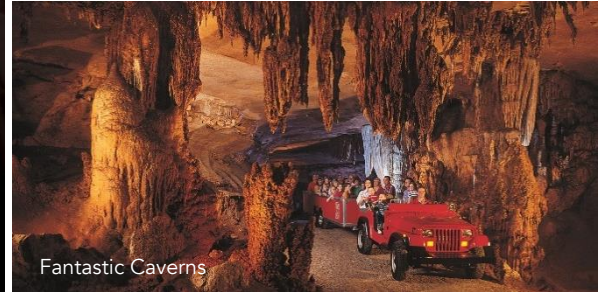




Dutton Family Show



Fantastic Caverns

## BRANSON

October 17, 2023 – 10 Days

*Includes 13 amazing shows!*

The entertainment in Branson, Missouri is nonstop – filled with music, laughter, and legends of the stage. It has been named the #1 U.S. destination for groups for many years and entertains more than six million visitors annually. It all began in 1959 when *The Baldknobbers Jamboree* opened the first live musical show in Branson, but the first theatre on Highway 76 was *Presley's Mountain Music Jubilee* in 1967. Currently there are 40 theatres operating in Branson and it has more theatre seats than Broadway or Las Vegas. During six days and nights in Branson, we experience 13 shows across a wide range of genres including country music, acrobatics, comedy, Celtic music, opera, and Broadway tunes! Come and find out why Branson is called the "Live Music Show Capital of the World."

Activity Level: 1



19 Meals Included:

7 breakfasts, 1 brunch, 5 lunches, 6 dinners

Fares per person:

\$5,295 double/twin; \$6,065 single; \$5,180 triple  
Tour is exempt from GST.

Early Bookers:

\$250 discount on first 15 seats; \$125 on next 10

Experience Points:

Earn 117 points on this tour.

Redeem 117 points if you book by August 8, 2023.

Departure from: BC Interior



Incredible Acrobats of China

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Tuesday, October 17

We cross the border at Sumas and follow I-5 south to Seattle for an overnight stay at the Embassy Suites near the airport. Meet your fellow travellers during a reception with cocktails, beer, and wine.

**Meals included:** Lunch

**Accommodation:** Embassy Suites Sea-Tac

### Day 2: Wednesday, October 18

We fly on Alaska Airlines non-stop to **Kansas City, Missouri**, arriving about 1 pm. Our coach meets us at the airport and it is a short drive to our hotel. Drury Hotels is a chain of 150 properties, still family-owned after three generations of Drurys. It is known for its daily "Kickback" with drinks and a generous array of snacks. If that is not enough for dinner, a Crackerbarrel Restaurant is adjacent.

**Accommodation:** Drury Inn Kansas City Airport

### Day 3: Thursday, October 19

We journey south across Missouri with a stop at **Fantastic Caverns**. Discovered in 1862 by a farmer's dog, the cave is the only one in the USA that you can ride through on a tram. After lunch in Springfield, it is a short drive into the hills of the Ozarks to reach **Branson**. We stay six nights at the full-service Thousand Hills Hotel, located just off Country Music Blvd. It has 10 floors, restaurant, lounge, indoor/outdoor pool, sauna, whirlpool, and fitness centre. Tonight, enjoy the first of our 13 wonderful shows in Branson. The **Hughes Family** presents fantastic entertainment from a very talented group of singers, dancers, and musicians. The show is filled with a variety of music from pop, rock, and country to Broadway,

gospel, and hip hop as they dance in unison with grace and style. With over 30 Hughes Kids in every show, the Hughes Brothers can claim to be the "World's Largest Performing Family."

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Thousand Hills Hotel

### Day 4: Friday, October 20

Our morning show, **Down Home Country** at Grand Country Music Hall, features singer Bob Davidson and "Fiddle Player of the Year," Melody Hart. They present the classics of George Jones, Hank Williams, Merle Haggard, and Waylon Jennings, in addition to the comedy of Jarrett Dougherty. Classic country, western swing, and gospel music are all expertly performed. Lunch is at Grand Country Buffet, followed by **The Dutton Family** show. They are international touring and recording artists who play everything from bluegrass to classical in their shows, featuring a variety of instruments: violin, guitar, bass, viola, banjo, mandolin, harmonica, and drums. After dinner, we return to the Music Hall for the **Grand Jubilee Show**. This incredible quartet entertains with spectacular music, great harmonies, family comedy, and Ozarks hospitality. Mark, Luke, David, and Jon sing favourite songs from Top 40, Country & Gospel classics, and Rock & Roll hits from the 70s through the 90s.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Thousand Hills Hotel

### Day 5: Saturday, October 21

This morning, a locally-guided tour visits highlights of Branson including **College of the Ozarks** which has a unique approach to education and is nicknamed "Hard Work U." The Ralph Foster Museum on the campus is included. Lunch is at the Pickin' Porch Grill, then we go to King's Castle Theatre to see the **Dublin Irish Tenors & Celtic Ladies**. The nine singers bring some of Ireland's best music to Branson, including opera, pop, swing, Irish classics, and traditional folk ballads. Their repertoire offers a variety of songs such as *Scarborough Fair*, *Nessun Dorma*, *You Raise Me Up*, *Rolling in the Deep*, and the Irish



Hughes Family





Gene Watson

favourite, *Danny Boy*. Dinner is at the 1950s style Uptown Café, then we go to the Mansion Theatre to see **Gene Watson**. His music peers even named him “The Singer’s Singer” for his octave jumping range and smooth tone, remarkable at age 78. Watson has 34 studio albums, scored over 72 charted songs, including 23 Top Tens and 6 #1 hits over his 60-year career. Watson’s first single, *If It’s That Easy* was released on Sun Valley Records in 1962. Watson was inducted into the Grand Ole Opry in 2020.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Thousand Hills Hotel

## Day 6: Sunday, October 22

We start with a sumptuous Sunday brunch at Chateau on the Lake. This afternoon, we attend a show starring **Yakov Smirnoff**,

an uplifting comedian who tells hilarious tales of life in his native Russia contrasted with his new homeland of America. He has kept audiences laughing in Branson since 1992. Dinner is



at Paula Deen’s Southern Kitchen at Branson Landing, then we attend **C.J. Newsom’s Classic Country and Comedy** show at the Americana Theatre. Newsom gives Branson the best of country’s legendary ladies and has been sharing the music of the incomparable Patsy Cline for years. Her show now features huge hits from other leading ladies of song such as Loretta Lynn, Reba McEntire, and Judy Garland. On top of all that phenomenal music, enjoy another local comedian, Terry Sanders.

**Meals included:** Brunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Thousand Hills Hotel

## Day 7: Monday, October 23

This morning, we explore the **Titanic Exhibit** which contains hundreds of artifacts from the famous ship as well as experiences such as a slanted deck and a vat of water as cold as the ocean. Lunch is at McFarlain’s Restaurant. In the afternoon, we thrill to an entirely different show, **The Incredible Acrobats of China** at the Mickey Gilley Theatre. One of the most celebrated acrobatic companies, these performers have stunned audiences all around the world. Over 20 acrobats bring the Orient to Branson in a fast-paced production featuring Human Strength & Beauty, Plates Spinning, Juggling, Diabolo, Chair Stack, Butterfly Lovers, and Spinning Girls. Tonight, we enjoy the lively show that is usually top-rated every year by Wells Gray customers — **Presley’s Country Jubilee**. It is two memorable hours of music and comedy with one of Branson’s longest running shows, still popular after 56 years and four generations of Presleys on the stage.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Thousand Hills Hotel



## Day 8: Tuesday, October 24

Our morning show features **George Dyer** at the Americana Theatre. With his amazing tenor voice, Dyer soared onto the operatic scene in 1996, making his professional debut to rave reviews with the New York City Opera. He has enchanted countless audiences in the United States and Europe with solo concerts that feature a delightful mix of opera and Broadway favourites. It is this variety of musical performances that he has brought to Branson and 2023 will be his 14<sup>th</sup> season. There is free time to browse the shops and have lunch at Branson Landing. The matinee

show is **#1 Hits of the Sixties** at the Clay Cooper Theatre. It is a high-energy party as this group of 10 revisits the days of the British Invasion, Motown, California Surfin', and the Age of Aquarius with over 100 songs, 100 costume changes, and even some classic 1950s tunes! Our "Farewell to Branson" dinner is at Florentina's Restaurant. Tonight's show is **Queen Esther**, an awesome finale to our week in Branson. Set in the opulent yet perilous Persian Empire, it is a captivating tale of beauty and bravery. Esther's ordinary life changed forever when she was taken through the palace doors, entering a new world of royalty and risk. With a crown on her head and a secret in her heart, can she find the courage to trust in God's plan? Experience one of the riveting Old Testament stories as it comes to life on the Sight and Sound Theatre's 100-metre wrap-around stage, with lavish sets, gorgeous costumes, a dramatic storm, colourful characters, live animals, and memorable songs.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Thousand Hills Hotel



### Day 9: Wednesday, October 25

We must say goodbye to Branson and the Ozarks after six days of fabulous entertainment. The coach takes us to **Kansas City**, then we fly to Seattle. The hotel's evening reception is a popular gathering place.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Embassy Suites Sea-Tac

### Day 10: Thursday, October 26

There are short stops at Bellis Fair Mall in Bellingham and the Duty-Free Store, then we cross the border and travel home via the Coquihalla.

**Meals included:** Breakfast


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## TOUR NOTES

**Flights:** Do you want window or aisle seating? Do you want to stay longer in Missouri and return independently? Alaska Airlines cannot change our group block for these preferences, so please book your own flight and take our option of "No Flight" for a discount of \$580 per person.

**Flight Upgrades:** Please enquire about current prices for upgrades on the flights from Seattle to Kansas City and return. First class (Alaska Airlines' name for business class) may be available.

**Food Allergies:** You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. Please do not tell us about your food preferences, as restaurants ignore these requests. An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.

 **Activity Level 1:** Light activity including short distances to walk and some stairs, mainly going to/from your theatre seats. There can be longer walks in Seattle and Kansas City airports and you may want to request assistance at airline check-in if this could be an issue for you. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the coaches by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. The coaches cannot carry a scooter or motorized wheelchair. **Everybody** participating in this tour is expected to be capable of handling Activity Level 1. The tour director and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour.

## BRANSON, MISSOURI

Branson had its modest beginning in 1882 when Reuben Branson opened a general store and post office in the area. The first tourist attraction opened in 1894 when William Lynch bought Marble Cave, renamed it Marvel Cave, and began charging for tours. Fame came to Branson in 1907 when Harold Bell Wright published his novel about the Ozarks, *The Shepherd of the Hills*. Hugo and Mary Herschend acquired Marvel Cave in 1950 then, ten years later, built Silver Dollar City, a re-creation of a frontier town which still operates today with rides and shows. *The Baldknobbers*

*Jamboree* opened the first live musical show in Branson in 1959, but the first theatre on Highway 76 was *Presley's Mountain Music Jubilee* in 1967. Branson began its transformation into a major tourist attraction in 1983 when the Roy Clark Celebrity Theatre opened and began to bring famous country music stars to Branson. During the next ten years, performers such as Box Car Willie, Andy Williams, Shoji Tabuchi, and Glen Campbell built their own theatres. The television series *60 Minutes* aired an episode in 1991 which declared that Branson was the "music capital of the entire universe", much to Nashville's chagrin. Currently there are 40 theatres operating in Branson and it has more theatre seats than Broadway or Las Vegas. It has been named the #1 U.S. destination for groups for many years and entertains more than six million visitors annually, but has a year-round population of only 11,000. Branson's title today is the "Live Music Show Capital of the World."



Hwy 76 in Branson

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transportation to Seattle Airport and return
- Flight from Seattle to Kansas City and return
- Current air transport taxes and security fees
- Airline luggage fees for one checked bag
- Coach transportation for 8 days in Missouri
- 9 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- Fantastic Caverns underground tour by tram
- *Hughes Family* show
- *Down Home Country* show
- *The Dutton Family* show
- *Grand Jubilee* show
- Locally-guided sightseeing tour of Branson area with College of the Ozarks
- Ralph Foster Museum
- *Dublin Irish Tenors & Celtic Ladies* show
- *Gene Watson* show
- *The Yakov Smirnoff* show
- *Newsom's Classic Country & Comedy* show
- Titanic exhibit
- *The Incredible Acrobats of China* show
- *Presley's Country Jubilee* show
- *George Dyer* show
- *The #1 Hits of the 60s* show
- Sight and Sound Theatre's *Queen Esther* show
- Knowledgeable tour director
- Gratuities for Branson driver & guide
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **19 meals:** 7 breakfasts, 1 brunch, 5 lunches, 6 dinners



## HOW ARE THE BRANSON SHOWS SELECTED?

The 2023 tour will be the 24<sup>th</sup> time that Wells Gray Tours has visited Branson. Many customers repeat the tour, knowing that some shows will be offered again, some are new, and many change their songs and stories. After each tour, our travellers turn in their comment sheets, rating each of the shows as excellent, good, average, or poor. A weighting of 10, 5, 1 or 0 respectively is applied. Most of Branson was closed in 2020-22, due to the pandemic, so we looked at the 2019 ratings. Nine of those shows scored very high, topped by the *Presleys*, but several have not re-opened and those theatres have new shows opening this year. The final choices for 2023 were 5 shows offered in 2019 and 7 new ones: *Hughes Family*, *George Dyer*, *Grand Jubilee*, *Gene Watson*, *CJ Newsom*, *Down Home Country*, and *#1 Hits of the 60s*. In addition, the Sight and Sound Theatre changes its production every year, and the spectacular show, *Queen Esther*, is scheduled for 2023. With up to 40 shows to choose from, there is always something new and exciting to see in Branson.

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## TOUR POLICIES

**Payments:** A deposit of \$400 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due August 8, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking or cheque (1.5% discount on tour fare), or by Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person on credit cards).

**Discounts:** Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 15 seats and \$125 on next 10 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after August 8, 2023.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to July 7, 2023, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From July 8 to August 8, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From August 9 to September 14, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After September 14, there is no refund.

**Itinerary and Fare Changes:** Due to continuing after effects of the pandemic, sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service or show if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a component of this tour due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Fuel surcharges and changes to taxes or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up to departure.

**Travel Insurance:** A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

**Photo Credits:** Dutton Family, Fantastic Caverns, Acrobats of China, Hughes Family, Gene Watson, Yakov Smirnoff, Presley's Country Jubilee, Sight and Sound Theatres, Branson Tourism Centre (Highway #76).

**Experience Points:** This tour earns 117 points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points or e-points. One point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until August 8, 2023.

**Consumer Protection BC Licences:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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