

Autumn Roads: Six Fall Drives That End at Cozy Getaways

Written by By Tom Uhlenbrock
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Jefferson City, Mo. — Scott Deffenbaugh predicts fall will arrive early this year in the Missouri Ozarks. And he has one of the best seats in the house for monitoring autumn colors.

Deffenbaugh and his wife, Jodi, own Round Spring Retreat, a single guesthouse located about 400 feet from their home on a ridge top near Eminence. The view from the rental cottage looks down on the Current River, with the wooded hills of the Mark Twain National Forest as a backdrop.

“It’s already changing down here,” Deffenbaugh said the first week in September. “The sumac came out early, bright red and orange, and we’re starting to see the browns, reds and yellows of the oaks and hickories.”

Round Spring Retreat is one of the unique lodging experiences found at the end of six fall drives in Missouri, kind of like pots of gold at the end of the autumn rainbow. The cabins and cottages all have one thing in common – a quiet place to enjoy the season by day and count the stars and satellites by night.

As RoundSpringRetreat.com puts it: “We have no campground, no canoe rental, no traffic, no noise – only the sounds of nature.”

Steven Spaner owns another one of our "Secluded Six" along with his wife, Judy Jones. He said their Heaven On Earth Bed and Breakfast, near Marthasville, attracts “couples who want to escape – escape the kids, escape the job.

“On my website, I put ‘research has shown that getting away from electronic intrusions prolongs your life’,” Spaner says.

Although Missouri’s forests wilted under the long, hot summer, Spaner said the rain that finally came may brighten up autumn. “If there’s some moisture in the soil when they start turning, that’s what determines the brilliant colors,” he said.

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If you miss the fall color show, no problem. Most of these destinations have fireplaces that make for a nice winter visit. Book early if you want a very special place for Valentine's Day.

Round Spring Retreat: Wild Horses and a View

Route 19 borders the national forest as it rolls south from Interstate 44 through Steelville. The two-lane road snakes its way out of Salem toward Eminence, twisting and turning along the way. Eleven miles north of Eminence, head left at the sign pointing out conservationist Leo Drey's virgin pine forest. A half-mile drive through the woods ends at [Round Spring Retreat](#).

The cabin has two bedrooms, a futon in the living room, a shower in the bathroom and a fully equipped kitchen. A screened porch out back opens to a gas grill and a fire ring. While the cabin is modest, the view through a notch cut in the tree line is fabulous.

"It's even better in winter," said Deffenbaugh, the owner. "When the leaves are off the trees, you get a 360-degree view."

The cabin is a perfect base camp to explore the wonders of the Ozarks, with caves, springs, mills, waterfalls and one of the best floating stretches of the Current River a short drive away.

A grassy area separates the cabin from the owner's house, and has become a grazing spot for the wild horses that live along the Current River Valley.

"They were here several times in August," Deffenbaugh said. "They'll come right up to the cabin porch, nine of them last time."

Rates are \$120 on weekdays and \$140 on weekends in October, and drop to \$80 and \$100 November through March. Call [573-858-9225](tel:573-858-9225) or visit RoundSpringRetreat.com.

Heaven on Earth: A Cowboy's Cabin

Route 94, west from Interstate 64, follows the Missouri River bluffs from Defiance to Augusta to Dutzow, a ridge runner of a ride through wine country with glimpses of the river valley below. [Heaven on Earth Bed and Breakfast](#) is northwest of Dutzow, off Route D.

"There are 12 wineries near us," said Steven Spaner, the co-owner. "Also, we offer a free shuttle service to and from the Katy Trail."

The B-and-B has two cabins – the Cowboy Cabin and the Ranch House Cabin. Both have two-person jetted tubs, queen-size beds, private bathrooms with showers and wood-burning fireplaces. One has rockers on the front porch, the other has a swing.

"We're getting more out-of-state people taking vacations to visit the wine country," Spaner said. "Last week, we had a couple from LA who were visiting parents in St. Louis. They left their kids with the parents and came out here to get away from everything."

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Rates are \$165 a night during the week and \$195 on weekends. There is a \$40 discount for two-night stays. Call [636-433-2511](tel:636-433-2511) or visit HeavenOnEarth.ws.

Fair Winds Cabins: A Dream of a Stay

Jude's Dream is a cabin named for Judy Bell, owner of [Fair Winds Cabins](http://FairWindsCabins.com), which has five romantic hideaways spread out on 120 acres off Route 49 east of Cherryville.

Jude's Dream, Hunter's Run and Birdsong each have one bedroom; Wildflower and Meadow each have two. All have jetted tubs, gas fireplaces, porches and they are lovingly decorated.

While the drive on Route 19 south to 49 is nice, the real treat is roaming the woods and meadows once you get there. A sun-dappled lane that connects the cabins serves as a walking trail and leads to Dry Creek, a clear, spring-fed, rock-bottomed stream with a shaded picnic spot on the gravel bar.

Jude's Dream is meticulously clean; it features a bathroom that is either opulent or decadent, depending on your point of view. The raspberry-colored tub, with gold fixtures, is big enough for you and a friend, with a mirrored wall behind it and candle lights on dimmers above. Nearby is a basket filled with towels, a jar of bath salts – even a rubber ducky.

"I get a lot of honeymoons, anniversaries, birthdays," Bell said. "The majority of them, once they get here, they never leave the gate."

Rates are \$129 a night for the one-bedroom cabins, and \$169 for the doubles. Call [573-743-6200](tel:573-743-6200) or visit FairWindsCabins.com.

Camper Cabins at a State Park

Route 21 goes due south from Potosi, crosses the Big River, and heads between the ancient St. Francois Mountains of the lovely Arcadia Valley. The scenic landscape is home to the Black River and two of Missouri's most popular state parks, [Elephant Rocks](http://ElephantRocks.com) and Johnson's Shut-Ins.

When [Johnson's Shut-Ins](http://Johnson'sShut-Ins.com) was repaired, after the collapse of a mountaintop utility reservoir in 2005, the campground was moved out of harm's way and six camper cabins were added on a hillside overlooking Beaver Pond.

The two-room cabins have a queen-sized bed in the bedroom as well as a futon. They are equipped with a microwave-toaster and compact refrigerator. Outside, there are rockers on the porch, a pedestal grill and fire pit. They do not include water or bathrooms. Guests bring their own cooking and eating utensils, and bedding linens or sleeping bag. A central showerhouse with restrooms is a short walk away.

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Three of the six cabins remain open in January and February to allow visitors to experience the solitude of the park in winter.

“The showerhouse is new and heated,” said Jeff Ayers, the park’s natural resource manager. “People like that they have individual rooms. You can walk into a shower room, and lock the door behind you.”

“It’s hard to predict fall colors, but we’ve certainly got the trees,” Ayers added. “The shut-ins is a neat place, even in winter time. It will definitely be quiet.”

The camper cabins are \$75 per night. Call [877-422-6766](tel:877-422-6766) or visit MoStateParks.com to make reservations online.

Charleville Vineyard: A Restored Log Cabin

Interstate 55 enters the foothills of the Ozarks as it arrives at Exit 150 in Ste. Genevieve County. Head west, take a quick turn left on Route B and drive through the bucolic countryside toward the small town of Coffman. You’re in the midst of the Route du Vin wine trail and its half dozen member vineyards.

Charleville is the maiden name of Joal Russell, who owns [Charleville Vineyard Winery and Microbrewery](#) with her husband, Jack Russell. Next to the tasting room is the Bruckerhoff Cabin, a restored 1860s log cabin with two bed-and-breakfast rooms on the second floor.

The cabin was the birthplace of the Bruckerhoff brothers, Willie and Glen, who gave it to the Russells with the knowledge that it would be preserved. It was relocated to this spot in 2005.

The two bedrooms have a shared bath and common sitting area that overlooks the vineyards and the forested hills of the Saline Creek Valley. A hearty breakfast is served on the first floor; a gourmet option for dinner is a short walk through the woods to the Grapevine Grill at [Chaumette Winery](#) next door.

“The majority of the time, we get two couples who know each other,” Joal Russell said. “If they’re strangers, they’re friends by breakfast. People who stay in bed and breakfasts are social. It goes with the territory.”

Rooms are \$128 a night. Call [573-756-4537](tel:573-756-4537), or visit CharlevilleVineyard.com.

Hermann Haus Wineries: Top of the Line

From Interstate 44, Route 100 follows the Missouri River west through Washington and New Haven on its way to Hermann. As you enter the quaint river town, six stone cottages are perched on the hill overlooking the historic business district.

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These are the "haus wineries," the former residences of German families who made wine on the bottom floor, and lived on the top. Carefully dismantled and reerected, stone by stone, on the landscaped hillside, they are available for nightly rental as part of the Inn at Hermannhof.

The inn is the centerpiece of banker Jim Dierberg's goal of making Hermann a first-class, year-round tourist destination. The "haus wineries" have 19 upscale suites, each with a charm and elegance of its own.

The Champagne Suite has a gas fireplace in the bedroom and another in the bathroom, which features a large soaking tub and a walk-in tiled shower. A covered porch looks over the vineyards on the hillside with the town spread out below.

October, when autumn glows on the river hills and the wineries celebrate the harvest, is the prime time for this luxury experience. In December, the Hermannhof Festhalle is decorated like a glittering Christmas display for Kristkindl, the German market.

Rates Sunday through Thursday are \$198 to \$318. Fridays and Saturdays they are \$248 to \$368. Call [573-486-5199](tel:573-486-5199) or visit InnAtHermannhof.com.

Tom Uhlenbrock writes travel stories for the State of Missouri. # # #