

Song Path is a compositionally guided listening tour of natural spaces. The Song Path at Banning State Park follows the Quarry Loop Trail Starting and ending at Teachers Overlook. Song Path is designed to be a silent tour in which you can listen to the natural and man made sounds in the park as a piece of music as you hike. I have marked a few spots along the trail that I found interesting while hiking. You will have the most satisfying experience if you follow your own ears as you hike so follow these as needed.

Start at the Teachers Overlook which is easily reachable from the main picnic area. Make yourself comfortable and stand facing the river. Close your eyes and engage in the following listening meditation.

1. Begin by taking slow, deep breaths in and out. Focus on the sound, contour, and pace of your breath, do this for around a minute.
2. Listen to the steady sound of the Kettle River. Focus only on this sound and try to tune other sounds out. Do this for around a minute.
3. Turn your head from side to side and focus your attention further up and down stream. Notice how the sound of the river seems to change as you do so.
4. Shift your attention to the sound of the wind blowing through the trees. Notice how it rises and falls at irregular rhythms and how the sound blends in with the sound of the water at times. Also, notice how it moves from left to right and front to back and up the hills of the valley. Listen for about a minute.
5. Listen to the sounds of birds, insects, and other animals in the park. Pay special attention to rhythms that begin to emerge and notice how each bird or animal sounds different depending on how close or far from you it is. Do this for a minute.
6. Now open your ears to the entire space and listen to how all of these sounds work

together. Listen for the distant sound of planes flying overhead, and cars passing along the highway. All of these noises make the music along the Song Path.

7. Open your eyes and begin following the song path but keep all the sounds that are present around you in your ears and as you move, listen to how all of these sounds seemingly shift and change as you hike through different landscapes.

Points of Interest

1. **Rock Staircase:** Keep the sound of the river in your ears as you descend and listen to how the sharp sound of the river changes as you do so.
2. **Kettle river overlook at the fork.** Listen to the low gulping sounds of the river in this relatively quite overlook. Take a right at the fork when you are done.
3. **Wooden Bridge over falls.** Stand on the bridge and listen over each edge comparing the difference in the sound of the falling water.
4. **Quarry Walls.** As you walk along this stretch of trail, keep your ears open to your right and listen for the distant sound of dripping water off the quarry walls. You may need to stop periodically to hear the drops above your foot steps.
5. **Clay Mound.** Take a right off the trail and climb this small mound overlooking more cliff walls. Notice how you can suddenly hear the trickling of a waterfall when you reach the top.
6. **Dripping Walls and Pool.** After you pass dead man trail and round a sheer cliff corner and pass the large stacked sandstone slabs, there is a small trail to your right leading to a cliff edge. Take this trail and begin by listening to the sound of water dripping onto the rocks at your feet. Explore the small caves around the quarry walls listening inside of them. Turn left to a small pool, listen for a moment as water drips there. Finally, turn left again towards the main trail and listen to the sound of a larger waterfall which fills the whole space with sound.
7. **Close Up Kettle River Overlook.** After you round the loop and pass through some densely forested area, take a right off the main trail and stand on the small sandstone rocks that are stacked along the river bank to hear the river up close with its low gulping. You can return to the main trail by either coming back the way you came or following the sub trail along the river for a ways. Be careful here as there is some poison IVY along the river banks.
8. **Rock Crusher.** Pass the large Power House and then take a right after the Rock Crusher. Follow the trail through the Rock Crusher and notice how the sound of the river changes when you enter. While you are inside, clap your hands and stomp your feet to hear the unique reverberation inside.
9. **Power House.** Follow the trail through the rock crusher to the Power House. Enter the Power House through the first entrance closest to the river and go inside. There is often a puddle blocking the entrance, but stepping up on the exposed foundation allows you to bypass it. Listen again to how the sound of the river changes and then engage in more hand clapping and foot stomping.
10. **River Overlook again:** In the same vicinity as point of interest 2, listen to the rhythms created by the sound of the river as it laps against the cliff walls. Do this in several spots as the sound changes as you walk up river. Keep this sound in your ears as you return to teachers overlook and then stand there for about a minute to finish your hike.



