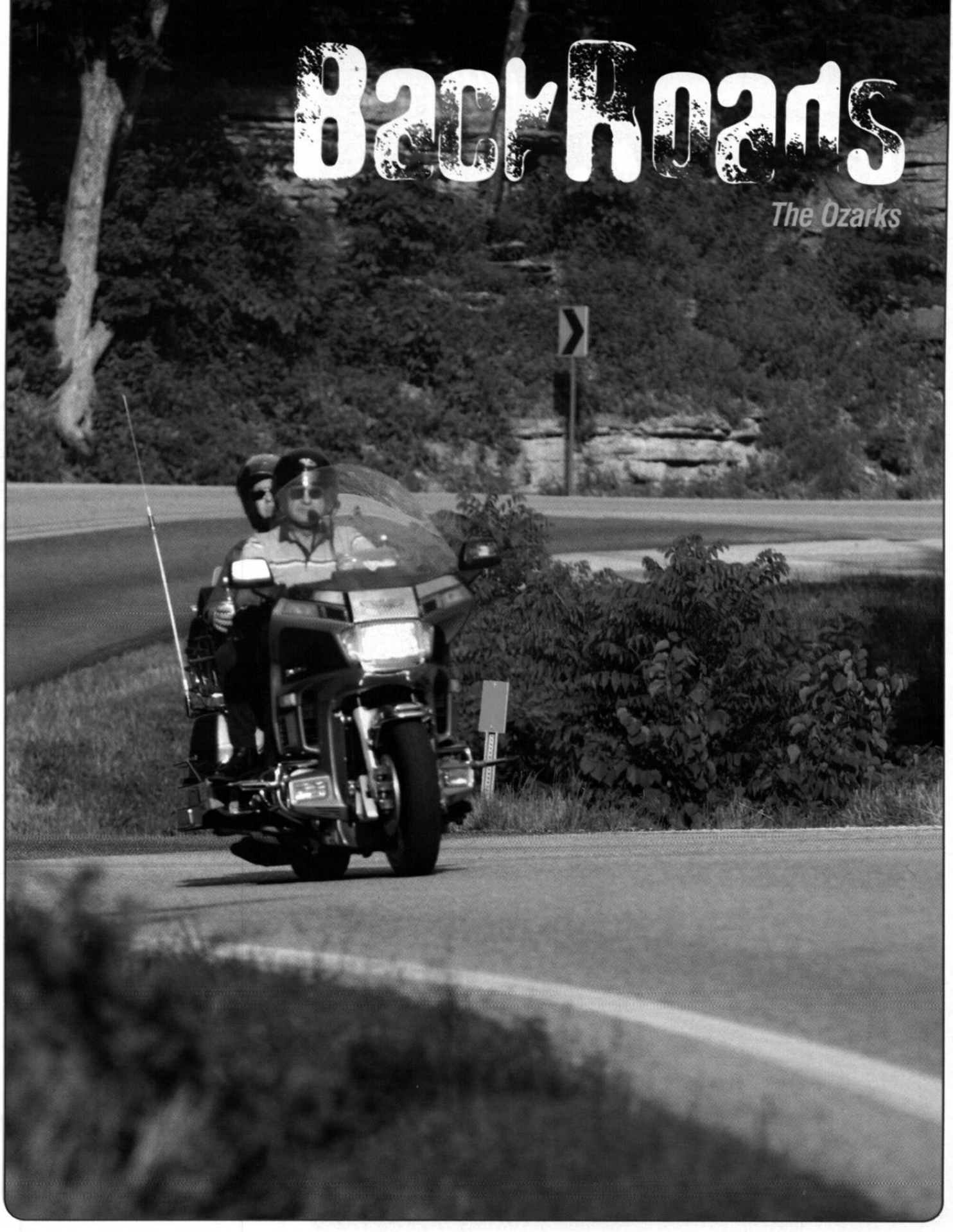

Back Roads
The Ozarks

Where even a wrong turn leads to great riding!

Another beautiful day in the Ozarks, and what better way to take in all that beauty than from atop your "Iron Horse". Motorcycling is the fastest growing hobby in America today with more people participating in two-wheeled fun than golf.

The Northwest Arkansas Region is host to some of the finest motorcycling in the nation if not the world. From the central location of Harrison, Arkansas the Ozark Mountain roads, with all the "twisties" and "sweepers", stretch out like spokes in a wheel to wonderful points of interest, exciting attractions, and some of God's most beautiful architecture.

Every year riders come from around the globe to take in the motorcycling experience that is "The Ozarks". Whether you are a weekend cruiser or a technical road warrior, The Ozarks are sure to please.

Here are some of the choice routes that motorcyclists from around the country have come to enjoy:

Push Mountain

This route is known as the Push Mountain Loop. This loop encompasses Push Mountain Road. Take Hwy 62 East out of Harrison through Yellville, AR toward Mountain Home. At Mountain Home take SR-201 South to SR-341. SR-341 South will dead end into Hwy 14. Take 14 West (right) to Harriet, AR and Ben Hur. Turn left onto Hwy 27. Follow Hwy 27 south/west to Hwy 16 West to Witts Spring and Ben Hur. Hwy 16 will then hit Hwy 7. Take Hwy 7 north back to Harrison. In the Dogpatch area, you will pass by The HUB at Hwy 7 spur, the areas largest motorcycle resort catering exclusively to the motorcycle crowd.

Eureka Springs

This ride will take you to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, "America's Victorian Village". You can spend several hours visiting the town and its shops. We suggest lunch on the balcony

overlooking the street at the Basin Park Hotel or Myrtie Mae's Restaurant at the Inn of the Ozarks.

Take Hwy 65 North from Harrison to Hwy 62 West. Hwy 62 west runs right to Eureka Springs. On the return, take 23 South from Eureka to Hwy 412 East, which will bring you back up to Hwy 62 at Alpena. Take Hwy 62 East to Hwy 65 and back down to Harrison.

As a side trip, take Hwy 23 North out of Eureka a few miles to Hwy 187. On this trip, you will cross over the Beaver Bridge, a one-lane suspension bridge that is a perfect photo opportunity. Hwy 187 loops around Beaver Lake and over the Beaver Lake Dam.

Make sure while in Eureka Springs to take in some of the interesting attractions such as the Great Passion Play , America's #1 Outdoor Drama.

Buffalo River Valley, Ponca and the Elk

Elk, once native to the area, are being reintroduced into the Buffalo River Valley today with a strong herd of approximately 450 animals. The bonus is that there are some fantastic riding roads in the area.

From Harrison take Hwy 7 South to Jasper, AR. On your way to Jasper be sure to stop in at The HUB , the areas largest motorcycle resort. At Jasper, take Hwy 74 West to Ponca. Along the way the Steel Creek Access is probably one of the best stops to see the Elk.

Upon arriving in Ponca visit the Elk Education Center sponsored by Arkansas Game & Fish. From Ponca take Hwy 43 south to Boxley. Take Hwy 21 South to Fallsville. Take Hwy 16 West to 23 North up to Hwy 412. Take Hwy 412 north to Hwy 62 at Alpena. Then take Hwy 62 to Hwy 65 and back to Harrison.

Take Your Bike On a Ferry Ride!

From Harrison, take Hwy 7 North to Hwy 14 East. Take Hwy 125 North to the Bull Shoals Lake Ferry. Take Hwy 125 North to Hwy 160. Take Hwy 160 West into Branson, Missouri. Take Hwy 76 out of Forsyth and over to Hwy 13.

The traffic here may get a bit congested but there will be a lot to see as you pass through the Country Music Capital of the World. Take Hwy 13 South across Table Rock Lake and then hit Hwy 86 back to Hwy 65. Then Hwy 65 South to Harrison, Arkansas.

Mammoth Spring

About 100 miles East of Harrison is Mammoth Springs. A nice smooth ride and interesting destination. Take Hwy 62 East to Salem, AR. Take Hwy 9 up to Mammoth Spring. Mammoth Spring, Arkansas' largest spring and a National Natural Landmark, flows nine million gallons of water hourly. Forming a scenic 10-acre lake, it then flows south as the Spring River, a popular Ozark trout and float stream.

Near the spring, the 1886 Frisco depot will take you back to the early 1900s. Just outside the train station is a Frisco caboose to tour also. Remnants of a mill and hydroelectric plant also reflect Mammoth Spring's history. Park facilities include an information center with exhibits on the area's rich history and natural resources, picnic sites, trail, ball field and playground. The park is located on U.S. 63 in Mammoth Spring.

Pig Trail Scenic Byway

The Pig Trail Scenic Byway is 19 miles of Hwy 23 south of Brashears. You can take Hwy 7 south out of Harrison and continue on to Hwy 16 West over to Hwy 23 South. You then take Interstate 40 East back to Hwy 7 and ride Hwy 7 all the way back into Harrison. 245 miles of exciting riding and a FULL day of activities.

Arkansas Highway 21

This is a little known highway, unfortunately eclipsed by the popular Arkansas 23, and holds its own against any road in the Ozarks in the category of riding fun. It begins just north of I-40 near Clarksville.

Like 23, it starts on the level ground of the Arkansas River Valley but soon begins winding up the mountain sides. The serpentine route is similar to that of Hwy 23, following rugged ridges and hillsides. It runs to the Missouri border, but the best part is the 62 miles from Clarksville to Boxley Valley.

A beautiful stretch of Arkansas 21 is where it dips into the Boxley Valley, paralleling the headwaters of the Buffalo River. At the junction of Hwy 21 and Hwy 74 at Boxley, it's worth leaving Hwy 21 to make the five mile ride to the Buffalo River at Ponca. Stop at the Buffalo Outdoor Center for a break, hike along the river, and enjoy the area. From Ponca, take Hwy 45 back to Harrison.

Arkansas Highway 16

This is perhaps the best little known highway in the Ozarks. Except for short sections which run concurrent with Highways 23, 21 & 7, this road is familiar mostly only to local riders. This is really too bad because the 110 miles of Arkansas 16 between Fayetteville and Clinton is a fun, twisty and scenic ride.

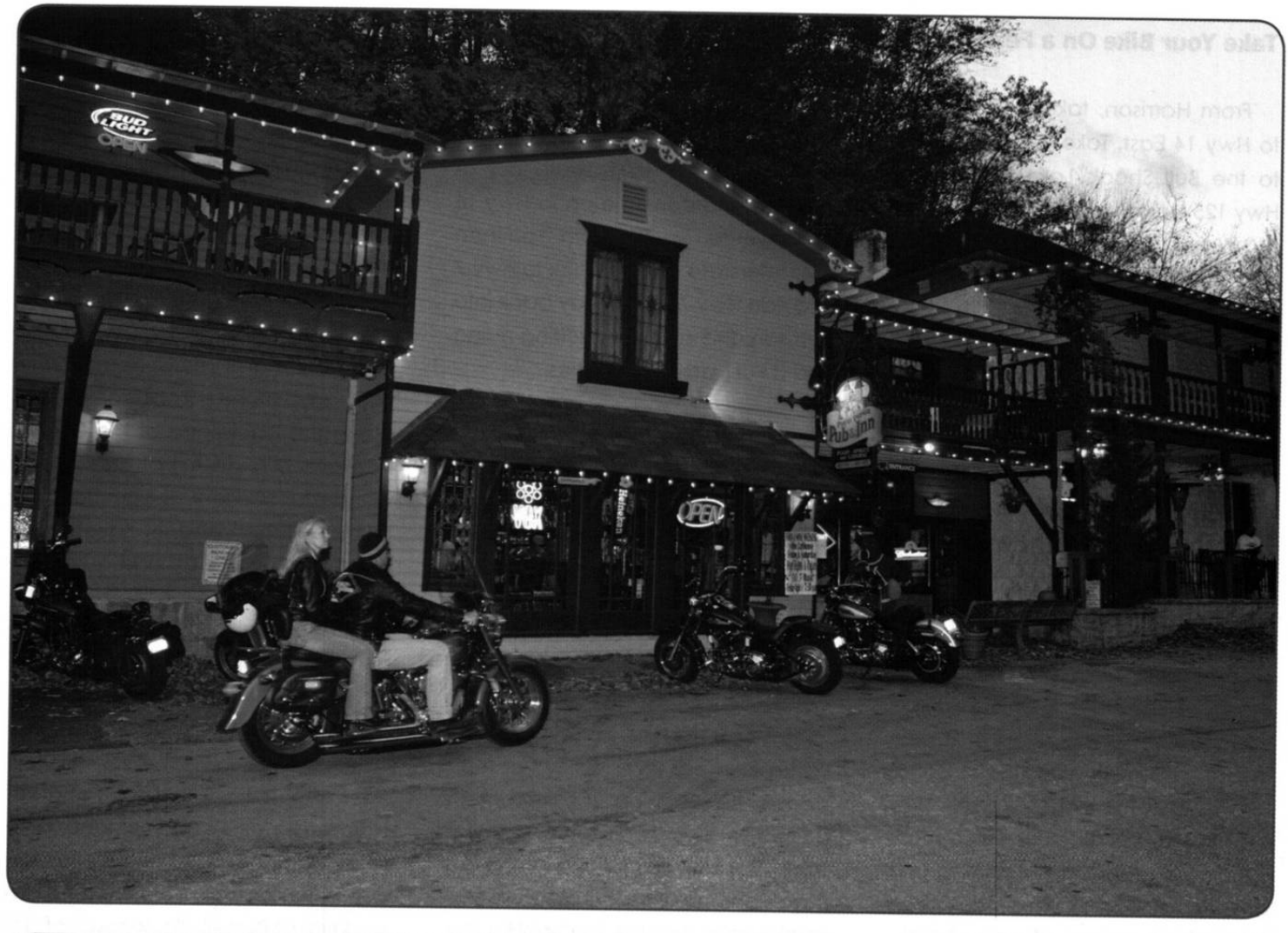
The reason Highway 16 is overlooked is that it really doesn't take you any place. It basically runs along the backbone of the Ozarks. It follows a route full of curves and wonderful scenery. If you start out on the eastern end, in Fayetteville, Head west, hang on and enjoy the ride. Most of the time traffic will be light and you'll have a great time discovering this fantastic road.

Arkansas 7 - Scenic 7

Ark. Highway 7 runs from north of Harrison to near the Louisiana state line at El Dorado, Arkansas. The portion from Harrison, across the Arkansas River at Russellville, to south of Hot Springs (in the Ouachita Mountains) is surely one of the most scenic highways in the United States. The curves are less severe than some of the other Ozark highways, but the vistas and scenery are pure eye candy.

Along Hwy 7 there are many wonderful places to stop and eat, such as Scooters Restaurant at The HUB in Dogpatch and The Cliff House Restaurant just south of Jasper. After winding over the mountains and down to the river valley at Russellville, Ark. 7 levels out and continues on.

Since the Ozarks are situated on both sides of the Arkansas River,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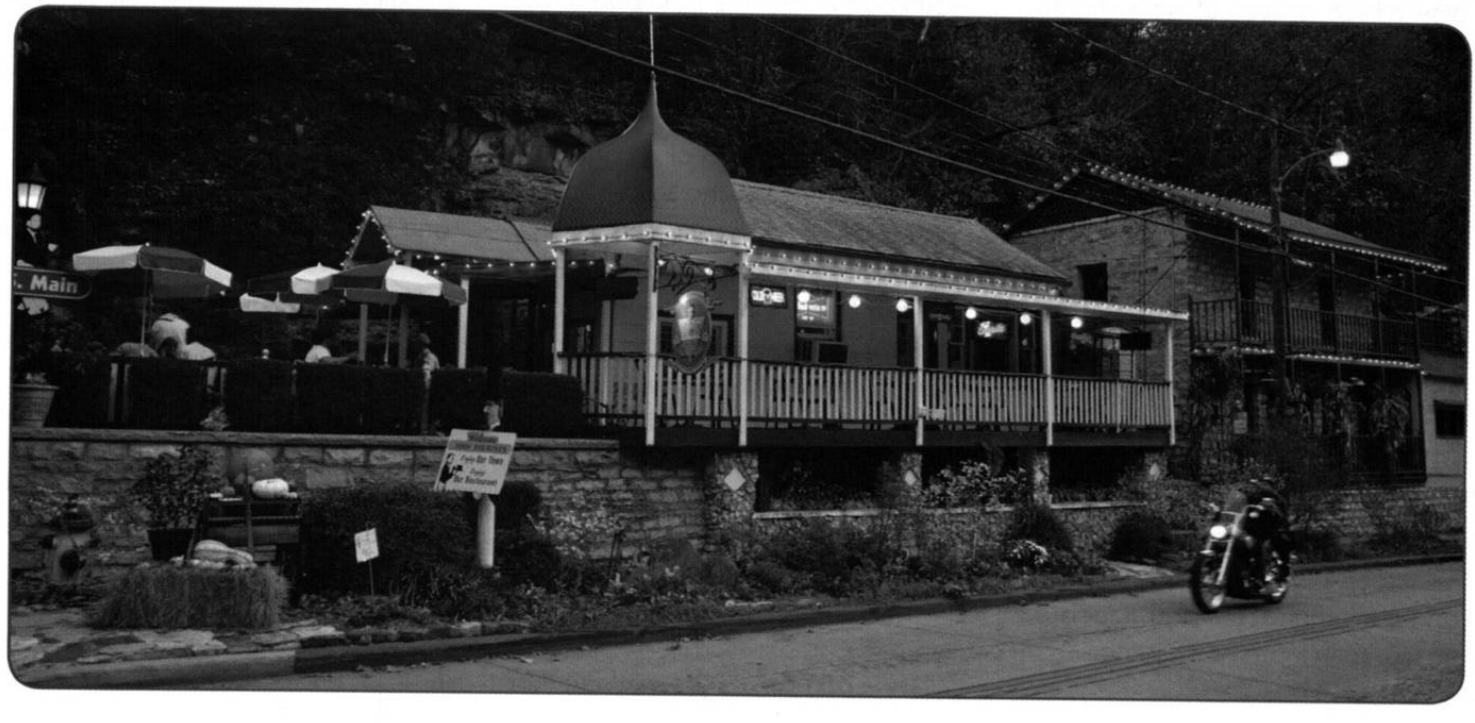
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Highway 7 begins another winding stretch to where the Ouachita Mountains begin. All-in-all, Ark. Scenic 7 is one of the top Don't-Miss highways in the Ozarks, especially if scenic beauty is your bag.

Arkansas 14

Ark. Hwy 14 is a wonderful highway, running through rural farm and wood lands, passing through primarily small-town Ozarks. The entire length of Highway 14 is a nice ride. If you are coming from Branson, Missouri, it would be a good choice for heading southeast into the region.

The 67-mile stretch from U.S. 62 south to the community of Harriet offers a great combination of winding, twisty roads through very nice scenery. It crosses the Buffalo River south of Yellville, a nice place to take a break. This county seat town is the home of the famous/infamous Turkey Trot Bluegrass Festival. Hwy 14 is basically a pleasurable ride through a varying Ozark countryside.

Arkansas 125/Missouri 125

Intersecting Hwy 14 is Hwy 125. Like Hwy 14, Hwy 125 runs through scenic areas and adjoins Mo. 125. But what makes this a great trip that you cross Bull Shoals Lake on the Hwy 125 Peel Ferry. Not only is the road very enjoyable, but the wait for and trip on the Ferry is a wonderful throwback to a time when there were five ferries crossing the waters of Bull Shoals Lake. Plus, it's a relaxing way to spend 30 minutes or so with a free boat ride on a beautiful body of Ozark water.

Arkansas 123

This is possibly the finest ride in the Ozarks, combining the best elements of the Tail of the Dragon and the Cherahola Skyway, in Tenn. and NC.

Just north of Clarksville on Ark. 21, take Hwy 292 east and ride four miles to the junction of Hwy 292/123. From there, stay on Hwy 123 north and let the fun begin. The road takes you through the heart of the Ozark National Forest, travels up along ridges, mountaintops and valleys, crossing several white water rivers, with the Big Piney offering great canoeing opportunities. The ride offers spectacular scenery and challenging riding.

You'll likely encounter light auto traffic as most tourists in cars will take Hwy 21 or Hwy 7 to travel north and south. After 28 miles of riding, Hwy 123 intersects Hwy 7 and travels concurrently for three miles before veering off to Mt. Judea (*locally pronounced Mt. Judy*).

This 15-mile stretch of highway is just as exciting and scenic as the section southwest of Hwy 7. But five miles from Mt. Judea, there's a warning sign about the curves and switchbacks ahead. Believe it! The highway hangs on the edge of the ridge, winding along the mountain side. As it drops into the valley at Mt. Judea, the road follows a very steep course, with numerous switchbacks cutting back and forth almost 180 degrees.

From Mt. Judea, stay on Hwy 123/74 about four miles till Hwy 74 splits and runs 10 miles back to Hwy 7 at Jasper, 24 more miles north on Hwy 7 will put you in Harrison. This is a beautiful, fun and very challenging ride of 90 miles. You must take care on some sections of the road. And at dusk, be sure to be on the lookout for deer and other animals crossing the highway.

Arkansas Highway 9

Arkansas Highway 9 runs from the middle of the state to the Missouri border. But for our purposes, only the portion from Clinton to Mammoth Spring will be considered.

Like Hwy 5, Hwy 9 runs through a rural landscape as well as a portion of the Ozark National Forest. It winds through Mountain View, home of the Ozark Folk Center and Blanchard Springs Caverns , along and across the White River, up to Mammoth Spring , site of the 10th largest spring in the world.

All things considered, this highway takes you through some of the most unique parts of the Ozarks.

Arkansas 5

Arkansas Highway 5 runs from the Arkansas-Missouri border through Mountain Home to such colorful places as Norfork, Calico Rock and Mountain View. It plays tag with the White River, once a Super highway of commerce in days gone by.

Hwy 5 runs through the mountains of the eastern Ozarks, a more rural part of the region. The road is

winding and scenic and takes you to some unique and interesting places in the Ozarks.

Boston Mountains Scenic Byway - Old U.S. Highway 71

This 48-mile scenic byway made the jump from road-to-avoid to don't-miss status when the parallel Interstate 540 opened to the west. From Alma, at I-40, to Fayetteville, this road is a pleasure to ride now that truck traffic has moved west.

The road surface is in great condition and the lanes and shoulders are wide. Many times its three lanes wide. The curves are broad sweepers with some tight ones mixed in. But with the wide lanes, the ride is easy.

Traffic wise, usually not more than a handful of other vehicles and almost no trucks, and the views on the way to the top are spectacular. The highway runs north/south over the Boston Mountains; from Alma, at I-40, to Fayetteville, home of the University of Arkansas.

From Alma to just south of Mountainburg, the road gently climbs out of the river valley and is fairly ordinary for about eight miles. But two miles south of sleepy little Mountainburg, you will find yourself winding down a steep mountain side for an exhilarating, downhill ride. The highway levels out through town and then starts an equally exhilarating climb out of the valley, ending at Fayetteville. At West Fork, Greenland and on into Fayetteville, be watchful for speed enforcement.

Arkansas Highway 23 The Pig Trail

Roscoe's
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Over the years, this Arkansas highway has consistently been ranked as one of the 10 best driving roads in the United States by driving and car magazines. And what they say for autos goes double for motorcycles.

The middle to northern end of the highway is called The Pig Trail. It earned that name for one of two possible reasons. One, it was a popular route from central Arkansas to Fayetteville for football fans on their way to Razorback games. The second possible reason is that the road winds around like it was built following the meanderings of a wild razorback hog.

Hwy 23 winds through the lush Ozark National Forest and farmlands of the region. It begins south in the Ouachita National Forest just north of Waldron, Arkansas, crosses the Arkansas River Valley and runs up through Eureka Springs to the Missouri border.

At I-40, the town of Ozark, (*name sake for the mountains to the north*) the real fun begins. The highway soon gets serpentine, taking you through a series of switchbacks and hairpin curves. It continues to wind around the rugged mountainsides, often through thick canopies of trees.

The best stretch of Arkansas 23, and reason for its reputation, runs 80 miles from Ozark through Huntsville to the 1890s Victorian resort town of Eureka Springs. You won't be sorry if you take this route into the heart of the Ozarks.

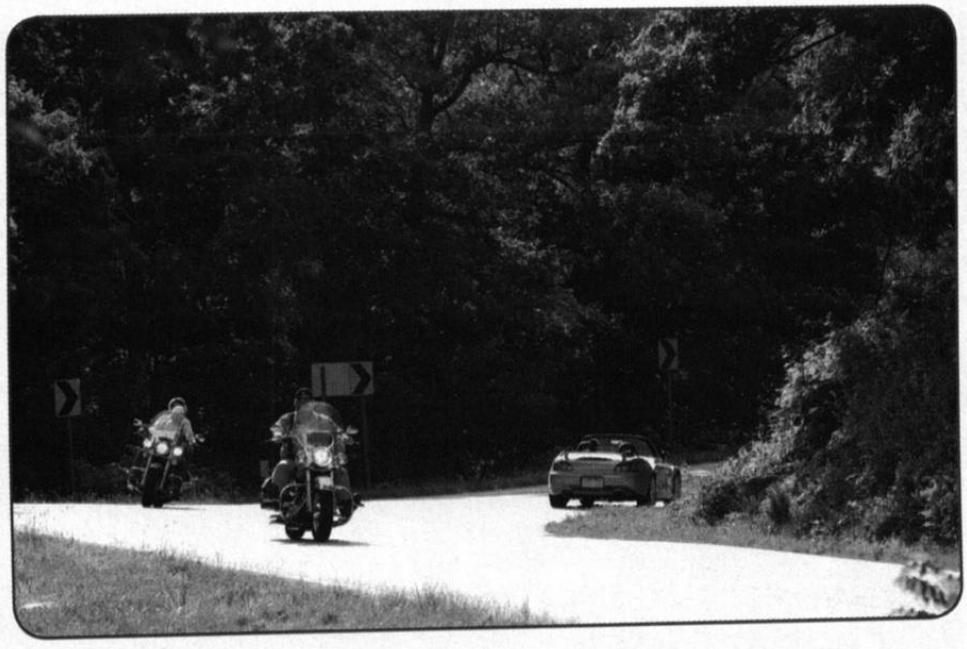
Arkansas 43-103-74
Out of Ponca

These highways lead out of Ponca, on the Buffalo National River. They end up in different parts of the area, so you will select the one you take depending on where you want to end up.

However, each is worthy of your attention, taking you through scenic rural parts of Madison, Carroll and Boone Counties. The mile and a half stretch of Ark. 74 out of the Buffalo Valley is mile-for-mile one of the best twisty roads anywhere in the country.

Websites relevant to this article:

www.harrisonarkansas.org
www.cruisetheozarks.com
arkansas.com/outdoors/Motorcycling



Eureka! I Have Found It!

Words and Photos: David Bell

In central United States, the Ozarks dominate as one of the premier destinations or motorcyclists.

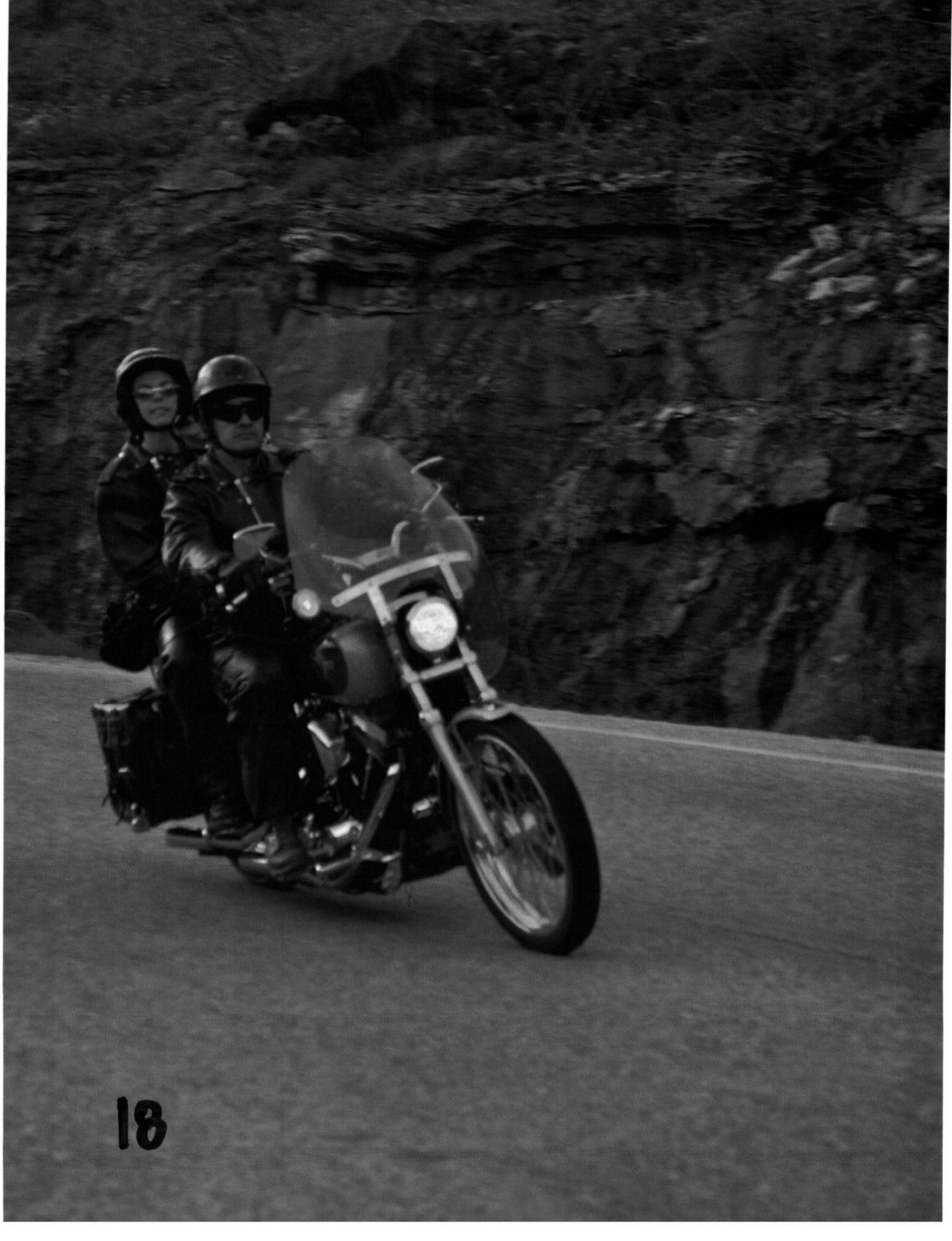
Over the ages, wind and water have shaped the hills, valleys, and ridges that define its geological terrain. Most of the highways and roads of the area follow those wildly undulating features, to the delight of the thousands of riders who visit each year. Moreover, in the Ozarks, Eureka Springs, Arkansas stands out as a prime target location for motorcycle riding. With its centralized setting, abundant accommodations, and wonderful restaurants, cafes and watering holes, Eureka, as it's called locally, has everything riders need to have a great day of riding and a fun evening of "bench racing", swapping stories, and visiting with other riders while unwinding from your day riding.

Long ago, long before the Smokies and Rockies, an ancient seabed rose up in the center of North American – the Ozarks Plateau. Then water and wind slowly and inexorably carved the mountains of the Ozarks that riders enjoy today.

In recent geologic history, perhaps a mere few hundred years ago, American Indians gathered peacefully around the running water of the springs that would become Eureka Springs. The reported healing of a Sioux princess, who apparently regained her eyesight after bathing in the waters of Basin Spring, begin the legend of the healing waters and its fame spread among the native population; eventually extending to the white settlers of the area.

A flourishing health resort industry eventually grew around the numerous springs due to the fame of this newly discovered "fountain of youth" and Eureka Springs arguably became the hottest resort in the United States. People flocked from around the country to "take the waters" and Eureka's population soon grew to over 10,000 permanent residents with a railroad, bathhouses, hotels, and the businesses necessary to support the town.

Folks come to the city seeking the health benefits of the springs and soon Ozarka Water Company was bottling the special water to ship across the United States. Eureka's reputation for H_2O earned it the



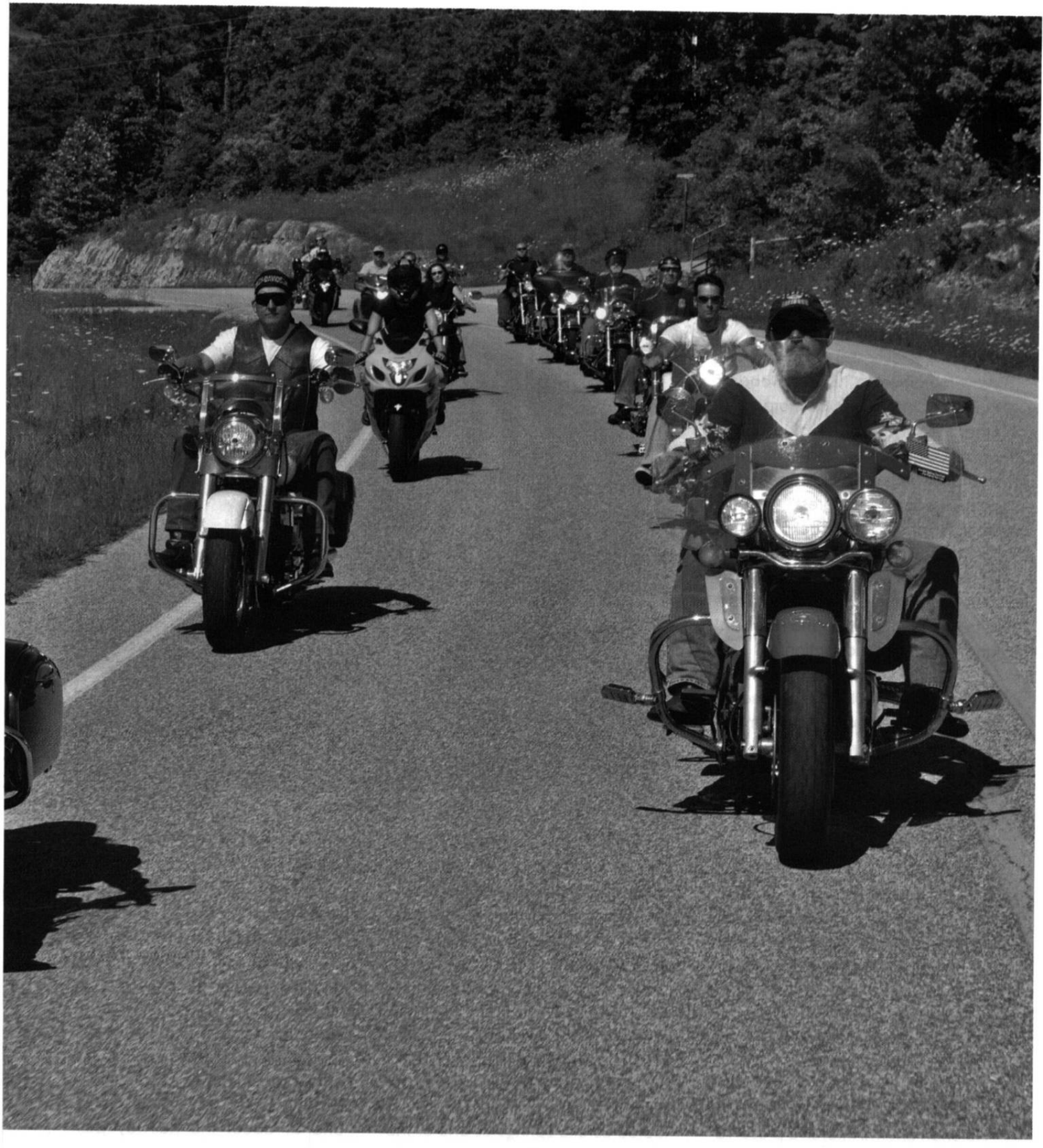
moniker, "The Town that Water Built". Considering its economic and geologic history, this is true in both ways.

Eureka Springs was a boomtown even before incorporation in 1894. The architecture is highly influenced by the Victorian era in which the town began its growth. Laid out on hills and ravines the city would almost make San Francisco look flat and a number of streets wind through the city like a tangled garden hose. In spite of fires over the years that destroyed numerous historic wooden buildings, often two or more at a time, the city is still full of beautiful and quaint homes and businesses that allow visitors to experience the past. Because "progress" had essentially passed by Eureka Springs the first half of the 20th century, most of the city remains exactly as it was in its Victorian heydays. This makes it a truly special place – the real deal and not just a reproduction.

In the early 1900s, the fortunes of Eureka declined as modern medicines caused the notion of "healing waters" to fall out of fashion and it became just another sleepy little hill town, albeit with great architecture, until the 1960s when artisans and craftsmen – that is, hippies – discovered the unique locale. In addition, an organization called the *Elna M. Smith Foundation* began production of a recreation of the German outdoor drama "Great Passion Play". With these elements as a draw, the Ozark burg once again began to thrive and prosper.

Eureka works hard to maintain its Victorian charm. Intensive preservation is the norm in the Historic District. Repairs to historic buildings must be approved by a commission and carried out in same manner as would have been handled originally and using the same materials as the original, even if newer materials might be superior. That meticulous attention to detail is part of the inherent charm of the place and national organizations often recognize the town. The National Trust recently selected Eureka Springs as one of the top 12 Distinctive Destinations for Historic Preservation.

The quickest way to sample Eureka Springs is to take what is called the historic loop. The loop begins and ends at two different points off U.S. 62. The route winds its way through the heart of the city, changing names at almost every turn of the road. It runs through downtown, past significant portions of the city and at about the halfway point,



it passes by St. Elizabeth Catholic Church and the Crescent Hotel, two of the most impressive of the historic buildings in Eureka. The church is a beautiful building constructed on a steep mountainside. The entryway to the grounds is through the bell tower, down a long walk adjacent to a small, lush, well-manicured garden. The Crescent Hotel, which is reputed to be haunted, sits high above Eureka and commands a spectacular view of the city. It is in perfect turn-of-the-century condition... but with comfort of air conditioning.

Most visitors enjoy spending time strolling the sidewalks and shopping the downtown district's many galleries, shops, and boutiques. Parking, though, is always at a premium, especially on weekends. Fortunately for rider, multiple bikes are, unofficially as of this writing, allowed to park in one metered spot. Just be sure that the last one in feeds the meter or all the offending bikes will be ticketed.

Numerous accommodations are biker-friendly or even cater exclusively to riders. **Rider's Rest** on highway 62 on the eastern edge of town is the newest such resort. **Iron Horse Stables** five miles further east, also on highway 62, is the first motorcycle resort in the Ozarks. Both are converted 1950s era motels and are wonderfully suited for rider lodging.

Eureka Springs is an appealing place. Take the opportunity to explore its many offerings during your non-riding times as much as you spend time in the saddle. Ultimately it's about the ride, of course. Hundreds and hundreds of miles of some of the best riding in the U.S. are within easy access from Eureka. However, there are many rewards in exploring Eureka Springs, not only as the spot in the middle of motorcycling Nirvana, but also for its' historic charm and the amenities of the city.

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When I ride to places outside the Ozarks, I like to go where the local riders congregate. If you want to visit with some of the local hard-core riders and get a few suggestions on their take on the best rides around, then drop by Roscoe's Music Shop and Internet Espresso Bar on West Van Buren (U.S. 62 west) on Saturday between, say 8:00 and 10:00 in the morning. Roscoe Pittenger is a mellowed-out biker from way back. "We have this informal club that meets here," Roscoe says. "And if anyone is thinking about buying a new bike, it's the club members' job to talk him into it," he adds with a smile

In case you miss the club meeting at Roscoe's, here are three (of numerous possibilities) suggestions for great scenery, fantastic twisty roads, and other interesting places to get the Ozark experience while visiting Eureka Springs.

Heart of the Ozarks Route

This is one of the finest routes in the Ozarks. Not only does it take in great

roads but also interesting places.

Here's the technical description of the ride by the numbers:

62 east to Berryville; 21 south out of Berryville to Boxley; 43 north to Ponca on the Buffalo Rover; 74 east from Ponca to Jasper; 7 south to 347 to 123; 123 south through Mt. Judea (pronounced locally as Mt. Judy) to 292; a short ride west on 292 to 21; north on 21 back through Boxley valley to Berryville; back to Eureka on 62.

Highlights

Berryville – if you like a traditional country breakfast, try the Ozark Cafe on the Berryville square. With its scenic square it is about as quintessential a rural-county-seat-town as you will ever find.

Ponca – sits in the north end of the beautiful Boxley Valley on the Buffalo National River. It's normally the farthest point up river where paddlers can put in. The first mile and a half on 74 up the mountain to Jasper is as twisty, fun, and scenic as any road in the country.

Jasper – like Eureka Springs, Jasper was a '60s settlement site for hippies who eventually assimilated into the culture of the hills. However, it's still a unique place and colored by its past, a real jewel in the Ozarks.

Highway 123 – all of Arkansas highway 123 is fantastic. The climb out of Mt. Judea is a carbon copy of the twisty one out of Ponca. All of 123 south to near Clarksville, is a run that has to be experienced to be appreciated. Do not miss this one.

Boxley Valley – this classic valley of the upper Buffalo River is drop-dead gorgeous and home to copious wildlife populations, including a large Elk herd. One focal point of the valley is the quaint and beautiful white clapboard Boxley Church.

The Ozark Divide Run

This route is essentially across the backbone of the Ozarks. Here's the ride by the numbers:

Take highway 23 south, past Huntsville to highway 16; take highway 16 east nearly 150 miles to Clinton. Quickest return is 65 through Harrison, then 62 back through Berryville to Eureka Springs.

This is a favorite ride of many well-informed local riders. They know the traffic is light and of a local variety since nobody in their right mind takes this as a primary east-west route. The route runs through little blips on the map like Nail, Swain, Deer, Pettigrew, Lurton, and Ben Hur. There are only a very few stop signs on Ark 16, but unlike the Blue Ridge Parkway, the speed limit is 55 mph, not a snail's pace 45. A good rest stop is at the junction of Ark 7, 123, and 16 at Lurton. The Hankins General Store there is a stop most riders on these routes make. Highway 16 is essentially the Ozarks Divide, the backbone of the region.

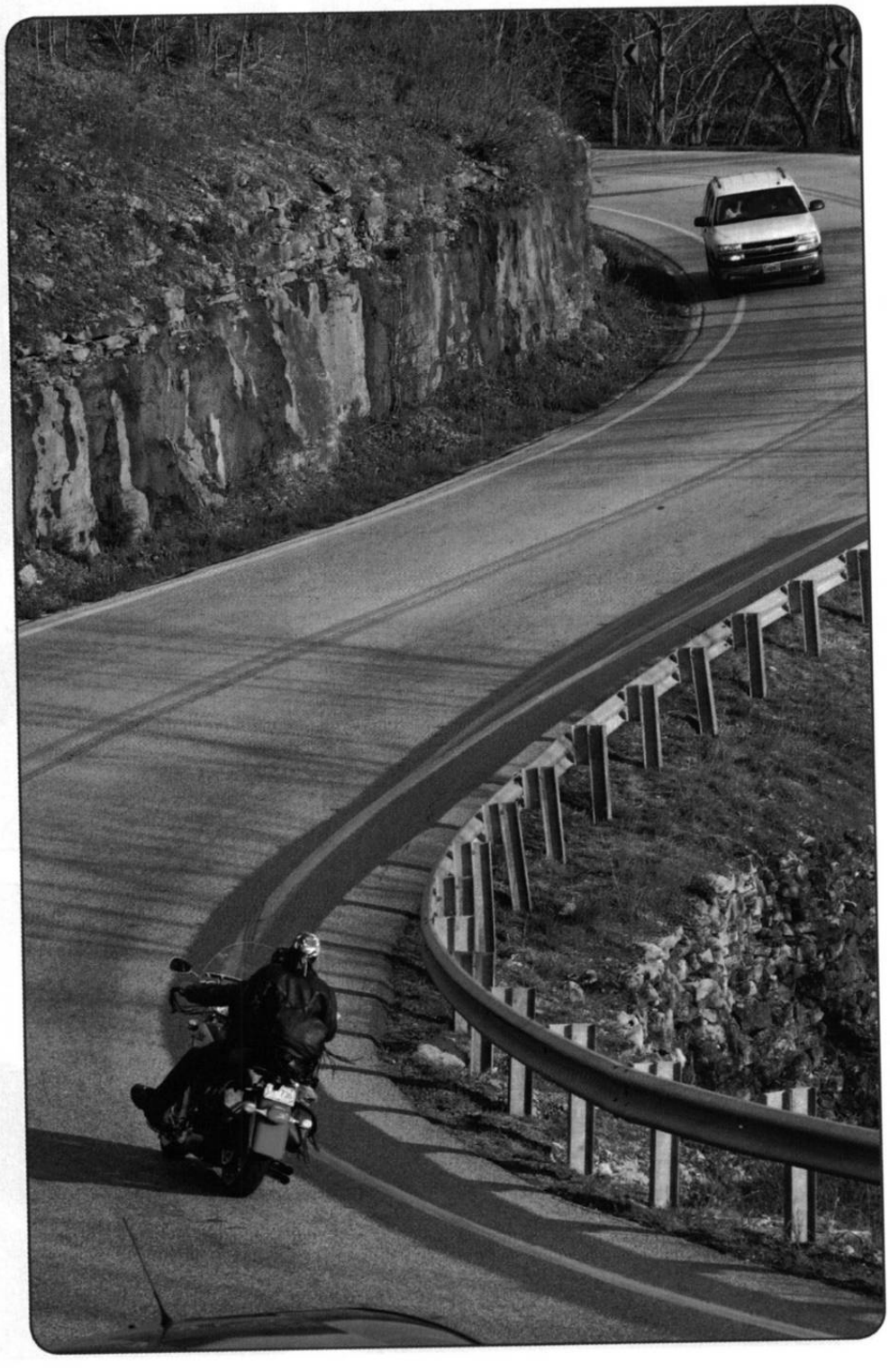
The "Don't Miss" Short Ride

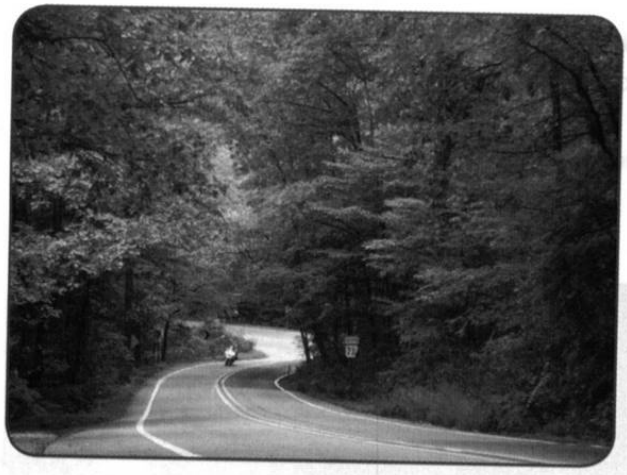
Here's the ride by the numbers:

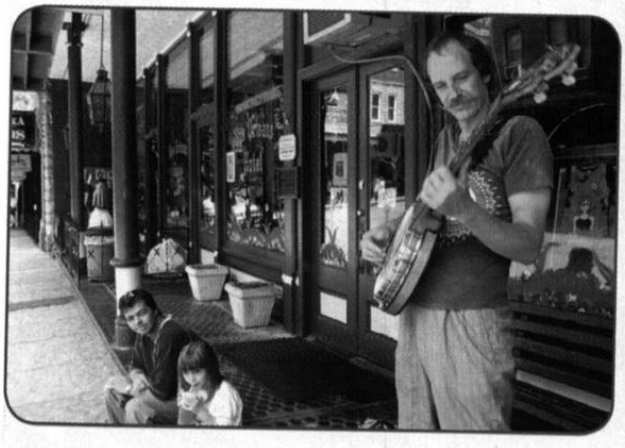
Take U.S. 62 to Berryville; then catch highway 221 south out of town; take County Road 308 (Rockhouse Road) back to Eureka Springs.

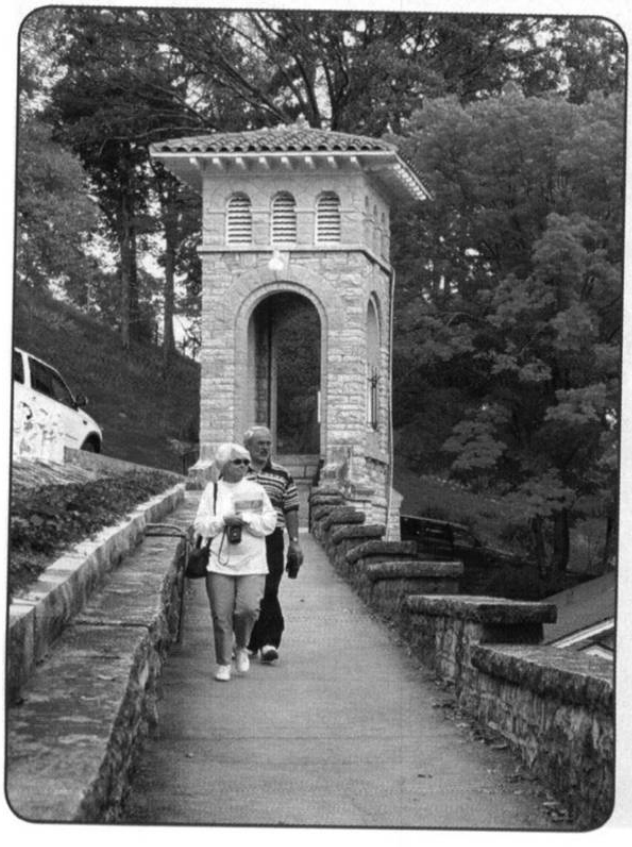
Locals call part of this route "Race Track Road" for good reason. The nine-mile stretch of Arkansas highway 221 south out of Berryville contains just about every type of road and setting any motorcyclist could ask for; long straight-aways, broad sweepers, and tight, knee dragging curves; up hills, over crests, hanging on cliff sides, and down into beautiful valleys that cross the Osage and Kings Rivers. Mile for mile, this ride is my choice for best short ride in the Ozarks – my local riding buddies may do me bodily harm, though, for mentioning this gem.

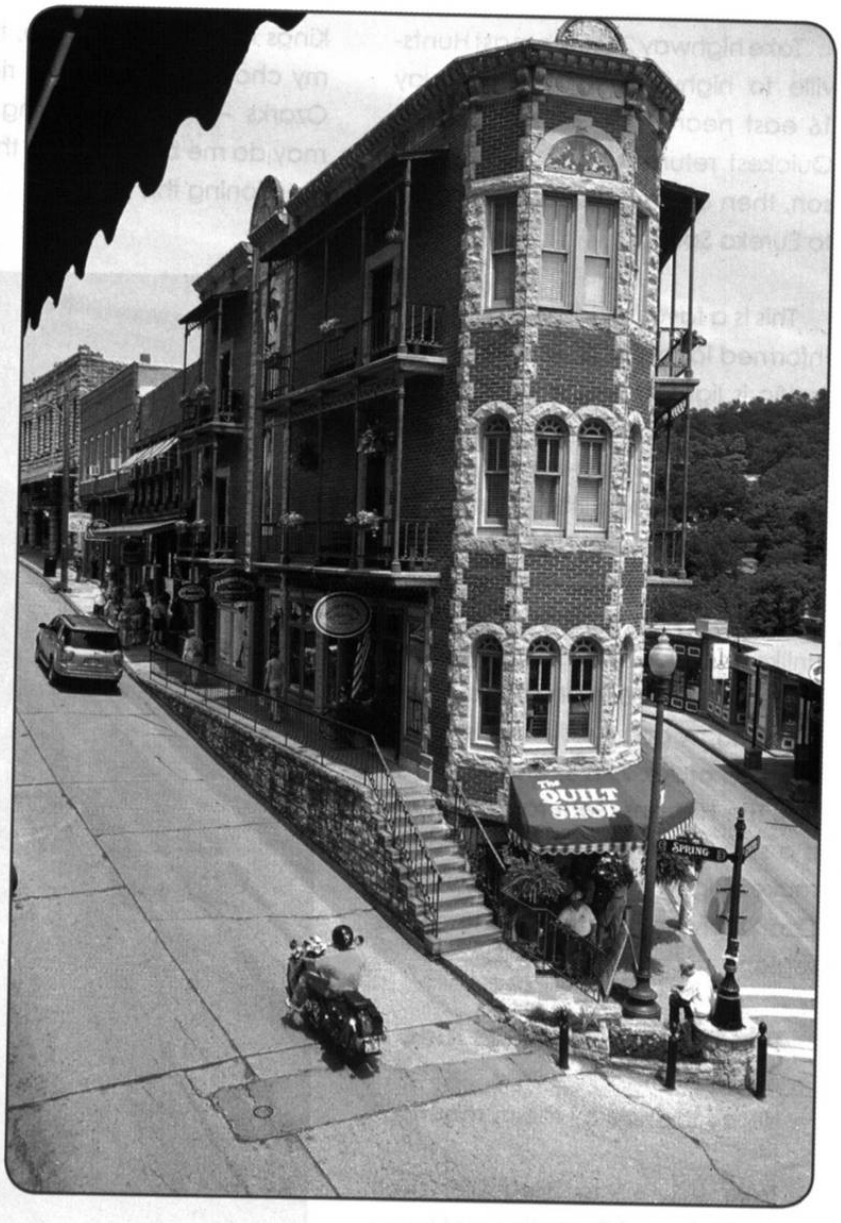
There you have it, an overview of a great motorcycling town, and three rides for the Eureka Springs visitor, a great place both for riding and for afterwards.







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