

# What Others Are Saying About This Book:

“This outstanding guide could have been titled: *How to See the Real Ozarks For Less Than Twenty-five Dollars a Day*. Complete with driving instructions, meal stops, interesting attractions and historical highlights, it has no equal. No visitor, tour guide, or Bransonite wanting to know the stories behind local sites and traditions should be without it.”

—*S. Burkett Milner, Ph.D. Former president of the National Tour Association*

“This enchanting book goes beyond the expectations of a reader seeking a mere travel guide. It is lovingly written as one would write about one’s own family members. The great detail concerning routes, travel tips, suggestions and insights of which only a local would be aware are frosted with an icing of warm descriptive passages and generously spiced with pictures that look like they have been donated from the family photo albums of all the original settlers of the area.

“Even if one were not planning a trip to this area, one can enjoy this book on its own merits as a fascinating view of the history, people and geography of one of the original garden spots of the United States. It is a book you will thoroughly enjoy reading. But if you intend to travel in the area, you will find this an invaluable reference from which to plan your trip and to take with you as your personal guide.”

—*Barry Stier, president, Oceanco Ltd. Publisher of travel books, newspapers and magazines worldwide*

“For first time visitors to Branson, seasoned regulars, and armchair travelers alike, *Branson’s Best Day Trips* is a wonderful read. I consider it one of the best local guidebooks to any area I have ever come across. If you are planning a trip to Branson this year, read this book first! Then bring it along

as a handy reference as you explore all the best the Branson area has to offer.”  
—*Gypsy Journal*

“From the internationally famous tourist attractions to unforgettable, inexpensive, ‘visitor friendly’ out-of-the-way places only a local would know, *Branson’s Best Day Trips* lives up to its title. Shaffer has enhanced this terrific guidebook with glimpses of the area’s colorful past. If you are planning a Branson vacation or simply passing through, an out-of-state tourist or a Missouri native looking for something fun to do or interesting to see, begin by a careful browsing of Carol Shaffer’s *Branson’s Best Day Trips*.”

—*Midwest Book Review*

“Now *this* is a guidebook, written by ‘local’ Carol Shaffer. The book mixes area history (better than any show!) and photographs with a complete guide to Ozark attractions from local theme parks to inexpensive day trips in the area. To help you get there, she has also provided 18 maps and detailed directions clear enough for even the most directionally impaired traveler! To top it all off, Ms. Shaffer’s writing is delightful! We recommend this book highly.”

—*Fairfield/Branson Book Review*

# **Branson's** *Best* **Day Trips**

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**A Guide to Discovering the Best of Branson  
& Ozark Mountain Country**

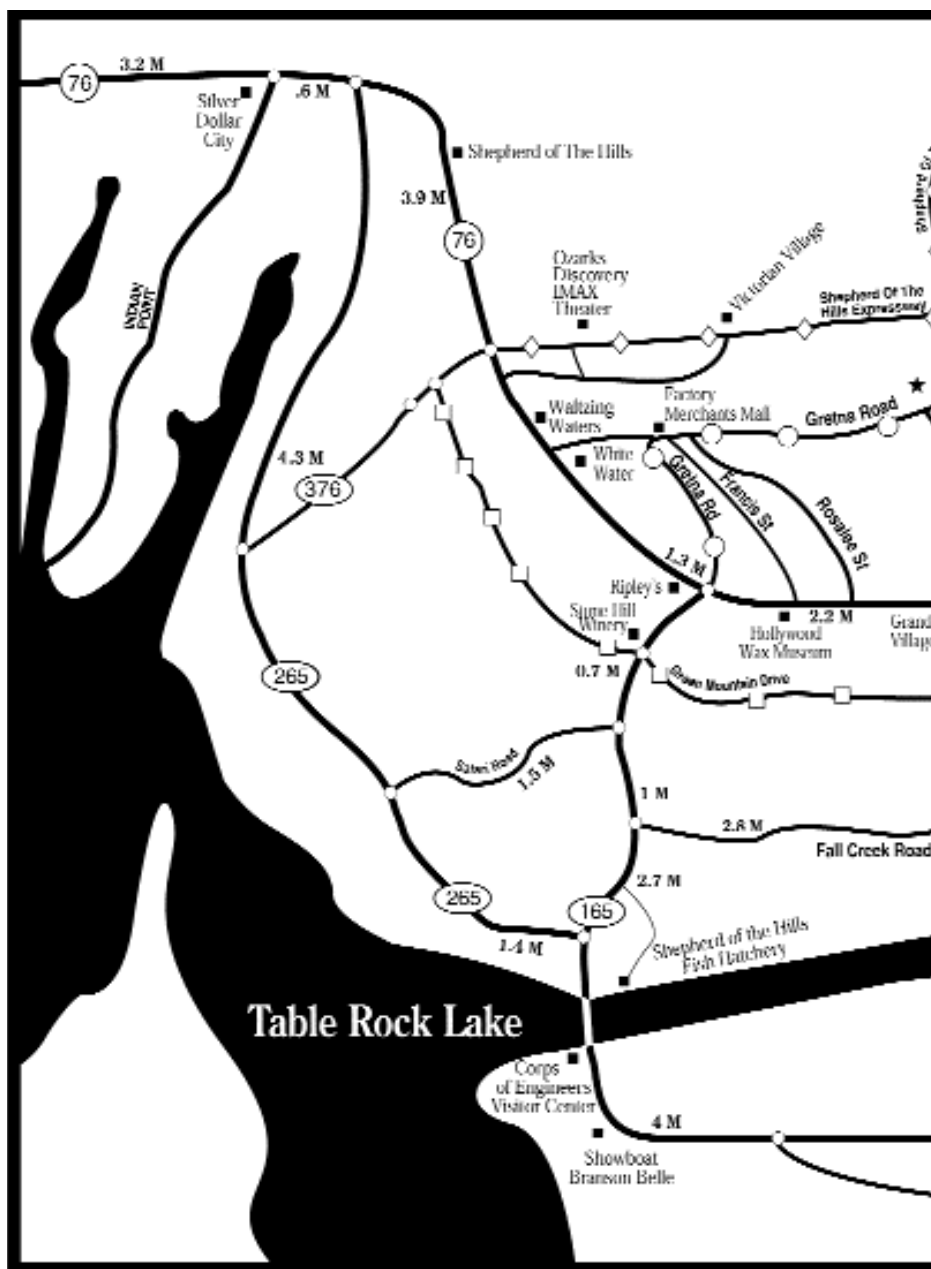
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Carol A. Shaffer



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### Disclaimer

*Every effort has been made to make this guide as complete and accurate as possible. However, there may be errors both typographical and in content.*

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# Introduction

When my husband and I moved to Branson in 1993, we wanted to learn all there was to know about our new hometown and the surrounding Ozark Mountains. After spending many weekends putting hundreds of miles on our van, we discovered so many beautiful and unusual places—both in Branson and beyond—that we wanted to share them with everyone.

Since cost is important, all of the day trips in this guide were designed with a budget in mind. Take Chapter Five, *Branson's Free Attractions*. For roughly the cost of a gallon of gasoline you can: visit a working gristmill; view two local history films; tour a fish hatchery; take a nature hike; and browse a country-style flea market and craft village. For the other trips, we quote all admission charges so that you can make your budget decisions before pulling off the roadway. In fact, every trip in this book is so packed with activities that you can easily skip one and still have a fun-filled day.

Afraid that you won't be able to find your way? Don't be! Each trip has its own map plus turn-by-turn directions. And if these directions are too detailed for some of you, please remember that we also wrote this book for Aunt Ida from Illinois. She's never driven in these tricky Ozark hills and has a frightful fear of getting lost.

While traveling through this beautiful country, you may find yourself wondering what life was like in the past. To make your trip to the colorful Ozarks more memorable, we've included some local history—no long history lessons, just the highlights. You will, for instance, discover how Branson, Missouri (pop. 3706) became, according to Morley Safer of CBS' *Sixty Minutes*, the music show capital of the universe. And why a novel written at the turn of the 20th century altered the destiny of the entire region.

To determine which day trips are best for you, here's a quick summary.

- Chapter One, *Getting Around Town*, provides maps and directions on navigating the area's confusing road system, including the newer Time Saver Routes. You'll also find directions to the Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, source of information on everything from music shows and attractions to restaurants and lodging.

- Chapter Two explores historic *Oldtown Branson*. Attractions are lake cruises, a train ride in the Missouri and Arkansas Ozarks, wonderful eating experiences, and unique shopping—all in a setting right out of a Norman Rockwell painting!
- Chapters Three and Four cover the area's two celebrated theme parks, *Shepherd of the Hills Homestead* and *Silver Dollar City*. In 1998 Silver Dollar City was named the world's best theme park by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions. Although the parks charge admission fees, both offer a taste of Branson and the Ozarks that's impossible to match.
- Chapter Five deals with Branson's *Free Attractions*. Highlights include a working gristmill at the College of the Ozarks, Table Rock Dam, two local history films, two nature hikes, shopping, and fantastic scenery.
- When you're ready to venture away from town, the two trips in Chapter Six, *Nearby Historic Towns*, will guide you through the hills and hollows to communities within fifteen miles of Branson. Flea market fans will especially enjoy the trip to Reeds Spring and Branson West, and history buffs the one to Rockaway Beach, Forsyth, and Hollister. Scenery aficionados will love them both.
- Can't get enough Victorian-style architecture? If so, you won't want to miss the nostalgic trip in Chapter Seven to *Enchanting Eureka Springs*. Attractions are a trolley ride down streets lined with Victorian homes, and a stroll through the city's historical downtown district crowded with over a hundred shops and art galleries.
- Chapter Eight's main attraction is Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World in *Springfield, Missouri*. Bass Pro—Missouri's most visited attraction—is more than a sporting goods store; it's an adventure. This day trip includes a driving tour of a Civil War battlefield, a fantastic wildlife museum, a cave where you ride a tram rather than walk, and a gem of a wild animal park.
- If you love nature and nostalgic settings, check out *Ozarks Outdoors* in Chapter Nine. You'll visit pretty Roaring River State Park with its trout stream, fish hatchery, and hiking trails; a Civil War battlefield; and picturesque War Eagle Mill.

- For the more adventurous, there's *Off the Beaten Path* in Chapter Ten. This day trip offers the option of touring a cave and pioneer museum before working off some vacation calories by hiking two wilderness trails in the Buffalo National River Park in Arkansas. The full day of outdoor activities will end with dinner overlooking the spectacular Grand Canyon of the Ozarks.
- The last and longest day trip is *Points North* in Chapter Eleven. In historic Carthage, Missouri, is the beautiful Precious Moments Chapel designed by Samuel J. Butcher, creator of the popular Precious Moments figurines.

Okay! It's time to get behind the wheel and start exploring everything that Branson and the rest of Ozark Mountain Country has to offer. Nothing has been left to chance—you'll know where to go, what to see and do, and what it's going to cost. Your vacation to the Ozarks—rich in history and blessed by Mother Nature—is guaranteed to be one of the most entertaining ever!

Note: When you see the following symbol, you'll know it's time to head for the car and travel to the next attraction.



*The man who goes alone can start today, but he who travels with another must wait until that other is ready.*

—Henry David Thoreau