



Natural Beauty in Grand Central USA!

Day 1 – Paragould AR – Morrilton AR – Paris, AR

This morning we begin in northeast Arkansas at **Crowley’s Ridge State Park**, named for Benjamin Crowley one of the first families to settle in the area. A tour of the park showcases the native log and stone structures that were constructed by the CCC in the 1930s amid the beauty of the region. Next, we head to Morrilton and **Petit Jean Mountain**, known for the 300 year old legend of Petit Jean, a French girl who disguised herself as a boy to secretly accompany her sweetheart to the New World. Enjoy lunch at the lodge located in **Petit Jean State Park** where



nature lovers enjoy walking trails, streams, wildflowers, and a spectacular waterfall. After lunch we will visit **The Museum of Automobiles** and see the permanent collection of thirty vintage automobiles on display. Our overnight this evening is at **Mount Magazine State Park** where we find a magnificent rustic log lodge atop a natural plateau that looks down upon the valleys of Petit Jean River.

Day 2 – Paris AR – Van Buren AR – Winslow AR – Fayetteville AR – Ponca AR – Harrison AR

Today we travel to Van Buren to board the **Arkansas & Missouri RR** for an excursion through the Ozarks along river valleys and across high trestles. Our journeys in the antique passenger cars are sure to take us back to times past when railroad was the prominent mode of transportation. We depart the train in Winslow and continue north to the **Buffalo National River**. We will enjoy the scenery of the river as we travel the road that follows along the river south of Ponca. Stop at the **Ponca Elk Education Center** to learn about the herd of elk that make their home along the Buffalo River



and the best times of the year for viewing the herd. We continue to Harrison, AR for our overnight this evening.

Day 3 – Harrison AR – Branson MO

After breakfast we depart Harrison and head north to Branson where our first stop will be at **Table Rock Lake** for a lunch cruise on the **Showboat Branson Belle**. Lunch is included on the



showboat along with entertainment as talented musicians, dancers, and comedians take stage as we enjoy two hours of cruising on Table Rock Lake. This afternoon there will be shopping time at **Branson Landing** located on the shores of beautiful **Lake Taneycomo** near downtown Branson. Stroll along the boardwalk with its waterfront views. We will overnight this evening in Branson.

Day 4 – Branson MO – Osage Beach MO – St Charles MO

We depart Branson and head north to Osage Beach and the **Lake of the Ozarks**. This morning enjoy shopping and lunch in Osage Beach before a sightseeing cruise. We board the **Tom Sawyer**, a turn of the century paddlewheel, for a 90 minute sightseeing cruise on Lake of the Ozarks where we can sit back and relax with some sightseeing. We depart Lake of the Ozarks mid afternoon and travel to St Charles for our overnight.



Day 5 – St Charles MO – Overland Park KS



Today we visit the area where the **Katy Trail** comes into St Charles and learn about how 225 of railroad line were converted into a hiking, running, walking, and bicycling trail. More than half of the trail follows the Missouri River while the remainder goes through farmland and small towns. We travel west today for an overnight in Overland Park, KS.

Day 6 – Overland Park KS – Strong City KS – Great Bend KS

Today we head to the **Flint Hills** of Kansas to find rolling hills of grassland and visit the **Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve**. At the preserve we will tour **Spring Hill Farm** and its ranch house, a limestone mansion completed in 1881, and visit the three story limestone barn built into the side of a hill. In Cottonwood Falls, the seat of Chase County, we will have free time for lunch and shopping in the towns square where the oldest continually operated courthouse in Kansas stands. Our overnight this evening is in Great Bend, KS.



Day 7 – Great Bend KS – Oakley KS – St Francis KS – Goodland KS

Today we explore the **Cheyenne Bottoms** 41,000 acres of lowland area bounded by steep limestone, sandstone, and clay bluffs that reach 100 feet over the marsh floor. The shallows are a perfect place for bird watching especially egrets, blue herons, and black-necks stilts. Next, we arrive at an area where erosion has carved chalk pyramids 70 feet tall from what once was a vast inland sea. These rocks are referred to **Monument Rocks** and are a National Natural Landmark. This afternoon we visit another region of natural beauty. This one is in the extreme northwest corner of Kansas and known as **Arikaree Breaks**, a rough terrain of deep ravines and gullies with few trees but natural grasses that is excellent for cattle and wildlife. Our overnight this evening is in Goodland, Kansas which is on Mountain Time.



Day 8 – Goodland KS – Elkhart KS – Boise City OK

After breakfast we head to southwest Kansas and the **Cimarron National Grasslands** where we find a rolling sand prairie abundant with sagebrush. While driving through the Cimarron Grasslands we may see elk, antelope, porcupines, roadrunners, and prairie chickens. We cross into the Oklahoma panhandle for our overnight in Boise City, OK.



Day 9 – Boise City OK – Kenton OK – Enid OK



Today we head to the tallest point in Oklahoma known as Black Mesa. Located in the extreme northwest corner of the Panhandle **Black Mesa State Park** received its name from the layer of black lava rock that covered the mesa millions of years ago. This afternoon we travel east thru the prairie plains of Oklahoma's panhandle where there is no problem seeing the beautiful horizon in all directions. Our overnight this evening is in Enid, OK.

Day 10 – Enid OK – Cherokee OK – Lawton OK

Today we visit the **Great Salt Plains**, the only place in the world you can dig for hourglass selenite crystals, a rare form of gypsum. The area also provides many opportunities for bird watching. This afternoon we arrive at the **Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge** where buffalo do roam free on the range. The Wichita Mountains are said to be the oldest range in the world and date back 500 million years. A drive thru the refuge area offers not only the scenery of the prairie ranges and lakes but also an opportunity to see buffalo, longhorn, elk, prairie dogs, and other wildlife. Take a break at the **Quanah Parker Nature and Visitor Center** and browse the interpretive displays or visit with a ranger to learn more about the area. We continue on to Lawton, OK for our overnight.



Day 11 – Lawton OK – Ardmore OK – Broken Bow OK

After breakfast we continue our travel across southern Oklahoma to **Lake Murray State Park**. As we enjoy a scenic drive around the lake we will stop at **Tucker Tower**, a WPA project and a former retreat of Governor Murray. Lunch is included at **Lake Murray Lodge** overlooking the Lake Murray before departing and continuing our travel east to **Beavers Bend** another state park. The forests of southeast Oklahoma are the number one industry in the area with over 60 million cubic feet of lumber harvested each year. We will visit the **Forest Heritage Center** where 14 dioramas tell stories of the forestry industry. The center also gives honor to forest firefighters with an eight foot bronze of Jim Burnett the first forest firefighter from Oklahoma to lose his life fighting forest fires. Tonight is at Lakeview Lodge on Broken Bow Lake.



Day 12 – Broken Bow OK – Talihina OK – Wilburton

Today we travel a National Scenic Byway, the **Talimena Skyline Drive**, built specifically for its view that winds atop the ridges of the **Ouachita National Forest**. There are many pull over areas that offer panoramic views and opportunities for photos. Enjoy lunch in Talihina before heading to **Robbers Cave State Park** in the woodlands of the **San Bois Mountains**. The park is most noted for the cave and the legend it holds as being a hideout for outlaws including Belle Star and Jesse James.





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Day 1 – Paragould AR – Morrilton AR – Paris, AR

9:00 am – Crowley’s Ridge State Park
10:00 am – Depart
1:00 pm – Petit Jean State Park – lunch
2:30 pm – Automobile Museum
3:30 pm – Depart
5:00 pm – Arrive at Mt Magazine State Park

Day 2 – Paris AR – Van Buren AR – Winslow AR - Fayetteville AR – Ponca AR – Harrison AR

9:00 am – Depart
11:00 am – Arkansas & Missouri RR (VanBuren to Winslow / One Way)
12:30 pm – Depart Winslow
1:00 pm – Lunch on own Fayetteville area
3:30 pm – Ponca – Buffalo National River – Ponca Elk Educational Center
5:00 pm – Arrive Harrison AR for Overnight

Day 3 – Harrison AR – Branson MO

8:30 am – Depart Harrison
10:00 am – Arrive Branson – Lunch on Showboat Branson Belle
3:30 pm – Free time Branson Landing
5:30 pm – Check into Branson hotel

Day 4 – Branson MO – Osage Beach MO – St Charles MO

8:00 am – Depart Branson
10:00 am – Shopping & Lunch in Osage Beach
1:00 pm – Tom Sawyer Cruise on Lake of the Ozarks
3:00 pm – Depart
5:30 pm – Arrive St Charles for overnight

Day 5 – St Charles MO – Overland Park KS

9:00 am – Depart St Charles – visiting portions of the Katy Trail
5:00 pm – Overnight in Overland Park KS

Day 6 – Overland Park KS – Strong City KS – Great Bend KS

8:00 am – Depart
10:00 am – Flint Hills & Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve
1:00 pm – Lunch and free time Cottonwood Falls
3:00 pm – Depart
6:00 pm – Arrive Great Bend KS for overnight

Day 7 – Great Bend KS – Oakley KS – St Francis KS – Goodland KS

8:00 am – Depart hotel and explore Cheyenne Bottoms
9:00 am – Depart
11:30 am – Monument Rocks – Oakley
Lunch
3:00 pm – Arikaree Breaks - St Francis
5:00 pm – Overnight Goodland KS

Day 8 – Goodland KS – Elkhart KS – Boise City OK

8:00 am – Depart
4:00 pm – Cimarron National Grasslands – Elkhart KS
6:00 pm – Overnight Boise City OK

Day 9 – Boise City OK – Kenton OK – Enid OK

8:00 am – Depart
9:00 am – Black Mesa State Park & Nature Preserve
10:00 am – Depart
Lunch – Guymon area
5:00 pm – Overnight Enid OK

Day 10 – Enid OK – Cherokee OK – Lawton OK

8:00 am – Depart
9:00 am – Great Salt Plains – Cherokee OK
10:00 am – Depart
Lunch enroute
3:00 pm – Wichita Wildlife Refuge
5:30 pm – Arrive Lawton for Overnight

Day 11 – Lawton OK – Ardmore OK – Broken Bow OK

8:00 am – Depart
10:30 am – Lake Murray State Park – Tucker Tower
11:30 am – Lunch at Lake Murray Lodge
12:30 pm – Depart
3:30 pm – Beavers Bend State Park – Forest Heritage Center
Overnight Beavers Bend State Park – Lakeview Lodge

Day 12 - Broken Bow OK – Talihina OK – Wilburton

8:00 am – Depart

Morning – Drive the Talimena Skyline Drive

Lunch – Talihina area

3:00 pm – Robbers Cave State Park