

## **SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA MUSEUM (B,J,C,S)**

Dear Group Leader:

This guide is developed to assist Leaders and Scouts in preparing for a trip to the Southwest Virginia Museum. The Virginia Division of State Parks operates the Southwest Virginia Museum, for its citizens and guests. The museum houses a wide variety of items from coal and fossils to Indian and pioneer artifacts. Since the museum was originally built in 1888 and was the private home of Rufus Ayers, entrepreneur and one time attorney general to Virginia, the Victorian lifestyle is easily seen throughout the museum.

Setting Up a Visit:

1. Contact Southwest Virginia Museum at least two weeks prior to your visit for reservations and details. Our phone number is (540) 523-1322.
2. Discuss your trip in detail with your group. Cover such topics as conduct, dress, food, spending money, handling of artifacts, excessive noise and horseplay.
3. Discuss with your group the importance of museums and the role they play in the preservation of our history.
4. Discuss with your group what to bring.
5. Prepare your group for the type of tour they will be given.

Group Guidelines:

1. Our group size limit is one guide for every 25-30 Girl Scouts. If you have a group larger than 30 Girl Scouts, plan on splitting it up into smaller groups and rotating them to other local attractions in Big Stone Gap or take a self-guided tour of the grounds.
2. Each group will need one adult with every five children.
3. Food, drink, excessive noise, horseplay or handling of artifacts are prohibited inside the museum.

During Your Visit: You may choose the following:

1. General tour: Length one hour
  2. Two specific tours: Length one hour
- The following items will be discussed during the tour:

**General Tour:** During this tour we will discuss:

Who built the museum and the materials used to build it. How Big Stone Gap is different from surrounding towns in Southwest Virginia. Who were the people that lived here before the 1880's and how did they live. Discover how a duldmer, still, butter churn, straw ticks and spinning wheels were used.

**Specific Tours:** During the specific tours we will discuss topics in greater detail. The ten areas are listed and described below.

**The Pioneer Way of Life:** During the tour we will discuss: The inside of a pioneer home and the importance of a fireplace. Discuss daily chores such as cooking, making butter, washing clothes, ironing and how they were accomplished.

**Making of Cloth and Clothing:** During this tour we will discuss: How cloth was originally made. Explain the differences between wool and flax and why each were used. What is the difference between the "Big Wheel" and the "Little Wheel" Demonstrate the loom operation.

**Making Of A Town-The History of Big Stone Gap:** During this tour we will discuss: Who established Big Stone Gap and why? How is Big Stone Gap different from other towns in Southwest Virginia? Who were Rufus Ayers, General Imboden and C. Bascom Slemp? What was the town like when they lived here?

**A Walk On The Grounds:** A self-guided brochure is provided to give you a tour of the grounds.

This tour can be taken with your leaders or at your own pace. You will get an opportunity to discover how the house was built and what were the building materials. Also discover the importance of the artifacts and plants which grace the lawn of the museum.

**A Stroll Around Town: An Architectural Walk Around The Block:** During this tour we will discuss: How to tell the age of a building by its windows, brick or wood siding. Increase your vocabulary with such words as gable, hip and turret. See first hand some of the finest architecture of the area.

**Indian Life And Lore:** During this tour we will discuss: Who were the people who lived here before the pioneers? Why did they not settle in this area? How did they live, eat and survive? We explore these topics and more. How were dug out canoes made? Why were arrowheads carried from place to place?

**Musical Instruments:** During this tour we will discuss: What is a dulcimer, zither and banjo? How were dulcimers used for "courting" Which instrument is the only truly American instrument? **Quilting And Embroidery:** During the tour we will discuss: The two methods of quilting. Why did people quilt? What are some of the different quilt patterns? How were crazy quilts made?

**The Victorian Way of Life:** During this tour we will discuss the lifestyle of the Victorians: How they entertained, what they ate, and how they dressed. You will have an opportunity to see a corset, petticoat, stereoscope and mustache cup.

**Construction Of The Museum:** During this tour we will discuss: How the museum was constructed. What materials were used to build the interior and exterior of the building. Discover why it took seven years to build the building.

**Follow Up:** When you return home, complete one of the activities from each specific tour you were given. If you took the general tour, choose one activity from any two specific tours.

**Pioneer Way of Life:**

1. Try your hand at making butter.
2. Try your hand at spinning or weaving.
3. Try your hand at cooking a soup over an open fire.

**Making of Cloth and Clothing:**

1. Sew an outfit for a doll by hand.
2. Make a drop spindle and spin wool.
3. Try your hand at growing flax.

**Making of a Town - The History of Big Stone Gap:**

1. Interview an older citizen or relative to find out how they lived as a child.
2. Go to the library and do research on a famous Southwest Virginian. Report back
3. Try mapping and laying out an imaginary town.

**A Walk Around The Grounds:**

1. Identify five plants in your yard or neighborhood.
2. Give a guided walk of your neighborhood and point out plants that are seen in the area.
3. Choose five plants that were used in early times for medical cures and tell how they were used.

**A Stroll Around Town - An Architectural Walk Around The Block:**

1. Analyze the architecture of your home.
2. Compare and contrast five buildings in your neighborhood.
3. Give an architectural walk of your neighborhood.

**Indian Life and Lore:**

1. Try your hand at making pottery.
2. Map out the Wilderness Road.
3. Try your hand at making an arrowhead.

**Musical Instruments:**

1. Research the origin and history of the dulcimer.
2. Make a musical instrument.
3. Learn an Appalachian Ballad and teach it to the troop.

Quilting and Embroidery:

1. Make a quilt square by hand.
2. Cross stitch or embroider your name on a bookmark.
3. Draw three different quilt patterns that were used in the "old days"

The Victorian Way of Life:

1. Make a Victorian costume for a doll.
2. Learn about the games the Victorians played and teach one to your troop.
3. Find out what the Victorians ate and write a menu.

Construction of the Museum:

1. Draw two different motifs that were used over the doors and windows of the museum.
2. Make a model of the museum.
3. Draw a picture of the museum and put it on a note card to send a friend.

Museum Information:

The museum is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Daily 9 a.m. and March 1 to Memorial Day and after Labor Day to December 31. An admission fee is charged from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day. A fee is also charged for the self-guided grounds brochure. Address Southwest

Virginia Museum; P.O. Box 742; Big Stone Gap, VA 24219; (540) 523-1322.

Other attractions in Big Stone Gap: John Fox Jr. Museum (540) 523-2747

Harry Meador Coal Museum (540) 523-4000

June Tolliver House (540) 523-1235

Tourist Information Center

President's 101 Car -(540) 523-2060