

Inspiration Tower at Shepherd of the Hills Homestead.

Getting Around Town

Branson's Best

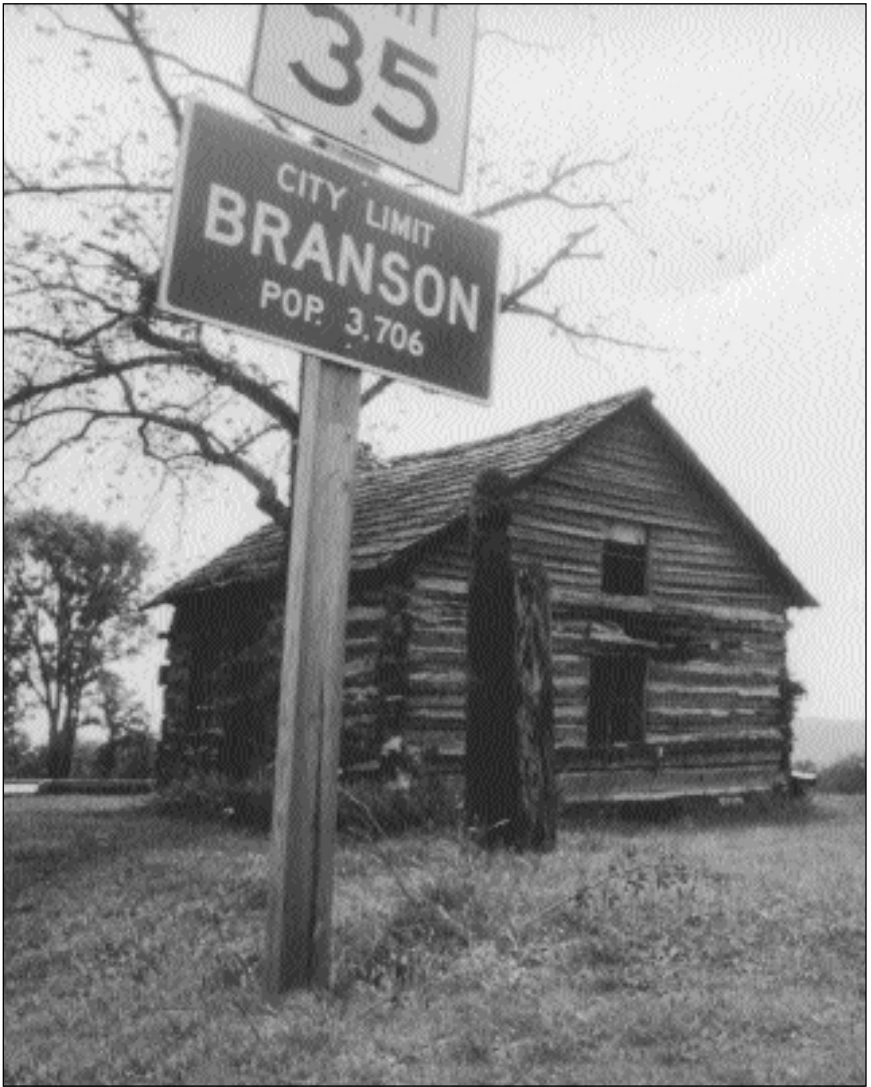
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Where to Go First

What to See First

**The Indispensable
Time Saver Routes**





Welcome to Branson!

Where To Go First



After you get to town, the first order of the day is to pay a visit to the **Branson Chamber of Commerce Tourist Information Center**. The always-friendly staff is just waiting to welcome visitors, so be sure to stop in for a cup of coffee and some old-fashioned Ozark hospitality.

**Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
and Convention and Visitor Bureau**

(800) 961-1221 or (417) 334-4136

Monday through Friday, 8 A.M. to 6 P.M.; Saturday,

8 A.M. to 5 P.M., Sunday, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

Web site: www.bransonchamber.com



Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce.

The Information Center is conveniently located on the southwest corner of **U.S. 65** and **Missouri 248 (Shepherd of the Hills Expressway/Veterans Blvd)**. See *Red Time Saver Route* in this chapter for details.

If you're coming from Springfield on U.S. 65, exit at Missouri 248 and turn right. Turn left at the first driveway (by the big blue Tourist Information sign). If you're coming from Arkansas on U.S. 65, travel one mile past Missouri 76 to Missouri 248 (exiting right), travel to the stoplight and turn left, crossing over U.S. 65. The Information Center is immediately on your left.

Information On Everything



Sitting in middle of the Visitor Center lobby is a huge kiosk filled with hundreds of brochures detailing music shows, lodging facilities, and area attractions. Now's the time to pick up additional information to help you decide what you would most like to see and do. Be sure to look for a current *Branson Show Guide*, or ask for one at the front desk.

Area Maps



Be sure to ask at the desk for a copy of the *Branson Roads Scholar*. The brochure's color-coded map will help you find your way on the town's three Time Saver Routes. *Detailed information about these color-coded routes is given later in this chapter.*

Free Publications



Lining the wall near the entrance are racks displaying free

publications. Pick up copies of: *Best Read Guide* (has a complete theater listing including prices); *Happy Camper* (has a good color map); *Sunny Day Guide*; *Branson This Week*; *Ozark Mountain Visitor*; *Restaurant Entertainment Guide*; and any others that happen to be there. All have money-saving coupons for restaurants and attractions.

Lodging Reservations



If you're in need of a place to stay, ask one of the staff about the **Lodging Locator**—a computerized listing of motels and resorts with current available accommodations. If you need help operating the computer, don't hesitate to ask for help. There's no charge for this service.



What To See First



The first thing you'll probably want to see is "the town." U.S. 65 (running north and south) divides Branson into two parts: the old historical waterfront and downtown section, and the newer theater-studded district. If you look at the two-page map in the front, you'll see that the street running east and west through both is **Missouri 76**, also known as **76 Country Boulevard** or "**the Strip**." The Strip is about five miles of restaurants, motels, theaters, miniature golf courses and gift shops. During certain times of the day, traffic along the Strip can be traffic from the netherworld.

Traffic Woes



If Branson's early planners had possessed a crystal ball, they would have built W. Missouri 76 with five lanes. But there wasn't any crystal ball, and the town slowly expanded through the years along a two-lane roadway. Since 1987 Branson has seen such phenomenal growth that it has been impossible to predict what to expect from one year to the next. In 1993 alone the city issued permits for \$139 million in new construction.

How to keep traffic moving is the city's highest priority. Looking at a city map, you might say, "They just need to build a few more roads." Well, roads are being built, but one look to the right and left of W. Missouri 76 will illustrate why it's lots easier said than done. The beautiful hills and valleys (one of the reasons we all love the area so much) create obstacles that require plenty of time and money to overcome.

The State of Missouri, Taney County, and the City of Branson are working hard to resolve the traffic problem. Many new roads have been built and more are in the planning stages. Also, new attractions and theaters are being built on the secondary roads to help alleviate traffic headaches on the Strip.

For now, your best bet is to study the road system and learn the Time Saver Routes and the best times of the day to travel on the Strip.

The Bright Side



Sometimes traveling slowly isn't so bad; it gives you a chance to get a good look at places you may want to visit later. One helpful Branson phenomenon is the drive-friendly attitude. You'll find motorists all over town giving the right of way to other drivers. Since we're all in this together, pass it on and give the other guy a break whenever you can.

The Indispensable Time Saver Routes



Local residents can go anywhere they want on the Strip without spending any appreciable time sitting in traffic. You can do it too, if you learn the Time Saver Routes and use them every chance you get. These alternate routes will get you to the theater in time for the show and—what's more important—keep your temper from reaching the boiling point.

Time Saving Tips!

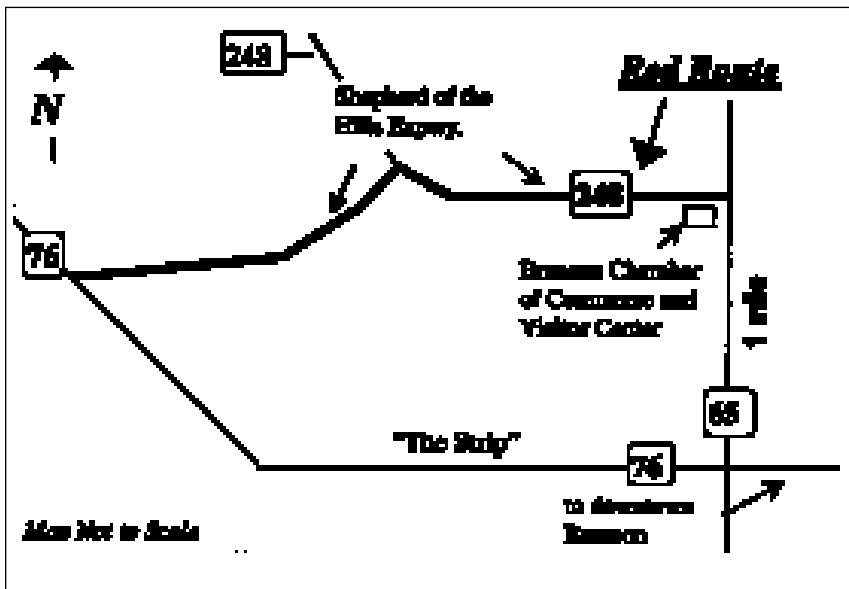


- Schedule shopping and sightseeing trips for less busy times of day. From Labor Day to Memorial Day, and during the month of October, the Strip really gets packed after 9:30 A.M. (when everyone is coming into town), and before and after the afternoon and evening music shows.
- Plan an entire day's activities so you won't waste time going back and forth to your motel.
- Learn the Time Saver Routes.
- Use the Time Saver Routes!

Branson has three color-coded Time Saver Routes. The **Red** and **Blue Routes** parallel the Strip to the north, and the **Yellow Route** parallels it to the south. Symbols in the designated colors are painted periodically on the pavement along each route.

Traffic is usually light on these routes (except at some of the intersections), so take the time to find them as soon as you get to Branson—it will be worth it!

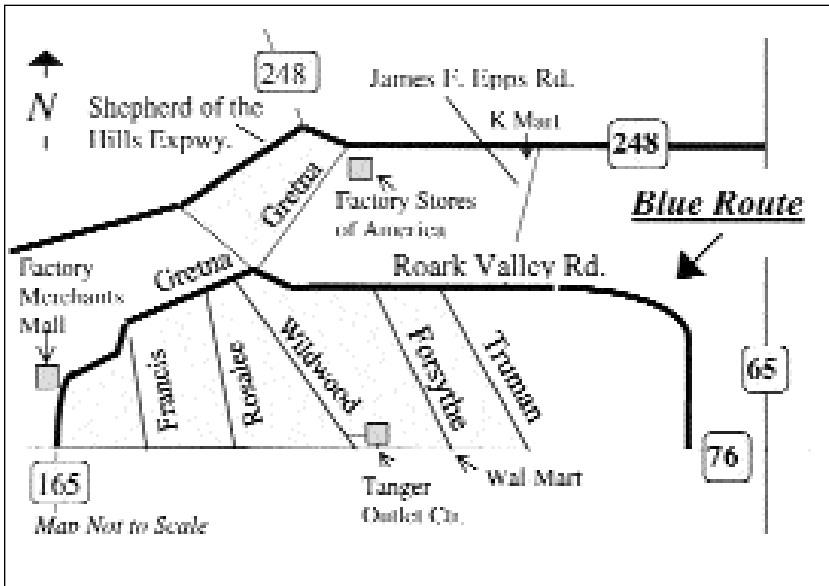
The Red Route



This route parallels the Strip north of Branson before it heads south and connects with it at its west end. To follow the Red Route from the **U.S. 65/Missouri 76** intersection, travel one mile north to **Missouri 248/Shepherd of the Hills Expressway**. Exit to the right and travel to the stoplight (staying in the left lane). Turn left, heading west on Missouri 248. Travel 2 miles to where the Expressway leaves 248 and takes off to the left. Follow the Expressway (about 3.5 miles) to **W. Missouri 76**. Two roads, **James F. Epps** (by Kmart) and a recently built extension of **Gretna**, go off from Missouri 248 and connect with **Roark Valley Road** and the **Blue Route** (see Blue Route map).

This route is a combination of **Roark Valley Road** and **Gretna Road**. Like the Red Route, it parallels the Strip to the north. Several roads take off from Roark and Gretna (like spokes in a wheel), returning to the Strip at various points.

The Blue Route



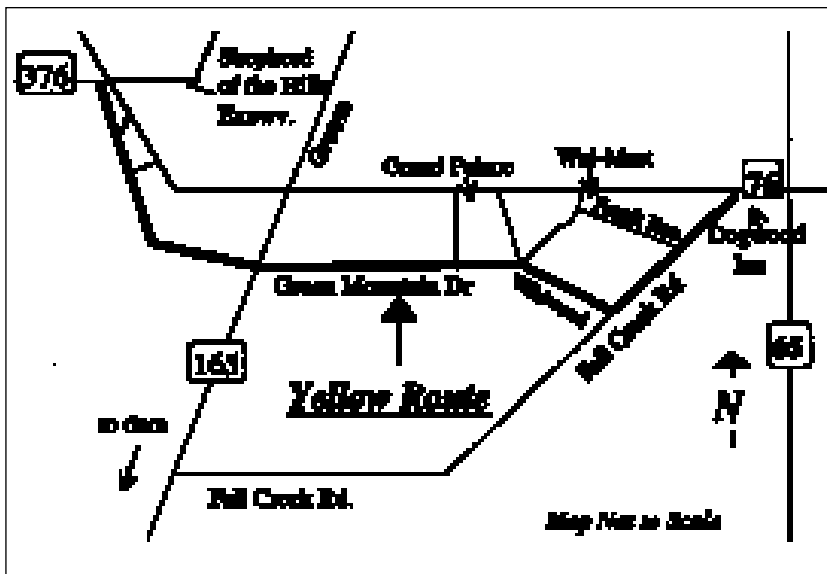
To follow the Blue Route from the **U.S. 65/Missouri 76 intersection**, travel west on Missouri 76, staying in the right lane as you head up the hill (you'll enjoy bypassing all those people in the center lane who aren't aware of the Blue Route). At the stoplight, turn right onto Roark Valley Road. Roark Valley will head north and then curve west, paralleling the Strip. Along Roark Valley, **Truman Drive** and **Forsythe St.** will take off to the south and head back to the Strip. (Forsythe will take you back to 76 near Wal-Mart.)

To complete the Blue Route, continue following Roark to Gretna Road and turn left. Gretna will take you back to the Strip. **Wildwood Drive**, **Rosalee** and **Francis** all take off from Gretna and return to the Strip. The **Factory Merchants Mall** (look for the big red roof) is located on this section of Gretna.

Gretna Road ends at Missouri 76. If you cross 76 at the

intersection, the road on the south side becomes Missouri 165 and eventually circles east (about 12 miles) and connects with U.S. 65 about 3 miles south of Branson. There are lots of free attractions and beautiful scenery along Missouri 165—see *Chapter Five* for a guided tour.

The Yellow Route

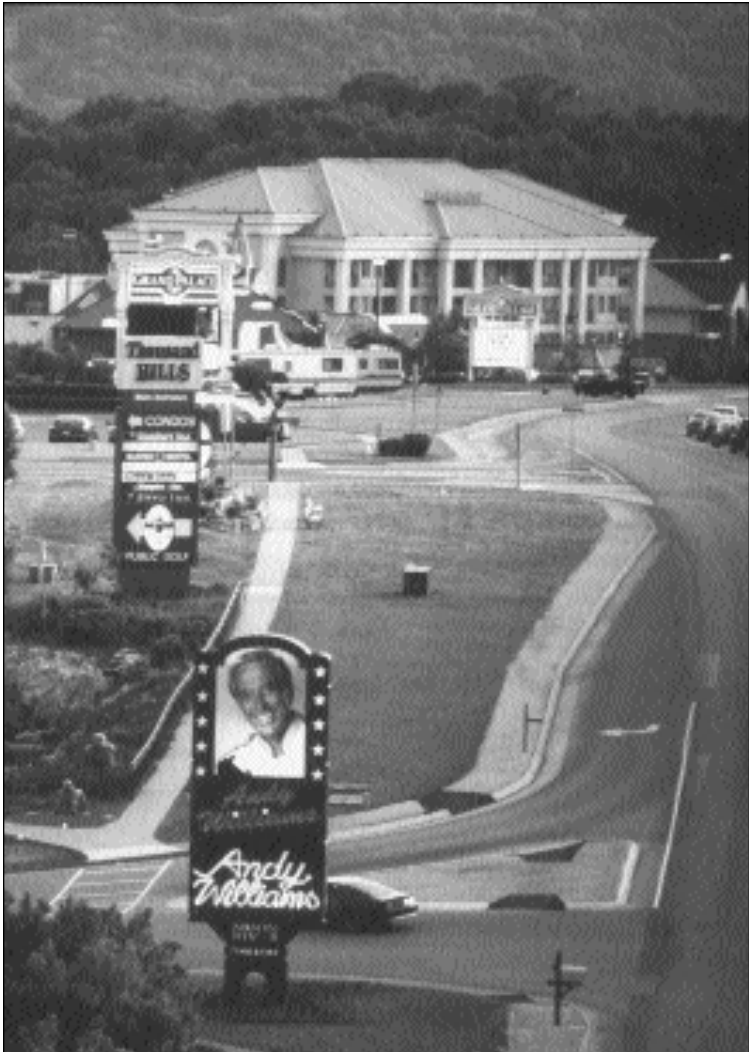


To follow the Yellow Route from the **U.S. 65/Missouri 76** intersection, travel west on Missouri 76 for 1.2 miles to **Fall Creek Road** (by the Dogwood Inn). Turn left on Fall Creek Road and follow it past **Frank Rea Boulevard** (this road will take you to the back of Wal-Mart) to **Wildwood Drive**. Turn right and follow Wildwood to **Green Mountain Drive**. Turn left (you'll be behind the Grand Palace) and follow Green Mountain to Missouri 165. If you turn right on Missouri 165, you'll head back to the Strip. If you turn left, you'll be

heading south toward the Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery and Table Rock Dam.

If you stay on Green Mountain Dr., it will take you behind several theaters and connect with **Missouri 376** at the west end of the Strip.

Remember, Branson is a small town filled with friendly people—glad to be here and glad you came to visit. If you should get lost, you won't be far off course, and local folks are always happy to steer you in the right direction.



The traffic flow in Branson has improved greatly, thanks to the addition of the recently completed Time Saver Routes.