Today it is a monument to California’s multi-cultural history, embracing its Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and European heritage. Originally built as a self-sufficient community by the Spanish Padres and Native Americans, the Mission was a center for agriculture, industry, education, and religion.

Help your students explore the Mission by using this supplemental guide to enrich their learning experience. With each exhibit we have included “think about it” topics. Use these discussion starters during your stay or back in the classroom.
Field Trip Experience

Overview
While visiting Mission San Juan Capistrano students will use the Passport Explorer to discover what it was like to live during mission times. This on-site teachers activity guide is designed to engage students in the exhibition by asking them to interact and apply their understanding to multiple games and activities.

Students Objectives
• To be active and intellectually involved in the exhibition experience.
• To acquire the understanding of life during mission times.
• To share their experience of the exhibition with each other.
• To be exposed to a range of ideas, innovations and accomplishments that occurred at the Mission.

Enrichment
Look for student discussion ideas found in bold like this as you use this guide.

Founding Document
Father Serra founded Mission San Juan Capistrano as the 7th mission, of what would become 21 in California. This Founding document lists the tools and supplies given to the new Mission.

Ask students to read the Founding Document. What kind of animals and supplies did Father Serra bring to start the Mission?

Olive Millstone
Powered by a donkey, this stone was used for crushing olives for oil. Olive oil had many uses that included cooking and trading for other goods.

Soldiers Barracks
Approximately 6-10 Spanish soldiers were assigned to protect the Mission. Explore the exhibit display.

Ask students to look at the Soldiers Barracks living quarters display. Ask students if they would want to live in the barracks.

Native American Grinding Stone
The large grinding stone was used by native women to grind acorns and seeds. Once the acorns were grounded into a meal the women would sift it through water to remove the tannic acid before it could be cooked. The most common acorn meal was called wii-wish, an acorn mush. A single serving of acorn mush could consist of 150 grounded acorns!

Ask students to look at the Live Oak tree with the grey bark, which is next to the grinding rock. Explain that the tree produces acorns in the fall.

South Wing
Encourage the students to explore the oldest building of Mission San Juan Capistrano. Many of the room displays provide a glimpse of what the building looked like during the early Mission days when it served as the Padres’ Living Quarters.

Be sure to encourage the students to look and read the exhibit panels within the space to learn more about the Padres’ kitchen, bedroom, sitting room, and dining room.

West Wing
Explore each exhibit room including the Acjachemen Native American Room, Spanish Colonial Art Room, Mission Clubhouse, and Treasure’s Exhibit.

Industrial Area
Excavations in the 1930s uncovered the Mission’s Industrial Area, or where many items were made including tallow, iron, leather etc.

Encourage students to explore each area and read the history panels to learn more. Encourage to imagine what it would be like to be a blacksmith, a leather maker, or a tallow maker.
**North Wing**
Encourage students to find the Leon Rene Music Room to learn more about the Mission in popular culture and its celebration of the swallows return every March 19th. Within the North Wing Corridor is also the Passport Brand Rubbing station. Be sure to encourage students to brand the backside of their passport.

Encourage each student to “brand” the CAP design on the back side of their Passport with their pencil.

**Central Courtyard**
This lush courtyard was once a dirt work area and the heart of Mission life. During the Mission days, the courtyard was where many people worked outside doing leather crafts, spinning and weaving wool, carpentry etc. After the secularization of the Mission, many of the buildings surrounding the courtyard fell into ruin. By the 1880s, the North and West Wing were in ruins. In the 1920s, Father O’Sullivan planted the gardens and had the fountain installed.

**Fun Fact:** The large colorful fish in the fountain are called koi fish. Please help us keep the koi fish healthy by keeping all hands or objects out of the fountain. Germs, and lotions can make them sick, and the bacteria in the fountain can make students sick.

**Serra Chapel**
Constructed in 1782, Serra Chapel is the oldest and most historically significant church in California, because it is the only remaining Mission church where Father or Saint Junípero Serra celebrated Mass. In the early 1920s, Father O’Sullivan restored Serra Chapel and installed the large Golden Altar called a “Retablo” within the church.

Within the church are many oil paintings that line the wall with a cross above them. They are called the “Stations of the Cross” depicting Christ’s last moments before his death. Near the entrance is a side chapel dedicated to St. Peregrine who is the patron saint to cancer sufferers. Near the entry is also the Mission’s original stone baptismal font.

**Mission Cemetery**
It is estimated that over 3,000 people are buried here. During mission times, marking graves was not practiced. So the Catholic people both Spanish and Native Americans buried here are not identified with grave markers. Sadly, many of the Native Americans died due to diseases like the measles that the Spanish unintentionally introduced.

Father O’Sullivan erected the tall monument in the center in 1924, as a memorial to the Native Americans who built the Mission. The last person to be buried in the cemetery was Father O’Sullivan and his tomb is at the foot of the monument.

**Bell Wall**
The bells originally hung in the bell tower of the Great Stone Church until the earthquake in 1812. The large bells are recasts of the originals. The two original bells are located in the Ruins of the Great Stone Church. The two smaller bells are the originals. Bells were important to early mission life, functioning as clocks. They called the community to meals, religious services, work, funerals, and even alerted to danger.

**Ask students how they communicate today. How is it similar or different to the Mission bells?**

**The Ruins of the Great Stone Church**
The Great Stone Church Construction began in 1797, and continued for 9 years until its completion in 1806. The Native American community built the church under the direction of a master stonemason named Isidro Aguilar. Only 6 years after its completion, December 8, 1812, a massive earthquake struck during the early morning Mass. The bell tower fell on top of the church causing the roof and domes to collapse, burying alive 40 worshippers. The church was never rebuilt and remained in ruins as a memorial to those who died.

**Ask students if they have ever been in an earthquake. Imagine the noise and fear the people of the Mission felt during the 1812 earthquake. Please remind students to not climb or sit on the historic ruins.**

For more resources, visit www.missionsjc.com/teachers-kids/resources