

TRAVEL BRIEFS



An architect's rendering of Celebration City, a new theme park in Branson, Mo. The park is being billed as the "night place for families."

MISSOURI

New theme park

BRANSON — More than 30 theme rides, attractions and activities, including a wooden roller coaster, will be part of the new Celebration City, which will open in May.

Top events and entertainment of the 20th century will be the focus of Electric Boardwalk, a boardwalk park atmosphere; historic Route 66, celebrating the 1950s and '60s; the Ozark WildCat roller coaster, a nightly laser production show and a men's a capella group called Chapter 6.

In the Route 66 area, the new Ozark WildCat will celebrate America's love for wooden roller coasters. The coaster is a classic twisting coaster that will reach speeds of 45 mph and drop eight stories. It has a one-of-a-kind, 310-degree spiraling double-down first drop, a high speed swoop turn with a rabbit hop midway and a screaming finale.

The park will have two other coasters, the Thunderbolt, which will take riders at speeds up to 35 mph and Jack Rabbit, which will have camel-back features and reach the same speed.

Other rides include the Accelerator, a tower ride that will launch riders 80 feet before plunging them back down with back-to-back positive and negative G-forces; Fireball, which will swing and spin riders more than 60 feet in the air; and the Electric Star Wheel, a 95-foot-high classic Ferris wheel.

The park, which will open at 3 p.m., bills itself as the "night place for families." For more information, call (800) 831-4386 or go online to www.silverdollarcity.com.

The festival exchange will be May 16-18. Grapevine will take its GrapeFest to Foley on Nov. 7-9.

At Main Street Days, visitors will experience the shrimp industry, meet Alabama boat builders, net makers and oyster shuckers. Quilters and woodcarvers will display their crafts, and music will be provided.

For more information, call (800) 457-6338 or go online to www.grapevinetexasusa.com.

KANSAS

Museum planned

HUTCHINSON — A proposed Kansas Underground Salt Museum will draw more than 150,000 visitors a year, supporters say.

The museum recently received a federal \$283,500 construction grant, and supporters have raised half of the \$7.8 million needed to build it.

The mines once were a big tourist draw. From the 1920s to 1965, thousands of Kansas schoolchildren toured the salt mines each year. Then public visits to the mines were halted by the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The museum will occupy the equivalent of more than three football fields of space below ground, and an above-ground visitor center will provide orientation.

Visitors will be required to wear helmets and will be able to tour galleries, theaters, and historical and geological exhibits.

They won't be allowed in the production area of the mines, but they still will experience the look, sound and feel of a working salt mine.

Smith said salt mining remains a vital part of the area's economy. Each year, more than 300,000 tons of