

and the attractions are spread out. That means you have to work to see the sites. That may mean hiking in or driving along gravel U.S. Forest Service roads to see selected sites. You won't see everything worth seeing in two or three days. It would take longer.

The best advice is to do your homework, determine what you want to see in the time allowed and plan out the logistics.

One of the most-accessible and most-visited arches is Sky Bridge. It is 74 feet long and 23 feet high and a short hike after a five-mile drive down state Route 715. You can hike out to the arch and to a scenic overlook that provides an impressive vista of the arch and the surrounding wild country. The rock span stretches along the thin top of the ridge.

Not far away is Chimney Top Rock. It requires a short hike along a paved walkway after driving to the site. The overlook offers views of Chimney Top Rock, Cloud Splitter Rock, Half Moon Rock and Pinch 'Em Tight Gap.

Some of the arches are far more inaccessible. Gray's Arch was a personal favorite. It requires a short 2.2-mile round-trip hike. You hike through an upland pine-hardwood forest

and personal. I never heard Whistling Arch really whistle. But it was a small but striking stone structure - perhaps 10 feet long and 4 feet high with ragged edges - that I had to myself to explore and to savor.

Tunnel and cabin

The Nada Tunnel is also impressive. The 900-foot-long tunnel - it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places - was built by a logging railroad in the early 1900s.

The Gladie Cabin near where Gladie Creek flows into the Red River's North Fork is a reconstructed log cabin - with spectacular gorge scenery and a herd of buffalo.

The visitor center there is open daily from April to October and on weekends in the spring and fall.

The 2,100-acre Natural Bridge State Resort Park has its own geologic formation, trails and a chair lift that will take visitors the half-mile up and down the mountain from mid-April to October.

You can also hike up and down to the park's namesake formation that is 78 feet long, 65 feet tall and 24 feet wide.

The park has a 35-room lodge and two campgrounds.

Stanton District Office, 705 W. College Ave., Stanton, KY 40380; 606-663-2852.

Also the Forest Supervisor's Office, Daniel Boone National Forest, 1700 Bypass Road, Winchester, KY 40391; 606-745-3100. The Internet site is www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/boone. For information on the state park, write to Natural Bridge State Park, 2135 Natural Bridge Road, Slade, KY 40376, 606-663-2214 or 800-325-1710. The Internet site is www.naturalbridge.com.

Local outfitters offer canoe trips and climbing instruction in the Red River Gorge. Contact the Natural Bridge/Powell County Chamber of Commerce, 30 L & E Railroad Place, Slade, KY 40376; 606-663-9229; www.powellcountyky.com.

Ohio tours

Something new is coming to the Wayne National Forest area of southeast Ohio.

Little Cities Tours is offering 15 guided tours of the region between Athens, Logan and New Lexington, the so-called Little Cities of the Black Diamonds region.

The tours in Hocking, Perry, Athens and Morgan counties will have themes: coal heritage,

into the old coal camps and company towns that thrived from 1870 to 1925.

Stops include old opera houses, community museums, a depot, a historical cave, a working coal mine and visits with local citizens.

Communities along the route include Haydenville, New Straitsville, Shawnee, Rendville, Glouster, Eclipse, Congo, Corning, Trimble, Jacksonville, Millfield and others.

The \$85-a-person fee covers transportation, morning coffee, lunch, snacks and tour booklets.

In addition, there is an Aug. 7 one-day trip to visit local artisans - basket makers, potters and ceramic tilers - in the Burr Oak area. The cost is \$85 a person.

In addition, there is a two-day environmental history tour on Aug. 28-29. The cost is \$145 a person and includes transportation and most meals. Lodging is extra.

For more information, contact Little Cities Tours at P.O. Box 243, Shawnee, OH 43782; 740-394-3011 or 866-394-3011; www.littlecitiesofblackdiamonds.org.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By Carol Sottill
Washington Post

Q: I'm looking for a tour group that runs bike trips in the western United States or Europe, preferably one that caters to single travelers. Any ideas?

A: Backroads (800-462-2848, www.backroads.com), an upscale outdoor tour company, offers the largest selection of bike tours for singles. It has 11 biking itineraries for singles in Europe and nine in the western United States. The company will match you with a roommate and won't charge a single supplement, even if it doesn't find you a roommate - as long as you book more than 60 days in advance. A six-day California wine country trip is \$2,298 per person double, plus air. A nine-day camping tour in Bryce, Zion and Grand Canyon national parks for advanced bikers is \$1,698 per person double, plus air.

For a cheaper trip, try Cyclevents (888-733-9615, www.cyclevents.com). It doesn't offer trips just for singles but says about two-thirds of its participants are

single travelers. The company has tours in Europe, Alaska and Hawaii and also organizes riding events, such as "SPUDS-Cycling Around Idaho," a five-day trip that costs \$350, plus air, with camping. A nine-day "Best of France" tour with camping is \$1,100, land only.

Other companies include Experience Plus (800-685-4565, www.experienceplus.com), which provides bike tours for singles to Italy, France, Greece and Costa Rica; and the World Outdoors (800-488-8483, www.theworldoutdoors.com), with multisport trips in the United States, Canada, Central America, the Caribbean and South America.

Q: My daughter and I plan to spend one night in Victoria, B.C., and two nights in Vancouver following an Alaskan cruise. We'll be staying in downtown Vancouver and at the Empress Hotel in Victoria. We'll be dependent on public transportation. Can you suggest where to go and what to do?

A: Victoria, on Vancouver Island, is about a 90-minute ferry ride from the city of Vancouver.

Victoria's Fairmont Empress is a fully restored historic hotel within walking distance of many sites, including Craigdarroch Castle, a 39-room Victorian mansion; Thunderbird Park, with its collection of totem poles; and the adjacent Royal British Columbia Museum, which hosts the special exhibit "Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art From the British Museum" starting in July. Butchart Gardens, 55 acres of plantings, is about 14 miles from Victoria; Gray Line (250-388-5248, www.grayline.com), which offers a four-hour Butchart Gardens and Butterfly Gardens tour for \$43.50 that leaves from the Empress Hotel daily. For more info: Tourism Victoria, 800-663-3883, www.tourismvictoria.com.

You can also walk to many sites from downtown Vancouver, or you can take the Vancouver Trolley tour, a 23-stop, \$20 tour that hits all the key sightseeing spots. City highlights include Stanley Park, one of the largest urban parks in North America and home to the Vancouver Aquarium; Granville Island, a combo artists colony/farmers market; Gastown, the city's old town

area; and the Vancouver Art Gallery, with 8,000-plus artworks. Info: Tourism Vancouver, 604-682-2222, www.tourismvancouver.com.

Q: I want to visit Iwo Jima for the 60th anniversary of the battle there, site of the famous flag-raising photo. Are there tours?

A: Military Historical Tours Inc., of Alexandria, Va., is under contract by veterans groups to conduct a tour March 8-14 to mark the epic battle. More than 6,000 Marines were killed during the invasion, which many know best through the picture snapped on Feb. 23, 1945 by Joe Rosenthal.

Tour participants will primarily be veterans and their family members, but the tour is open to others. The group will travel to Saipan and Guam before going by charter plane to Iwo Jima on March 12 to attend a memorial ceremony. Tentative cost is \$3,395 per person double, including air from Los Angeles; an optional three-day Peleliu Battlefield tour is about \$995. Info: 800-722-9501, www.miltours.com.