



# Branson, Missouri



**B**ranson, Missouri, is located on the White River/Lake Taneycomo in the Ozark Mountains. The city was named for Rueben Branson, who opened a general store that became the post office in 1882. The discovery of Marvel Cave, which was described in *Scientific American* in 1885 and in the 1907 publication of *The Shepherd of the Hills*, led to an influx of visitors. Branson was incorporated as a town in 1912.

Among Branson's many museums is the Branson Centennial Museum, which opened in 2012 to share the history of the region in rotating displays that include early history, the White River, roots of tourism, schools, conflicts, and interesting local people. The Branson Dinosaur Museum displays various dinosaurs constructed in great detail by paleoartists. The interactive Titanic Museum Attraction shares the stories of those who were onboard the tragic ocean voyage and also displays authentic artifacts. The Ralph Foster Museum, on the campus of the College of the Ozarks, houses a collection of artifacts, most of which have some tie to the Branson region, and a display of Rose O'Neill's world-famous Kewpie Dolls. The Veterans Memorial Museum—Branson is a tribute to the men and women who bravely served our country in WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and more recent conflicts. Branson Auto & Farm Museum displays more than 100 cars and antique tractors. The World's Largest Toy Museum Complex consists of 6 museums: World's Largest Toy Museum, Harold Bell Wright Museum, National BB Gun Museum, Stearns Bear Museum, World of Checkers Museum, and the Paul Harvey Jr. Museum. Other museums include the Hollywood Wax Museum and Ripley's Believe It Or Not!

The Ozarks' homestead of Rose O'Neill, the creator of the Kewpie Doll and other fascinating works of art, and the Ancient Ozarks Natural History Museum are located in the surrounding area.

The Shepherd of the Hills Historic Homestead is the site where Harold Bell Wright, the author of the popular novel, compiled his notes for his book. The Homestead is also the location for a nighttime live reenactment of the famous historical novel, the Inspiration Tower, the Vigilante Extreme ZipRider, and opportunities for horseback and all-terrain vehicle rides.

With more than 50 theaters on or near Highway 76, also known as the Strip, Branson offers a variety of performances. Originally a home to country music, the theaters along the Strip now present diverse entertainment, including music in all genres as well as dramas, dance performances, magic shows, acrobatic performances, and comedy shows. Also along the Strip are Silver Dollar City, an 1800s-themed amusement park with live music; the landmark Marvel Cave located beneath Silver Dollar City; and Dolly Parton's Stampede, a Wild West-style dinner theater.

## NEIGHBORHOODS

Historic Downtown Branson is primarily a shopping district.

Lakewood Estates is among Branson's residential neighborhoods and is close to downtown Branson, Cox Medical Center Branson, and the Branson Landing. Many of the homes and condominiums in this subdivision are ranch-style and are surrounded by large trees. Lakeview Terrace is an established subdivision near the hospital and features 1960s-style cottages, 1970s-style ranches, and contemporary craftsmen homes built in the 1980s and 1990s. Larger cottages and ranch-style homes are found in the Hideaway Hills neighborhood. Country Bluff Estates offers Colonial two-story homes along with traditional ranchers. Many of these homes overlook Lake Taneycomo or large meadows adjacent to farms. The Lake Shore Hills community, situated along Lake Taneycomo, has experienced a recent renaissance. Some older homes have been demolished and new houses have been built; the older properties vary from small houses to large, stately manors. The Roark Hills subdivision is surrounded by a number of mature trees and Ozark Mountain views. This neighborhood offers homes in varying sizes. Vacant lots available in many neighborhoods offer opportunities for new construction.

The Branson area also has many senior residential communities, some of which have specific bylaws prohibiting full-time residents under a certain age and others that promote themselves as communities for retired individuals without official guidelines.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Branson has 16 parks with amenities that include baseball/softball fields; tennis, basketball, volleyball, and four square courts; playgrounds; horseshoe pits; fishing docks; a skate park; a dog park; a golf course; a disc golf course; and nature trails.

Lakeside Forest Wilderness Area is located in the heart of Branson and offers 140 acres of wooded and rugged hill country. The property includes the Lyle Owen homestead, built in 1911, and 315 stone steps leading down toward Lake Taneycomo along a path that features a waterfall and cave and 4.4 miles of trails.

The 62-acre Stockstill Park, which sits along Roark Creek, has softball and soccer fields, 6 tennis courts, and 2 large playgrounds. The park also contains a skate park and a dog park and is surrounded by a half-mile paved walking trail.

The Branson RecPlex is a 35 acre recreational complex that features an indoor center with gymnasiums, an outdoor aquatics center, baseball and soccer fields, a walking trail, and 2 playgrounds.

The 6.9-acre Alexander Park is located near Lake Taneycomo and features 2 youth ball fields, a tennis court, horseshoe pits, and a playground.

Eiserman Park is home to the 9-hole Don Gardner Par 3 Golf Course, the Branson Community Center, a lighted basketball court, and a swing set.

Nearby, Table Rock State Park offers a variety of recreational activities, including hiking, sightseeing, mountain biking, and such water sports as swimming, boating, fishing, and water skiing. The Branson region is known for its caves and is home to Marvel Cave, which is famous for its massive Cathedral Room. Other areas of the cave include the Waterfall Room, Cloud Room, Spring Room, and the Dungeon. Lost Canyon Cave is a 4-story cave with a cascading waterfall complemented by viewing balconies on all four levels and a cave bar accessible by a mining-style elevator. The cave is accessed by an electric cart ride through Lost Canyon Nature Trail. Talking Rocks Cavern has a vertical layout with concrete handrails and steps throughout the cave.

Other Branson attractions include Branson's Promised Land Zoo, Butterfly Palace & Rainforest Adventure, and the National Tiger Sanctuary.

## EDUCATION

Branson Public Schools educate about 4,800 students in 5 elementary schools, a junior high school, and a high school.

Higher education is available at the College of the Ozarks, which is a Christian liberal arts college located at Point Lookout near Branson. Ozarks Technical Community College offers technical education programs, allied health, general education, developmental education, and customized training at its 5 campuses near Branson.

Additional opportunities for higher education are located in Springfield and include Missouri State University, a public university; Evangel University, a private Christian university; and Drury University, a private liberal arts college.

## HEALTH CARE

Branson is served by the Cox Medical Center Branson with 157 licensed beds.

### CITY STATS

**2016**

City Population	11,430
Metropolitan Statistical Area Population	458,930
Per Capita Personal Income, Springfield-Branson MO, MSA	\$37,502