

# VACATION MISSION

Find biodiversity while you travel, get help identifying what you saw, and contribute to a record of life on Earth.



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## Make your explorations count!

Vacation is a great time to get outside and explore. Use this learning mission to focus your family's attention on living things that they may not otherwise notice. Whether you are going to the mountains, ocean, river, lake, or city, there are always living things to see and photograph.

How are you getting there? Make the journey part of the fun, too. You can see wildlife anywhere—in a parking lot, near the airport, or while waiting for a train. Here are some ideas to guide your exploration and some car games to keep your family engaged and entertained.

Your mission is to explore the natural world on the way to your vacation destination. **But this is no ordinary scavenger hunt! By submitting your observations of biodiversity to National Geographic's Great Nature Project, you can get help identifying what you saw and contribute to a record of life on Earth.** Children under the age of 13 must submit observations with adult supervision in order to protect their privacy.

Your **mission** is to explore and photograph biodiversity with your family while you travel.

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

- 1 Go outside and search for the wild plants, animals, and fungi. Use the games and scavenger hunt to focus your search and talk with your family about the natural world.
- 2 Keep a photo record of what you have seen and contribute to science by uploading your photos to the Great Nature Project on [greatnatureproject.org](http://greatnatureproject.org) or by using the **iNaturalist.org** mobile app.
- 3 Check out what other people have uploaded! Visit [greatnatureproject.org/photos](http://greatnatureproject.org/photos).

### What you need:



camera

copy of this mission

internet connection

iNaturalist app (optional)



# GETTING STARTED



Start your family's photographic scavenger hunt as soon as you walk out the door. While some family members pack up the car, take pictures of as many different living things as you can in ten minutes (pets and potted plants won't count). Look over your photos and identify what you can before you leave. Remember, it's fine if you don't know what you saw. Record as much as you know (e.g. "bird" or "plant") when you submit observations and then others in the Great Nature Project can help suggest identifications.

**Try to photograph something living every time you get out of the car or stop for a break.**



*(left) National Geographic Creative/Diane Ackerman;*

*(middle) National Geographic Creative/Paul Zahl;*

*(right) National Geographic Creative/Carolyn Barnwell*



# ON YOUR JOURNEY



Photograph as many different species of living organisms as you can in ten minutes at a rest stop or any time you pull off the road. Upload your images to the Great Nature Project using the iNaturalist app and try to identify the organisms.



When you get back into the car, play a version of *20 Questions*, in which the answerer can only select animals or plants that they have seen during the trip as the subject.



While in the car, play the game *In Grandmother's Trunk I Packed...* using only animal names.

In this version of the game, the first person says an animal that starts with the letter *a*. The second player repeats the *a* animal name and then adds an animal that starts with *b*. Each player repeats all of the previous animal names and adds another for each letter of the alphabet.

For older kids and adults, try playing the same game using only the names of plants and trees or only the names of insects.



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# BIODIVERSITY SCAVENGER HUNT



Use the Great Nature Project to keep a family species list for the whole vacation. Be sure your geolocation feature is enabled on your mobile phone camera so that you can easily record where you saw everything.



Try to find and photograph these organisms:

- beetle
- butterfly or moth
- caterpillar
- clover
- deer
- dragonfly
- fern
- frog
- mushroom
- mosquito
- moss
- plant that lives in water
- reptile (lizard, snake, turtle)
- snail
- squirrel (or other rodent)
- spider
- tree with blossoms
- tree with needles
- tree with pine cones
- tree with leaves
- wildflower
- worm
- \_\_\_\_\_

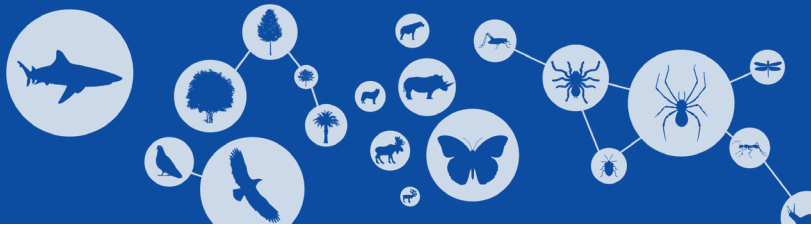
Don't let this list limit you! What other living things do you see?



For a different way to focus your observations, find and photograph:

- a plant that is taller than a water bottle
- an animal that is smaller than your big toe
- an animal with wings
- an animal that makes noise
- an animal that lives in the water
- an animal with no legs
- an animal with 4 legs
- an animal with 6 legs
- an animal with 8 legs
- an animal with more than 10 legs
- organisms representing every color of the rainbow
- organisms in pairs
- organisms in groups of 3
- organisms in groups of 4 or more
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# COMPLETING YOUR MISSION



Reminder: In order to protect their privacy, children under 13 cannot create their own accounts and should contribute to the Great Nature Project with adult supervision since observations include time and place. Make it a family thing!

Upload all photographed sightings to the Great Nature Project and identify each organism as best as you can. Be sure to use the “look up” button (or magnifying glass icon in the app) to search for the appropriate group of organisms (such as “millipedes” or “ferns”). Then others in the community can help suggest identifications for what you saw!

**Remember that clear photos always help!**



**Conversation starters for the way home:**

Which places did we visit? Which plants and animals were found in each place? Why did we see different organisms in different places?

Which organisms were easiest to photograph? Which were most difficult? Why?

Which organisms did you see but not photograph? Why?



## Art Project Extensions

Of all of the plants and animals that you saw on your trip, which one would you like to be? Draw yourself as that organism in your new habitat.

Make a nature journal with notes and drawings from each day of your trip or make a digital scrapbook with notes about the organisms.



Let us know what you think!  
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