

# **Historic Blakeley State Park**

## ***Junior Ranger Activity Program***



**Historic Blakeley State Park**

**34745 State Hwy. 225**

**Spanish Fort, AL 36577**

**251-626-0798**

**[www.blakeleypark.com](http://www.blakeleypark.com)**

**[office@blakeleypark.com](mailto:office@blakeleypark.com)**



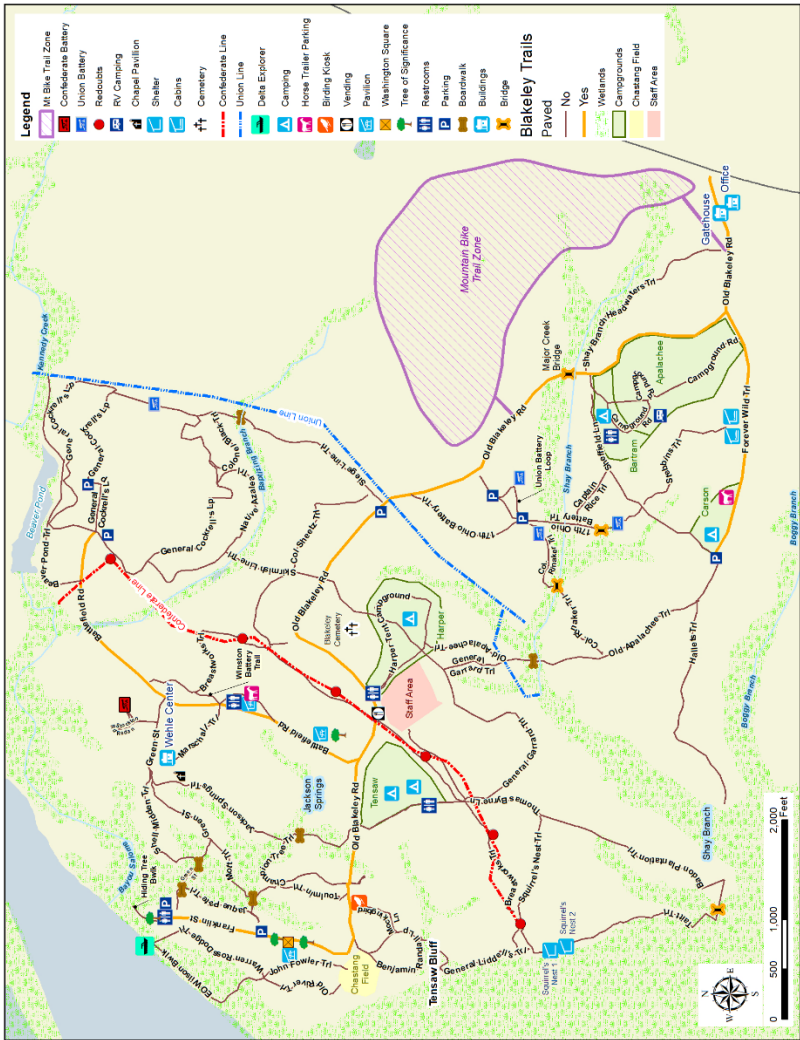
## A Word to Parents:

We're honored that you chose to bring your family to Blakeley today. We hope that we can provide a fun, engaging curriculum to help your visit be as educational and entertaining as possible.

*A word about preservation:* Many places here in the park are of great historic importance, and we ask that you assist us in keeping these important places just as they are. Please help us protect both your family's safety and the integrity of these historic sites by encouraging your family to stay behind any rope barriers, and by respecting marked historical areas and items. We also ask that you not damage the park's fragile natural environment. Please do not cut trees, pick flowers, or harm any animals.

*A word about safety:* We are an outdoor park, so there are areas and animals that need to be treated with caution. Watch for snakes, and avoid areas where they may be living (dead logs, marshy areas, etc.). Please be aware of dead limbs that may fall from trees, and keep an eye on weather conditions before and during your trip. Please keep to posted trails and boardwalks.

## Park Map:



Blakeley State Park is a really big place! To help you and your family see as much of the park as possible, we've organized the activities so that they can be completed in three different areas of the park.

Activities one through four can be completed in the vicinity of the Tensaw River waterfront. Starting at Washington Square (you may park at the Old Courthouse site), you can proceed down the Old Town Nature Trail to the E.O. Wilson Boardwalk, then walk over to the Hiding Tree Boardwalk. From there you can easily walk back to your car.

Activities five and six may also be completed in this area, or may be completed in any other area of the park you choose. Activity six will be completed on the Civil War battlefield, and activity seven takes place at the cemetery.

The activities are arranged to make them easier to complete them in a single visit, but they *do not have to be done in a single day*. We encourage you to come back whenever you have time!

## 1. Washington Square



The first stop on our tour is Washington Square! The town of Blakeley was founded in 1814, over 200 years ago. At its busiest time, the town of Blakeley had almost as many residents as the city of Mobile! Lots of people lived here in Blakeley, and it was a very important town for a short time. Now all that's left of the town are trees, and what's left of the old Courthouse. The spookiest thing that's left in Washington Square is the Hanging Tree. In the 1800s, punishments for crimes were different than they are now. One punishment, for very serious crimes, was hanging. Legends say that the Hanging Tree was where these punishments were given.

### **Activity:**

Some people say that the Hanging Tree is haunted, and that if you put your hand on the trunk, you can feel tingles! Did you feel any tingles? When you're done at the Hanging Tree, walk to the site of the old Courthouse. What material do you think the foundation is made of?

- a. Steel
- b. Stone
- c. Wood
- d. Brick

Do you think this was a good choice of material?

## 2. E.O. Wilson Boardwalk



Next we're going to explore the E.O. Wilson Boardwalk! As you walk the trail and the boardwalk, you'll go through many different ecosystems. An ecosystem is a place where plants, trees, animals, and other organisms live together. An ecosystem might be a desert, an icy tundra, or a forest. The ecosystems here are very different, and change very quickly. When many ecosystems are in one place, it means that lots of different animals can live close together.

### **Activity:**

While you're on the boardwalk, look and see if you can see a city across the river to your left. That city is Mobile! Blakeley is really close to Mobile, and Blakeley's founders planned for it to be bigger than Mobile. Cities located by rivers and oceans are called "port cities," and they're good places to live. Many ships docked right here at the port of Blakeley. With your parents, list a few different reasons port cities make good places to live.

### 3. The Hiding Tree



At the end of the Wilson Boardwalk, you'll be close to the Hiding Tree. The Hiding Tree is one of the most interesting things inside Blakeley! This tree over a hundred years old, and stories have been told about it for many years. It's inspired many legends! Most of these legends talk about people hiding inside of the large hollow in the middle of the tree. Some stories say that some soldiers

who ran away from battles fought here during the Civil War would hide in the opening in the roots of the tree until it was safe to come out.

#### **Activity:**

Look at the hollow of the Hiding Tree with your family. Be careful and watch out for any animals who might be hiding there too! Do you think this would be a good hiding place? Do you think the legends might be true? Talk about it with your parents.

#### 4. The “Cockleshell” Mound



The Cockleshell Mound Trail is named for the mound-shaped hill that you can find on the trail. It might look like just a plain pile of dirt, but it's really very special. A long time ago little freshwater clams (incorrectly commonly called “cockles,” which live in saltwater) lived in this area and were on the menu for Native Americans. They ate them and left thousands and thousands of their shells behind in big piles called “middens.” Some of these middens were formed over generations as people came to the same area year after year to catch and eat clams. The “Cockleshell Mound” is actually in part a prehistoric garbage pile!

##### **Activity:**

When you're hiking by the mound, look very carefully and see if you can find a shell. Don't take it out of the park, but pick one up and examine it if you see one lying on the ground. They are small and white, and look a lot like shells you find on the beach. How does it make you feel to hold something that is hundreds or thousands of years old? Do you think you would have liked to live that long ago?

## 5. Plants and Animals

### 5A. Plants

Historic Blakeley State Park is located in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, home to some of the most diverse plant and animal life found anywhere on earth! The Delta is a series of interconnected rivers, islands, and floodplains. Many of the hundreds of native plant and animal species found in the Delta live at Blakeley in one of several ecosystems, or natural communities, like swamps and forests. Throughout the park you may see several types of plants and animals, some of which may be only found here!



### Activity:

Identify these trees, which are found throughout the park:



Live Oak \_\_\_\_



Magnolia \_\_\_\_



Pine \_\_\_\_



Sweet Gum \_\_\_\_

Count the number of wildflowers you see. How many did you spot? \_\_\_\_

## 5B. Animals

There are many different animals living in the ecosystems, or natural communities, in Historic Blakeley State Park! Here's a list of a few animals you just might see during your visit.

When you're done in the park today, come back to this list and count how many of the animals you saw.

Squirrels – Foxes – Alligators - Lizards – Fish - Ants

Bugs - Birds - Raccoons - Opossums - Snakes

Rabbits - Frogs – Deer – Butterflies -Bees

Did you see any other animals? \_\_\_\_\_

How many kinds of animals did you see today? \_\_\_\_\_



## 6. Go for a Hike!



Now it's time for a little exercise! Grab your parents and head back down the road to the Cockleshell Mound Trail. The Cockleshell Mound Trail is near the Nature Center. This is a short hike, but there should be lots to see on it. Nature hikes are a great way to use our senses. Sight, smell, and hearing are the three main senses you'll use on your hike. Be sure to keep your eyes, nose, and ears open while you hike.

### Activity:

Use your senses to observe the Cockleshell Mound Trail. Look around and see what you can see on the trail. Do you see trees? Flowers or moss? Look out for birds and animals, or signs that they've been there. Do you hear rustling? Birds chirping? Bees buzzing? Breathe deeply and see what you smell. You could smell flowers, or rotting wood, or even dirt! Being in nature uses all our senses. If you pass by any patches of dirt on the trail, use your eyes to see if you see any tracks. Use the chart shown here to identify any tracks you see. Can you identify any tracks? If so, which one?



COYOTE



DEER



RABBIT



RACCOON



SQUIRREL

## 7. The Civil War Battlefield



This field might look like a regular field with some boards around it, but this area is one of the most interesting and special in the park. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1865, just after 5:30 in the afternoon,

the Battle of Fort Blakeley was fought right here where you're standing! The Battle of Fort Blakeley was one of the last battles fought during the Civil War. It was a very scary day at Blakeley. Bullets and cannon balls would be whizzing overhead, and you would hear sounds like men yelling, horses whinnying, and guns firing. The piles of dirt that you see are called "earthworks." Earthworks were meant to help protect soldiers from bullets, and they were built and used by soldiers over 150 years ago.

### **Activity:**

Using your map to help you, find the Union Line and walk there. When you're there, ask your parents to help you find the Confederate Line. Reenact the Union Army's charge. The Union Army charged from the Union Lines to the Confederate Lines. Run across the field from the Union Line to the Confederate Line, and imagine what that day was like. See if your parents will run with you!

## 8. The Cemetery

The last activity on our list is to visit the Cemetery.

The Cemetery at Blakeley is one of the last sites you'll see on your way out of the park. It's also one of the saddest places in the park. Many people lived in Blakeley for a long time. Native Americans lived here first, and after them came European settlers, all before Blakeley was founded as an American town. The cemetery



was started shortly after Blakeley was established. There are many people buried here, but only a few of the graves are marked by monuments. (The crosses you see near the entrance to the cemetery are a memorial to those who died in the Civil War battle here, not actual graves.) The cemetery also has one large monument in it, where names of some of the first residents of Blakeley are written. It's a place where some people like to reflect on the past and remember the people who lived and died here.

### **Activity:**

Look at the monument and see all the names written there. There are names of some of the first people who came here and settled the town of Blakeley. Look at their names and see the states and places they lived in before they moved here. How many different states did the first settlers come from? Why do you think they came here? Have you been to any of those states?

## **Let's Wrap Things Up!**

We here at Historic Blakeley State Park are so glad that you decided to spend the day with us today! We hope that you and your family had a wonderful time. We love that you got to spend a day in nature, learning about history and appreciating natural sights and sounds.

Please make sure that the only thing you leave in our park is footprints, and make sure to take nothing but memories and pictures home with you! Please properly dispose of any trash, to help keep our park clean.

Please come visit us again soon! And ask your parents to visit [www.blakeleypark.com](http://www.blakeleypark.com) or follow us on facebook to keep track of upcoming programs and activities!

Be sure to present the completed checklist (on the back of this page) to the gatehouse attendant at the exit of the park, and we will mail you a certificate to show that you are a Junior Ranger at Historic Blakeley State Park! You may also mail your completed form to:

Junior Ranger Program  
Historic Blakeley State Park  
34745 State Hwy. 225  
Spanish Fort, AL 36527

Come back to see us soon!

*To receive your certificate of completion in the Junior Ranger Program, please turn in this form at the park gatehouse or mail to:*

**Historic Blakeley State Park  
Junior Ranger Program  
34745 State Hwy. 225  
Spanish Fort, Al 36577**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity Checklist:**

(check when completed)

1. \_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_ Date completed \_\_\_\_\_

Adults who helped you complete the activities:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Resources:

**If you and your family want to know more about the history of Historic Blakeley State Park, or about the nature here in South Alabama, these are a few good resources to visit.**

[www.blakeleypark.com](http://www.blakeleypark.com)

[www.encyclopediaofalabama.org](http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org)

<http://archives.state.al.us/>

[www.alabamawildlife.org](http://www.alabamawildlife.org)