



**The Alt family  
at Wisconsin Dells.**

# 24 BEST FAMILY REUNION SPOTS

Thinking of getting your family together? You're part of a growing trend (more than a third of us will travel for family reunions in 2008). But where? The answer is not easy, partly because the questions are different when planning for a big group. Here's help. Armed with 21 years of Midwest travel expertise, we looked at vacation spots, as well as cities and areas that may surprise you. Our research turned up 24 destinations doing exceptional jobs of hosting family groups. Then, we checked out dozens of resorts, hotels and motels in each. Read on for 60 top reunion lodgings. For even more, visit [www.midwestliving.com](http://www.midwestliving.com).

Many of the region's top vacation areas fall in this category. You'll sacrifice some accessibility and convenience, but families will love the range of activities and lodgings.

## TOP PICK BRANSON, MISSOURI

**Appeal** ★★★★★

**Location** ★★★

**Lodging choices** ★★★★★

**Planning help** ★★★★★

**Behind the score:** *There really are lodgings for everyone here, including big, full-service resorts and motels in the midst of Branson's shows and attractions, as well as quieter, small resorts and condominium complexes along Table Rock Lake.*

Music shows, Silver Dollar City theme park and Table Rock Lake bring travelers to this southwest Missouri vacation area. The central location appealed to Shirley King, who lives in upstate New York, and 20 family members driving from all over. Plus, the reunion planners made it easy, Shirley says.

Branson's Chamber of Commerce helps more than 450 family groups a year. After collecting a family's information, staffers send it to some of the more than 200 properties catering to reunions. Thousand Hills Resort, a sprawling complex with 18 championship golf holes, turned out to be the best fit for Shirley's family, giving the golf-loving group a chance to hold a tournament.

To plan your trip: 800/214-3661; [www.explorebranson.com](http://www.explorebranson.com).



### Unraveling the rankings

We liked all the places featured in this story, but compared these four factors to help you choose. Decide what matters most to you, and check our ratings. Five stars is tops; one still is a stand-out!

**Appeal** Will your group want to go there? Established destinations with lots of activities and reputations as vacation spots scored highest.

**Location** Convenience counts, especially when a group is flying in. Proximity to major cities and airports earned points.

**Lodgings** Many reunion groups need a range of lodging types and prices. The top scorers have something for everyone.

**Planning help** Top-rated tourism offices coordinate dozens of reunions a year, provide materials, dedicate staff to planning and even schedule preliminary visits to hotels and attractions for organizers.

### More picks

	Appeal	Location	Lodgings	Planning	Behind the score
<b>Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri</b> 800/386-5253; <a href="http://www.funlake.com">www.funlake.com</a>	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	A popular central location with a wide range of lodging choices—big, busy resorts and quiet cabins.
<b>Brainerd Lakes area, Minnesota</b> 800/450-7247; <a href="http://www.brainerdlakescvb.com">www.brainerdlakescvb.com</a>	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	Premier vacation area known for all sorts of family activities and resorts as well as cottages.
<b>Door County, Wisconsin</b> 800/527-3529; <a href="http://www.doorcounty.com">www.doorcounty.com</a>	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★	A generations-long reputation as a family destination with old-time resorts as well as new condo properties.
<b>Traverse bays area, Michigan</b> 800/940-1120; <a href="http://www.visittraversecity.com">www.visittraversecity.com</a> 800/845-2828; <a href="http://www.boyncountry.com">www.boyncountry.com</a>	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★	Lake Michigan beaches, pretty shore towns full of shops and restaurants and top resorts.
<b>Mackinac area, Michigan</b> 877/847-0086; <a href="http://www.mackinacisland.org">www.mackinacisland.org</a>	★★★★★	★	★★★★	★★	Beaches, parks, historic sites and storied Mackinac Island; motels and grand resorts.



(Above) Table Rock Lake brings travelers to Branson. (From left) Shirley King's family planned a water park outing, golf and a family run at Thousand Hills Resort.

## TOP LODGINGS

Regular peak-season rates are listed; ask about group prices.

### **Branson, Missouri**

**Thousand Hills.** **Loved:** Plush new cabins and planning help.

**But:** It's hilly and spread out. From \$118 (800/697-9472; www.thousandhills.com).

### **Westgate Branson Woods**

**Resort,** on the edge of town. **Loved:** Nicely equipped gathering spaces; lodgings, including bargain motel rooms.

**But:** Drive to attractions. From \$99 (866/610-8990; www.wgbransonwoods.com).

### **Still Waters Condominium**

**Resort,** lakeside. **Loved:** New swimming pool; lodgings, including updated motel rooms; outstanding marina with free water toys and new boats. **But:** Small cafe only. From \$139 (800/777-2320; www.stillwatersresort.com).

### **The Village At Indian Point,**

lakeside. **Loved:** Family-oriented owners; nice condos; indoor gathering space with kitchen next to patio with grills. **But:** Small pool (larger pool planned for summer 2008). From \$135 (800/984-7847; www.villageatindianpoint.com).

### **Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri**

**Tan-Tar-A Resort,** a huge retreat with conference and family business; some lakeside lodgings. **Loved:** Lodgings variety; bargain rates; family activities, including an indoor water park. **But:** Spread out and hilly. From \$99 (800/826-8272; www.tan-tar-a.com).

**The Resort at Port Arrowhead,** medium-size lakeview motel complex near area attractions. **Loved:** Rates include free meals for kids 12 and younger.

**But:** Standard rooms basic. From \$170 (800/532-3575; www.theresortatportarrowhead.com).

**Bass Point Resort,** 25-acre, family-owned, 40-year-old affordable cabin complex along the lake's quieter west side.

**Loved:** Relaxed, friendly vibe; beach along the lake; lots of activities. **But:** Not much close by; towels not provided; some cabin interiors basic. From \$97 (573/374-5205; www.basspoint.com).

### **Brainerd Lakes, Minnesota**

**Grand View Lodge,** historic retreat on huge Gull Lake.

**Loved:** Planning help, beach; range of rooms, cabins, condos; spa and fine dining restaurant. **But:** Pricy. From \$340 (866/867-8939; www.grandviewlodge.com).

**Madden's on Gull Lake,**

sprawling along two miles of shore. **Loved:** Golf; family-friendly atmosphere; activities.

**But:** Lowest-price rooms pretty basic. From \$183 (800/233-2934; www.maddens.com).

### **Kavanaugh's Sylvan Lake**

**Resort,** on a quieter lake south of Gull. **Loved:** New, big cottages. **But:** No restaurant. From \$215 (800/562-7061; www.kavanaugh.com).

### **Door County, Wisconsin**

**Gordon Lodge,** a classic under new ownership on 130 acres on the peninsula's quieter Lake Michigan shore. **Loved:** Setting and outdoor gathering spaces; stylish redone lodge rooms.

**But:** Cabin interiors basic. From \$200 (800/830-6235; www.gordonlodge.com).

**Eagle Harbor Inn,** in the heart of Ephraim along Green Bay.

**Loved:** Apartmentlike suites;

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