



First-time exposure to patriotism can go a long way for your family's youngest members. You'll be teaching future citizens about the proud heritages of our country.

It will be especially effective if it happens in places where the actual moments of history took place. Maybe your biggest thrill will be to see everything again through the bright eyes of a grandchild. Consider some choices:

The Lincoln Memorial in Washington is an inspiration to millions of Americans. Just standing in front of that massive statue of the seated Lincoln can be a precious moment, especially with a grandchild at your side. While visiting the capital city, also take your young companions to the Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and King Monuments. And for the brightest of them all, be sure to spend a day at the Smithsonian. nps.gov/linc Most families today weren't in America when our earliest heroes founded the nation. If you're descended from millions of immigrants who sought social and religious freedom in the 19th and 20th Centuries, you may want to take your grandchildren to the Ellis Island Museum in New York City harbor.

The station has been restored to the original reception center as it functioned more than a century ago. Let your grandkids explore the extensive written and graphic records there of immigrant families, possibly including yours. As you arrive and depart, you'll get a thrilling close-up view of another great symbol of America, the Statue of Liberty. ellisland.com

While in New York City, take your grandkids to one of the most tragic locations in America, Ground Zero. The Tribute-World Trade Center structure now occupying the site exhibits items recovered from the disaster. tributewtc.org.

Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia is restored to its original 18th Century grandeur, including guides strolling around in period costumes. Grandkids who never knew life before TV, smartphones and iPods will enjoy seeing how people lived without electricity and inside plumbing. history.org.

For a breathtaking outdoor adventure, take your grandchild to the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Explain how millions of years of nature's work have carved it into one of most beautiful areas of the world. If you make reservations early enough, take a mule trip down from the South Rim to the floor of the Canyon and the Colorado River. nps.gov/grca.

Take your grandchildren to see another icon of modern history. Visit the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. It's in the former motel building where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. died. The museum exhibits trace the African-American struggle from slavery to today. civilrightsmuseum.org.

It all began at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and it still stands today as it has for 260 years. There the Declaration of Independence was created and the Constitution was later introduced. Just across Independence Mall is the building housing the Liberty Bell. Your grandkids will thrill to be at the sites where the United States was born. nps.gov/inde