

Travel Notes

Where every day is like the 4th of July

The question is, what are you going to do for the Fourth of July when every day's the Fourth of July?

Celebration City, a new nighttime theme park in Branson, Mo., closes each night with a pyrotechnic flourish. An outdoor multimedia laser production show, "Celebrate," whisks guests through the 20th century.

High-tech special effects highlight World War II victory parades, the first steps on the moon, rock 'n' roll, disco, the computer age, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, James Dean, Elvis Presley and the Beatles. It culminates with the stars and stripes, all projected against the side of a mountain.

The park, which opened last month, also unveiled 30 rides and attractions designed for the brave and the free.

A choice of three roller coasters include the Ozark WildCat, a new retro wooden coaster that reaches speeds of 45 mph and drops riders eight stories; the Thunderbolt, a 60-foot steel coaster that peaks at 35 mph; and Jack Rabbit, a 52-foot coaster that provides camel-back features.

Other thrill rides include the Accelerator, which takes riders up an 80-foot tower and plunges them down, and the Fireball, which spins riders more than 60 feet in the air.

But the main theme of the park is to take visitors back to the early 1900s and to show that "Branson isn't only about music," said spokeswoman Lisa Rau. Visitors enter through Celebration Street, which is filled with vintage cars and carousel. They proceed to a Coney Island-style boardwalk and go onto Route 66, which celebrates the '50s and '60s with shiny cars and drive-in diners.

The park, a Silver Dollar City attraction, is open daily from 3 to 11 p.m. Call toll-free, (800)

831-4386 or go to www.silver-dollarcity.com.

TRAVEL SURVEY

Online Americans are vacation-bound

In an optimistic travel survey, 84 percent of 1,000 active travelers who have Internet access said they'll take a vacation this summer.

The largest number, 45 percent, intend to visit friends or relatives; 23 percent will be heading for beaches or lakes; while 14 percent will go to theme parks, according to the national poll by Yesawich, Peperdine, Brown & Russell, a Florida-based marketing firm. Florida was the chosen destination of 18 percent of those queried, California ranked next with 16 percent, while New York can expect to get 10 percent.

Orbitz, the online air-travel engine, also reported bookings for Independence Day are up over last year, with Chicago, New York and Las Vegas the top destinations.

INTERNET TOURS

College viewing made virtually easy

Can a "virtual campus tour" be as good as an actual campus visit?

"Nothing beats an in-person tour," says Cliff Kramon, co-producer of Collegiate Choice Walking Tours Videos. But he says online tours are the next best thing, especially for the parents of a student who wants to visit Harvard, Duke, Dartmouth, Stanford, Rice, Case Western, George Washington, Harvey Mudd, Georgia Tech

and a few more.

The videos, taped student-guided campus tours of 350 colleges in the United States and abroad, are "a respectable way for the entire family to get a feel for a school to decide if the chemistry there is right for that child," says Kramon, a New Jersey-based guidance counselor.

Made without background music, mood shots or edited script, the videos are "an average one hour per college of reality

footage." They're \$15 each. Call (201) 871-0098 or visit online at www.collegiatechoice.com.

— RHODA AMON, NEWSDAY

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