

# **Volunteer Leaders Training Guide**

## **Arkansas Staycation**

Laura Connerly, Instructor – Family Resource Management

### **Introduction**

High gas prices and tight budgets don't have to mean the end of the family vacation. Having fun doesn't have to break the bank. Take a "staycation" and explore low-cost or no-cost Arkansas adventures. This lesson reveals tips for planning a successful staycation. A staycation is an alternative to a traditional vacation. Staycationers stay at home or close to home and enjoy local, regional or state attractions.

### **Target Audiences**

- EHC leaders
- Adult audiences

### **Objectives**

Participants will gain knowledge about:

- Looking for fun and adventure in their local state or region.
- Planning quality family time with no travel necessary.
- How to find low-cost and no-cost entertainment.

### **Handouts**

- People Bingo
- Optional Handouts: Order from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism at [www.arkansas.com](http://www.arkansas.com) or call 501-682-7777.
  - Arkansas state highway map
  - Arkansas Tour Guide
  - Arkansas Calendar of Events
  - Arkansas State Parks Guide
- More Optional Handouts: Check with your local chamber of commerce about tourist attractions in your local area. They may provide copies of brochures.

## Suggestions for Teaching

- Review the lesson and the People Bingo instructions.
- Research local and regional activities, events or attractions that may be good for staycations. You can look in the Arkansas Tour Guide, visit the web site of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and/or visit your local chamber of commerce.
- Optional – Order copies of maps and guides from the Department of Parks and Tourism.
- Make copies of handout: People Bingo

### Icebreaker

#### People Bingo

Each person is given a bingo handout. Each square has a statement such as “Born in Arkansas” or “Has never been camping.” Participants move around the room, finding people for whom the statement is true. For example, one person would ask another “Have you ever been camping?” If the answer is “yes,” the respondent signs the bingo card square. See additional instructions in the **People Bingo Instructions**. This game has a dual purpose. First, it helps people get acquainted – or better acquainted if they’ve already met. Second, it introduces some of the lesson ideas.

## The Staycation

Vacations can be an expensive item in the personal budget with travel costs, hotels, restaurants and activity fees. Many people are limiting unnecessary spending, and an expensive vacation is an easy place to cut costs. One way to keep the fun without so much expense is to have a staycation – staying close to home means that you save money on travel costs. But there’s another reason to have a staycation. Many people are tired of the hustle and bustle of everyday activity and want a break. Vacation travel can feel even more hectic than your regular life. A staycation is a great way to get some rest and recreation by chilling out at home. Another benefit of a staycation is that it supports your local and state economy.

## Planning a Staycation

Decide what type of staycation you want – active, relaxing or a mix of both. Look for activities that match your interest. If you’re planning a staycation for the whole family, be sure to include activities everyone will enjoy. You might want to have a family meeting to discuss and select activities.

Schedule a start date and an end date. It’s a good idea to plan some specific activity to mark the beginning and the end of your staycation – that way it feels more like you’ve set aside a special block of time. For example, you might have a kickoff breakfast on your first morning and host a cookout for family and friends on the last evening. When you plan your staycation, you will need to think about the activities you want to do and establish a budget for your estimated expenses.

## **Active Staycation Ideas**

- **Museums** – Old Statehouse Museum, Territorial Restoration, “hanging judge” Parker’s courtroom in Fort Smith, Arkansas Arts Center, Plantation Agriculture Museum and many other fascinating exhibits. Check the Arkansas Tour Guide from the Department of Parks and Tourism, visit their web site, or check with your local chamber of commerce.
- **Parks** – Arkansas has many parks featuring either nature (for example, Buffalo National River, Ouachita Mountains) or history (for example, Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, Historic Washington State Park).
- **Festivals** – Toad Suck Daze, Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival, Brickfest, Riverfest, Timberfest, etc. Many towns have a local festival. Check the Calendar of Events from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism for festivals near you.
- **Events** – Races (horse, stock car or chuck wagon), holiday light tours, eagle awareness workshops, etc. Check the Calendar of Events from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism for events near you.
- **Activities** – Tour Arkansas’ wine county, take a scenic train ride, go ice skating or roller skating or take a dinner cruise on Lake Ouachita or on the Arkansas River. Check the guide for fun activities in your area.
- **Fishing** – In Arkansas, you can fish in lakes or rivers and fish for trout, bass, catfish and more.
- **Adventure** – Some active outdoor adventures in Arkansas are hiking, bike-riding, floating, back-packing, hang-gliding and rock climbing.
- **Amusement Parks** – There are several amusement parks in Arkansas (Wild River Country, Magic Springs), and some in neighboring states may be close enough for a day’s drive (Silver Dollar City in Branson, MO).
- **Concerts, Theater, Sporting Events** – Larger towns might have an orchestra and/or professional theater venue. Many smaller towns have local bands and community theater groups. Occasionally, groups offer free concerts or play for free at festivals. The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra offers a few free concerts each year. Professional sporting events can be attended in Little Rock. Colleges and universities also host musical, theater and sporting events. Call your local college or university or check their web site for more information.

## **Relaxing Staycation Ideas**

- **There’s No Place Like Home!** – Stay home and relax, but beware of distractions that can make your staycation all work and no play. Cleaning out closets, painting the living room and building a new deck are all productive ways to spend time. **BUT, REMEMBER – a staycation is supposed to be fun!** Try to limit the household chores. In fact, it might be a good idea to do a thorough housecleaning BEFORE the staycation starts so you won’t be tempted to spend your fun time doing housework. Some people get their best rest in their own home and their own bed, so staying at home can be relaxing. Another benefit of staying home is that there is no lodging expense. You might choose to stay at home the entire time or spend one or two nights out. If you do stay home the entire time, remember to plan plenty of “vacation-type” activities.

- **Fun Things to Do at Home** – Fun things to do at home can include board games, renting movies, hosting a party or even cooking a special meal for your family. Relax and spend time at home doing fun activities with family and friends.
- **Spa Day** – You can gather supplies to have your own “spa day” at home. Give yourself a manicure and pedicure, buy a facial mask and use special bath oil for a long soak in a warm bath. A more expensive option would be to spring for a day trip to a spa during your staycation week at home. Some spas offer discount packages if you buy several services (massage, facial, pedicure) at once.
- **Just Relax** – Recline in the hammock and read a good book, sleep late or take a nap, linger over your coffee and the morning paper, etc. Do whatever you like to do that helps you to feel relaxed and refreshed. Take a break from being busy. But, don’t spend the entire week being a couch potato. Sometimes too much inactivity can make you feel sluggish. Try to plan a balance of activities.

### Your Staycation Budget

A staycation should be designed to fit your budget. Decide how much money you want to spend, and then look for activities to fit your budget. Some of the expenses you might have on a staycation include:

- **Food** – You don’t have to leave home to have “vacation” food. Now you finally have time to try that new recipe you saw on *The Food Channel*®. You may also want to take a break from cooking some days. Look for a new restaurant to try. Another fun alternative is to go on a picnic. As you’re planning your staycation, think about meals and snacks to include this expense in your budget for the week.
- **Gas** – The closer to home the activity, the less money you’ll spend on gas. This is one of the biggest savings categories when choosing a staycation over a vacation. With a staycation, you don’t have the cost of airline tickets or gasoline to drive across several states. Decide how much money you want to budget for gasoline based on the activities you’ve chosen and the money you have available.
- **Entry Fees** – We talked about some of the free things you can do, but you might also want to budget for other activities. Some museums charge an entrance fee – usually less than \$10 but often only \$2 or \$3. Concerts, theaters and sporting events may have a fee associated. Choose the activities you would like, think about how much money you can afford to spend and then make a decision.
- **Lodging** – Staying at your own home is the least expensive option. Camping is an inexpensive option for travel lodging – if you like to camp. There are many campsites in Arkansas. If your budget allows, you might include one or more nights of lodging in a hotel, motel or bed and breakfast. Look online or call and ask for specials or discounts. Sometimes, lodging facilities offer especially good discounts in the “off” season – those times of year when their business is slower.
- **Miscellaneous** – Budget some money for miscellaneous items such as sunscreen, fishing supplies or maybe even a souvenir.

## **Enjoy Your Staycation**

Enjoy your staycation and remember to:

- **Plan** – Plan your activities and be sure to include both active and relaxing activities so that you will feel both refreshed and re-energized.
- **Schedule** – Set a start and end date just like you would on a regular vacation. Schedule activities. Purchase tickets ahead of time if necessary.
- **Budget** – Make a budget so that your staycation doesn't upset your regular spending plan.
- **Snap** – Take pictures to document the special memories you are making on your staycation.
- **Have Fun!** – Keep fun in mind as the focus during your staycation.