

# Stay-Cations & Day Trips

affordable vacationing close to home!

by Susan E. Hohman

What we sometimes miss in living somewhere day by day is the intrinsic beauty that surrounds us. Traveling across the country, one may see lovely mountains and rolling hills, crystal clear streams, wide and flowing rivers, pastoral scenes of hilltops dotted by cattle, grazing on green grass undulating in the breeze. Traveling across the countryside of Dixon, Missouri, one may see the exact same things. Yes, here at home are scenes so beautiful they cause the heart to soar with pride, the senses to respond with joy at their loveliness.

To truly enjoy that loveliness, it is often important to be intentional about visiting sites "in your own backyard," so-to-speak. Planning a Stay-cation is easy, and relatively guilt- and pain-free. Some practical tips: 1) Make a list of the top four things you would want from a vacation. 2) Set a reasonable budget for the vacation. 3) Research new activities in your area. 4) Be certain to set aside your normal responsibilities, as if you will truly be "away" from home.

#### Local Day-Trip/Stay-cation Ideas:

Maramec Spring Park, St. James, Missouri, can be accessed in less than an hour's drive east from Dixon. Containing 1,860 acres of forests and fields, and a 200-acre public use area, Maramec's distinct beauty can be enjoyed by visitors who wish to feed the fish, picnic, view wildlife, camp, play, or even fish in the clear stream of the Meramec River that flows through the park. In addition, a small store and café are located on the grounds.

Similarly, more family fun of all sorts is also a short journey northwest from here. After about a forty-five minute drive, boating, fishing, swimming, entertainment, and relaxing at the Lake of the Ozarks is awaiting those who desire water-related fun and games. Of course, Boiling Spring Campground, LLC, located about nine-and-a-half miles west from the town of Dixon OR east from the St. Robert city limits, offers plenty of aquatic activities also, including float trips.

Also featuring lots of H2O fun and appealing to the younger crowd is the water park in the city of St. Robert – the Tiger Typhoon Aquatic Center. Located across from the St. Robert Municipal Park on J.H. Williamson Drive, amenities include a zero-depth splash area, water play structure, two tube slides, a family slide, sunshades, party deck, and a rock-climbing wall. An indoor therapy pool and multipurpose room are also on-site.

It isn't even necessary to go as far as Branson to enjoy a family-centered night of entertainment. The Barn, located not far from Dixon's city limits, from time to time offers great shows and dinner combos for a reasonable price. Culture, in the form of bluegrass concerts by local groups at various venues



and historically significant items such as those found at the Pulaski County Museum or a tour down "Historic Route 66" are bonuses to living here. For those craving a little mild action, Kokomo Joe's Family Fun Center in Rolla, MO offers mini-golf, a driving range, batting cages, and go-carts! They also provide the "perfect place for your next birthday party," as touted on their website.

For an overnight stay, but still a short journey by car, try the Brinkman Farmstead Bed and Breakfast, in Owensville, MO. Their website ([www.coolcowcheese.com](http://www.coolcowcheese.com)) describes it best: "The Bed and Breakfast rooms are in our new post-and-beam barn that features an interactive dairy processing area on the first floor and guest rooms in the 3,000 square foot hayloft with 18-foot ceilings. You are invited to come help us break in this new addition to our working farm. The structures on the farmstead date from 1857 to the farm's latest addition in 2012."

Brinkman's B & B is part of Martha & Tom's Farm, LLC, which also produces Cool Cow Cheese. The website further explains, "The farm is a working farm situated on a charming road just up from Third Creek between Highway 19 and Highway P. The farm is actively involved in producing farmstead artisan cheeses from our registered Jersey cow herd. You will see us working with our cows, feeding our new babies, making cheese, fixing fences, and playing with our team of Belgian horses."

Need to get away, but you just don't have enough time off from work, nor the necessary funds to take a "real" vacation? The Ozarks region is a destination in itself, and there are enough fun activities available within a short driving distance to warrant taking some "day trips," that don't play havoc with your budget! Relaxing scenery, buildings of historical significance and breathtaking beauty are all within a day's drive of Dixon, Missouri.

A float trip down the winding Gasconade River, covering miles and miles of vastly diverse terrain is one option. Fishing in the calm waters of Rinquelin Trail Lake can bring restfulness to the weary worker. Or, just lying back on the bank and soaking up some solar rays can provide some much-needed relaxation. For the die-hard tourist, take your camera along to snap pictures of the scenery, or some native birds in their natural habitats, or the deer feeding on surrounding grasses. Take in the breathtaking views of Portuguese Point or Rock Eddy Bluff.

Family time can be spent wading in the clear waters of nearby streams. An inexpensive bug-catcher (how about a mason jar with holes punched in the lid?) and a net for capturing minnows or tadpoles will give the little ones active enjoyment away from computers and televisions. Our local streams are gorgeous reminders of our wonderful creation and what it provides.

A picnic lunch at the park or near a river or lake provides variety to eating at home. And, by saving those hundreds of dollars in travel costs, you can even try out some local eateries that time and cost can normally prohibit you from enjoying! Local entertainment such as plays (Pulaski Fine Arts Association – Theatre on the Square, or Ozark Actors Theatre – Rolla), shows (Main Street Music Hall – Osage Beach), or local events such as Cow Days in Dixon, Old Settlers Day and the Annual Duck Race – Waynesville!

Instead of driving or flying hundreds of miles to view scenery, soak up the sun, sample local entertainment, or spend relaxing time with your family, try a few "day trips," originating in or near Dixon. You'll not only save large amounts of money, you'll help support local businesses and events, gain appreciation for what is offered locally, and find your affordable vacation, taken in "day-trip increments" was exactly what you needed!