

Tour Scout

The Show-Me State's Group Tour Newsletter

Missouri rings in the New Year with countless opportunities for group tour fun. The upcoming **total solar eclipse** occurring Aug. 21, 2017, is a must-see. Missouri communities along the path of totality are preparing viewing sites and events to entertain the crowds taking in the first total eclipse in the continental United States since 1979. This is two minutes and 40 seconds you won't want to miss. But don't worry, there are plenty of other attractions to fill your itinerary and these **Missouri fun facts** will help get you there.

Itinerary

You don't have to travel far on Route 66 in Missouri to realize you're in for one fantastic road trip. Stretching more than 310 miles (517 km) from east to west, Route 66 includes two of Missouri's largest cities, notable attractions, scenic views and motor courts harkening to a bygone era. **Get Your Kicks on Route 66** with this five-day tour.



New & Noteworthy

- Titanic Museum Attraction honoring James Cameron's Titanic, Branson** – Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the iconic movie, the Titanic Museum Attraction will host temporary exhibits featuring movie costumes, set props, signed scripts and more. March 12-June 13, 2017.
- Showboat Branson Belle, Branson** – Now featuring an all-new noon show "Country On The Lake." From country music to rock, a variety of performers - backed by a live band - will entertain with a repertoire of No. 1 hits.
- Starlite Theatre's "Raiding the Country Vault," Branson** – Opening in mid-March, Nashville stars and up-and-coming musicians perform some of country's biggest hits. Select summer dates will showcase the evolution of rock at the show "Raiding the Rock Vault."
- Worlds of Fun, Kansas City** – Two new rides and the holiday celebration of Winterfest join the lineup at Worlds of Fun in the 2017 season.
- Renovated Bloch Galleries at Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City** – Opening March 2017 and on view for the first time since 2007, visitors can admire the prestigious Bloch collection of European Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art in the expanded Bloch Galleries.
- Pompeii: The Exhibition at Union Station, Kansas City** – Through Spring 2017, groups have the opportunity to learn about the ancient village of Pompeii, destroyed after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The exhibit offers a look at various artifacts recovered from that fateful day in August 79 A.D.
- Missouri History Museum, St. Louis** – Learn about the significant events in St. Louis that impacted and advanced the movement for racial equality at the #1 in *Civil Rights: The African American Freedom Struggle in St. Louis* exhibit. March 11, 2017-April 15, 2018.
- CityArchRiver, St. Louis** – The \$380 million expansion project of the Gateway Arch attraction and grounds is scheduled to be completed in late 2017. Tram rides to the top will resume in March 2017.
- Saint Louis Science Center, St. Louis** – *The Discovery of King Tut* special exhibition debuts May 27, 2017, and runs through January 7, 2018. Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more (regular admission \$16/adult).
- Garden of Glass: The Art of Craig Mitchell Smith at the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis** – Running May 13-August 13, 2017, the Garden of Glass will feature the world's largest kiln-fired glass exhibit to date. Featuring 30 custom pieces, the collection is sure to impress.
- Grizzly Ridge at the Saint Louis Zoo, St. Louis** – Scheduled to open mid-2017, visitors will enjoy an up-close look at grizzly bears in a new floor-to-ceiling viewing area. Whether watching the inhabitants swimming, eating or playing, your group is bound to have a good time.
- Field House Museum, St. Louis** – With an expansion of 4,000 square feet, the museum now offers a dynamic cultural and educational area in addition to the original National Historic Landmark.
- Union Station, St. Louis** – With plans for a 200-foot-tall Ferris wheel, food-train park and fire/water/light show, Union Station is gearing up to provide an unforgettable experience to guests in 2017. In addition, the St. Louis Aquarium is anticipated to open in 2019 in the former mall area within Union Station.

Industry Q&A

Q. What are the top two priority questions you ask a prospective client and why?

A. "I focus on asking as many open-ended questions as possible. As a salesperson, it's important for me to understand what really drives the customer's decision. My go-to question is:

What are your customers interested in doing when they visit a destination? Tell me about a successful trip the group has recently taken and why it was successful.

Asking this question helps me determine how to position our destination. I don't want to begin selling the client on a museum when the group prefers to do wine tasting and shopping. Based on the conversation I have with the client, I can better promote Joplin by making recommendations that fit the group's interests."

- Erin Slifka, Director of Sales, Joplin CVB

Best Practice Tip

"As I am planning each trip, I contact the local convention and visitors bureau to let them know I have a group overnighing in their city. Some bureaus may put together *goodie bags* for each guest or each hotel room. As an example, Oklahoma City CVB provides a 'bus box' of prizes that they leave at the hotel for our tour director. This complements our trip by providing more goodies for everyone on the bus.

I feel that contacting the visitors bureau serves another important purpose. It helps me build a relationship with the local experts and I can ask for trip planning help if I need it. The CVB also is informed that a group is coming through and consuming rooms in their city.

I feel it's a win-win for both of us."

- Bonnie Filipi, Allied Tour and Travel

Spotlight: St. Joseph



There are many reasons St. Joseph is frequented by group tours. It could be because of the plethora of museums, or the eclectic mix of historical attractions and modern-day charms. But the one thing that remains true is that an amazing experience awaits. The **Saint Joseph Museums** complex is a convenient stop, offering four attractions at one location. The St. Joseph Museum features various artifacts, including an impressive collection of American Indian items. An odd find, the Glore Psychiatric Museum, will leave you stunned ... and thankful for advancements in mental health care. The Black Archives Museum chronicles the achievements of those who influenced the Civil Rights movement and contributed to black culture and heritage.

Though it's easy to fill a day visiting the museums alone, you don't want to miss the **Walter Cronkite Memorial**, located on the Missouri Western State University campus. Learn about the broadcaster who made history for his coverage of the Kennedy assassination, the first man on the moon and the Watergate scandal. Self-guided and guided tours are available, in addition to the viewing of recorded productions that tell the story of Cronkite's reflections on President Harry S. Truman and Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. While on campus, be sure to see a show at the Bushman Planetarium.

Cap off your day seeing a performance at **Robidoux Resident Theatre**. Dinner shows are available at the Robidoux Landing Playhouse, featuring Mystery Dinners and a revolving list of Tabletop Series productions. With advance notice and staff availability, custom shows can be scheduled to accommodate groups.