

2026 Missouri Official Travel Guide

Welcome to Missouri

It's a great time to live in and visit the Show-Me State, as 2026 marks a year of momentous celebrations

Missouri is one of eight states commemorating the 100th anniversary of Route 66. Stretching more than 300 miles, Missouri's portion of the Mother Road offers fun roadside attractions, vintage motor courts, beautiful natural spaces, incredible views along the wayside and restaurants worth the drive. We're proud to showcase this truly all-American experience.

2026 also marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. You can expect Missouri's Fourth of July celebrations, including those at the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City and near the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, to have a little extra excitement and patriotism this year as we celebrate America's birthday.

The year also brings the opportunity of a lifetime to Kansas City which was selected as a host site for six matches in the FIFA World Cup 26 tournament. Visitors from across the U.S. and around the world will travel to Missouri to be part of the biggest sporting event on earth. Along with thrilling matches, special activities for fans will be taking place across the state. Whether or not you have tickets, there will certainly be plenty of opportunities for you to be part of the World Cup excitement.

No matter when you visit or the destinations you choose, we invite you to explore Missouri's vibrant urban areas, charming small towns, expansive outdoor spaces, world-class cultural institutions and growing culinary scene.

We can't wait for you to see what Missouri is all about.

Safe travels,

Governor Mike Kehoe and First Lady Claudia Kehoe

Kickin' it in Missouri

The Show-Me State Is Your Base Camp for World Cup Fun

Billy Stampfl of the Sports Planning Guide contributed to this story

City of Fountains: KC Calling

Kansas City, Missouri, will host six matches during FIFA World Cup 26, joining 15 other locations across North America and setting the stage for thrilling competition at Arrowhead Stadium, home of the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs.

Arrowhead is slated to host four group stage matches, one Round of 32 match and one quarter-final match during the tournament, with 26 days between the first and last event. Organizers expect about 650,000 visitors to descend upon the region to watch matches, be part of the atmosphere, and participate in activities like the FIFA Fan Festival and other public viewing events.

Thanks to its central location, Missouri is ideally positioned to host visitors from around the world. Kansas City specifically is one of the nation's most centrally located major metropolitan areas, with 55 million people within a day's drive and both coasts accessible within a three-hour flight. Enhancing this advantage is the new single terminal at Kansas City International Airport. Along with being a great sports city and its prime location, Kansas City is rich in cultural attractions for people to enjoy. Popular stops include the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, American Jazz Museum, National WWI Museum and Memorial, Arabia Steamboat Museum, and Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art — to name just a few.

Families traveling with children are drawn to places like Science City at Union Station Kansas City, LEGOLAND® Discovery Center, SEA LIFE Kansas City, Worlds of Fun, Hallmark Visitors Center and the Kansas City Zoo & Aquarium.

Foodies rejoice at the selection of dining options offered in Kansas City, which is best known for its rich tradition of barbecue. Some of the top local spots include Q39, Jack Stack Freighthouse, Arthur Bryant's Barbecue, Char Bar, Gates Bar-B-Q and BB's Lawnside. Flavors from around the world welcome diners at Grünauer (German, Austrian), Garozzo's (Italian), Lidia's (Italian), La Bodega (Spanish), Vietnam Cafe, Seva Cuisine (Indian) and Taste of Brazil Restaurant and Bar.

Regional favorites include Bristol Seafood+Steak+Social, Gram & Dun, Piropos Restaurant, Pierpont's at Union Station, Beer Kitchen, 801 Chophouse and The Majestic Restaurant.

Those interested in Kansas City's nightlife will hear the lively sounds of jazz emanating from clubs and music halls like the Green Lady Lounge, The Blue Room and The Phoenix.

And in case you just can't get enough soccer, book a guided tour at CPCK Stadium — the first stadium in the world built specifically for a women's pro sports team and home of the KC Current of the National Women's Soccer League.

The Lou: Discover St. Louis

While Kansas City will take center stage, the impact of the World Cup extends beyond its host cities. St. Louis has been named a potential Team Base Camp host. If selected, St. Louis would become a "home away from home" training camp site for one of the competing nations. (Riverside, Missouri, north of downtown Kansas City and home to the KC Current Training Facility, may be a training site as well).

St. Louis has a rich soccer history and its Major League Soccer team, St. Louis City Soccer Club, has a passionate fan base that keeps the new Energizer Park rocking at home matches.

Visitors in St. Louis enjoy the iconic Gateway Arch National Park, Anheuser-Busch Brewery, Forest Park — which is larger than New York's Central Park and is home to attractions like the Saint Louis Zoo, Missouri History Museum, Saint Louis Art Museum and Saint Louis Science Center — plus the you-have-to-see-it-to-believe-it City Museum downtown.

While named for King Louis IX of France, the city's dining scene has a decidedly Italian flair, particularly in The Hill neighborhood, which was founded by Italian immigrants. And, like Kansas City, barbecue is big here too.

To put the cherry on top of your St. Louis trip — maybe literally — be sure to stop by Ted Drewes Frozen Custard stand. It's located on Route 66, which celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2026, and is a great place to enjoy a cold treat paired with a taste of nostalgia on The Mother Road.

Road Trips Are Calling

You'll definitely want to explore beyond Kansas City, Missouri, during your World Cup experience, and Missouri has abundant road-trip destinations. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Independence

25 minutes east

Learn about Missouri's only president at the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, located in Truman's hometown of Independence.

Lee's Summit

40 minutes southeast

Visit the past at Missouri Town Living History Museum in Lee's Summit, where more than 25 buildings (some dating to 1822) are situated across a 30-acre park.

Kingsville

45 minutes east

Powell Gardens — Kansas City's Botanical Garden — in Kingsville is noted for its myriad garden settings and stunning architecture, including the Marjorie Powell Allen Chapel.

St. Joseph

50 minutes north

St. Joseph, a Wild West town, is home to the Pony Express National Museum, Jesse James Home and Patee House Museum.

Warrensburg

65 minutes southeast

Stop for a selfie at the Old Drum Monument and learn about "man's best friend" in Warrensburg.

Butler

70 minutes south

In Butler, the Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site commemorates an important battle of the American Civil War, one where Black soldiers fought for the first time.

Boonville

100 minutes east

See the birthplace of the Budweiser Clydesdales at Warm Springs Ranch in Boonville.

Joplin

135 minutes south

Joplin's Route 66 Mural Park is a great place to begin your eastbound journey on the famous route. Learn more on page 20.

Fulton

140 minutes east

Visit Fulton to explore America's National Churchill Museum at the restored Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, which was built in London in 1677 and moved to Fulton in the 1960s.

Hannibal

195 minutes northeast

All the way across Missouri, on the banks of the Mississippi River, don't miss Hannibal, the hometown of author Mark Twain and inspiration for his most famous works. Go underground at Mark Twain Cave, learn about his life at the Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum and take a break at Mark Twain Diner to enjoy their famous onion rings and homemade root beer.

Branson

205 minutes Southeast

The "Live Entertainment Capital of Missouri," boasts stage shows, shops and Silver Dollar City theme park.

Route 66

A Century of Cross-Country Adventure

Route 66 has always been greater than the sum of its parts — a cross-country highway punctuated with mom-and-pop shops, quirky roadside attractions and views filled with natural beauty and neon signs. But to many who slipped behind the steering wheel to head west, the historic route offered much more: the thrill of the open road, a feeling of freedom and a sense of adventure.

Missouri is the birthplace of Route 66 because it's where the roadway received its iconic name. This year, the renowned ribbon of highway celebrates a century of ushering motorists across the country on one of the world's most famous road trips.

Although modern-day interstates eventually replaced Route 66, travelers from far and wide come to the Show-Me State in search of a nostalgia-fueled experience on a network of roads that were part of the original route.

Missouri's 317 miles of the "Mother Road" are still lined with dozens of stops. From old-fashioned motor courts and vibrant murals to dazzling caves and down-home diners, it's an epic journey 100 years in the making.

Start your engines in St. Louis

Explore

Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, St. Louis

Walk or bike across this 1929 bridge that has a dramatic 30-degree bend halfway across its deck. The mile-long structure once carried motorists on Route 66 over the Mississippi River and into the Show-Me State.

Gateway Arch National Park, St. Louis

Look up ... way up ... to marvel at the tallest manmade arch in the world. Ride a tram 630 feet up to the top for impressive views of St. Louis and the Mississippi River. Also, tour the underground museum to learn more about the people who shaped the country and westward expansion.

National Museum of Transportation, St. Louis

A tribute to wings and wheels, the museum's 190 exhibits showcase the largest collection of planes, trains and automobiles in the world.

Route 66 State Park, Eureka

Trace the history of Route 66 through a collection of memorabilia and photos on display at the park's visitor center in the former Bridgehead Inn, a 1935 roadhouse.

Red Cedar Inn Museum & Visitor Center, Pacific

Built in 1934 with logs harvested from a family farm, this historic structure was once a popular restaurant on the Mother Road. Today, you'll find Route 66 exhibits, information and gifts.

Meramec Caverns, Stanton

First explored in the 1720s, the cavern's seven levels are filled with stalactites, stalagmites and other geological wonders. Jesse James is believed to have used the cave as a hideout in the 1870s. Decades later, local residents hosted parties there to escape the summer heat.

Eat and Drink

Ted Drewes Frozen Custard, St. Louis

The original frozen custard shop has been a sweet stop on Route 66 since 1930. The signature concretes, introduced in 1959, were so thick they were handed to customers upside down — a tradition that continues today.

Crown Candy Kitchen, St. Louis

A striped awning welcomes diners to St. Louis's oldest soda fountain. Dating back to 1913, the shop serves homemade ice cream, candies and sandwiches, including a towering BLT made with a half-pound of bacon.

Big Chief Roadhouse, Wildwood

Enjoy "garden-to-table" dining at one of the last remaining full-service restaurants on Route 66. The menu features organic produce grown in the restaurant's gardens.

Stay

Chase Park Plaza, St. Louis

This art deco hotel, built in 1922, was designed for travelers looking for an upscale stay on the Mother Road. Located in the city's historic Central West End, the hotel is surrounded by restaurants, shops and turn-of-the-century homes.

The Middle Stretch

Explore

Fanning 66 Outpost and Giant Rocker, Cuba

Tempt your tastebuds with 75 flavors of fudge and 300 varieties of gourmet popcorn, plus other road trip treats. The second-largest rocking chair in the country provides a perfect photo op.

Route 66 Mural City, Cuba

A colorful collection of murals earned Cuba the designation of “Route 66 Mural City.” Twelve larger-than-life works showcase the golden age of Route 66 as well as local and national history.

Route 66 Neon Park, St. Robert

See restored “orphaned” Route 66 signs displayed in an open-air museum that fills the median between the highway’s eastbound and westbound lanes.

Devils Elbow, Pulaski County

Cruise across a steel truss bridge in a picturesque section of the Ozarks where a bend in the Big Piney River creates an elbow-like turn. Rent a canoe or kayak nearby for a float trip on the scenic waterway.

Route 66 Museum, Lebanon

Venture inside the museum, located in the Lebanon-Laclede County Library, for a nostalgic look at local Route 66 lore.

Eat and Drink

Missouri Hick Bar-B-Que, Cuba

You can’t visit the Show-Me State without sampling some of its famous barbecue. Choose from a variety of meat — dry-rubbed with a special blend of spices, smoked for 12 hours and served with house-made sauce.

Hoppers Pub, Rolla and Waynesville

Pair a burger or schnitzel sandwich with one of 66 beers on the menu, including several varieties from Missouri craft brewers.

Stay

Wagon Wheel Motel, Cuba

Take a break from the road and stay in one of the original stone cottages at this charming motel, one of the oldest operating motels on Route 66. Relax outside on the patio or around a firepit.

Where the Road Found Its Name

Eat and Drink

College Street Cafe, Springfield

This little spot is exactly the kind of place that comes to mind when you imagine a retro cafe. Specializing in breakfast and burgers, College Street Cafe is loved by locals and Route 66 travelers alike, which is evident by the number of signatures that diners have left on the walls over the years. Bring a marker to add your own name to the collage.

Mother's Brewing Company, Springfield

Drink a beer "brewed with love" at this craft brewery located in a historic bread factory on the Mother Road. Choose from more than 20 beers on tap, then head out to The Back Yard, a tree-shaded space with lawn games and live music.

Stay

Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven, Springfield

Themed rooms with nostalgic decor pay tribute to Route 66 history. The motel's eight original sandstone cottages date back to 1938.

Rockwood Motor Court, Springfield

The oldest operating motor court on Route 66 has been providing a place for guests to rest their heads since 1929. Six original stone cabins are decorated with vintage furniture and memorabilia.

Explore

Park Central Square, Springfield

Stop in downtown Springfield to see the placard that proclaims the city as the official birthplace of Route 66.

History Museum on the Square, Springfield

Make your way through eight interactive exhibits, including The Birthplace of Route 66 gallery that features neon signs, a Rock-and-Roll Corner and a timeline of the country's most famous highway.

The Highway's Last Mo. Mile: Joplin

Explore

Gary's Gay Parita, Ash Grove

A re-created 1930s Sinclair gas station is one of four buildings packed with memorabilia from the heyday of Route 66.

Red Oak II, Carthage

Time stands still in this "small town." A collection of early 20th century buildings — including a general store, Phillips 66 gas station and an old schoolhouse — make up the property.

66 Drive-In Theatre, Carthage

Watch a movie under the stars at one of the remaining drive-in theaters in Missouri. Catch a classic flick or a new release April through September.

Route 66 Mural Park, Joplin

Swing by the Route 66 Mural Park, where a replica Corvette is the centerpiece of a 3D mural that pays tribute to the Mother Road.

Eat and Drink

The Bruncheonette, Joplin

Enjoy breakfast, brunch or lunch prepared with meats, cheeses, vegetables and freshly baked breads from local farms and bakeries. Start your day with eggs benedict or breakfast tacos.

Wilder's Steakhouse, Joplin

Serving the Joplin area for nearly a century, the restaurant is in a building that dates back to 1908. Savor a hand-cut steak and a full-bodied red wine in the art deco-inspired dining room.

Stay

Boots Court, Carthage

This 1939 motor court is one of the oldest operating motels along Route 66. The nonprofit Boots Court Foundation purchased the motel in 2021 and completed extensive renovations to preserve the historic structure.

Drifting Slowly Downstream

Discover Missouri's Scenic Waterways

While Missouri is well known for its connection to North America's two greatest rivers, the Mississippi and Missouri, dozens of recreational waterways beckon outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy the quintessential Show-Me State adventure: the float trip.

Water is the star of the show during Missouri river excursions, and towering rock bluffs, expansive forests, wildlife-viewing opportunities, caves and gravel bars (which are great places to pull over for a quick bite and to take a break from paddling) add to the scene and make an unforgettable journey.

Float trips are most popular during the summer, especially on the spring-fed streams where 60-degree water offers a refreshing way to cool down on a hot day. Off-peak trips from mid-September through December are every bit as beautiful and often more serene.

Most outfitters also offer camping and lodging, which is a great option when you want to spend a couple of days, a long weekend or a week on the water.

The Missouri Canoe and Floaters Association — whose members include more than 50 canoe outfitters ready to help you have a great float-trip experience — serves 36 floatable rivers, streams and creeks in the state. A majority of the waterways are in the Ozarks, a massive region in Missouri's southern half known for its rugged hills and natural beauty.

"I love how unique our rivers are in Missouri," says the Association's Executive Director, Michelle Lambeth. "Each has their own beauty and hidden gems."

The Elk River in southwest Missouri is one such gem. At just over 35 miles, the Elk's prime floating experiences happen in the section between the convergence of the Big and Little Sugar creeks and the area before the dam at Noel. Many different outfitters serve the region, providing varied excursions. Big Elk Floats & Camping, for example, offers 4- and 8-mile trips and has everything you need, from single kayaks to 14-person rafts.

A little more than two hours northeast, the Gasconade River holds a unique distinction: It's the longest river fully contained within the state's borders. While the river's total length is around 270 miles, it has such myriad bends and turns that the straight-line distance is only 120 miles. The National Rivers Project, an organization working to increase visibility and access to water and river trails, says there's an area near Waynesville where floaters can travel 15 miles on the river and be only 2 miles overland from their put-in site! Gasconade Hills Resort, about 10 minutes south of Richland, offers float trips ranging from 4 to 20 miles.

Noted as one of Missouri's most challenging rivers to float, the St. Francis River flows 420-plus miles from Iron County, Missouri, down into Arkansas. More than 220 miles of the river are in the Show-Me State, and certain sections — when water levels are highest — present some of the most intense kayaking in the state. Otahki Lake KOA and Otahki Outfitters offer floats ranging from 3 to 10 miles and a 1-mile experience on Otahki Lake itself.

The Eleven Point River begins near Willow Springs and increases in width and depth as it flows south-eastward, making floating more prevalent downstream from Greer Spring (said to be the tenth-largest spring in the world), which pumps an incredible 200 million gallons of water daily. The river offers one of Missouri's most scenic float trips, and a portion of it (44 miles) is federally designated as the Eleven Point National Wild and Scenic River. Hufstedler's Canoe Rental, Cabins and Camping outfits traditional float trips that take 4 to 8 hours, plus extended 19-, 26- and 36-mile treks that can last two to three days.

With its abundance of scenic rivers, knowledgeable outfitters and breathtaking natural beauty, Missouri has a float-trip experience for every type of adventurer. Whether you prefer a leisurely float with minimal paddling or an invigorating journey through winding waterways, there's a perfect river waiting to be explored.

High Notes

Discover Year-round Sounds at nightclubs, historic theaters and state-of-the-art arenas

Missouri has long been known for its music — jazz, blues, bluegrass, country, pop and rock. Legends like Chuck Berry, Tina Turner and Sheryl Crow have set the stage for new generations of artists like Nathaniel Rateliff, Chappell Roan and others. The Show-Me State is also home to dozens of world-class music venues. From century-old concert halls to outdoor amphitheaters, these spaces provide remarkable acoustics, exciting atmospheres and a deep connection to Missouri's musical roots. So whether you're seeing a chart-topping headliner or discovering someone new, you'll walk away with an unforgettable, cherished experience.

Big Acts: Arenas

St. Louis

See some of the biggest names in music at the Enterprise Center in the heart of downtown St. Louis. From modern country to classic rock and everything in between, you're sure to find a concert that satisfies your musical tastes.

Kansas City

The T-Mobile Center, the city's largest indoor arena, attracts top-tier concert tours featuring legendary entertainers like Taylor Swift, Garth Brooks and Elton John. The arena's modern glass facade is a sparkling landmark in the downtown Power & Light District.

In Nature: Outdoor Amphitheaters

Branson Area

Take in breathtaking views of the Ozarks and Table Rock Lake while listening to some of the country's top performers at Thunder Ridge Nature Arena. The amphitheater, part of the Big Cedar Lodge wilderness resort, is about 12 miles south of Branson.

Lake of the Ozarks Area

Spend an evening at Ozarks Amphitheater during a trip to Lake of the Ozarks, one of the country's most popular recreational lakes. The outdoor venue features a variety of artists. From Dwight Yoakam to Earth, Wind & Fire to REO Speedwagon, the venue has seen (or heard) a variety of musical genres.

Jefferson City

Catch a concert in Missouri's capital city at Capital Region MU Health Care Amphitheater. The venue brings local, regional and national acts to the community's Ellis Porter Riverside Park.

Historic Spots: Musical Theater Venues

St. Louis

The Fabulous Fox Theatre has been presenting Broadway's best musicals for decades.

Originally a 1920s movie palace, the opulent design incorporates ornate craftsmanship and a lavish style known as Siamese Byzantine.

Experience the magic of theatrical performances beneath the stars at The Muny. Located in Forest Park, it is America's oldest and largest outdoor musical theater that first opened in 1918.

Kansas City

Starlight Theatre has been bringing musical productions to the Kansas City area for more than 75 years. In addition to classic and contemporary musicals, the open-air venue in Swope Park presents a lineup of country, pop and rock concerts.

Arrow Rock

One of Missouri's oldest professional regional theaters, the Lyceum Theatre got its start in a historic church in the tiny village of Arrow Rock. Today, Broadway-caliber shows are presented in an intimate 415-seat auditorium.

Up Close: Intimate Venues

St. Louis

Blueberry Hill has been showcasing live music in the iconic Duck Room for nearly 30 years.

Chuck Berry, a St. Louis native and the "Father of Rock and Roll," performed the inaugural show at the music club and continued to make monthly appearances for the next 17 years. Today, the venue hosts live music several nights a week. Don't miss the larger-than-life statue of Berry — doing his famous Duck Walk — just across the street.

Kansas City

Slide into one of the red velvet booths or choose table-side seating and bask in the glow of candlelight reflecting off the tin ceiling at the swanky Green Lady Lounge. The city's jazz scene has flourished because this venue (as well as others in the area) hosts local musicians who perform their original compositions.

Columbia

Head downtown to The Blue Note — a 1920s theater turned live music hot spot — to hear up-and-coming artists and nationally known acts. (The venue has seen the likes of Red Hot Chili

Peppers, Willie Nelson and Wilco.) Every summer, music fans fill the street out front for an outdoor concert series.

Lively Locales: Music Halls

St. Louis

The Pageant and Delmar Hall — companion venues located side-by-side in the city's vibrant Delmar Loop entertainment district — have earned a national reputation as top-notch concert halls. The Pageant's tiered floor ensures you're never more than 70 feet from the stage. Delmar Hall features cabaret-style seating and standing-room-only space, so there's no bad "seat" in the house.

Kansas City

Sitting on the former site of Electric Park (one of the world's first amusement parks), Knuckleheads has live music on four distinctly different stages. The Garage offers a funky atmosphere while The Saloon gives classic honky-tonk vibes. The Gospel Lounge is designed for audiences seeking an intimate setting, and the Outdoor Stage and Courtyard Theater hold concerts under Kansas City's night sky.

Columbia

Located in Columbia's North Village Arts District, Rose Music Hall packs a big punch in a small package. A narrow bar area with a vintage feel opens to a small stage offering up-close views of the artists. When the weather warms up, outdoor shows lure music lovers to the adjacent Rose Park to spend long summer evenings under towering shade trees while enjoying the tunes. Shows range widely, from local artists to acts like The Pixies and R.E.M.

On Stage: Theaters

St. Louis

With more than 80 years of history as a performing arts center, Stifel Theatre has been the site of many star-studded performances by some of the country's biggest artists, including Ray Charles, Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. In addition to concerts, the historic theater presents musical productions.

Kansas City

The Midland Theatre has been bringing live music to Kansas City since 1927. State-of-the-art sound, lighting and amenities combine with the building's historic ambience to set the stage for a memorable concert in the city's Power & Light District.

Springfield

Established in 1926, the Gillioz Theatre in Springfield boasts nearly 100 years of live music. The historic structure sets the stage for an array of talent. See the Ozarks Lyric Opera perform or attend the popular Jazz Festival in the spring.

Branson

For nearly five decades, music enthusiasts have been drawn to the Live Entertainment Capital of the World where dozens of theaters line 76 Country Boulevard. The venues feature local and regional performers — including the Baldknobbers, the Duttons and the Haygoods — as well as tribute acts highlighting the music of Elvis, ABBA, the Bee Gees and other classic favorites.

Big Adventures, Small Price Tags

Find Affordable Family Fun ‘Round Every Corner

Missouri is a state of remarkable diversity — from the forested hills and winding rivers of the Ozark Plateau to the urban energy of Kansas City and St. Louis, its landscapes and communities form a colorful patchwork, each offering its own distinct charm. With a wide range of affordable — and, in some cases, free — attractions and activities in each region, Missouri is the perfect destination for a memorable and budget-friendly family getaway.

Northwest Region

History and Culture

Take a tour at Chip’s Chocolate Factory, “The Sweetest Place in Kansas City!” Located in Crown Center, the family-owned and -operated business has been in operation since 1983. Every batch of their famous Kansas City Fudge® is made with techniques established more than 100 years ago, and visitors can see the process in real time. In fact, 95% of the product is handmade on-site daily.

More to explore

Jesse James Home, St. Joseph
Missouri Town Living History Museum, Lee’s Summit
The National Museum of Toys and Miniatures, Kansas City

Outdoors and Nature

South of Kansas City lies scenic Longview Lake, a 930-acre haven perfect for water recreation, fishing and soaking in the rays while lounging lakeside. With its relaxing atmosphere, miles of shoreline and the peace of mind provided by certified, on-duty lifeguards, it’s an ideal place for both amusement and unwinding. Fishing enthusiasts will have the chance to catch bluegill, carp, channel catfish, largemouth bass and more — talk about a mouthwatering fish fry! The area also includes a marina with concessions and lake supplies for guests’ convenience.

More to explore

Kansas City Zoo, Kansas City
Lakeside Nature Center, Kansas City
Remington Nature Center, St. Joseph

Family Fun

In Maryville, movie night takes flight at the Hangar Cinema, where the building’s design models an airplane hangar. Catch the latest releases at reasonable prices, enjoy arcade fun and choose from a variety of dinner options that’ll satisfy everyone’s taste. It’s more than just a night at the movies — the atmosphere, activities and delicious fare create a one-of-a-kind experience.

More to explore

Chilli Bay Waterpark, Chillicothe
Kauffman Stadium Tour, Kansas City
Stone Lion Puppet Theatre, Kansas City

Northeast Region

History and Culture

Admire the beauty of brightly colored butterflies as they delicately move through the air amongst lush, tropical gardens at the Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House in Chesterfield. Additionally, children can learn about the life cycle of butterflies while exploring interactive exhibits in a peacefully captivating environment.

More to explore

Gateway Arch Museum, St. Louis
The Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum, Hannibal
The Soda Museum and Arcade, St. Charles

Outdoors and Nature

North of Hermann, Graham Cave State Park features historical artifacts that belonged to a group of people who occupied the space 8,000 to 10,000 years ago. Enter the archlike cave entrance (120 feet wide and 16 feet high) to learn about the area through interpretive exhibits and walk the spacious 368-acre area where the hunter-gatherers once lived.

More to explore

Saint Louis Zoo, St. Louis
Thousand Hills State Park
World Bird Sanctuary, Valley Park

Family Fun

MADE for Kids, located in St. Louis, is an entertaining 7,000-square-foot space that encourages creativity and hands-on exploration. With screen printing, laser cutting, stop-motion animation, 3D printing, pottery and more, the learning opportunities are endless for children and parents alike.

More to explore

Foundry Arts Centre, St. Charles
The Rawlings Experience, St. Louis
Swing-A-Round, Fenton

Local Insights: Home Sweet Home

The Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum was the residence of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as author Mark Twain, from 1844 to 1853. It was designated a National Historic Landmark on December 29, 1962.

Central Region

History and Culture

Immerse yourself in Pulaski County history at the Old Stagecoach Stop Museum in Waynesville. Built in the 1850s and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the building features rooms representing the different functions the structure served over the years, including a stagecoach stop and tavern, Civil War hospital and dentist office. Guests will gain an appreciation for how the community has grown and developed over the decades.

More to explore

Auto World Museum, Fulton

Missouri Veterinary Medical Foundation Museum, Jefferson City

Ozarks Amphitheater, Camden

Outdoors and Nature

Learn about the state's natural beauty and wildlife at the Runge Conservation Nature Center in Jefferson City. Featuring an impressive indoor wildlife viewing area, a 3,580-gallon fish aquarium, hands-on activities for children, and live amphibians and reptiles, the center offers a top-tier educational experience.

More to explore

Bennett Spring State Park

Jacob's Cave, Versailles

Lake of the Ozarks State Park

Family Fun

Climbing adventures await at Malted Monkey in Lake Ozark. Adults can indulge in the specialty "Topsy Shakes" while children navigate the twists and turns of the three-level, 60-foot-high ropes course. In addition to shakes, the menu offers classic American fare, so it's an ideal one-stop location for lunch and amusement.

More to explore

Lucas Oil Speedway, Wheatland

Midway Golf & Games, Columbia

Miner Mike's and Busters, Osage Beach

Southeast Region

History and Culture

The Space Museum and Grissom Center in Bonne Terre takes visitors on an unforgettable adventure into the limitless cosmos. The 5,000-square-foot facility houses hundreds of significant relics — including a genuine Apollo 16 moon rock and Gus Grissom's Mercury training spacesuit — providing a tangible connection to the accomplishments of space travel. In addition to state-of-the-art exhibits, witness a launch in the Shuttle Theater Experience and step into the shoes of an astronaut during the "On Board" virtual reality (VR) experience. The VR activity includes real footage shot in orbit, providing breathtaking views of the space station as Earth passes below.

More to explore

Missouri Mines State Historic Site

Mo-Ark Regional Railroad Museum, Poplar Bluff

Sainte Genevieve Museum Learning Center, Ste. Geneviève

Outdoors and Nature

Admire the grandeur of Missouri's elk from the comfort of your vehicle at Peck Ranch Conservation Area in Ellington. The best opportunity for a sighting is during sunrise or sunset. While spotting an elk is not guaranteed, the drive itself is stunning, taking guests through beautiful fields, forests and glades. (Deer and other wildlife sightings are a possibility, too.)

More to explore

Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center, Cape Girardeau

Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park

Missouri Down Under Adventure Zoo, Van Buren

St. Joe State Park, Park Hills

Family Fun

For an authentic train-riding experience, make your way to Jackson and book a ticket for the St. Louis Iron Mountain Railway. The short line railway offers exciting, themed adventures like train robberies, treasure hunts, music and dinosaurs — you never know who will show up on this popular excursion that hosts more than 11,000 visitors annually.

More to explore

Bootheel Youth Museum, Malden

Johnny Hatchets Axe Throwing & Coffee House, West Plains

Legit Speedway Park, West Plains

Southwest Region

History and Culture

Transport yourself back to American pioneer life and see where the “Little House” books were written in Mansfield. The Laura Ingalls Wilder Home & Museum takes fans on a literary journey, highlighting the chapters of Wilder’s life that inspired her writing. With two homes, a museum and a maintained garden in honor of the author’s passion for horticulture, there’s plenty to learn and explore, providing an authentic and engaging experience.

More to explore

Joplin History and Mineral Museum, Joplin
Pythian Castle, Springfield
Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield, Republic

Outdoors and Nature

The 207-acre Rutledge-Wilson Farm Park in Springfield provides a genuine farm experience. A stunning red barn graces the property, and visitors can observe mini-horses and donkeys, goats, sheep, pigs, cows and more. In addition to interacting with animals, guests can enjoy a farm-themed playground, stocked fishing pond and gift shop.

More to explore

Neosho National Fish Hatchery, Neosho
Route 66 street paintings, Joplin
Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area

Family Fun

Discover all the Discovery Center in Springfield has to offer. The hands-on science activities amuse children of all ages — and adults young at heart, too! Visitors can dig for dinosaur bones, walk through the inner workings of an eyeball, play in the Lu Digital Interactive Playground (the only one open to the public in North America) and much more. This activity center combines education with excitement, and the dynamic environment makes it a hit for the entire family.

More to explore

Bigfoot Fun Park, Branson
Swing Right Golf, Springfield
Tilt Studio, Joplin

Show-Me The Legends

Missouri has been home to a number of famous people who have impacted the state, nation and even the world.

From Walt Disney's humble beginnings in Marceline to Buck O' Neil's influence on baseball and civil rights, the lives of these notable individuals reflect the spirit and resilience rooted in the Show-Me State.

Josephine Baker: Dancer, French Resistance Spy

Born in 1906 in St. Louis, Josephine Baker lived a childhood filled with struggle. Her father left early on, leaving the family working to survive on limited resources. Consequently, she dropped out of school and began working as a street dancer. Baker honed her dancing skills by booking gigs around St. Louis. At the height of the Harlem Renaissance, she moved to New York City, and by 1925, she made her way to Paris and performed in *La Revue Nègre*. She became an overnight sensation, dazzling the French audience with a vibrant new dance called the Charleston. Baker's fame continued to grow, and she eventually called France her home.

World War II broke out in 1939, and a French spy master, Jacques Atbey, recruited Baker because of her fame. He believed she could charm secrets out of diplomats at embassy parties — and he was right. Baker left Paris when the Germans invaded, yet she was committed to the French Resistance's efforts. Not only did she shelter Resistance fighters and Jewish refugees at her estate, but she also continued to smuggle documents when traveling around Europe for "performances." After the war ended, she was presented an award by the French military.

Baker returned to the United States to help fight for civil rights during the '50s and '60s. She continued to perform, and in 1973 at the age of 67, she appeared at New York's Carnegie Hall and received a standing ovation. Baker's inspiring journey is chronicled at The Griot Museum of Black History in St. Louis. The compelling exhibit features a wax figure posing on a "stage," surrounded by artifacts illustrating her life.

Ella Ewing: World's Tallest Woman

Ella Ewing was born in 1872 in LaGrange in northeast Missouri. Ewing's uncommon growth — attributed to a rare hormone condition — began after her seventh birthday. By age 14, she measured more than 6 feet, 2 inches. Although reports vary regarding Ewing's maximum height, some accounts claim she ultimately reached 8 feet, 4 inches, making her the world's tallest woman during her lifetime.

Though Ewing was reported to be uncomfortable with the attention she received, she eventually agreed to make appearances, planning to use the income to help her family. In 1890, she began with a month-long appearance at a Chicago museum, earning her \$1,000. By 1897, she joined

the Barnum & Bailey Circus on a nationwide tour and was billed as the “Missouri Giantess.” At the end of the stint, she received \$3,250 — an amount equivalent to a little over \$124,000 today.

With her earnings, Ewing bought a farm and built a house. She also generously purchased a farm for her parents and installed one of the area’s first residential telephones for her neighbors’ use.

Ewing died at age 40 from tuberculosis and is buried in Harmony Grove Cemetery near South Gorin, Missouri. The Ella Ewing Lake Conservation Area in Scotland County is named in her honor, and the Downing House Museum — in Memphis, Missouri — documents her life. The exhibit features a life-sized model, along with several of her personal items, including her 9-foot-long bed and size 24 shoe.

Walt Disney: Animator, Film Producer, Theme Park Visionary

spent part of his childhood on a farm in Marceline, an area that would later inspire elements of his artistry. His interest in drawing emerged early, and when his family moved to Kansas City in 1911, Disney took Saturday morning drawing classes at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Disney’s family then moved back to Chicago where he attended high school. He worked as a cartoonist for the school paper and took photography and art classes. Disney eventually returned to Kansas City and began experimenting with cel animation, opening a studio that barely made it past its first (and only) year. Undeterred by failure, he moved to Hollywood with his brother Roy in 1923, where they founded the Walt Disney Studios — the beginning of a legacy.

Disney brought the beloved character Mickey Mouse to life in 1928, showcasing one of the first cartoons to include synchronized sound. Nine years later, he forever impacted cinema with “Snow White,” the first full-length animated feature film. Continually drawing inspiration from his home in Missouri, Disney opened his iconic theme park, Disneyland, in 1955. The park boasts an entry reminiscent of the bustling Main Street in Marceline, the place where the magic truly began.

Experience the magic of Marceline by visiting the Walt Disney Hometown Museum, the Disney Family Farm, and Main Street, U.S.A. Visitors will be immersed in the history that created a new era of wonder, learning that the grandest ideas can grow from modest beginnings.

Buck O’Neil: Baseball Player, Coach, Scout and Advocate

Born in the sunny state of Florida in 1911, John Jordan “Buck” O’Neil was a talented first baseman and respected manager in the Negro Leagues — primarily playing for the Kansas City Monarchs. He later broke barriers as a scout and the first Black coach in Major League Baseball. After retirement, O’Neil spearheaded the efforts to establish the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City in honor of the players who deserved to be recognized.

Featured in Ken Burns' 1994 baseball documentary, O'Neil garnered national attention. This allowed him to further promote the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and the story of the players who, as O'Neil said, "... built the bridge across the chasm of prejudice."

In 2006, at 94 years old, O'Neil made a cross-country tour. Sportswriter Joe Posnanski tagged along and turned their journey into a book, "The Soul of Baseball: A Roadtrip Through Buck O'Neil's America." The book details O'Neil's successful effort to ensure former Negro Leagues players were inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

The sad irony is that O'Neil himself was denied induction by one vote in 2006. While many of his fans and supporters were angry, he took the news in stride, saying with grace, "God's been good to me. They didn't think Buck was good enough to be in the Hall of Fame. That's the way they thought about it and that's the way it is ... Now, if I'm a Hall of Famer for you, that's all right with me." That same year, in a fitting recognition of his legacy, Congress designated the Kansas City museum he helped build as America's official National Negro Leagues Baseball Museum.

O'Neil posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2006 and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2022, cementing his place among the game's most influential players.

Visit the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum or attend a Kansas City Royals game at Kauffman Stadium, where you'll likely get a glimpse of the only red chair in the stadium. It marks the spot where O'Neil sat when scouting future baseball stars. Today, it's reserved for those who make a difference in the community.

Eight Missouri Masterpieces

Explore these spectacular places designed by Mother Nature

Springs

Big Spring, Van Buren

One of the three largest springs in the country, Big Spring sends an average of 286 million gallons of water into the Current River each day. Follow a short trail to the mouth of the spring, and then explore the Big Spring Historic District where stone-and-timber cabins and a dining lodge — built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s — recently reopened following a multiyear restoration project.

Maramec Spring, St. James

Trout fishing is the main attraction at Maramec Spring Park, but you don't have to be an angler to soak up the area's lush scenery. Take in the park's sparkling centerpiece — the sixth largest spring in Missouri — surrounded by more than 1,800 acres of fields and forestland.

Alley Spring, Eminence

The vivid teal blue water of Alley Spring and the historic red mill sitting at its edge create one of the most photographed spots in the state. Admire breathtaking views from the trail encircling the state's eighth largest spring and tour the mill — now a museum — and a one-room schoolhouse nearby.

Roaring River Spring, Cassville

As the deepest spring in the country, Roaring River Spring descends 472 feet and counting — the bottom has yet to be discovered. Test your fly-fishing skills in the stream fed by 20 million gallons of water that flow daily from the spring in Roaring River State Park.

Caves

Bridal Cave, Camdenton

A stalactite-adorned wedding chapel below the earth's surface in Bridal Cave has been the site of more than 4,000 weddings. Hear intriguing tales from long ago — marked by romance and tragedy — that are part of the cave's colorful past.

Onondaga Cave, Leasburg

Considered one of the most beautiful caves in the country, Onondaga Cave is an underground wonderland located in Onondaga Cave State Park. See stunning geological formations such as the King's Canopy, the "lily pad" room and a river that flows through the cave.

Mark Twain Cave, Hannibal

One of just a few labyrinth caves in the United States, Mark Twain Cave features a series of 260 interconnected corridors. Make your way through the maze-like cave that was part of the storyline in five of Twain's novels, including "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

Fantastic Caverns, Springfield

A dozen adventurous women were the first to explore Fantastic Caverns after they answered a newspaper ad seeking volunteers. Board a jeep-drawn tram to travel a path carved out by an ancient subterranean river and marvel at the massive formations in the country's only drive-through cave.

Getting Here

Everything You Need To Know About Traveling To And Through Missouri

Missouri's location in the center of the country makes it easily accessible by air, rail and road.

By Air

Missouri's central location allows travelers to fly to the state's largest metro areas from most major U.S. cities in four hours or less. The state is home to two international airports, one national airport and dozens of regional and municipal airports.

Kansas City International Airport (MCI)

Eleven airlines provide service at the new 40-gate terminal, which opened in 2023. The airport is located 19 miles northwest of downtown Kansas City.

St. Louis Lambert International Airport (STL)

The 86-gate airport, located 12 miles from downtown St. Louis, is served by 11 major airlines.

Springfield-Branson National Airport (SGF)

Four airlines provide service at the 10-gate airport, located about five miles northwest of Springfield.

Columbia Regional Airport (COU)

Located 12 miles southeast of Columbia, the airport opened a new terminal in 2022.

By Rail

Amtrak offers several routes with stops in Missouri as well as a route across the midsection of the state.

Missouri River Runner

Provides daily service between St. Louis and Kansas City, stopping in Kirkwood, Washington, Hermann, Jefferson City, Sedalia, Warrensburg, Lee's Summit and Independence.

The Lincoln Service

Travels daily between Chicago and St. Louis.

The Texas Eagle

Runs from Chicago to Los Angeles, making stops in Missouri in St. Louis, Arcadia and Poplar Bluff.

The Southwest Chief

Travels from Chicago to Los Angeles, making a stop in Kansas City.

By Road

With more than 33,000 miles of state highways and a vast network of county and city roads, Missouri is a perfect place for a road trip. Major roadways include:

Interstate 70

Extending east–west across the middle of Missouri, Interstate 70 connects the state’s two largest cities, St. Louis and Kansas City, passing through St. Charles, Columbia and Independence.

Interstate 44

Mostly following the path of historic Route 66 — one of America’s most famous highways — Interstate 44 starts in St. Louis and runs southwest across the state, passing through Rolla, Lebanon, Springfield and Joplin.

Interstate 55

Extending south from St. Louis, Interstate 55 passes just west of Ste. Geneviève and through Cape Girardeau.

U.S. Route 65

Running north–south, U.S. Route 65 travels through Sedalia, the Truman Lake area, Springfield, Branson and the Table Rock Lake area.

U.S. Route 61

Known as the Avenue of the Saints because it connects St. Paul, Minnesota, and St. Louis, Missouri, Route 61 stretches north–south and passes through Hannibal, St. Louis, Ste. Geneviève, Perryville, Cape Girardeau, Sikeston and New Madrid.

U.S. Route 60

Route 60 stretches east–west across the southern tier of Missouri through the Ozarks, Poplar Bluff, West Plains and Springfield.

U.S. Route 54

Running southwest–northeast, U.S. Route 54 travels through the Pomme de Terre Lake area, the Lake of the Ozarks region, Jefferson City and Fulton.

U.S. Route 36

Known as the Way of American Genius, U.S. Route 36 spans northern Missouri, connecting Hannibal and St. Joseph and running through Marceline and Chillicothe.

Time to Drive

Approximate drive times to four Show-Me State destinations.

Kansas City

Des Moines: 3 hours

Tulsa: 4 hours

Chicago: 7.5 hours

Dallas: 8 hours

Nashville: 8 hours

St. Louis

Chicago: 4.5 hours

Des Moines: 5.5 hours

Tulsa: 5.75 hours

Nashville: 7 hours

Dallas: 10 hours

Lake of the Ozarks

Tulsa: 3.75 hours

Des Moines: 5.25 hours

Chicago: 7 hours

Nashville: 7 hours

Dallas: 8 hours

Springfield/Branson

Tulsa: 2.75 hours

Des Moines: 6 hours

Dallas: 7 hours

Nashville: 7 hours

Chicago: 8 hours

Northwest

Things To Do & Places To Stay

Succulent barbecue, legendary sports and museums teeming with tales from the past — find all this and more in Missouri's Northwest Region.

With more than 200 fountains, Kansas City is known as the City of Fountains. The city's energy fuels a growing arts scene and flourishing entertainment districts. Hop on the free trolley for a ride through the vibrant downtown area. Head to Swope Park to visit the Kansas City Zoo and Aquarium. Immerse yourself in the city's signature cuisine with the Kansas City BBQ Experience, an app that will help guide you to the region's smoky, saucy specialties.

Learn about the intriguing life of the Show-Me State's only president in Independence, and explore the history of the Pony Express in St. Joseph, an early center for western commerce and trade. Soak up small-town charm in the Missouri River towns of Weston and Parkville. Visit Marceline, Walt Disney's hometown; Chillicothe, the "Home of Sliced Bread;" and Hamilton, the "Disneyland of Quilting."

Online information is available at MoStateParks.com, unless otherwise noted.

Missouri National Parks

Harry S Truman National Historic Site: Independence, 816-254-2720, 223 N. Main St.

Learn about the life of Harry S Truman, the only Missourian to serve as president of the United States. Tour the home he shared with his wife, Bess, in Independence and the Truman Family Farm in Grandview.

Missouri State Parks And Historic Sites

Annie and Abel Van Meter State Park: Miami, 660-886-7537, 32146 N. Highway 122.

The park's cultural center interprets the nine Indigenous tribes that once inhabited Missouri. Camping, hiking and fishing are available.

Arrow Rock State Historic Site: Arrow Rock, 660-837-3330, 39521 Visitor Center Drive.

Activities offered here range from tours of various historic buildings and dining at an 1830s tavern to camping, hiking and fishing.

Battle of Lexington State Historic Site: Lexington, 660-259-4654, 1101 Delaware.

The Missouri State Guard defeated Union troops here during an 1861 battle. Tours are given of the battlefield and the Anderson House.

Big Lake State Park: Craig, 660-771-6341, 204 Lake Shore Drive.

This park lies along a major migratory flyway and offers campsites, camper cabins, picnic areas and a boat ramp on a large oxbow lake.

Boone's Lick State Historic Site: Boonesboro, 660-837-3330, Highway 187.

This was once the site of a salt-manufacturing business operated by Daniel Boone's sons. An interpretive trail leads to the salt springs.

Confederate Memorial State Historic Site: Higginsville, 660-584-2853, 211 W. First St.

Once the grounds of the Confederate Veterans Home of Missouri, this site now features a historic chapel, a cemetery and small fishing lakes.

Crowder State Park: Trenton, 660-359-6473, 76 NW Highway 128.

Located in the rolling hills of northern Missouri, this park offers a lake, a campground, picnic shelters and a variety of trails.

Gen. John J. Pershing Boyhood Home State Historic Site: Laclede, 660-963-2525, 950 Pershing Way.

This site features the boyhood home of American war hero Gen. John J. Pershing, plus two museums dedicated to him. Tours are available.

Lewis and Clark State Park: Rushville, 816-579-5564, 801 Lakecrest Blvd.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition passed through this area in 1804. Features include trails, picnic sites, a campground and a keelboat exhibit.

Locust Creek Covered Bridge State Historic Site: Laclede, 660-963-2299, 29277 Highway 130.

Built in 1868, this 151-foot bridge is the longest covered bridge in Missouri. It spans a section of Locust Creek in Pershing State Park.

Pershing State Park: Laclede, 660-963-2299, 29277 Highway 130.

Wetlands, a bottomland forest and a savanna provide a glimpse of the area's natural landscape. Trails, lakes and a campground are available.

Sappington African American Cemetery State Historic Site: Arrow Rock, 660-837-3330, Route AA.

This 1856 cemetery contains the graves of several generations of Black Americans from the area. Exhibits commemorate their contributions.

Sappington Cemetery State Historic Site: Arrow Rock, 660-837-3330, Route AA.

Buried here are Govs. Meredith Miles Marmaduke and Claiborne F. Jackson, as well as Dr. John Sappington, a pioneer in treating malaria.

Thomas Hart Benton Home and Studio State Historic Site: Kansas City, 816-931-5722, 3616 Belleview.

Missouri's most noted 20th-century artist lived in this eclectic-style house from 1939 to 1975. Tours are given of Benton's home and studio.

Wallace State Park: Cameron, 816-632-3745, 10621 NE Highway 121.

Hiking trails meander through wooded hills at this tranquil park. Additional features include campgrounds, picnic shelters and a small lake.

Watkins Mill State Park: Lawson, 816-580-3387, 26600 Park Road N.

Campsites, trails and a lake provide a variety of opportunities at this park adjacent to Watkins Woolen Mill State Historic Site.

Watkins Woolen Mill State Historic Site: Lawson, 816-580-3387, 26600 Park Road N.

This site interprets the landholdings of Waltus Watkins. Visitors can tour his home and woolen mill and learn more at the visitor center.

Weston Bend State Park: Weston, 816-640-5443, 16600 Highway 45 N.

This park features picnic areas, trails, a campground, a dog park and a scenic overlook of the Missouri River.

Conservation Areas

Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center: Kansas City, 816-759-7300, 4750 Troost Ave.

The Discovery Center offers eight acres of natural areas with short paved and natural trails through forest, woodland, wetland and prairie habitats. The area has demonstration beds showcasing how native plants can be used for home landscaping and also features Sycamore Station – a children's natural play area. Nature exhibits are available for viewing inside the building, and free nature programs are offered regularly.

Blind Pony Lake Conservation Area: Sweet Springs, 573-884-6861, Rural Route 2 Box 17.

This 2,246-acre area is located in the prime agricultural lands found midway between the towns of Marshall and Sweet Springs. The primary purpose for the area is to provide a lake-oriented, multiuse area and a site for a warm-water fish hatchery. Much of the uplands surrounding consist of old fields, croplands and small woodlots. The area is open to fishing and hunting and offers hatchery tours.

Bluffwoods Conservation Area: St. Joseph, 816-271-3100, Route 59.

The forest on the 2,281-acre area is home to various kinds of trees and woodland plants. The remaining acres consist of old crop fields, abandoned pasturelands, homesteads and a few native grass openings. Steep bluffs adjacent to the Missouri River Valley provide vantage points for scenic views that can be accessed by service roads and trail loops. The Forest Nature Trail is a gently sloped, paved and disabled-accessible trail system. Restroom privies and picnic pavilion, both disabled-accessible, are at the trailhead. The Kerlin Creek Picnic Area is located at the trailhead of the Maple Falls and Lone Pine trails and has several picnic tables and fire rings available along with a disabled-accessible privy. There are two wet weather springs and a waterfall that can also be found on the Maple Falls Trail loop.

Burr Oak Woods Nature Center and Conservation Area: Blue Springs, 816-228-3766, 1401 NW Park Road.

Natural features on the 1,071-acre area include steep forested hillsides along Burr Oak Creek (the namesake of the property), large limestone boulders and outcrops, restored prairies and woodlands, and a trail complex that will guide visitors through many of these unique features. The trails at Burr Oak Woods provide an escape from its nearby urban/suburban surroundings.

The nature center has a large aquarium full of native fish, exhibits on native fish and wildlife, and more.

Guy B. Park Conservation Area: Platte City 816-858-5718, Route 371.

The nearly 380-acre area offers birding, fishing, hiking, hunting, outdoor photography and wildlife watching. The area has a 16-acre lake impoundment called Tobacco Hills Lake. The lake is managed for trophy-sized bluegill and contains populations of largemouth bass and redear sunfish. There is a privy, covered fishing dock and concrete boat ramp available for the public to use. More info at mdc.mo.gov.

James A. Reed Memorial Wildlife Area: Lee's Summit 816-622-0900, 13101 SE Ranson Road.

This wildlife area was established in 1952 with additional tracts purchased later to bring the area to its present 3,084 acres. The area has 12 lakes ranging in size from one to 42 acres. Most lakes contain largemouth bass, channel catfish, crappie, bluegill and redear sunfish. In addition, hybrid striped bass have been stocked in most of the lakes, and rainbow trout are stocked for the winter fishing season (November-March) in Coot and Plover lakes as well as in Honker Pond (kids only). The area also has numerous small ponds. Woodlands, native grass plantings, shrub plantings and crop fields are managed to provide year-round food for wildlife. Giant Canada geese nest and winter at the Reed Area. The area also supports good numbers of white-tailed deer.

Mark Youngdahl Urban Conservation Area: St. Joseph, 816-271-3100, 102 S. 36th St.

The 85-acre area features a two-mile trail system that takes you throughout the area. The Ridge Trail (0.75-mile long) and the Pond Trail (0.67-mile long) are paved and accessible to disabled visitors. The Marsh Trail (0.6-mile long) is graveled and non-accessible. Two disabled-accessible picnic shelters and restrooms are also available. A 2-acre wetland and other small wildlife watering holes are too shallow to stock with fish but attract other forms of aquatic life, including waterfowl, turtles and amphibians. More than 75 species of native and nonnative trees were planted throughout the area in 1997 to display the different kinds of trees that are commonly planted in the urban landscapes across Missouri.

Parma Woods Conservation Area and Shooting Range: Parkville, 816-891-9941, 15900 NW River Road.

The area includes 200 acres of rugged bluff land. A hiking trail leads through the forested bluff. The area also features a shooting range and Outdoor Education Center. Most of the area outside the immediate shooting range area is forested. Tree species found on the ridges include black walnut, honey locust, elm, shingle oak and hickory. The hillside tree species include chinquapin oak, walnut, basswood, white oak, northern red oak and white ash. Some of the

valley trees are sycamore and hackberry. The major goal of the area is to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the public such as shooting, hunting, hiking and wildlife viewing.

Platte Falls Conservation Area: Platte City, 816-858-5718, Settle Station Road.

The 2,366-acre area includes 1,320 acres of bottomland and upland timber, 295 acres of agricultural lands, 515 acres of grasslands and old fields, and 206 acres of wetlands. Hunting, fishing, hiking, canoeing and birdwatching are popular. A 9.1-mile stretch of the Platte River flowing through the area allows many river-oriented activities and recreations. The portion of the area where the river forms the rough shape of a duck's head is unique. The "neck" of the duck's head has a boat ramp on each side. Anglers, canoeists and kayakers can launch at the upstream ramp and enjoy a float of more over 2.5 miles without the need to shuttle a vehicle. The area has an archery sight-in range as well as a shotgun range. Firearms firing single projectiles are prohibited on the shotgun range.

Rebel's Cover Conservation Area: Livonia, 660-785-2420, 1107 N. Route N.

Approximately 60% of this 4,225-acre area is forested. The remainder is broken up into various habitat types, including croplands, grasslands, old fields, numerous wetlands and ponds. Nearly five miles of the Chariton River runs through the area. A 100- to 200-foot-wide forested corridor is maintained along the river to protect the banks and maintain a healthy ecosystem. The meandering river channel has created several oxbow lakes and natural marshes along the river, providing unique fish and wildlife habitats. The area also contains a heron rookery. The Henry Clay Dean House site, once located on the northwest side of the area, is listed in the Missouri Historic Sites Catalog. A shelter house and marker now designate the site.

Sunbridge Hills Conservation Area: St. Joseph, 816-271-3100, 4600 NE Huntoon Road.

This 145-acre area is about 30% open land and 70% forested. Numerous redbud trees burst into bloom at the first hint of spring. Maples and oaks display their brilliant colors before the autumn leaf drop. Native Americans called this region "Lanowa," which means "sacred region." The area overlooks the Missouri River and offers many scenic viewing sites. Eagles can be seen soaring over the river during their spring migration.

Union Ridge Conservation Area: Green Castle, 660-785-2420, Highway D, north of Green Castle.

Bisected by Spring Creek, this 8,262-acre area is a mosaic of woodlands, grasslands, old fields, prairie, savanna and forest. A 1,769-acre portion of the area has been designated as the Spring Creek Ranch Natural Area. This area is being managed to restore prairie and savanna communities. Characteristic species such as big bluestem, little bluestem, pale purple

coneflower, prairie clover and leadplant are now flourishing, increasing the aesthetic appeal and wildlife value of these habitats. Whitetailed deer are abundant and the area also supports populations of bobwhite quail and other upland game species. Various songbirds and small mammals are common.

Must See Museums

The Arabia Steamboat Museum, Kansas City:

A cargo load of artifacts recovered from a steamboat that sank in the Missouri River in 1856 provides an inside look at frontier life. The boat, carrying 200 tons of supplies, was lost for 132 years before it was excavated in the 1980s.

Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, Independence:

Examine the life of the only U.S. president from Missouri at the museum that highlights his journey from farm life to the White House. Interactive exhibits incorporate the challenges and triumphs Truman faced as president.

Jesse James Birthplace, Kearney:

The legend of Missouri's most infamous outlaw lives on at the Jesse James Birthplace. The carefully preserved family home now houses heirlooms and artifacts that illustrate James' early life and tell the story of how he came to be cemented in American history.

Museum of BBQ, Kansas City:

A feast for the senses, this new museum showcases the history of barbecue while pitmasters offer tips for perfecting your own grilling skills. Pick up some rubs and sauces in the gift shop. The BBQ Playground for kids features a "bean pit" — a ball room that resembles baked beans.

National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence:

Learn about the hundreds of thousands of pioneers who risked their lives and livelihoods to settle in the American West at this history museum, interpretive center and research library.

National WWI Museum and Memorial, Kansas City:

See the most comprehensive collection of World War I objects and documents in the world. The museum is dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impacts on the global community.

Pony Express National Museum, St. Joseph:

Imagine traveling by horse thousands of miles through the wilderness to deliver mail to the West. This museum details the legendary rides that began in St. Joseph.

The Rabbit hOle, Kansas City:

Children's books such as "Goodnight Moon" and "My Father's Dragon" come to life in this imaginative and immersive museum. The journey through 100 years of children's literature is designed for visitors of all ages.

Mark Your Calendars

Here's a sampling of festivals and events in Missouri's Northwest Region.

Boulevardia, Kansas City:

Grand Boulevard is the site of the city's biggest urban street festival, where you'll find live music, costumed performers, food tastings and craft beer.

Festival of Butterflies, Kingsville:

Step into the fascinating world of butterflies at Powell Gardens and learn more about these captivating creatures while exploring acres of bloom-filled gardens.

Plaza Art Fair, Kansas City:

More than 240 juried artists put their creativity on display at the famed Country Club Plaza. The historic shopping and entertainment district has been hosting the premier art event for more than 90 years.

Pony Express PumpkinFest, St. Joseph:

Great Pumpkin Mountain illuminates the sky with the lighting of hundreds of hand-carved jack-o'-lanterns in the town where the Pony Express began. Festival highlights include a costume parade, rides, games, crafts and food trucks.

SantaCaliGon Days, Independence:

Celebrate the rich history of Independence as the starting point of the Santa Fe, California and Oregon trails. Explore Main Street 1849, browse and shop the 500 craft and vendor booths, and enjoy a lineup of live music.

Sliced Bread Day, Chillicothe:

The first town to commercially produce and sell sliced bread celebrates its claim to fame with a bread-baking contest, farmers market, concerts, arts and crafts, and activities for the kids. Weston Applefest, Weston – Dig into an apple dumpling or slice of pie while the parade — boasting marching bands, antique tractors and classic cars — makes its way down Main Street.

Northeast

Things To Do & Places To Stay

Eclectic urban neighborhoods and small towns brimming with history thrive in Missouri's Northeast Region — from St. Louis and its iconic Gateway Arch to Mark Twain's hometown of Hannibal.

St. Louis is a center for the arts and entertainment. The National Blues Museum celebrates the history of the genre with exhibits and live performances. The Muny has been bringing live musical theater to St. Louis for more than a century. Exhibits at the Saint Louis Art Museum and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis span 5,000 years across many cultures.

Rivers and wine flow through the area where two of the country's largest waterways — the Missouri and Mississippi rivers — converge. In the early 1800s, Lewis and Clark set out from St. Charles on the Missouri River to explore the Louisiana Purchase. Today, the city's historic downtown is filled with charming shops, inns and restaurants.

In the late 1800s, German immigrants established the state's first wineries in Hermann and Augusta, located along the Missouri River. Sample the wine while you enjoy the views from more than a dozen vineyards and wineries in the region.

You'll also find several caves, including Meramec Caverns, the state's largest commercial cave, and Mark Twain Cave, an unusual labyrinth-style cave.

Online information is available at MoStateParks.com, unless otherwise noted.

Missouri National Parks

Gateway Arch National Park: St. Louis, 877-982-1410, 11 N. Fourth St.

Take a tram ride to the top of the Gateway Arch for breathtaking views. Delve into more than 200 years of St. Louis and national history in the free, world-class museum. Visit the Old Courthouse, where pivotal cases such as Dred and Harriet Scott's fight for freedom and Virginia Minor's pursuit of women's suffrage unfolded.

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site: St. Louis, 314-842-1867, 7400 Grant Road.

See the White Haven home where General and President Ulysses S. Grant met his wife, Julia Dent Grant, and raised his family before the Civil War. Thirty people enslaved by Julia's father, Frederick F. Dent, also lived and worked on the property. Five historic structures remain at the site.

Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites

Battle of Athens State Historic Site: Revere, 660-877-3871, 12378 Athens State Park Road.

During the battle, a cannonball pierced the site's Thome-Benning House, and the damage is still visible today. Visitors can enjoy camping, hiking, boating, fishing and free tours.

Castlewood State Park: Ballwin, 636-227-4433, 1401 Kiefer Creek Road.

This park is great for activities such as bird-watching, picnicking, hiking, biking and fishing in the Meramec River.

Cuivre River State Park: Troy, 636-528-7247, 678 State Route 147.

This diverse park boasts a variety of trails, a scenic creek, a lake for swimming and fishing, and a plethora of camping opportunities.

Deutschheim State Historic Site: Hermann, 573-486-2200, 101 W. Second St.

This site interprets German-American history and culture and offers tours of two buildings dating to the 1840s, each with a period garden.

Don Robinson State Park: Cedar Hill, 636-257-3788, 9275 Byrnesville Road.

Visitors here can hike and picnic among sandstone box canyons, shelter caves, cliffs, glades and forests.

Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park: Wildwood, 636-458-3813, 800 Guy Park Drive.

This St. Louis area park has trails for hikers, bicyclists and equestrians. Other features include campsites, shelters and a visitor center.

Edward "Ted" and Pat Jones-Confluence Point State Park: West Alton, 636-899-1135, 1000 Riverlands Way.

A trail leads to the meeting point of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Panels focus on the rivers and the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

First Missouri State Capitol State Historic Site: St. Charles, 636-940-3322, 200 S. Main St.

Missouri's first legislators met here from 1821 to 1826 to establish Missouri's new state government. Take a tour of the restored building.

Gov. Daniel Dunklin's Grave State Historic Site: Herculaneum, 636-464-2976, 104 Dunklin Drive.

Daniel Dunklin, the fifth governor of Missouri, is buried here with members of his family. The site overlooks the Mississippi River.

Graham Cave State Park: Danville, 573-564-3476, 217 Highway TT.

Featuring a shelter cave that was inhabited more than 10,000 years ago, this park offers camping, hiking, a visitor center and river access.

Iliniwek Village State Historic Site: Alexandria, 573-655-2280, 22569 County Road 188.

This was once the site of a village inhabited by Native Americans of the Iliniwek Confederacy. Outdoor exhibits explain the site's history.

Long Branch State Park: Macon, 660-773-5229, 28615 Visitor Center Road.

Landscapes here range from woodland to prairie and savanna. Activities include fishing, swimming, boating, paddling, hiking and biking.

Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site: Florida, 573-248-9980, 37352 Shrine Road.

A modern museum surrounds the two-room 1830s cabin where author-humorist Mark Twain was born. Exhibits interpret Twain's life.

Mark Twain State Park: Florida, 573-248-9980, 37352 Shrine Road.

Enjoy boat ramps and a beach on Mark Twain Lake, plus trails, picnic areas, camper cabins, campsites, a group camp and a disc golf course.

Mastodon State Historic Site: Imperial, 636-464-2976, 1050 Charles J. Becker Drive.

Excavations have found that humans hunted mastodons here during the Ice Age. The site has a museum, picnic areas and hiking trails.

Meramec State Park: Sullivan, 573-468-6072, 115 Meramec Park Drive.

This park borders the Meramec River and features a store and grill, watercraft rentals, camping, lodging, trails and cave tours.

Robertsville State Park: Robertsville, 636-257-3788, 902 State Park Drive.

Bordered by Calvey Creek and the Meramec River, this wooded park offers hiking trails, a picnic area, a campground and a boat launch.

Route 66 State Park: Eureka, 636-938-7198, 97 N. Outer Road.

Located along Route 66 and the Meramec River, this park has trails, picnic sites, a boat ramp and displays from Route 66 and Times Beach.

Sandy Creek Covered Bridge State Historic Site: Hillsboro, 636-464-2976, 9090 Old Lemay Ferry Road.

Originally built in 1872, this red barn-like bridge creates a scenic setting for picnics and photos. An outdoor exhibit explains the history.

Scott Joplin House State Historic Site: St. Louis, 314-340-5790, 2658 Delmar Blvd.

In 1902, this was the home of renowned ragtime composer Scott Joplin. Today, it features a player piano and exhibits on Joplin's life.

Thousand Hills State Park: Kirksville, 660-665-6995, 20431 State Highway 157.

Forest Lake provides opportunities for boating, fishing and swimming. The park also has trails, cabins, campgrounds, dining and petroglyphs.

Union Covered Bridge State Historic Site: Paris, 573-248-9980, 20700 Monroe County Road 962.

This bridge is the only surviving example in Missouri of the Burr arch truss system. Built in 1871, it served travelers for 99 years.

Wakonda State Park: La Grange, 573-655-2280, 32836 State Park Road.

A great place for birding, this park has six lakes, a beach, hiking and mountain biking trails, watercraft rentals, and two campgrounds.

Conservation Areas

August A. Busch Conservation Area and Nature Center: St. Charles, 636-441-4554, 2360 Route D.

In the early 1940s, the 6,951-acre area was used by the Department of the Army as a TNT munitions plant to support the World War II effort. There are still 100 of the old TNT storage bunkers in the area. Walk the hiking trails, drive the auto tour, photograph wildlife, fish many of the lakes and ponds, or simply sit under a tree and enjoy the outdoors. Hunting for a variety of wildlife species is allowed. The nature center offers a variety of programs and exhibits.

Big Creek Conservation Area: Kirksville, 660-785-2420, Rainbow Basin Trail.

About 75% of this 1,064-acre area is forest, woodland or savanna. The remaining 25% is made up of native grassland, old field habitat and food plots. The west side of Big Creek is bordered by Thousand Hills State Park, which is managed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Missouri Department of Conservation manages the forest, fish and wildlife resources to provide for public recreation and to protect soil and water quality. Management practices – including cropping, timber management and prescribed burning – are used to improve wildlife habitat. Enjoy bird-watching, camping, fishing, hunting, biking and hiking.

Columbia Bottom Conservation Area: St. Louis, 314-877-6014, 801 Strodman Road.

The 4,316-acre area is for those who love wide, open spaces. It's located in a floodplain at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, the two largest in North America. The area features a paved and level trail for hiking and biking that partially traverses the area with an out-and-back path. The trail, and much of the Columbia Bottom Area itself, has been reshaped by the dynamic forces of nature through recurring flooding. A boat ramp enables boaters and anglers to put into the Missouri River, and a separate access gets paddlers onto the Mississippi.

Daniel Boone Conservation Area: Hermann, 636-441-4554, Route Y.

This 3,523-acre area is a place where the great pioneer himself might have felt at home. Boone, in fact, lived near here in his golden years. A 6.8-mile, multiuse trail invites hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians to explore its deep valleys, woodlands, savannas, glades and rugged wooded hills. Visitors will also go through the Razor Hollow Natural Area along the way. For those who enjoy a self-sufficient camping experience, Daniel Boone has multiple primitive camping sites. You'll be sharing the space with a bevy of neotropical songbirds during the spring as they "camp" there during their travels.

Deer Ridge Conservation Area: Lewistown, 573-248-2530, Route Y West.

The 7,155-acre area offers nearly 20 miles of multiuse trails. The easy-to-walk purple trail will take you through a woodland that has an abundance of 150-year-old post oaks. The horse campground is the place horseback riders will want to camp. Enjoy bottomland forest and wetlands filled with the musical sounds of aquatic wildlife species along green and blue trails. Visitors will also see signs of open field cropping, grass management and wetland management. A 48-acre lake provides bass, bluegill, catfish and crappie for anglers. The area also offers opportunities for target shooting at the James B. Jenkins Shooting Range. Six wetland pools have been constructed for wetland habitat. Oxbow marsh areas along the North Fabius river bottoms provide an excellent habitat for waterfowl and amphibious wildlife.

Department of Conservation Northeast Regional Office: Kirksville, 660-785-2420, 3500 S. Baltimore.

The building includes 1,500 square feet of exhibit space highlighting north Missouri's fish and wildlife resources. The exhibits also include a 1,300-gallon aquarium. Located on 26 acres, the site also includes a pond and storm water retention marsh. An interpretive hiking trail surrounds the 26-acre site and is approximately 0.8 mile long. The trail surface is mulch, and it winds through restored prairie plantings, a small marsh and forest, and along a pond.

Forest 44 Conservation Area: High Ridge, 636-458-2236, 1100 Antire Road.

The 958-acre area lies right along the Interstate-44 corridor that conveys travelers to some of the Show-Me State's most scenic places. Several springs in the area feed Williams Creek, which flows along the eastern portion of Forest 44. Flowering dogwood and redbud trees add to the area's natural beauty, especially in the springtime. Hiking, wildlife viewing and horseback riding are popular activities. An extensive and intertwining trail system covers the area. The Dogwood Ridge trail is reserved for hikers, while the rest of the trails will satisfy both hikers and horseback riders.

Fox Valley Lake Conservation Area: Kahoka, 660-785-2420, State Highway NN.

The 2,158-acre area is about 60% forested. The remaining 40% consists of grasslands, row crops and idle fields. The forest consists mainly of oak-hickory in the uplands and mixed hardwood and softwood species in the bottomlands. The area includes a 108-acre fishing lake and a 13-acre constructed wetland. Over 1 mile of the Fox River meanders along the area's eastern boundary. The area is available to the public for a variety of outdoor activities. Portions of the area are managed for upland wildlife species such as quail, rabbits and songbirds. Timbered portions are managed for deer, turkey, squirrel and woodland songbirds. Wetlands provide waterfowl habitat. The area includes a concrete boat ramp at the lake, an accessible fishing area, river access (no ramp) and a rifle and archery range.

Hunnewell Lake Conservation Area and Fish Hatchery: Hunnewell, 573-983-2201, 6503 Highway Z.

The 1,998-acre area includes a 228-acre lake and a fish hatchery. The hatchery raises a variety of fish, including channel catfish, largemouth bass, bluegill, sunfish, walleye and hybrid sunfish for stocking Missouri's public lakes. Total production is about 700,000 fish per year from 16.4 acres of hatchery ponds. Hunnewell Lake provides the water supply for the hatchery. The land was originally a tall-grass prairie that was gradually replaced by cultivated fields or planted to hay crops. Some remnant stands of prairie grasses remain in the area. Limited cultivation of some fields continues. The landscape is broken up by small, wooded drainages that contain mostly pin oaks and locust trees. On the south side of the lake is a unique stand of old-growth white oak forest.

Montgomery Woods Conservation Area: Kirksville, 660-785-2420, Route 11.

Visitors will find a challenge on the rough terrain of this 348-acre forested area. Oak-hickory forest covers the steep hills and ridgetops. Bottomland tree species include silver maple, cottonwood, sycamore and an assortment of other hardwoods. Visitors may view various forest management practices, such as tree improvement and tree harvest, to create forest openings for wildlife, promote a healthy forest, and ensure a diversity of tree sizes and age classes. White-tailed deer and wild turkey are abundant in the area as well as numerous songbirds.

Myron and Sonya Glassberg Family Conservation Area: Eureka, 636-441-4554, Route FF South.

This is one of the newest conservation areas in the St. Louis region. The 634-acre area lies in the Ozark border region with soils derived from limestone and dolomite. It's also in the important Labarque Creek watershed, a rare and unique haven for aquatic wildlife. The hiking trail encounters a variety of plant communities, and the woods are dominated by oaks, hickory, maple and cedar with an understory of flowering dogwood and redbud. A viewing platform affords onlookers a sprawling, elevated view of the Meramec River.

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center: Kirkwood, 314-301-1500, 11715 Cragwold Road.

This educational nature oasis is in the middle of Kirkwood. It is nestled within 112 acres of oak-hickory forest in a quiet corner of a busy urban world. The area has three trails, all of them paved, and one that offers interpretive signage and is accessible. Powder Valley has something for nature lovers, both indoors and out, for all seasons. The nature center, gift shop and innovative educational exhibits, including an aquarium and beehive, offer something year-round. Missouri Department of Conservation naturalists conduct regular programs to help those of every age discover the wonders of nature.

Rockwoods Reservation: Wildwood, 636-458-2236, 2751 Glencoe Road.

The 1,881-acre area offers a rich diversity of plant and animal life as well as springs, caves and rock formations. Cool, moist, north-facing ravines and lush creek bottoms contrast with the nearby arid, rocky ridge tops and south slopes. The terrain is reminiscent of the Ozark hills and many plants and animals found in hill country are also found here. The area features about 13 miles of foot trails of varying length and difficulty. These take hikers by caves, Hamilton Creek (which flows during wet weather), scenic overlooks and a giant historic lime kiln.

Rudolf Bennitt Conservation Area: Higbee, 573-815-7900, W. County Road 2910.

The area contains 3,575 acres at the junction of Boone, Howard and Randolph counties. The mostly gentle, rolling terrain is 75% forested. Fields of native, warm-season grasses and bottomland fields are scattered among the forests. The 48-acre Rudolf Bennitt Lake provides a good fishery for bass, catfish, bluegill, crappie and redear sunfish. Lake facilities include an accessible boat ramp, a fishing dock and restroom. Watering ponds have been built to provide habitat and water for the area's wildlife species. Hikers, bikers and equestrians may enjoy the Moniteau Trail. During all portions of firearms deer season and spring turkey season, the trails are closed to bicycle and horseback riding.

Sugar Creek Conservation Area: Kirksville, 660-785-2420, Route N.

The 2,602-acre area is primarily forested, with a few open fields on ridges and along Sugar Creek. Both Sugar Creek and Elm Creek run through the area. Wildlife management practices include cropping fields to serve as food sources for animals and also harvesting timber, which provides wildlife-improved forage and cover. White-tailed deer and wild turkey are abundant in the area, as are numerous songbirds and a variety of mammals. The area offers a shooting range, trails, biking, horseback riding, hiking, camping, fishing and hunting.

Ted Shanks Conservation Area: Ashburn, 573-248-2530, 3643 Pike 145.

This 6,705-acre area contains bottomland hardwood timber, open marsh, mixed shrub/scrub/emergent wetlands, row crop, oxbow lakes and sloughs, old fields and upland woods. The area consists of 3,827 acres of lands managed by Missouri Department of Conservation and 2,878 acres of lands managed under a cooperative agreement between the Conservation Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The area borders 8.75 miles of the Mississippi River, 4.75 miles of the Salt River and 2.25 miles of river bluffs. The area contains 35 miles of levees, three pump stations, 9 miles of water canals and 45 water control structures. The area is divided into 25 management units. A concrete boat ramp provides access to the Salt River.

A Host of Historic Places

The Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, St. Louis:

Home to the largest collection of mosaic art in the western hemisphere, this cathedral dates back to 1907. The walls and ceiling are covered with colorful glass tiles, and a museum in the lower level shows how mosaics are designed and created.

Forest Park, St. Louis:

Developed in the 1870s, one of the country's largest urban parks is home to the award-winning Saint Louis Zoo, an outdoor theater, art museum, a history museum and more.

The Historic Daniel Boone Home, Defiance:

Tour the home that famous frontiersman Daniel Boone and his son Nathan built in the early 1800s. The site also includes a reconstructed 19th-century village, living history programs and artisan demonstrations.

Lewis & Clark Boat House and Museum, St. Charles:

Exhibits recount Lewis and Clark's epic, 8,000-mile Corps of Discovery journey up the Missouri River when they mapped the Louisiana Purchase and searched for a water route to the Pacific Ocean.

The Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum, Hannibal:

The museum complex includes the house where one of America's greatest authors spent his formative years, as well as Becky Thatcher's House and the Huckleberry Finn House. Interactive exhibits immerse you in some of Twain's most famous novels.

Missouri History Museum, St. Louis:

Explore exhibits that delve into stories from St. Louis' past, including the 1904 World's Fair, the development of Forest Park and the city's contributions to popular music.

Old Courthouse, St. Louis:

Visit the site where the first two trials of Dred and Harriet Scott took place — the enslaved husband and wife fought for their freedom in the mid-1800s during a court case that hastened the beginning of the Civil War. Part of the Gateway Arch National Park, the Old Courthouse recently reopened following a multiyear renovation project and includes new exhibits and galleries.

Stone Hill Winery, Hermann:

Sample award-winning wine and tour the nation's largest series of underground wine cellars at one of the oldest wineries in the country. Sample authentic German fare in a restaurant housed in the property's original carriage house and barn.

Mark Your Calendars

Here's a sampling of festivals and events in Missouri's Northeast Region.

Great Forest Park Balloon Race, St. Louis:

Bask in the light from the brightly colored hot air balloons at the evening balloon glow. During the day, pack a picnic and listen to live music as the balloon race begins.

Legends & Lanterns, St. Charles:

Follow a group of "paranormal poltergeists" on a spirited journey through Halloween history in downtown St. Charles. Witches, phantoms and villains from the past offer more treats than tricks during the family-friendly outing.

National Tom Sawyer Days, Hannibal:

Experience Mark Twain's hometown with fence painting, frog jumping and characters straight out of his most well-known novels and short stories. The event's Fourth of July fireworks display will have extra "pop" in 2026, as it's the 150th anniversary of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" being published.

Soulard Mardi Gras, St. Louis:

The city's Mardi Gras event — one of the largest in the country — includes the world's largest parade of costumed pets along with plenty of drinks, delectable food, shiny beads and special activities.

Strawberry Festival, Kimmswick:

The historic Mississippi River town celebrates all things strawberry — strawberry shortcake, strawberry cheesecake and strawberry iced tea, to name a few. For your first stop, purchase a jar of The Famous Kimmswick Strawberry Jam before it sells out.

WASHMO BBQ & Bluesfest, Washington:

Enjoy live blues and delicious food and drink — including a BBQ, Bacon and Bourbon Tasting — in this historic Missouri River town.

Wurstfest, Hermann:

For more than 40 years, Hermann has been celebrating the art of German sausage making with sausage-making competitions, sausage sampling, German music, dancing and a wiener dog derby.

Central

Things To Do & Places To Stay

Discover sparkling lakes, hiking and biking trails, historic sites and roadside attractions in Missouri's Central Region. Visit Jefferson City where the State Capitol and Governor's Mansion overlook the Missouri River. Tour the Missouri State Penitentiary, the oldest operating prison west of the Mississippi River before it was decommissioned in 2004.

Columbia — home of the University of Missouri — offers a vibrant college-town atmosphere. Explore charming small towns such as Fulton, the site of Winston Churchill's landmark "Iron Curtain Speech," and Boonville, where the world-famous Budweiser Clydesdales are born and trained. The tiny town of Rocheport, with restaurants, shops and inns, is a popular stop on the Katy Trail, the country's longest developed rail-trail. Take a nostalgic road trip down historic Route 66 and stop in Lebanon, Waynesville and St. Robert to learn more about the iconic highway.

Online information is available at MoStateParks.com, unless otherwise noted.

Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites

Bennett Spring State Park: Lebanon, 417-532-4338, 26250 Highway 64A.

A trout-stocked stream lures anglers to this scenic park. Hiking, camping, lodging, dining, a nature center and river access are available.

Bothwell Lodge State Historic Site: Sedalia, 660-827-0510, 19349 Bothwell State Park Road.

The site's 31-room lodge was the focal point of attorney John Bothwell's Stonyridge Farm. The site offers tours, hiking and mountain biking.

Clark's Hill/Norton State Historic Site: Osage City, 573-449-7402, Osage Hickory Street.

A trail leads to an overlook atop a hill that explorer William Clark climbed in 1804. The trail goes past two Native American burial mounds.

Finger Lakes State Park: Columbia, 573-443-5315, 1505 E. Peabody Road.

A network of lakes provides opportunities for fishing, swimming and paddling. Trails, campsites and a motocross track are available on land.

Ha Ha Tonka State Park: Camden, 573-346-2986, 1491 State Road D.

Miles of scenic trails lead to springs, bluffs, natural bridges and castle ruins. Water activities are available on the Lake of the Ozarks.

Harry S Truman State Park: Warsaw, 660-438-7711, 28761 State Park Road.

Swimming, boating and fishing are available at this park on Truman Lake. Features include a marina, boat ramps, trails and campgrounds.

Jefferson Landing State Historic Site: Jefferson City, 573-751-2854, 100 Jefferson St.

Exhibits in the Lohman Building explore the history of the capital city. Upstairs are support facilities for the Missouri State Museum.

Jewell Cemetery State Historic Site: Columbia, 573-449-7402, South Providence Road.

Educator William Jewell and Gov. Charles Hardin are buried here. Unlettered stones are likely the markers of enslaved people's graves.

Katy Trail State Park: Jefferson City, 573-449-7402, Clinton to Machens.

The flat 240-mile Katy Trail stretches across the state and is open to hikers and bicyclists, as well as equestrian users in some sections.

Knob Noster State Park: Knob Noster, 660-563-2463, 873 SE 10.

Activities here include hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, horseback riding, fishing, kayaking, camping, picnicking and orienteering.

Lake of the Ozarks State Park: Brumley, 573-348-2694, 403 Highway 134.

This sprawling park offers campsites, cabins, yurts, marinas, beaches, seasonal cave tours and a variety of trails.

Pomme de Terre State Park: Pittsburg, 417-852-4291, 23451 Park Entrance Road.

Located on Pomme de Terre Lake, this park has trails, campgrounds, lodging facilities, beaches, a marina and ample fishing opportunities.

Rock Bridge Memorial State Park: Columbia, 573-449-7402, 5901 S. Highway 163.

Features include nature programs; picnic areas; an orienteering course; and trails leading to sinkholes, springs and a natural rock bridge.

Rock Island Trail State Park: Windsor, 660-563-2463, Pleasant Hill to Windsor.

This park comprises 47.5 miles of developed trail for bicyclists, hikers and equestrian users and joins Katy Trail State Park in Windsor.

Conservation Areas

Big Buffalo Creek Conservation Area: Warsaw, 660-530-5500, Big Buffalo Road.

This mostly forested 3,612-acre area contains a 6-acre fishing pond, three springs and 3 miles of Big Buffalo Creek. Forest management activities include timber stand improvement, tree planting, commercial thinning, even-aged and uneven-aged commercial harvests, woodland restoration, and glade/savanna restoration. It has one designated natural area, Big Buffalo Creek Fen Natural Area. The fen is a 40-acre portion of the conservation area with natural features that include a small, spring-fed fen; a spring branch and creek; dolomite glades; and forest. The area offers bird-watching, camping, fishing, hunting, trails, biking, hiking and horseback riding and is accessible.

Brickley Hollow Conservation Area: Warsaw, 660-530-5500, Fire Road 401-2.

This 186-acre area contains small expanses of woodland, savanna and native grassland as well as a dolomite glade. A variety of wildflowers can be found in the area, as well as animal species associated with glade communities, including fence lizards and five-lined skinks. The diverse variety of habitats help to provide small game, deer and turkey hunting opportunities. The area offers bird-watching, fishing, hunting and trapping.

Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area: Columbia, 573-445-3882, 6700 W. Route K.

The Missouri River and Perche Creek provide more than 10 miles of stream frontage on this 4,429-acre area. The area's wetlands have been restored by creating 17 shallow pools, 30 miles of levees, 61 water control structures, river water supply pumps, a water supply junction box, pump-out facilities and a pipeline linking the area to the City of Columbia's wastewater treatment wetlands. The area's 17 wetland pools allow the flooding of 1,100 acres of moist soil marshes, emergent marshes and crop fields, providing year-round habitat for migrating and wintering

birds, permanent wildlife and excellent wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities. The Katy Trail State Park passes through a portion of the area and adds to the public's use and enjoyment. The parking lot on Warren School Road provides walking access to the area's scenic overlook.

Granny's Acres Conservation Area: Warsaw, 660-530-5500, Day Road.

A highlight at this 351-acre area is a well-marked hiking trail system through a hilly forest and woodland ecosystem. A network of mapped and signed trails allows visitors to range widely over the area. The trails are not for the faint of heart, however. Granny's Acres is a very rocky area with steep hills and some long climbs along glades and through old-growth woodlands. Birders will appreciate seeing and hearing many native species. Other fun-to-watch wildlife includes scorpions, box turtles, five-lined skinks and fence lizards. The area is also open to hunting.

Hi Lonesome Prairie Conservation Area: Cole Camp, 660-530-5500, Hi Lonesome Road.

This 655-acre native prairie has been designated by Audubon Missouri as an Important Bird Area – sites that are the most crucial for bird populations due to the abundance and/or diversity of birds present. This area is a remnant of a once vast prairie ecosystem that provides habitat for a diverse group of plants and animals. Because less than one-half of 1% of the original prairie remains, some of these species have become increasingly rare. Area managers use prescribed fire, grazing and other management practices to maintain healthy grasslands, simulate historic disturbances and limit the negative impacts of invasive plants.

Lead Mine Conservation Area: Tunas, 417-532-7612, 191 Coatney Road.

The 7,760-acre area has 2 miles of Niangua River frontage and a 3.5-mile stretch of Jakes Creek running through it. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, some lead mining did take place near the area, but evidence is hard to find. The area contains examples of dolomite glade communities, oak-hickory uplands and clear running springs. Deer, turkey, raccoon, squirrel, rabbit, coyote and many other small animals and birds are commonly seen from the gravel roads and forest trails. There are six primitive camping areas with a main campground offering 51 sites (26 of those for trailers). A privy is at the main campground. No other facilities are provided. Numerous multiuse trails are open to hiking, biking and horseback riding. Hunting is allowed during proper seasons. An unstaffed shooting range is located on the area.

Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area: Fulton, 573-815-7900, 1821 Route RA.

The 733-acre area features oak-hickory forests and once-open pastures that have reverted to various stages of old-field and young forest habitat. Stands of warm-season grasses and other prairie plants are managed by prescribed burns. Numerous small, fishless ponds have been constructed for woodland wildlife. In addition, 22 ponds in the area are used for fisheries research, including vegetation control, pond stocking rates, fish reproduction and fish rearing

techniques. The area offers bird-watching, dog training, fishing, hunting, trails, biking, hiking, trapping and more. It is accessible.

Lost Valley Fish Hatchery: Warsaw, 660-438-4465, 28232 Hatchery Ave.

The 969-acre area features glades, prairies and wooded areas. Some hunting is allowed in parts of the area. Missouri Department of Conservation staff raise various warm-water and cool-water fish species in 77 production ponds. The area offers bird-watching and fishing.

Paint Brush Prairie Conservation Area: Sedalia, 660-530-5500, Manila Road.

The northwest portion of the 314-acre area is designated a natural area, which protects a diverse plant community of more than 200 tallgrass prairie plants, including the federally endangered Mead's milkweed. Slightly raised circular mounds measuring up to 12 feet in diameter, known as mima mounds or prairie mounds, are found in the area. Their origin is still open to debate. This area has been designated by Audubon Missouri as an Important Bird Area – the most crucial for bird populations due to the abundance and/or diversity of birds present. This area is a remnant of a once vast prairie ecosystem that provides habitat for a diverse group of plants and animals. Because less than one-half of 1% of the original prairie remains, some of these species have become increasingly rare.

Painted Rock Conservation Area: Westphalia, 573-815-7900, Route 133.

The lands of the 1,480-acre area were once occupied by Native Americans as early as 9,000 years ago. An Indian burial cairn can be found along the Osage Scenic Bluff Trail. The Osage River intersects the property along the west boundary. Breathtaking views are offered from the scenic trail at two boardwalks and other locations. The forest contains six ponds (which are managed primarily for wildlife) and Clubhouse Lake. The forest consists primarily of oak and hickory, with the areas along the Osage River being dominated by bottomland hardwoods. Several small glades can be found throughout the area and offer a kaleidoscope of wildflowers from May to October. Timber harvesting is managed to improve wildlife habitat, and 60 acres of open land serve as wildlife food plots on a crop rotation basis.

Rocky Fork Lakes Conservation Area: Columbia, 573-445-3882, Peabody Road.

The 2,200-acre area offers more than 60 lakes or ponds of significant size for fishing. Two very old cemeteries exist on the property. The area has a history of strip mining and grazing and has been row cropped where possible. A ramp has been installed for boating access to the large lake, and a fishing dock designed for wheelchair access is located on the big lake's north shore. The area's shooting range receives year-round use.

Runge Conservation Nature Center: Jefferson City, 573-526-5544, 330 Commerce Drive.

The center provides visitors with educational and interpretive opportunities to view, learn about and appreciate the variety of habitats found in Missouri. Five hiking trails, including two woodchipped and three hard-surface trails, total 2.4 miles and loop through woodlands, prairies and glades, next to ponds and a beautiful wet-weather stream. It offers public programs, nature exhibits with live animals, a large fish aquarium, wildlife viewing area and gift shop. Outdoor restrooms are open year-round when the area is open.

Three Creeks Conservation Area: Columbia, 573-884-6861, E. Deer Park Road.

The 1,600-acre area takes its name from the three creeks that run through it: Turkey Creek, Bass Creek and Bonne Femme Creek. The rugged forest features scenic bluffs, intermittent streams, geologic formations and old eastern red cedar trees. The area offers bird-watching, camping, fishing, hunting, trails, biking, hiking and horseback riding.

Lake Life

Drake Harbor, Warsaw:

Located at the upper end of Lake of the Ozarks, just a block from downtown Warsaw, this waterfront park includes the Steamboat Landing Boardwalk, picnic areas, a series of walking and cycling trails, boat ramps, fishing areas and the historic Joe Dice Swinging Bridge. Finger Lakes, Columbia – Rent a kayak or canoe (or bring your own) and paddle the 4.3-mile water trail at Finger Lakes State Park. You'll also find a mountain bike trail, off-road vehicle trails, a campground and swimming beach.

Ha Ha Tonka State Park:

Explore a treasure trove of geological features — rugged rock formations, a natural bridge and fresh-water spring — plus the remains of a 19th-century “castle” overlooking the Lake of the Ozarks.

Lake of the Ozarks:

Dozens of lakefront resorts, restaurants and entertainment venues keep things buzzing at one of the country's most popular recreational lakes. Take in scenic views while playing a round of golf at courses designed by Arnold Palmer, Tom Weiskopf and Robert Trent Jones Sr. Head to Lake of the Ozarks State Park for camping, a variety of water sports and sunny days on the beach.

Little Dixie Lake, Fulton:

Cast a line from one of the nine fishing jetties or a fishing boat to catch black bass, sunfish, catfish and crappie while you soak up the solitude at this small mid-Missouri lake. The state conservation area includes a boat ramp, dock, picnic area and pavilion.

Pomme de Terre Lake:

The lake is known for its muskie fishing, but anglers also come to reel in bass and crappie. Two state park locations offer picnic areas, swimming beaches and lodging options that include campgrounds, camper cabins, yurts, a lake house and marina cabin.

Truman Lake:

Dramatic bluffs and miles of forested hillsides surround this 55,600-acre lake. Harry S Truman State Park has picnic areas, hiking trails, swimming beaches, a campground and marina.

Mark Your Calendars

Here's a sampling of festivals and events in Missouri's Central Region.

Ford Enthusiast Nationals and Shelbyfest Rally, Jefferson City:

Car enthusiasts from across the country converge on the capital city to check out hundreds of vintage and late-model Mustangs lining the streets of downtown.

Missouri State Fair, Sedalia:

Showcasing the Show-Me State since 1901, the fair is packed with classic agricultural exhibits and competitions, grandstand concerts, and a midway full of rides.

Morels & Microbrews, Fulton:

Try morel mushrooms (while supplies last) and sip a craft beer in the town's historic Brick District. Food trucks and live music add to the festivities.

Olde Tyme Apple Festival, Versailles:

Celebrations fill the historic courthouse square to celebrate fall's favorite fruit. The event features a parade, car show, an apple pie baking competition and the crowning of the Apple Festival King and Queen.

Ozark Cigar Box Guitar Music Festival, Warsaw:

Musicians playing guitars crafted from cigar boxes perform at the amphitheater in Drake Harbor while overlooking the upper reaches of Lake of the Ozarks.

Pedaler's Jamboree, Columbia:

Cycling and live music combine for a fun-filled trip on the Katy Trail, the longest developed rail-trail in the country. Pedalers enjoy a leisurely ride during the day and a diverse lineup of musicians at night.

True/False Film Fest, Columbia:

Immerse yourself in a creative and spirited atmosphere that sets the stage for one of the top documentary film festivals in the country.

Southeast

Things To Do & Places To Stay

The rolling hills of the Mississippi River Valley meet the rugged beauty of the Ozarks in the Southeast Region of Missouri. Nature lovers, river paddlers and history buffs find plenty of places to pursue their interests throughout the area.

Explore Mississippi River towns — including Cape Girardeau, the largest city in the southeast corner of the state, where the 1,100-foot-long Mississippi River Tales Mural celebrates the area's connection to the river. See some of the rarest French Colonial architecture in the country at the Ste. Geneviève National Historical Park in Ste. Geneviève, the oldest European settlement in Missouri. Experience more history at the Felix Valle House State Historic Site and the Centre for French Colonial Life. The region is also home to several vineyards and wineries.

Small towns, such as Steelville, Eminence and Van Buren, welcome float trip fans looking to rent canoes, kayaks and rafts for a scenic trip along one of the region's pristine streams. Hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking are also popular in the area.

Online information is available at MoStateParks.com, unless otherwise noted.

Missouri National Parks

Ozark National Scenic Riverways: Van Buren, 573-323-4236, 432 Highway 103.

Experience the beauty of two of America's clearest spring-fed rivers, the Current and Jacks Fork. This river system is the first to be protected by the National Park Service. The area also includes springs, caves, hiking trails and historic sites.

Ste. Geneviève National Historical Park: Ste. Geneviève, 573-880-7189, 66 S. Main St.

Explore the French Colonial history and rare architecture of Missouri's oldest European settlement, including a 1792 "post-in-ground" house – one of only five such structures remaining in the United States.

Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites

Battle of Pilot Knob State Historic Site: Pilot Knob, 573-546-3454, 118 E. Maple.

This site preserves an earthen fortification used by Union troops during the 1864 Battle of Pilot Knob. Exhibits illustrate the battle.

Big Oak Tree State Park: East Prairie, 573-649-3149, 13640 S. Highway 102.

A boardwalk provides up-close views of the park's swamp and towering trees. Picnicking, fishing and wildlife viewing are available.

Bollinger Mill State Historic Site: Burfordville, 573-243-4591, 113 Bollinger Mill Road.

This site features a stone-and-brick gristmill and Missouri's oldest covered bridge – both completed circa 1867 – plus a small picnic area.

Current River State Park: Salem, 573-751-5211, 11053 County Road 19D.

The park offers hiking trails, picnic areas and lakes for fishing, as well as tours of the property, which was once a corporate retreat.

Dillard Mill State Historic Site: Davisville, 573-244-3120, 142 Dillard Mill Road.

Visitors can tour the water-powered gristmill, take a hike, fish in Huzzah Creek or enjoy a picnic lunch in this picturesque setting.

Echo Bluff State Park: Eminence, 573-751-5211, 35244 Echo Bluff Drive.

This Ozarks park features campsites; cabins; a lodge; trails; and opportunities to enjoy fishing, floating or swimming in Sinking Creek.

Elephant Rocks State Park: Belleview, 573-546-3454, 7406 Highway 21.

Huge granite rocks stand end to end like a train of elephants. A paved Braille trail winds through the rocks. Picnic sites are available.

Felix Vallé House State Historic Site: Ste. Geneviève, 573-883-7102, 198 Merchant St.

This site contains two of the finest examples of French colonial architecture: the 1818 Felix Vallé House and the 1819 Shaw House.

Grand Gulf State Park: Koshkonong, 417-683-2520, Highway W.

Here, visitors can use boardwalks to descend partway into a vertical-walled canyon and view one of the largest natural bridges in Missouri.

Hawn State Park: Ste. Geneviève, 573-883-3603, 12096 Park Drive.

This park features a scenic creek and native pines with an understory of dogwood, redbud and wild azalea. Camping and trails are available.

Hunter-Dawson State Historic Site: New Madrid, 573-748-5340, 312 Dawson Road.

The site's Hunter-Dawson house is a 15-room Bootheel mansion completed in 1860. Visitors can tour the home and see its original furniture.

Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park: Middle Brook, 573-546-2450, 148 Taum Sauk Trail.

Park features include campsites, cabins, stores, trails and "shut-ins" – natural swimming holes created by rocks closing in river water.

Lake Wappapello State Park: Williamsville, 573-297-3232, 8005 State Highway 172.

The park's coves make great spots for camping, fishing or picnicking. Other features include boat ramps, cabins, trails and a beach.

Missouri Mines State Historic Site: Park Hills, 573-431-6226, 4000 State Highway 32.

The site features a former lead mine and an ore-processing plant that's been turned into a museum with mining exhibits and mineral displays.

Montauk State Park: Salem, 573-548-2201, 345 County Road 6670.

The park's main draw is its trout-stocked stream. It also has campsites, lodging facilities, trails, a gristmill, a store and a restaurant.

Morris State Park: Campbell, 573-297-3232, Highway WW.

Lying in a range of low hills in the Mississippi River flood plain, this park features a hiking trail, an overlook and many rare plants.

Onondaga Cave State Park: Leasburg, 573-245-6576, 7556 Highway H.

Tours are given of Onondaga and Cathedral caves. The park also offers Meramec River access, a store, a campground and hiking trails.

Sam A. Baker State Park: Patterson, 573-856-4411, 5580 State Highway 143.

Set in the St. Francois Mountains, this park offers trails, cabins, float trips, dining, a nature center and three campgrounds.

St. Francois State Park: Bonne Terre, 573-358-2173, 8920 U.S. Highway 67 N.

A popular put-in spot for float trips on the Big River, this park also features hiking, backpacking and equestrian trails, and a campground.

St. Joe State Park: Park Hills, 573-431-1069, 2800 Pimville Road.

The park has trails for off-road vehicles, horses, bikers and hikers. Lakes allow for swimming, fishing, boating and paddling. Campsites are available.

Taum Sauk Mountain State Park: Ironton, 573-546-2450, Highway CC.

Missouri's highest point and its highest wet-weather waterfall are located in this park, which also has hiking trails and basic campsites.

Towosahgy State Historic Site: East Prairie, 573-748-5340, County Road 502.

This site preserves the remains of a once-fortified Mississippian Native American village, inhabited between A.D. 1000 and A.D. 1400.

Trail of Tears State Park: Jackson, 573-290-5268, 429 Moccasin Springs.

The infamous Trail of Tears traversed this area in the 1830s. The park interprets this tragedy and also provides recreational opportunities.

Washington State Park: De Soto, 636-586-5768, 13041 State Highway 104.

Visitors can float or fish on the Big River and see ancient petroglyphs. Trails, campsites, cabins, shelters and a store are also available.

Conservation Areas

Amidon Memorial Conservation Area: Fredericktown, 573-290-5730, County Road 208.

The 1,630-acre area features mixed hardwoods to shortleaf pine to cedar glades. The pink granite shut-ins on the Castor River add an interesting geological feature. Missouri Department of Conservation has created watering ponds and planted food plots and agricultural crops within the forest to provide additional food sources for wildlife. The area offers bird-watching, camping, fishing, hunting, trails, hiking and trapping.

Apple Creek Conservation Area: Altenburg, 573-290-5730, Route CC.

This 2,100-acre area offers steep hills and narrow valleys with 2.5 miles of Apple Creek stream forming its northern border. The area is home to a mix of upland oak-hickory forests and a few bottomland forests. Watering ponds, planted food plots and agricultural crops within the forest provide additional food sources for wildlife. The area offers bird-watching, camping, fishing, hunting, a shooting range, trails, biking, hiking, horseback riding and trapping and is accessible.

Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center: Cape Girardeau, 573-290-5218, 2289 County Park Drive.

The center showcases the rich cultural history and diverse natural resources of Southeast Missouri. Explore 2 miles of nature trails that wind through rolling river hills with sinkholes, ravines and deep hollows. Enjoy wildlife-viewing areas and see how native plants provide habitat for various wildlife species. Encounter nature's wonders through hands-on exhibits, a children's play area and freshwater aquariums. Visit a collection of Native American artifacts. Enjoy interactive exhibits featuring habitats found in Southeast Missouri and learn where to go for your own adventure. Join a public program or special event.

Castor River Conservation Area: Marble Hill, 573-290-5730, Route 34.

The 9,688-acre area is nearly all forest with several small springs scattered across the area, including Blue Pond Natural Area – the deepest natural pond in Missouri at more than 65 feet deep. The area offers primitive camping, multiuse trails, hiking, biking, horseback riding, a shooting range, bird-watching, fishing and hunting, and is accessible.

Current River Conservation Area: Ellington, 573-290-5730, Route 106.

This area encompasses 29,000 acres of forested Ozark land and is bordered by the Current River to the south and west, and Highways 106 and 21 to the north and east. Popular area activities are elk viewing, hunting, fishing, bird-watching and sightseeing. Places of interest are the Current River, Blue Spring, Paint Rock Bluff, Fort Barnesville, Deer Run Log Cabin, Deer Run Fire Tower, the Current River Elk Driving Tour and the Deer Run Shooting Range.

Elk Driving Tours at Peck Ranch Conservation Area: Ellington, 855-263-2355, 2929 County Road 618.

This 23,763-acre area features rugged, forested hills and hollows. Limestone and rhyolite glades provide natural openings among the oak-pine forest that dominates the region. Narrow ridges range from 900 to 1,000 feet in elevation. The area's highest point is Stegall Mountain – 1,348 feet above sea level. Rogers Creek and Mill Creek, which flow into the Current River, meander through the area. Peck Ranch is home to Missouri's wild elk herd as well as a diversity of other wildlife. The area offers a driving tour to view elk and other wildlife. The area includes a shooting range, trails, hiking, bird-watching, camping and hunting, and is accessible.

Holly Ridge Conservation Area: Bloomfield, 573-290-5730, Route E.

Two natural areas, Holly Ridge and Beech Springs, are located on this 991-acre conservation area. The 84-acre Holly Ridge Natural Area protects 26 rare or endangered plant species. Beech Springs Natural Area consists of 35 acres and was established to protect the perched bog, sometimes called a hanging bog. A perched bog is a natural pond located on an upland site. This particular bog is surrounded by a stand of large red, black and white oak. The area offers a shooting range, trails, biking, horseback riding, hiking, bird-watching, camping, fishing, hunting and trapping, and is accessible.

Huzzah Conservation Area: Steelville, 636-441-4554, Route H.

The 6,225 acres feature rugged forest terrain, the Meramec River, and Huzzah and Courtois creeks. The Ozark Hiking Trail transects most of the area and allows hikers access to many of its unique features. The Narrows, located in the extreme southwest portion of the area, is a narrow hogback ridge divided between Huzzah and Courtois creeks that features extremely steep topography and rapidly changing vegetation. The remains of the Scotia Furnace and Iron Works are located on the property. The area is managed for a variety of game and nongame wildlife species. It offers bird-watching, camping, fishing, hunting, a shooting range, hiking and trapping, and is accessible.

Little River Conservation Area: Kennett, 573-290-5730, Route 412.

The 1,013-acre area contains 103 acres of reforested bottomland hardwoods, 360 acres of marshes and 250 acres of upland habitat with scattered food plots. Wetlands attract wading birds and waterfowl during the spring and fall. The 150-acre Jerry Paul Combs Lake has six fishing jetties, one concrete fishing platform, one covered floating fishing dock and one boat ramp with accessible parking. A large parking lot is at the west side of Combs Lake. Accessible ramps lead from the parking lot to the fishing docks and platform. The parking area also provides a pavilion with picnic tables and men's and women's privies.

Magnolia Hollow Conservation Area: Bloomsdale, 573-290-5730, Route V.

This rugged 1,740-acre area is bordered by Establishment Creek and Schmidt's Island alongside the Mississippi River with steep bluffs and scenic river views. Eagles are commonly

sighted along the river. The forest is diverse, ranging from mixed hardwoods to cedar glades. Wildlife management practices include creating watering ponds, planting fields to serve as food sources for animals, and harvesting timber, which provides improved forage and cover for wildlife. An accessible viewing platform is available for observing the Mississippi River and Establishment Creek bottoms. The area offers a shooting range, trails, hiking, bird-watching, camping, fishing and hunting, and is accessible.

Millstream Gardens Conservation Area: Fredericktown, 573-290-5730, Route 72.

This 916-acre tract includes the spectacular Tiemann Shut-ins as well as the St. Francis River, which forms one of the area's western boundaries. The area's woodlands are composed primarily of oak, hickory and pine in the uplands, while along the river border and its drainages are ash, elm and maple. The area offers a shooting range, trails, hiking, bird-watching, fishing and hunting, and is accessible.

Otter Slough Conservation Area: Dexter, 573-290-5730, 7001 County Road 675.

This 4,859-acre area is one of only a few examples of a cypress/tupelo swamp that is left in Missouri. The cypress swamp, open marsh and flooded timber provide important waterfowl foods such as acorns, natural seeds, tubers and invertebrates. Corn, wheat, sunflowers and other row crops are all used to maintain an open marsh condition and provide high-energy food during winter months to sustain waterfowl during their long migratory journeys. Duck numbers have exceeded 60,000 and as many as 250,000 snow geese have been recorded in the area. Many wading birds, shorebirds, eagles and wetland mammals make the area their home. The area offers trails, hiking, bird-watching, hunting, camping, fishing and trapping, and is accessible.

Pickle Springs Natural Area: Farmington, 573-290-5730, Dorlac Road.

The 256-acre area is a geological wonderland with scenic waterfalls and cool box canyons that harbor unusual plants and animals. Enjoy the blossoms of rose azaleas along the sandstone valley in the spring. Besides the geology, this site supports more than 250 rare plant species. The area has trails for hiking and wildlife watching.

Rocky Creek Conservation Area: Eminence, 417-256-7161, Highway 19, Routes H and E.

This 39,546-acre area features woodlands and forests mostly covered by even-aged black oak, scarlet oak, white oak, post oak, hickory and some shortleaf pine. The area offers nature viewing, bird-watching, hiking, primitive camping, hunting and fishing. It provides access to the Current River, just south of the Highway 106 bridge near Owls Bend, east of Eminence. The conservation area is also home to an auto driving tour that explores a 1,300-acre pine-oak woodland restoration project. Access to areas varies from paved roads to unimproved woods

roads to areas that are only accessible by foot. The area also includes many springs, caves and karst features that contain some of the rarest plants and animals in the state.

Ten Mile Pond Conservation Area: East Prairie, 573-290-5730, Route W.

This 3,755-acre area was once a lowland hardwood forest intermingled with cypress sloughs that flooded seasonally. More than 1,000 acres of this wetland habitat are now managed through the manipulation of water levels to provide high-quality natural foods for migrating and wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and other wetland wildlife species. Row crops and green browse are grown to provide nutritious food for geese and field-feeding species of ducks. Wetland development has included the construction of interior levees, wells, pumps and water control structures. Duck and goose hunting and viewing waterfowl are the most popular outdoor activities in the area. Bald eagles are common from late fall through early spring. Visitors should use extreme caution while boating or wading because deep water and hazardous conditions are possible when the area is flooded.

Twin Pines Conservation Education Center: Winona, 573-325-1381, Route 60 East.

The center highlights the unique natural features of the Ozarks, including its logging history and the importance of forests. It also features indoor wildlife exhibits, a fishing pond, archery range and trails.

Nature's Playground

Elephant Rocks State Park:

Billion-year-old, pachyderm-sized pink granite boulders stand end to end, resembling a line of circus elephants at this popular state park. Follow a mile-long trail for breathtaking views.

Eleven Point River:

Head to this National Wild and Scenic River for canoeing, kayaking and fishing. The river is fed by Greer Spring, the 10th-largest spring in the world. A 1.7-mile out-and-back trail leads to the spot where 222 million gallons of water rush into the river every day.

Hawn State Park:

Find picnic areas and campsites nestled alongside streams in a forest of towering pine trees. Five hiking trails include the 10-mile Whispering Pine Trail, considered one of the best backpacking trails in the state.

Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park:

In this "waterpark" made by Mother Nature, splash the day away in pools and chutes created by ancient volcanic rock in the Black River. Extend your stay at the campground where you can pitch a tent or reserve one of the park's camper cabins.

Mark Twain National Forest:

Encompassing 1.5 million acres — much of it located in Missouri's Southeast Region — the national forest has more than 750 miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking. Specific areas include trails for off-road vehicles and motorcycles.

Onondaga Cave State Park:

Head underground and see why Missouri is called the Cave State. View towering stalagmites, dripping stalactites and active flowstone.

Ozark National Scenic Riverways:

More than 80,000 forested acres are home to the pristine Current and Jacks Fork rivers (popular for canoeing and kayaking) and some of the country's largest springs, including Big Spring, Round Spring and Blue Spring. The national park area is the first to protect a river system in the United States.

Ozark Trail:

Immerse yourself in the beauty of the Ozarks. The 430 miles of mostly linked trail sections wind through rolling hills and valleys, past stone bluffs and along meandering streams. In addition to hiking, much of the trail is open to mountain biking and horseback riding.

Taum Sauk Mountain State Park:

A series of picturesque trails provides sweeping views of the Arcadia Valley. The Mina Sauk Falls trail leads to Missouri's highest elevation point and tallest wet-weather waterfall — best viewed after a rain.

Mark Your Calendar

Here's a sampling of festivals and events in Missouri's Southeast Region.

Christmas Country Church Tour, Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Perry and Ste. Geneviève counties:

More than 30 churches, from one-room wooden structures to brick-and-mortar masterpieces — some more than a century old — are draped in holiday decor.

Dogwood-Azalea Festival, Charleston:

Two springtime favorites, dogwood trees and azalea bushes, are celebrated at this colorful festival. A 6-mile trail lined with the blooming beauties is the centerpiece of the event. At dusk, luminaries line the walking route for a candlelight tour.

East Prairie's Sweet Corn Festival, East Prairie:

A week-long lineup of activities culminates with the Tour de Corn — a charity bike ride that attracts more than 1,000 cyclists of all ages.

French Heritage Festival, Ste. Geneviève:

Celebrate more than 300 years of French culture in North America with music, dance, storytelling, reenactments and French cuisine.

HOBAs Bluegrass Festival, West Plains:

Some of the region's best bluegrass performers fill three days with music during this festival, which is hosted by the Heart of the Ozarks Bluegrass Association.

Riverfront Fall Festival, Cape Girardeau:

Festivities on the banks of the Mississippi River include live entertainment, food trucks, a biergarten and kids' activities.

Sikeston Jaycee Bootheel Rodeo, Sikeston:

Rodeo lovers fill the stands for four days of bull riding, barrel racing and more. Evening concerts boast some of the biggest names in music.

Southwest

Things To Do & Places To Stay

Missouri's Southwest Region greets you with sweeping Ozark Mountain views and activities focused on family fun. Springfield, the region's largest city, is the birthplace of Route 66 and Springfield-style cashew chicken — a dozen local restaurants offer their version of the delectable dish. The city is also home to the original Bass Pro Shops store, 500,000 square feet filled with everything you need to enjoy the outdoors.

Branson is known for its live shows featuring music, comedy, magic and more. You'll also find an action-packed theme park, fascinating museums and award-winning golf courses.

Nature also takes center stage across the region. Visit Prairie State Park to see one of Missouri's largest remaining tallgrass prairies and the resident herd of bison. In Joplin, visit Grand Falls, the largest continuously flowing waterfall in the state, and explore the rare chert glades at Wildcat Park. Try your hand at fly fishing or hike the trails at Roaring River State Park. Anglers flock to Table Rock Lake and Lake Taneycomo for world-class fishing while sailing enthusiasts seek out the steady breezes that send them gliding across Stockton Lake.

Online information is available at MoStateParks.com, unless otherwise noted.

Missouri National Parks

George Washington Carver National Monument: Diamond, 417-325-4151, 5646 Carver Road.

Visit the birthplace and childhood home of George Washington Carver— scientist, educator and humanitarian — whose work helped revolutionize agriculture. The monument is the first National Park property dedicated to a Black American.

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield: Republic, 417-732-2662, 6424 W. Farm Road 182.

Tour the site of the first major Civil War battle west of the Mississippi River and the second major battle of the war. The visitor center includes a museum displaying Civil War artifacts and a research library.

Missouri State Parks and Historic Parks

Battle of Carthage State Historic Site: Carthage, 417-682-2279, 1111 E. Chestnut St.

The earliest battle of the Civil War ended here when 6,000 Southerners forced 1,000 Union men to retreat. A kiosk explains the battle.

Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site: Butler, 417-276-4259, 4837 NW County Road 1002.

This site contains Fort Africa, where the first Black soldiers to ever engage in Civil War combat camped prior to the battle.

Big Sugar Creek State Park: Pineville, 417-847-2539, 6727 Big Sugar Creek Road.

This rugged park contains outstanding savannas, glades, woodlands and bluffs along Big Sugar Creek. A hiking trail traverses these features.

Bryant Creek State Park: Ava, 417-683-2520, 1204 Private Drive 3422.

This park is home to towering oaks and pines, scenic sandstone outcrops, and a pristine creek. It offers picnic tables and hiking trails.

Harry S Truman Birthplace State Historic Site: Lamar, 417-682-2279, 1009 Truman St.

Harry S Truman, the only Missourian ever elected U.S. president, was born in this six-room home in 1884. Free tours are given of the house.

Nathan and Olive Boone Homestead State Historic Site: Ash Grove, 417-751-3266, 7850 N. State Highway V.

Tour the 1837 log home of Nathan Boone – a military officer and the son of Daniel Boone – and his wife, Olive, who maintained the homestead.

Osage Village State Historic Site: Walker, 417-682-2279, Highway C.

From 1700 to 1775, this was the location of a Big Osage Native American village. Outdoor exhibits interpret Osage history and life.

Prairie State Park: Mindenmines, 417-843-6711, 128 NW 150th Lane.

Featuring Missouri's largest public native prairie, this park offers a nature center, hiking trails, campsites and guided bison walks.

Roaring River State Park: Cassville, 417-847-2539, 12716 Farm Road 2239.

Roaring River is one of three Missouri state parks with trout fishing. It also offers hiking, camping, lodging, dining and nature programs.

Stockton State Park: Dadeville, 417-276-4259, 19100 S. Highway 215.

This park overlooks Stockton Lake and features a marina, a beach, campsites, lodging facilities, terrestrial trails and an aquatic trail.

Table Rock State Park: Branson, 417-334-4704, 5272 Highway 165.

Located on Table Rock Lake, this park features a marina, a boat ramp, campgrounds, premium yurts, and trails for hiking and bicycling.

Conservation Areas

Andy Dalton Shooting Range: Bois D'Arc, 417-742-4361, North Farm Road 61.

All fees collected are payable by cash or check only. The shooting range offers a fee-based rifle/pistol range, trap/skeet and 5-stand sporting clays, shotgun patterning and 3D/static archery.

Bushwhacker Lake Conservation Area: Bronaugh, 417-629-3423, 527 E. Sixth St.

Historically, nearly the whole 4,790-acre area was prairie, with timber only along Little Dry Wood Creek and its drainages. Before it became public land, much of the original prairie had been plowed and put into crops or disced and seeded to fescue. Today, the more than 1,400 acres of remaining prairie are being restored. Visitors can observe various wildlife management, research and soil conservation activities. Quail, rabbits and deer are common, and hundreds of waterfowl use the area's lakes and ponds, including the 157-acre Bushwhacker Lake. Area lakes and ponds have been renovated and stocked with bass, bluegill and channel catfish. Along with hunting and fishing, visitors will find multiuse trails, campsites and a disabled-accessible fishing dock. A concrete boat ramp provides access to Bushwhacker Lake. Camping is allowed in designated campsites.

Busiek State Forest and Wildlife Area: Highlandville, 417-895-6880, 5 U.S. Route 65.

The 2,700-acre area provides multiple recreational opportunities. Hunting is allowed. A well-marked trail system provides approximately 18 miles of trails for use by hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders. Visitors will find eight primitive, tent-only campsites. An unstaffed firearms shooting range is located in the area.

Caney Mountain Conservation Area: Gainesville, 417-256-7161, Route 1818.

This 7,900-acre area is characterized by unusual geology, including the roughest parts of a precipitous range of hills that are a remnant of an old, elevated plateau that has been dissected by numerous feeder streams. From area roads, visitors can view numerous prominent peaks, including Bear Cave Mountain, High Rock Mountain, Morrison Knob, Long Bald and Tater Cave Mountain. The area also includes unique plant communities. Glades, savannas, forest openings and old-growth forest cover the rugged terrain along the small creek bottoms. Several of the state's rare and endangered species are being protected in the area. The area offers a shooting range, trails, biking, horseback riding, hiking, bird-watching, camping and hunting.

Robert E. Talbot Conservation Area: LaRussell, 417-451-4158, 7031 Route 96.

Lands on this 4,361-acre area vary from rich bottomlands along Spring River to rocky upland areas. The area is 69% open land and 31% wooded. Fishing opportunities can be found at the four-acre or seven-acre lake. Numerous smaller ponds can also be found in the area. Some of the timbered areas have been thinned to restore the savanna and woodland natural communities that historically existed there. Periodic prescribed burning is used to maintain these restored natural communities. Along with high-quality upland habitat, visitors will find several miles of multiuse trails that are open to hiking, biking and horseback riding. Camping is allowed only in the spot designated on the area map. No facilities are provided at the campground. The campground is best suited for tents or small travel trailers/RVs.

Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area: Branson, 417-895-6880, Shepherd of the Hills Expressway.

Much of this 1,534-acre space consists of steep hills covered with upland oak-hickory forest interspersed with scenic glades. The area also includes a small section of bottomland forest along a 0.5-mile stretch of Roark Creek. Visitors will find 5.6 miles of hiking trails, a scenic overlook and lookout tower. Horses and bicycles are not allowed on trails. The 3.4-mile Homesteaders Trail features 14 informational stops that showcase the natural features of the area or places of historical interest. Information on those stops can be found on the area's brochures at trailheads.

Springfield Conservation Nature Center: Springfield, (417) 888-4237, 4601 S. Nature Center Way.

This 80-acre slice of the Ozark outdoors, within the city limits of Springfield, is a place to connect with nature and learn the importance of conservation.

Fun For All Ages

66 Drive-In Theatre, Carthage:

Pack some snacks and a pillow or two for a nostalgic movie-watching experience on Route 66. Catch a double feature April through mid-September.

Aquarium on the Boardwalk, Branson:

A giant gleaming octopus sculpture sits atop the aquarium's roof, guiding you inside to 10 zones of fish and fun. Don't miss the Jelly Infinity Room, the Coral Reef and Submarine Adventure.

Branson Landing, Branson:

This entertainment and retail destination is home to a mix of shops, hotels, restaurants and live entertainment along a waterfront boardwalk. The terraced town square features spectacular fountains where water, fire, light and music shows are a draw throughout the afternoon and evening.

Dogwood Canyon Nature Park, Lampe:

Escape to an outdoor paradise filled with pristine streams, waterfalls and wildlife, including bison and elk. Explore the 10,000-acre paradise aboard a tram or on horseback, bicycle or foot.

Fantastic Caverns, Springfield:

Board a Jeep-drawn tram to see the stalagmites, stalactites, soda straws and other rock formations on a subterranean trip in a ride-through cave — the only one in the country to provide this experience.

Silver Dollar City, Branson:

At this top-rated theme park, life in the 1880s is the inspiration for rides, restaurants, shops and shows. Skilled artisans demonstrate glassblowing, woodcarving, blacksmithing and more.

Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium, Springfield:

Journey through 350,000 square feet of immersive habitats that are home to 35,000 animals. With a focus on conservation, the mission of the attraction is to connect people with the great outdoors.

Mark Your Calendar

Here's a sampling of festivals and events in Missouri's Southwest Region.

Apple Butter Makin' Days, Mt. Vernon:

Festival goers can take their turn at stirring slow-cooking apples in huge copper kettles on the courthouse lawn. A parade; kids' activities and contests; entertainment; and booths featuring arts, crafts and food round out the event.

Baker Creek Spring Planting Festival, Mansfield:

Garden enthusiasts gather for a celebration of heirloom seeds and plants. The festival includes live music, food, craft and seed vendors, and some of the world's leading heirloom farm and garden speakers.

Birthplace of Route 66 Festival, Springfield:

Celebrate the place where the famed highway received its name. Highlights include car and motorcycle shows, a parade and live music.

Carver Day, Diamond:

George Washington Carver's contributions as a scientist, educator and humanitarian are celebrated through storytelling, music and children's activities at the first national monument to honor a Black American.

Maple Leaf Festival, Carthage:

America's Maple Leaf City showcases its beautiful trees every fall with festivities surrounding the picturesque Jasper County Courthouse.

An Old Time Christmas, Silver Dollar City, Branson:

More than 6 million lights, hundreds of Christmas trees, holiday shows, joyful carols and tasty treats create a magical experience.

Ozark Empire Fair, Springfield:

Billed as summer's biggest party, the fair is one of the biggest events in Southwest Missouri. Dating back to the early 1900s, the fair is packed with concerts, livestock shows, art exhibits and vendors.