

Ethan and Oliver Adventures

Georgia's on our Mind
Road Trip



Georgia's on our Mind Road Trip

Jennifer Zelt

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ethanandoliveradventures@gmail.com

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Dedication

To my children—Sydni, Ethan, and Oliver.

Sydni, you have weathered every season of my Navy journey with strength far beyond your years. This life—full of deployments and distance...ups and downs—is all you have ever known. As you continue into adulthood and look back on the moments I missed, please know how deeply I thank you for your resilience and grace.

To the families who read this book—may it remind us all not to take for granted the fleeting, sacred time we have with our children.

And to Ethan and Oliver—

Momma is home now. Let our adventure begin.

You are {all} fearfully and wonderfully made.

— *Psalm 139:14*

Let's plant some seeds.

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Mission Complete!

Meet the Adventurers

Ethan – Big brother. Thoughtful and curious. He is always asking big questions, sketching what he sees, and writing down the things he does not want to forget.

Oliver – Little brother. Wild and joyful. A question machine with endless energy, a big imagination, and a talent for turning anything into an adventure—especially if it involves climbing, splashing, or laughing too loud.

Mom – Retired Navy officer and the family’s planner-in-chief. Once responsible for navigating ship movements across oceans, now she maps out each day’s journey with purpose and care—connecting history, faith, and discovery.

Dad – Faith-filled storyteller, inventor, and history guru; and, a deeply involved member at their church. He manages everything from finances to facilities, and he can do it all remotely—so whether he is solving a budget problem or dreaming up his next big idea, he is always ready for adventure.

The Journey – A homeschooled family on a mission to explore and experience all 50 states, one unforgettable road trip at a time—learning about God, the country, and themselves along the way.

Our Adventure Rhythm

The E & O PBED Process

Before every mission, the Navy follows a method called PBED:

****Plan. Brief. Execute. Debrief. ****

Since Mom served in the Navy, she taught us about something called a Battle Rhythm—a routine that helps teams stay on track, anticipate next steps, ask questions, and work together.

For big missions, Navy teams use PBED to prepare and improve every time. But for daily life on a ship, they follow something called the POD—the Plan of the Day. It is like a schedule that tells everyone what is happening:

“Inspection at 0800. Training at 1100. Tacos for supper.”

So...

- PBED is for the big picture.
- POD is for the day-to-day.
- And both help everything run smoothly.

For our family adventures, we made our own fun version of all this:

Our Adventure Rhythm!

It helps us stay prepared, stay curious, and soak up every moment. Now it is just how we do adventure—and you can too.

****P – PLAN****

Pre-Trip Detective Work

Before we leave home, we study the state. We look at maps, read about its history, learn the symbols, and get excited for what is ahead. We imagine what we will see—and we always pin it on the map.

— “The more we know before we go, the more we (k)no(w)tice along the way.” —

****B – BRIEF****

Backseat Briefings

Right before we arrive at a stop, Mom or Dad gives us a mini mission briefing:

- What happened here?
- What should we look for?
- What questions do we have?

(And yes—there are always snacks.)

****E – EXECUTE****

Explore Mode: Activated

This is the best part—seeing it for ourselves. We climb, paddle, walk, ask, wonder, and try new things. Sometimes we get messy. Sometimes we get muddy.

But we always learn something new.

****D – DEBRIEF****

Notebooking and conversations about Our Day

Each evening, we pull out our notebooks. We write, draw, ask big questions, and remember what we saw. Sometimes we talk about history. Sometimes we talk about God. Sometimes we just talk about alligators.

PBED turns our road trips into adventures—and our memories into lessons that stick.

How This Book Works

Ethan & Oliver Adventures follows a rhythm — just like the family does on their real-life road trips. Every book starts with a sense of purpose and a plan, and unfolds one meaningful day at a time.

Here is how to follow the adventure:

Prologue: The Map

Before every journey begins, Ethan and Oliver stand before the giant wall map at home — tracing the route, praying over what is ahead, and wondering what they will learn along the way. Our *Planning* piece.

Departure Morning

Each trip kicks off with a send-off from San Diego. It may feel like they’ve time-traveled, but do not worry — the story picks up right at the state line, ready for the first real adventure.

Daily Chapters (Days 1–13)

Each chapter takes place over the course of a day in that state. You will explore real locations, learn fun facts, and follow the boys through hikes, museums, mishaps, and moments of discovery. Our *Briefing* piece.

“After a full day of...”

When you see this phrase, the day is ending. This is the notebooking reflection time — a quiet moment where the family slows down, prays together, and talks about what they learned. You will notice a soft notebook background on the page to help you settle into this peaceful rhythm too. *This is our Debrief — yes, we know it is “out of order,” but it works!*

Stop & Explore Missions

After each chapter, you will find a hands-on “Stop & Explore” mission. These simple activities are designed to help you follow along from home — no matter where you are. Each one connects to something Ethan and Oliver experienced that day, so you can get

creative, curious, and reflective right from your living room, backyard, or homeschool table. *This is your Execute piece.*

These missions are optional, but highly encouraged. After all, you are part of the adventure too!

Prologue

The Map on the Wall

In the corner of a hallway back home in San Diego, a giant map of the United States hung on the wall. Tiny pins marked the places they'd already been.

Ethan stood before it, holding a soft peach-colored pin between his fingers.

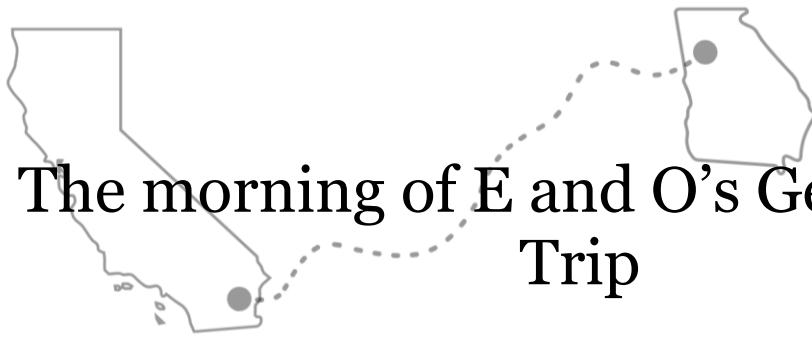
“Georgia,” he whispered, pressing it into the map.

“We’re coming for you.”

That was five days ago.

Now? He was wide awake, staring out the backseat window, waiting for the words he’d been dreaming about:

“Welcome to Georgia—the Peach State.”



The morning of E and O's Georgia Road Trip

California to Georgia

The sky outside was still dark when Mom's voice floated into the room.

"Time to roll, road trippers!"

Ethan blinked awake, reached for his travel journal, and sat up with a sleepy grin. "Is it really today?"

"It is if you want to make it to Georgia before next week," Dad called from the hallway, already sipping his honey-sweetened coffee.

Oliver didn't move. "Do we have to leave before the sun even wakes up?"

Mom laughed. "The early bird gets the peaches."

That got a smile out of Oliver.

In the kitchen, the boys munched on warm peach muffins—soft, golden, and sweet like the state they were headed for—and sipped their coffee (hot water and honey, of course) while Dad packed up the last cooler with drinks and trail mix. The kitchen light glowed like a lighthouse in the quiet morning, and Mom double-checked the list one last time.

Shoes? Check.

Blankets? Check.

Snacks? Check.

Ethan tucked his notebook into the seat-back pocket as they loaded up the truck. The cab still smelled faintly of campfire and sunscreen from their last trip, and Oliver spotted the same stubborn goldfish cracker wedged in the seat crack.

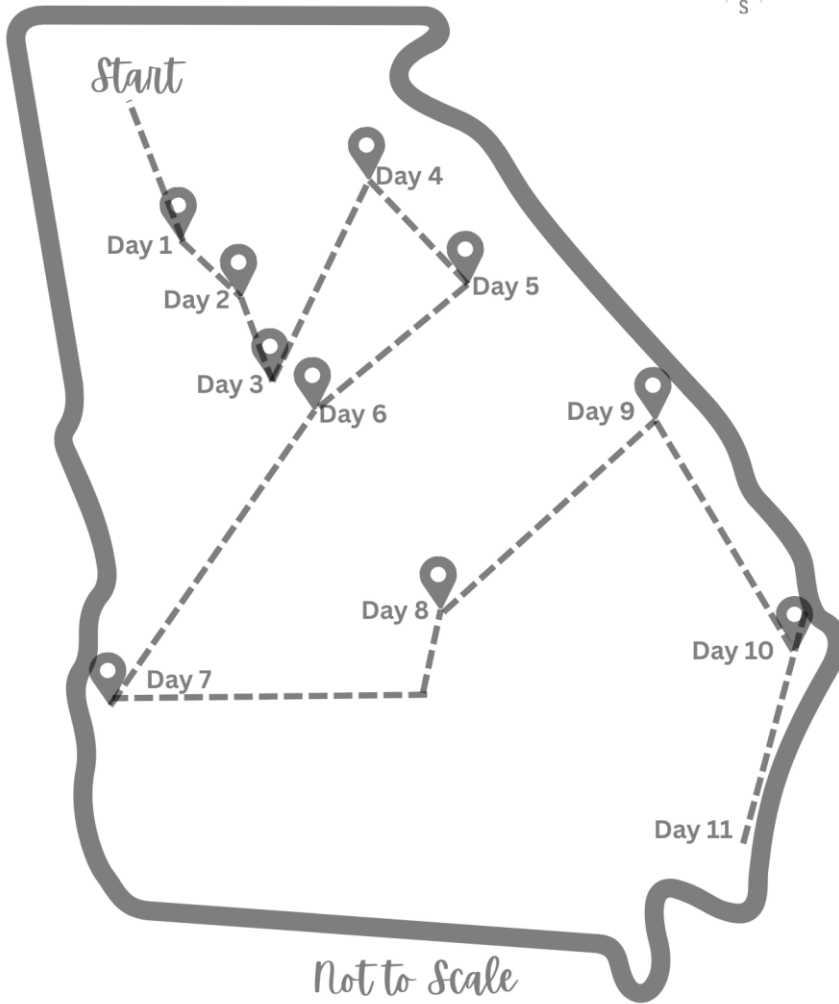
He pointed dramatically. "You again."

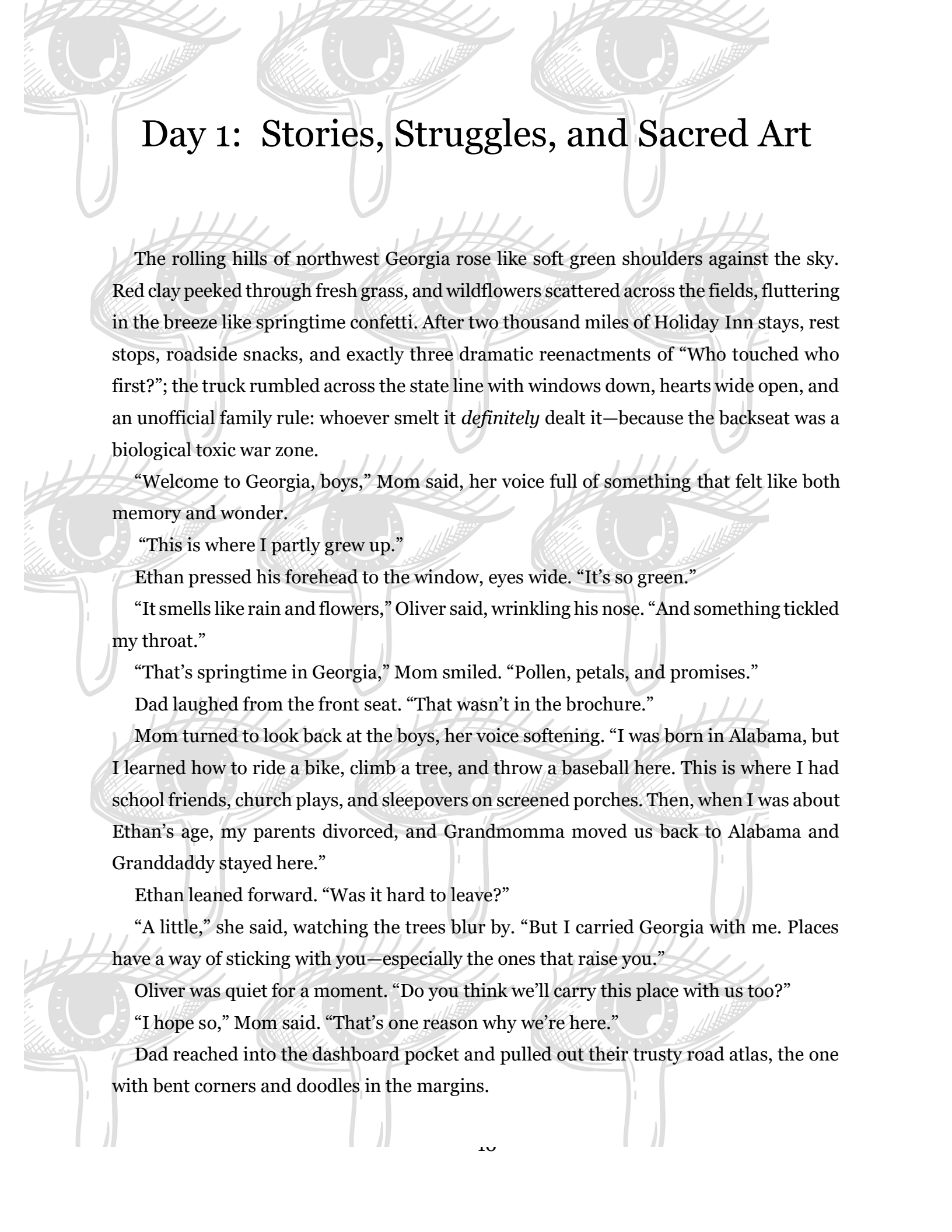
The road stretched ahead—two thousand miles of new memories waiting to be made.

As the truck pulled away from San Diego, the boys leaned their heads against the window, dreaming of peaches, mountains, and maybe even a few gators.

Georgia was on their minds.

Follow Along





Day 1: Stories, Struggles, and Sacred Art

The rolling hills of northwest Georgia rose like soft green shoulders against the sky. Red clay peeked through fresh grass, and wildflowers scattered across the fields, fluttering in the breeze like springtime confetti. After two thousand miles of Holiday Inn stays, rest stops, roadside snacks, and exactly three dramatic reenactments of “Who touched who first?”; the truck rumbled across the state line with windows down, hearts wide open, and an unofficial family rule: whoever smelt it *definitely* dealt it—because the backseat was a biological toxic war zone.

“Welcome to Georgia, boys,” Mom said, her voice full of something that felt like both memory and wonder.

“This is where I partly grew up.”

Ethan pressed his forehead to the window, eyes wide. “It’s so green.”

“It smells like rain and flowers,” Oliver said, wrinkling his nose. “And something tickled my throat.”

“That’s springtime in Georgia,” Mom smiled. “Pollen, petals, and promises.”

Dad laughed from the front seat. “That wasn’t in the brochure.”

Mom turned to look back at the boys, her voice softening. “I was born in Alabama, but I learned how to ride a bike, climb a tree, and throw a baseball here. This is where I had school friends, church plays, and sleepovers on screened porches. Then, when I was about Ethan’s age, my parents divorced, and Grandmomma moved us back to Alabama and Granddaddy stayed here.”

Ethan leaned forward. “Was it hard to leave?”

“A little,” she said, watching the trees blur by. “But I carried Georgia with me. Places have a way of sticking with you—especially the ones that raise you.”

Oliver was quiet for a moment. “Do you think we’ll carry this place with us too?”

“I hope so,” Mom said. “That’s one reason why we’re here.”

Dad reached into the dashboard pocket and pulled out their trusty road atlas, the one with bent corners and doodles in the margins.

“Alright, boys. You know the drill. New state, fresh page. Every stop we make—highlight it.”

Ethan took the highlighter from the seat pocket. “I call the first one!”

Oliver crossed his arms and smirked. “Fine. But I get the next one.”

As the truck rolled deeper into the Georgia hills, the green seemed to stretch in every direction—new and old all at once.

They hadn’t even been in Georgia for an hour when Dad turned onto a quiet road that dipped through a tunnel of trees. The sunlight flickered like a strobe through branches dressed in new spring leaves. The air smelled of wet earth and something sweet—dogwoods maybe, or wild honeysuckle.

Their first stop was tucked just beyond a bend in the road: a small, weathered log cabin surrounded by a split-rail fence. The John Ross House stood steady and plain—its wooden walls darkened with time but full of story.

“This is it,” Mom said, stepping out and breathing in the fresh April air. “The home of John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.”

Ethan followed her gaze. The cabin didn’t look like much—just a humble log house—but it felt heavy, like the kind of place where something important had happened.

“He lived here while he tried to protect his people,” Mom said, walking toward the fence. “He fought not with weapons, but with words.”

“Letters?” Oliver asked.

“Letters, speeches, petitions,” Mom said. “He believed in using laws to stand up for what was right. He even took the government to the Supreme Court—and he won. But the president ignored the ruling. They went ahead with the Indian Removal Act anyway.”

Oliver’s brows scrunched. “Well that’s not fair.”

“No,” Dad said softly. “It wasn’t. The Cherokee and other Native nations had already lost a lot of land by then—sometimes through war, sometimes through treaties they were pressured to sign. By the 1830s, settlers wanted even more land. So the government passed a law that gave them the right to take it.”

Mom added, “That law—The Indian Removal Act of 1830—forced thousands of Native Americans from their homes. Most were sent to a place called Indian Territory, which later became Oklahoma.”

Ethan looked up. “So they didn’t just live here—they belonged here?”

“They did,” Mom said. “The Cherokee homelands include Georgia. This was where they farmed, built homes, held ceremonies... lived their lives. But the government said they had to leave.”

Dad stepped in.

“The removal didn’t happen overnight. It stretched over many years. Some Native families had already moved west on their own, but from 1838 to 1839, thousands more were forced to go. Soldiers rounded them up and sent them to removal camps—ten in Tennessee and one in Alabama. From there, they began an 800-mile journey on foot to Indian Territory, which is now the state of Oklahoma.

Oliver’s eyes widened. “Eight hundred miles?”

Mom nodded. “They walked through rivers, over mountains, in the snow, through sickness and hunger. That journey became known as the Trail of Tears—because so many people wept, and so many never made it.”

Oliver crouched down and touched the soft red clay at his feet. “So John Ross lived here while all that was happening?”

“He tried to stop it,” Dad said. “And when he couldn’t, he didn’t stay behind. He went with them. He led his people all the way to Indian Territory.”

“Even though he didn’t have to?” Oliver asked.

“Especially because he didn’t have to,” Mom answered. “He knew being a leader meant walking beside those who were hurting—even when it cost him everything.”

The trees swayed gently overhead. A mockingbird sang from a branch, and dogwood petals drifted down like snowflakes in slow motion.

The past took on a different shape as they continued driving south—down a quiet road lined with tall trees and gentle hills. Fields stretched out on either side like green pages in a book, and small cannons peeked from patches of grass. Signs marked troop positions and historic ridges.

“This is still part of the Chickamauga Battlefield,” Dad said as he slowed the truck. “We’ll pass through most of it before we reach the visitor center.”

Mom pointed to a sign that read “Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park.”

“We’ll get our first stamp of the trip here,” she said. “This was the first national military park in the country. Protected so people wouldn’t forget.”

The boys sat up straighter.

“Do you think they’ll have the cancellation stamp too?” Ethan asked, already reaching for the Parks Passport book.

“Let’s find out,” Dad said with a grin.

A few minutes later, the Visitor Center came into view, its wide glass doors reflecting the trees outside. Inside, the light was soft and reverent. Old uniforms hung behind glass. Black-and-white photographs lined the walls. And in the center of it all, a massive relief map of the battlefield rose like a frozen wave.

As they stood in the entryway, Oliver tilted his head. “So... was this part of the North or the South?”

“Obviously the South, Oliver! We’re in the South,” Ethan blurted.

“Ethan.” Mom’s voice carried a gentle firmness. “Sometimes what feels obvious to you isn’t obvious to someone else. Give your brother the grace to ask questions.”

Dad knelt beside him, pointing to a nearby wall map. “This whole area was part of the South. During the Civil War, the United States split into two sides. The North—called the Union—wanted to keep the country together and eventually end slavery. The South—called the Confederacy—wanted to break away and form its own country, partly to protect slavery.”

Ethan looked up from a photo of a Union soldier. “So they were fighting their own people?”

Mom nodded solemnly. “Yes. It was a war between states, neighbors—even families. More than 600,000 people died. It was one of the deadliest wars in American history.”

“Chickamauga,” Dad added, “was one of the biggest battles fought east of the Mississippi River—even though it’s called part of the ‘Western Theater’ because it happened west of the original 13 colonies.”

Oliver tilted his head. “So... why did they fight here?”

“That’s the key,” Dad said, walking them over to the giant relief map. “President Lincoln believed taking Chattanooga was as important as taking Richmond. This small city sat on the Tennessee River, right where four major railroads crossed. Whoever controlled it could move soldiers and supplies—and cut off the other side. It was like striking the heart of the Confederacy.”

Mom leaned in. “In the summer of 1863, Confederate General Braxton Bragg was holding Chattanooga. But Union General Rosecrans brought his army over the Tennessee River, around Sand Mountain and Lookout Mountain, and surprised Bragg from behind.”

“So the Confederates ran away?” Oliver asked.

“For a moment,” Dad said. “They had to abandon the city. Rosecrans thought they were retreating toward Atlanta, so he followed them into Georgia.”

Ethan glanced up. “But it was a trick, wasn’t it?”

Dad nodded. “Exactly. Bragg had reinforcements and turned around to fight. The Union army didn’t see it coming. The result was Chickamauga—the bloodiest two days in this part of the war.”

Oliver stared at the map again. “So many people... all because of railroads?”

“Railroads, rivers, and what they believed in,” Mom said. “But what happened here helped decide what would happen next—for Chattanooga, and maybe even for the whole war.”

At the passport station, Ethan carefully stamped their book while Oliver read the cancellation out loud:

Chickamauga Battlefield – NMP – Fort Oglethorpe, GA.

He grinned. “First stamp of the trip.”

Their next stop that day was unlike any other.

Paradise Gardens bloomed out of nowhere—like someone’s imagination had spilled out of a paint can and then kept growing. Bicycle wheels hung from tree branches like halos. Porcelain doll heads peeked from bricks. Bright mosaics sparkled across the sides of sheds and chicken coops, and painted doors leaned against tree trunks, covered in Bible verses and swirls of color.

“He called himself the ‘Man of Visions,’” Mom said, walking beneath a string of painted mirrors. “His name was Howard Finster. He was a Baptist preacher, and he believed God gave him dreams and told him to turn them into art.”

“So this is like... a museum?” Oliver asked, squinting at a tower of hubcaps.

“More like a message,” Dad said. “He said God told him to paint sermons. So he used anything he could find—bottle caps, broken glass, bicycle parts. He made over forty-six thousand works of art. All to share his faith.”

Ethan stood before a wall of license plates, angels, and crooked crosses. “It’s like someone turned a dream inside out.”

Oliver sniffed the air. “It smells like paint and dirt. But in a good way.” Then he grinned. “It’s messy. But it’s awesome.”

“Sometimes the best things are,” Dad said. “You don’t always have to understand them to know they matter.”

As they wandered deeper into the garden, Ethan ran his fingers along a painted window frame. “You know who he reminds me of?”

“Who?” Mom asked.

“Joseph,” Ethan said. “The dreamer in the Bible. People thought he was weird, but his dreams came from God too.”

Mom looked at him, surprised—but smiling. “That’s a beautiful connection, Ethan.”

“Joseph saved his family,” he said. “And Howard didn’t do that exactly... but maybe he helped people remember what matters. Like that God can still use you, even if you feel thrown away.”

Before they left, Dad snapped a photo of the boys standing beneath a painted sign that read:

*“I TOOK THE PIECES YOU THREW AWAY AND PUT THEM TO USE BY NIGHT
AND DAY.”*

Their last stop was a short drive south east to a quiet airfield just outside of Rome, Georgia. The Museum of Flight looked like a row of simple hangars from the outside, but inside—Oliver’s eyes went wide.

“Whoa,” he whispered, stepping just past the door.

Suspended above them, the nose of a silver jet pointed down like it was ready to launch again at any second. A line of aircraft stretched across the hangar floor, their metal shells gleaming under the lights.

“That one flew over 1,300 miles per hour,” a volunteer told them, nodding toward a sleek jet with long wings. “That’s an F-14 Tomcat—this one’s called Sweet Little Miss. She was delivered to the Navy in 1992 and flew during Operation Iraqi Freedom.”

The boys moved closer.

“She served on the Abraham Lincoln and the Theodore Roosevelt,” the volunteer continued. “And she made history—she was the last F-14 to land on an aircraft carrier before the jet was retired in 2006.”

Ethan blinked. “Whoa... that’s really cool.”

Then he turned to his mom. “Were you in the Navy when the F-14s were still flying?”

Mom smiled. “Yes, I was in the Navy and deployed when the F-14s were around. I served on the ‘small boys’—that’s what we call the guided missile cruisers and destroyers. We’d deploy with the big aircraft carriers, as part of a Carrier Strike Group—the ones the Tomcats landed on.”

Oliver’s eyes widened. “So you were out there when this one was flying?”

“I was,” she said, running her hand along the cool gray metal. “We all worked together—ships, fighter jets, helicopters. It takes a lot of pieces to make it all work.”

They stood quietly for a moment, letting it sink in. Somehow, the jet felt even more powerful.

Near the back of the museum, they climbed into a flight simulator that buzzed and jolted just enough to make them squeal and clutch the sides. The air smelled like rubber tires and old metal, with just a hint of machine oil.

Later, they paused beneath the open belly of a Vietnam-era Huey helicopter, its wide blades stretching overhead like sleeping dragonfly wings.

“The men who flew these risked everything,” Mom said softly, touching the dull green metal. “This kind of flying wasn’t about fun. It was about courage.”

Ethan stared into the chopper’s empty cabin. “Is it weird that I feel kind of proud, even though I didn’t do anything?”

“Not weird,” Mom said. “It just means your heart knows it matters.”

Oliver looked around. “Did you ever ride in one of these?”

“Not a Huey,” Mom said. “But I flew in other aircraft during deployments. Some things don’t change—noise, nerves, and never knowing exactly what’s going to happen next.”

Outside, a small training plane lifted off in the distance, its hum rising into the sky.

“They’re loud,” Ethan said.

“They were even louder back then,” Mom replied. “But sometimes, you need something loud to defend what’s quiet.”

After a full day of Stories, Struggles, and Sacred Art...

In a treehouse near Adairsville, nestled in the woods like it had grown there on purpose, the family settled in for the night. supper was simple but perfect: a skillet of golden cornbread, roasted vegetables glistening with olive oil, and grilled sausages Dad had cooked on the little deck. Crickets had just begun their evening chorus, and the woods below glowed the color of sweet tea.

Ethan held up a piece of cornbread and studied it before taking a bite. “Maize,” he said thoughtfully. “That’s what they called it, right?”

Mom smiled and passed him the honey butter. “That’s right. Corn—maize—was one of the most important crops for the Creek and Cherokee people. They often planted it with beans and squash. It was called the ‘Three Sisters.’”

Oliver licked his fingers and nodded. “Well, this sister is delicious.” Everyone laughed.

An owl called from somewhere deep in the trees as Ethan leaned back against the railing. “This is my favorite kind of day,” he said. “History, trees, and cornbread.”

The treehouse was small but full of charm, with hammocks on the porch, string lights glowing softly overhead, and the scent of warm cornbread still lingering in the air.

Mom handed out journals and pencils as the boys curled into the hammock swings. Tree frogs croaked in the distance, and the soft rustle of leaves set a quiet rhythm for their thoughts.

“Alright,” she said gently, “let’s take a few minutes to write. What stood out today? What challenged you? What made you think?”

Ethan leaned back, his pencil hovering: *The Trail of Tears made my stomach hurt. I kept thinking about how someone could win in court—and still lose their home. It’s like people didn’t want to listen because they already believed they were right.*

He paused, then wrote again: *John Ross didn’t just write letters. He walked with his people. I think that’s what real leadership is—showing up, even when you’re hurting too.*

Oliver chewed on the end of his pencil, then scribbled: *John Ross walked. That’s the part I can’t stop thinking about. He could’ve stayed behind—but he didn’t. That’s what a real hero does.*

He flipped to a new page: *Chickamauga felt big. Like the ground still remembers. So many people fought and died there... and some of them were just kids. I keep wondering:*

If you think you're doing the right thing, but it hurts people—how do you know if it's actually right?

Ethan turned toward him. “That’s a really good question.”

Oliver looked up, hesitant. “It kind of feels weird to ask out loud.”

Dad looked up from his journal, still perched on the porch railing. “Some of the best questions feel that way. But I’d guess someone else is wondering the same thing. That’s why people say there’s no such thing as a dumb question—or a weird one, in this case.”

Mom turned to the boys. “And what about Paradise Garden?”

Ethan grinned. “It was like walking through a dream. But not a normal dream—a messy, wild one.”

He flipped the page and wrote: *Mr. Reverend Howard Finster said God gave him visions. That makes me think about Joseph from the Bible. He was a dreamer too. People didn't get him either. But God still used him—for something way bigger than himself.*

Oliver drew a garden full of crosses, clocks, and crooked stars. Then he wrote beneath it: *God used Howard Finster's trash to tell the truth. I wonder... what broken things do we have that He could use too?*

Mom pulled her Bible from her bag and opened to Genesis.

“*Joseph told his brothers, ‘You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done.’* That’s Genesis 50:20,” she read softly. “I thought about that verse all day.”

Ethan nodded slowly. “Like the Cherokee. And the soldiers. And even Howard Finster. What people meant for harm—God can still use for good.”

Dad leaned back and looked up through the trees. “It doesn’t mean those things weren’t painful. But it means the story isn’t over.”

Oliver glanced down at his sketch, then added a single line beneath it:

God writes new stories with broken pieces.

The treehouse swayed gently in the breeze. For a few minutes, no one spoke.

Then Ethan flipped back to a clean page and whispered, “I forgot to write about the flight museum.”

He scribbled quickly: *The F-14 looked like it could still fly. Like it was waiting. I didn't even know Mom had seen it in real life—back when it was part of something big. I think history feels more real when it's your own family.*

Oliver peeked over his brother's shoulder, then wrote: *My favorite part was the flight simulator. But the Huey helicopter felt important. Like it wanted to tell us something without using words. Kind of like the statue at the art museum.*

Mom smiled and whispered, "This is why we write things down."

After notebooking Ethan grabbed the atlas and traced the route with his finger, then highlighted a small stretch on the atlas. "We made it about 92 miles today," he said, satisfied.

They sat quietly after that, swinging gently, the sounds of the forest wrapping around them like a blanket.

Their notebooks were messy, honest, and full—and their hearts were too.

This is the end of Chap 1 of Georgia Road Trip. Next is the GA Stop & Explore Mission that will be seen by a QR Code.

CLASSIFICATION. UNCLASSIFIED Civilian Adventure Training (Family Unit)

SUBJECT. STOP & EXPLORE: GEORGIA DAY 1 MISSION BRIEFING

SITUATION.

Today, Ethan and Oliver crossed into Georgia under a tunnel of trees and entered a land full of red clay, wildflowers, and stories that shaped our country. From Cherokee leaders to Civil War battlefields, from visionary folk art to jets that once ruled the skies, this mission is about learning from the past, honoring those who stood for others, and seeing the sacred in the unexpected.

MISSION.

Explore the layers of Georgia's history by reflecting on leadership, sacrifice, creativity, and courage. Your family will complete five interactive events inspired by today's stops — blending movement, imagination, hands-on learning, and faith.

EXECUTE.

Event 1: "Walk with a Leader"

Inspired by the John Ross House

Set a timer for 5 minutes. Walk silently around your yard, home, or neighborhood — imagining you're walking with someone who's hurting.

Write or draw: "If I had to leave everything behind, I would carry _____ with me."

Bonus: Choose a short phrase to carry with you for the day like "Walk beside them" or "Stand with truth."

Event 2: "Field Map Freeze"

Inspired by Chickamauga Battlefield

Lay out a "battlefield map" on the floor using blocks, string, or paper to mark rivers, hills, or railroad lines.

Each person takes a turn being a general — choosing where to move your troops (toy figures, socks, etc.).

Call a 2-minute "freeze" and ask: What do you fight for? What would you stand up for today?

Event 3: "Broken to Beautiful"

Inspired by Paradise Garden

Grab recycled materials — bottle caps, paper scraps, broken crayons, or cardboard.

Make a piece of "junk art" and title it with a message (like "Grace in the Mess" or "God's Pieces").

Bonus Faith Tie-In: Read Genesis 50:20 and talk about how God can use broken things for good.

Event 4: “Flight Ready Roll Call”

Inspired by Museum of Flight + F-14 Tomcat

Pick a toy plane or fold your own paper aircraft. Name it, decorate the tail, and give it a mission.

Bonus: Shout your mission briefing like you’re standing on the flight deck — “Operation Courage Launch, ready for takeoff!”

Event 5: “Family Debrief Firewatch”

Inspired by Treehouse Journaling + Huey Reflection

Sit quietly as a family — outside or by a window — and reflect on the day.

Journal Prompt:

What made your heart feel heavy today?

What gave you hope?

What broken thing might God use in you?

ADMIN AND LOGISTICS.

Supplies: Recycled items, notebook, pens, toy figures or blocks, string or paper

Mission Time: Each event 5–15 minutes

Location: Indoors or outside, treehouse not required

COMMAND AND CONTROL.

Family Debrief: Share your art, maps, or journal thoughts aloud.

Discuss: What kind of leader was John Ross? What makes a hero? What did you create from something broken?

Faith Connection: Genesis 50:20 — “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good...”

Commander's End of Mission Remarks:

“God, help us remember those who walked through pain with courage. Teach us to lead by walking beside others. Help us see Your beauty in broken things — and use our hands to build something good.”