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LAKE OF THE OZARKS, MISSOURI



editor's note

We are passionate about travel and appreciate collected experiences. A new-to-you country, town, or landscape can introduce a fresh perspective and enhance your life in unexpected ways. At press time, the world was bonding over the safety of home versus the thrill of travel. Although travel is in a state of flux, there is always value in education. Whether this article serves as research for a future trip or provides a real-time adventure from the comfort of your own home, we hope it helps you experience a new destination.

OPENING SPREAD: Watch the world go by on the "Fun Lake." BELOW: Cruise the lake at sunset. OPPOSITE FROM LEFT: Exploring the lake is fun for all ages. Bring your swimsuit for a boatload of water sports, including waterskiing and wakeboarding. Enjoy a fall day fishing for bass and catfish.



Nestled in the Ozark Mountains of south-central Missouri is a world-class boating, golfing, shopping, and fishing mecca. The Lake of the Ozarks—with more miles of coastline than California's ocean beaches—is the Midwest's premier lake resort. Only a couple hours from St. Louis, Jefferson City, and Branson, the "Fun Lake" is known as one of the best places to own a second home. Why is this area of the Show-Me state so special? It won't take long to see why.

Written by Heidi Siefkas



HISTORY

In the late 1920s, the construction of the Bagnell Dam was primarily done by hand. Its goal was to produce hydroelectric power, but as a result, the Lake of the Ozarks was born. The Bagnell Dam impounded the Osage River (named after the local Native American tribe), creating a reservoir encompassing over sixty thousand square miles. The coastline of the Lake of the Ozarks is defined by its dramatic limestone bluffs and rolling mountains with forests of birch, maple, white oak, and dogwood.

ON THE LAKE

One of the best ways to experience the lake is by boat. Whether via private watercraft, rental pontoon, or tour catamaran, the perspective makes it easy to understand why so many have made the Lake of the Ozarks an annual vacation spot. Get active with water sports such as parasailing and stand-up paddleboarding or keep it mellow by fishing for bass and

catfish. The natural beauty of the area is complemented by outstanding dining and entertainment options like Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville Lake Resort, making it a win-win for families and couples.

OFF THE LAKE

Off the lake, you can play a round of golf on one of sixteen courses or shop at numerous retail outlets and malls; however, if adventure and adrenaline are more your style, opt for a bird's-eye view of the ninety-two-mile-long lake via helicopter tour. For adventurers of all ages regardless of the season, Thunder Mountain Park and its Bridal Cave delight with an array of stalactites, stalagmites, and giant columns. Not surprisingly, Bridal Cave is *the* place for lake weddings and vow renewals.

LOCAL FLAVOR

Lake activities would make anyone hungry and thirsty. You can boat or drive to JB Hook's

for legendary steaks and seafood with a side of stellar lake views and romantic sunsets. Oenophiles shouldn't miss the Lake of the Ozarks Wine Trail, which consists of visiting and sipping the best of seven local wineries. For those who prefer a handcrafted cocktail or local brew, there is the Ozark Distillery and Brewery in Osage Beach. Select from its creative mixology menu, including both Missouri bourbon whiskey and moonshine cocktails.

THE SHOW-ME STATE

Did you enjoy the show? The Lake of the Ozarks truly pulls out all the stops. The nearly one-hundred-year-old reservoir has sparked lifelong memories of summer barbecues, fishermen's stories, and fun in the sun. Now it's your turn to experience all the region has to offer while watching the world go by from your balcony on *the Fun Lake*. ■