

9 Tips For Pleasurable Pond Touring

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Welcome to the North Texas Water Garden Society's 16th Annual Tour of Ponds. This is an event not to be missed. This two-day tour is an opportunity to visit and explore private residential water garden oases in the area. The NTWGS has put together an array of beautiful ponds for your viewing pleasure. Each pond displays its distinctive characteristics and inherent qualities.

Because of the increased interest and popularity of water gardening, many people will be attending the pond tour for the first time. Since this will be a new experience for many, I have put together nine tips to share with you that will make your tour more pleasurable.

These tips consist of bringing a few key items and performing a few simple tasks. Most are common sense, but with all the anticipation and excitement in the air, they can easily be forgotten. These tips are most helpful for the new pond tourist but also serve as a reminder for the experienced. Here are my nine tips.

❑ **Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.** Pond touring is *not* part of a fashion show with long runways, so forget about fashion statements for these two days. Wear comfortable and cool clothes because this event is very casual and the weather is hot. Above all, wear a pair of shoes that is safe and comfortable. You will be walking on gravel, wood, flagstone, mulch, grass, concrete and other surfaces. You will also be on your feet a large portion of the day. Because you may be crossing an arched bridge, walking on a pond edge or crossing stepping-stones in the water, wear comfortable shoes with a good tread. I have seen a pair of pond tourists wearing spike heel shoes and wing tip dress shoes. They performed an amazing "balancing act" while crossing an arched wooden bridge. It didn't take them long to realize their shoes were a safety hazard. You can avoid your own version of a "balancing act" by wearing safe and comfortable shoes.

❑ **Drink plenty of water.** The Texas heat at this time of the year can be dangerous to one's health. Therefore, it is very important to bring

plenty of water to avoid dehydration and heat exhaustion. Bringing a cooler filled with ice and bottled water and keeping it in your vehicle can help accomplish this. Cool fresh water will be convenient and available whenever you want it. Believe me, after a few hours of pond touring, a nice cool bottle of spring water will be worth its weight in gold!

❑ **Plan a route.** With over 40 beautiful ponds on the tour, the choices available can be overwhelming at times. Don't panic! A little homework will go a long way toward a smooth touring experience. Before the tour starts, get familiar with the tour book by looking over the pond descriptions and statistics. Then make a list of the ponds you would like to see. Plan a route by starting with the nearest pond you would like to visit. Your route can range from a loose route in your head to one that is very detailed and complete with driving directions. Make a separate route for each day and for the evening. Be sure the ponds on your route are scheduled for the correct day and time.

❑ **Wear Sun Protection.** I have seen many pond tourists with red arms, legs, neck, and face. To avoid being sunburned, apply sunscreen with a high SPF to exposed areas of the skin. Bring the sunscreen along with you to reapply later in the day. A hat will keep the sun off your head and face. I have seen some tourists sporting umbrellas for instant shade. Sunglasses are great for reducing glare and protecting your eyes. I always remove my sunglasses when I arrive at a pond because I like to see the beauty of nature in its true color.

❑ **Bring a camera.** After all ...you are a tourist. Bring along the accessories that go along with your camera such as extra batteries and memory. Taking picture is not only fun, but is a great way to keep a record of the things you like. A few weeks after the pond tour, you will not remember the details of each pond. If you are planning your own pond or looking for ideas for your existing pond, look over the tour pictures and you will have a bounty of ideas at your fingertips.

Since ponds evolve over time, I am always looking for ideas to enhance my pond. This is why I take pictures at each pond that I visit. There are so many creative ideas that I can't remember them all. Believe me, there is no

shortage of ideas on this pond tour. It also allows me the freedom to take a virtual pond tour any time I want.

❑ **Bring a friend.**

Most things are more fun when experienced with a friend. This is especially true when pond touring. A friend will not only keep you company, but can make driving easier for you. Have your friend read the map and tour book and give driving directions. It is *not* a good idea to practice your multitasking skills by driving on LBJ while reading a map and the tour book.

❑ **Take a break.**

Lunch is a great time to take a break. I like to assimilate lunch to halftime of a sporting event. Lunch is the time to rest your feet, cool off and clear your head. A break from intensive pond touring will increase your second half performance by increasing your energy level and mental alertness.

Pond touring has an almost intoxicating effect on me. It sends my brain racing with beautiful images and creative ideas. Because of this, I like to take a leisurely lunch in a cool restaurant. A little food and rest recharges my body and mind. By the time I leave the restaurant, I am very calm and cool. I have a revised touring plan and I am ready for action!

❑ **Bring a map.**

Although this book contains directions to each pond, you will need a more detailed map such as a city map or Maps-co. The driving directions are given from a prominent location. However, you may be approaching the pond address from a different direction. A map will show you the most direct way to get to your destination.

Bring a map even if you think you know your way around town because you will be traveling on some unfamiliar streets. The pond tour is scheduled for specific hours in the day and evening. Don't waste valuable pond touring time by getting lost.

❑ **Relax and enjoy.**

The pond tour is *not* a numbers contest and you will *not* be quizzed by the NTWGS. So, relax! Because you will not be able to visit every pond in this book, don't feel you have to rush off to visit the next pond on your list. I believe spending quality time at a pond is more fulfilling and earns richer rewards. Relax and enjoy the beautiful sights, sounds and scents that will encompass you.

These tips were derived from my own personal experience. I vividly remember my first pond touring experience. Pond touring was an intriguing idea, but was totally new to me and I did not know what to expect. At that time, I wasn't sure that I wanted to see more than a couple

of ponds, so I did not prepare very well. I did not bring any of the items listed above. I did not plan a route, and to make things worse, I wore a pair of brand new shoes.

While touring the first pond, enthusiasm began to take over. I began touring ponds with a full head of steam. I got lost a few times but still managed to visit many ponds. By the end of the day, I was thirsty, hot and hungry. I was sunburned and my feet hurt. I was hooked!

After a long shower and a good meal, I packed water, maps, sunscreen and a camera. I planned a route for the night tour and asked my best friend to join me. I slipped a comfortable pair of shoes on my aching feet and began an incredible night tour. The night tour was a totally awesome experience! I was so inspired that I began planning the construction of my own pond.

The NTWGS wants the 16th Annual Tour of Ponds to be a pleasurable and enlightening experience. My first pond tour was not the smoothest of experiences. It would have been much better if I had done a little preparation. Now that I have given you nine tips, you can avoid the problems I created on my first tour. Whether you are a seasoned veteran, a rookie or somewhere in between, following these nine tips will make your pond touring experience more pleasurable. Have a safe and fun tour!

16th Annual Tour of Ponds

