

Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium to open this year

After a seven-year, \$100 million renovation and expansion, Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium, a world-class aquarium and multiple thematic attraction, is set to open in late summer/early fall.

On the grounds of the former Bass Wonders of Wildlife in Springfield, this new 315,000-square-foot, high-tech wonderland features educational displays about marine life, animal habitats and most importantly, conservation. Over 40 different exhibitions take visitors through North America, Africa and the Arctic, and feature mammals, birds and reptiles.

As groups walk through the aquarium, hundreds of saltwater fish in large tanks swim around them. A polar bear stands tall in an arctic setting, while the



Arctic exhibit, Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium, Springfield

PHOTO: WONDERS OF WILDLIFE NATIONAL MUSEUM & AQUARIUM

mountain sheep exhibits display more than 30 species from around the world.

Moving to the new museum is the International Game Fish Association Fishing Hall of Fame, currently in Florida.

“Our vision is to create a world-class

experience that celebrates hunting, fishing and conservation,” said Johnny Morris, Bass Pro Shops founder. “We hope it becomes a must-see destination for 60 million people who enjoy the outdoors.”

Elaborate banquet spaces in a wilderness atmosphere are available for meetings and workshops.

“With the iconic Bass Pro Shop next door, you won’t find anything else like it in the world,” said Tracy Kimberlin, president/CEO of the Springfield, Missouri CVB. “There’s literally a new adventure around every corner.”

**Wonders of Wildlife
National Museum & Aquarium**
417-890-9453
wondersofwildlife.org

Rolla engineers for fun

Rolla, a central Missouri town, is well known for the Missouri University of Science and Technology, which connects groups with a range of fun, educational activities.

“The university offers unique experiences, like sitting in on a class with a tour of the underground mine, hard hats and all,” said Aimee Campbell, Rolla tourism director.

Other must-sees include the university’s scale versions of Stonehenge and Millennium Arch, both created with Missouri S&T’s high-pressure, waterjet technology.

In addition, headquarters of the Mark Twain National Forest, part of the Ozark Highlands American Vini-cultural Area, is in Rolla. The nearby St. James Winery and other wineries have tasting rooms for sampling Missouri’s special vineyards, while the area abounds with outdoor recreation.

Rolla holds festivals throughout the year. Highlights include the June



Experimental Underground Mine tour, Rolla

PHOTO: ROLLA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & VISITOR CENTER

Route 66 Summerfest, where groups can hear the rumble of classic cars and the sounds of classic oldies that bring back memories. The Phelps County Fair happens in July and the Grape & Fall Festival welcomes wine tasting and grape-stomping in September.

The highlight of the year is the Haunted Mine in October, where the university’s engineering students transform the Experimental Underground Mine into hair-raising, frightening fun.

“Our historic downtown includes Benton Square — a newly renovated 100-year-old schoolhouse that has been transformed into a restaurant, salon and entertainment hub,” Campbell said.

**Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce
& Visitor Center**
888-809-3817
visitrolla.com



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