to vacuum the car is heavy work. (Provide a pair of earmuffs if the noise is off-putting.) Toting a bucket of sudsy water and packing the car with suitcases and ice-filled coolers are physically satisfying tasks.

Now for the actual road trip. A vibrating massage cushion (amazon.com) with a car adapter soothes tired muscles and gives input to sensory seeking travelers. Some models have heat options and different intensity modes.

Here's another idea, but this one is fueled by your child's creativity instead of your gas tank. Attach an insect rubbing plate (roylcostore.com) and paper to a clipboard. Rub crayons across the surface and watch the insect come alive. Use extra thick paperless crayons (lakeshore-learning.com) or simply peel your own.

For another sensory adventure that ties in with the great

outdoors, customize a perfume diffuser locket (stress2relaxation.com) with a nature scent. Cedar wood is a good bet, as is English Ivy, Forest Pine and Woodland. My daughter enjoys wearing a lavender-scented locket.



Bison display at the Travertine Nature Center

My final suggestion is also my daughter's favorite car activity: **Travel Bingo**. You can customize cards at freebingomaker.com. Mark the grids with scented stickers instead of tokens.

When you arrive, I highly recommend a hike around the grounds of the historic **Travertine Nature Center** at the **Chickasaw National Recreation Area** (www.nps.gov/chic) or the **Lake Murray Nature Center** (www.lake-murray.org/nature-center). Take pictures of insects and fragrant plants that match the rubbing plates and scented locket inserts. These make great journal material. On your way home, talk about what your child did and did not like. What activities are repeat-worthy? How could you tweak the before and during travel experience to make it more enjoyable for everyone? Encourage input from your kids and don't be surprised if they have ideas of their own. These conversations might be the most memorable part of your trip.

Lori Williams and her daughter Aurelia love hands-on adventures. When they aren't traveling to the Arbuckles or another exciting destination, they enjoy spotting bobcat prints at the Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge in their neighborhood or growing dill that attracts butterflies to their garden. This year they hope to plant six varieties of basil in their suburban garden.

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