

# The Show Me State sells sights to tourists, investing millions on ads

By Chris McCubbin  
Senior Editor

Missouri. What's the big deal? It's down there by Nebraska City, Rulo, hardly garden spots either one. It's under Iowa. It's just not in that great of a neighborhood.

But there must be something down there. Why run all those ads, otherwise?

Missouri's current tourism push began in 1984, said Marjorie Beenders, director of the Missouri Division of Tourism. That year the state's industries united to create the "Impact '80s" program, designed to demonstrate to the state government the positive impact potential of travel and tourism on a state's economy.

The government responded. In 1983 the Missouri Division of Tourism's budget was \$1.6 million, this year it's \$4.2 million. More than \$3 million of this will be spent on advertising, like the "Wake Up to Missouri" campaign, Beenders said.

And the investment seems to be paying off. The travel industry will bring more than \$10 million into Missouri's economy this year, Beenders said.

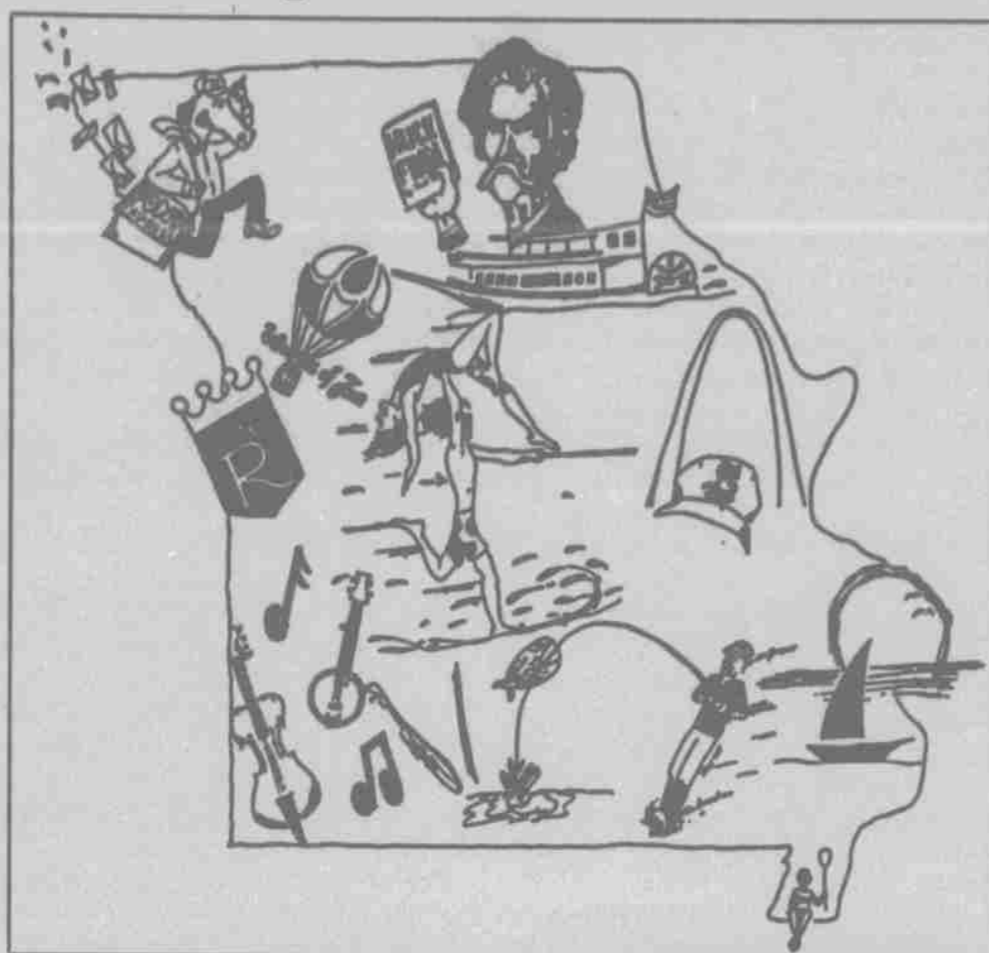
So what's there to do in Missouri?

Beenders said the state's most popular tourist attraction by far is the St. Louis Gateway Arch. This 630-foot tall monument was built in 1962-65. Two and a half million people visited the arch last year, said Jon James, a historian for the National Parks Service. But St. Louis is a long way for most Nebraskans.

Much closer is Kansas City's Worlds of Fun, the state's largest theme park, outstripping even St. Louis' Six Flags over Mid America. Based on different parts of the world, Worlds of Fun has more than 115 rides. The park is in its 15th season.

Sherry Schmitt, the park's public relations manager, said more than 1.3 million people visited the park last year. Of these, about 150,000 were Nebraskans, mostly from the Omaha and Lincoln areas.

For more literary minded tourists, there's Hannibal, in the Northeast corner of the state. The town was the boyhood home of Samuel Clemens, the author Mark Twain. A town since the early 19th century, Hannibal got its start in the tourist business more



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

Missouri's Division of Tourism will spend more than \$3 million on advertising this year to point out to tourists prominent attractions and sites around the state.

than 100 years ago when the Mark Twain Cave first opened to the public. It was Missouri's first show cave, said Dorothy Minear, director of the Hannibal Visitor and Convention Bureau.

Twain's boyhood home was donated to the town in 1912. In 1937 the museum opened. The tourist trade in Hannibal has been growing ever since, Minear said. A half million people visited Hannibal each year.

South, along with Arkansas border, the Ozark Mountains begin. The Ozarks are one of the world's oldest mountain ranges. Many of these crumbling hills are still covered with almost virgin forest. If you go down enough backroads you still can find teetering tarpaper shacks with old hound-dogs dozing out front. But these days there are more souvenir stands than moonshine stills in the Ozarks.

Since you're already in the area, duck over the border to Eureka Springs, Ark., home of the original

See MISSOURI on 4

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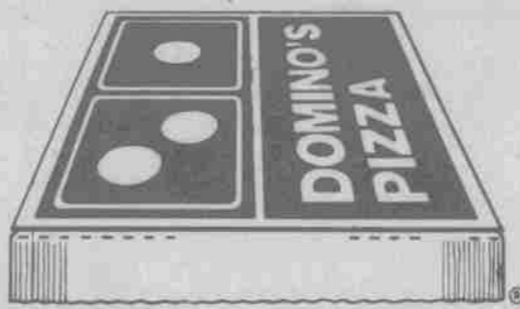


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