

MINIs in the Ozarks 2015



■ Courtesy Gregg Taylor

Motoring in the Arkansas Ozarks is a great thing—just ask any of the hundreds of drivers who make this journey every October. MINIs In The Ozarks is held every fall in the tiny burg of Eureka Springs, and the event has something for everyone to enjoy.

Eureka Springs is a small resort town with a colorful history. There are lots of places to stay at any price point, and a plentitude of things to do while you are there. The town is surrounded by the Ozark Mountains and some of the best motoring roads in the country. Minimal local traffic and a multitude of options make this a great weekend getaway. This year's event was the biggest yet in terms of activities.

The event hosted over 26 unique drives conducted over the course of a three-day weekend. Things kicked off on Thursday, to allow an extra day of opportunity for drive enthusiasts.

The drive menu included the iconic Pig Trail, drives to Crystal Bridges Museum, the Elk Run to the Buffalo River National Park (where you can actually see elk in the wild, as well as picturesque views of the bluffs on the river), a trip to the Fort Smith National Historic site (where "Hanging



Judge" Isaac Parker ruled the rowdy West with an iron fist in the 1800s), a drive to the starting point for Sam Walton's empire, and many others. New this year was a drive to the Dogpatch USA theme park that has been shuttered for many years. Participants in this drive got a guided tour of the facility lead by the current owner of the park. The park was popular in the 1960's and 1970's and featured characters from the Lil' Abner comics.

This year was the best year yet for pure driving opportunities. The MITOx autocross was bigger and better than previous years, and featured some guest





celebrities. The MITO team brought in Ian Stewart, an SCCA champion racing driver and MINI tuner with his own shop, as well as Mike King, also an SCCA champion driver and instructor in the SCCA Starting Line program. Ian and Mike provided both classroom and in-car training for the performance driving offering. "It is a great thrill to have guys like Ian and Mike here this year," said organizer Greg Taylor. "Everyone who participates in this part of MITO will walk away a better driver as a result of the time spent with Ian and Mike" Taylor said. Stewart and King did in-car instruction on the course and ride-alongs with the drivers on the MITOx autocross course. "This is quite an opportunity," said one attendee, "to get instruction from guys of this caliber. It's also a whole lot of fun! We are really looking forward to next year."



Each day of driving concluded with parties sponsored by several clubs. The Midsouth MINIACs, folks from OKMINI, the MINISKirts and AMOK all participated. Club members organized and hosted the events, as well as fundraising for the host club's charity. Raffles and live auctions were held, with major prizes won on Saturday night. This year's big prizes, along with the auction of the hand painted original event artwork done by Gregg Petersen, were two sets of admission tickets to the MINI Motoring School at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The tickets were donated by MINI of Little Rock and MINI USA.

The Halloween party was the gala event this year, with a red carpet recep-



tion and photos. Adults turned into their younger selves as they donned a vast array of creative costumes. "This happens every year at this event: adults love to get dressed up," noted Gloria Girdler from inside her Jabba the Hutt costume.



In addition to all of the events that are available, the town of Eureka Springs provides a wide variety of shopping including everything from specialty pet products (like strollers, beds and clothes) to original artwork from regional artists. Along with the meals and activities provided as part of the event, there are also many good restaurants in town.

All proceeds from the events are given to Camp Aldersgate, a specialized facility located in Central Arkansas that



provides children with serious disabilities requiring medical attention to enjoy a camp experience.

Come and join us in the scenic Ozark Mountains next year for MITO October 20-23, 2016! We look forward to seeing you there! Stay tuned to the MITO website for more details: www.ozarkmini.com. ■

