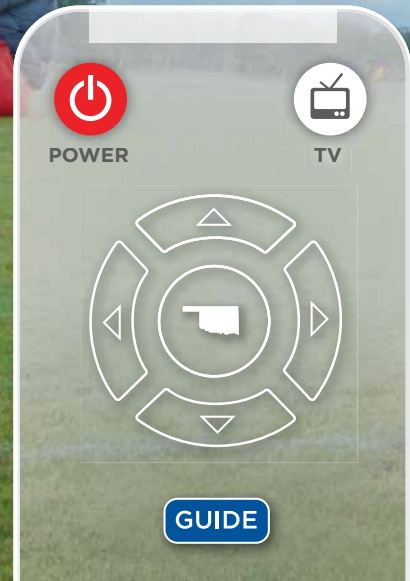


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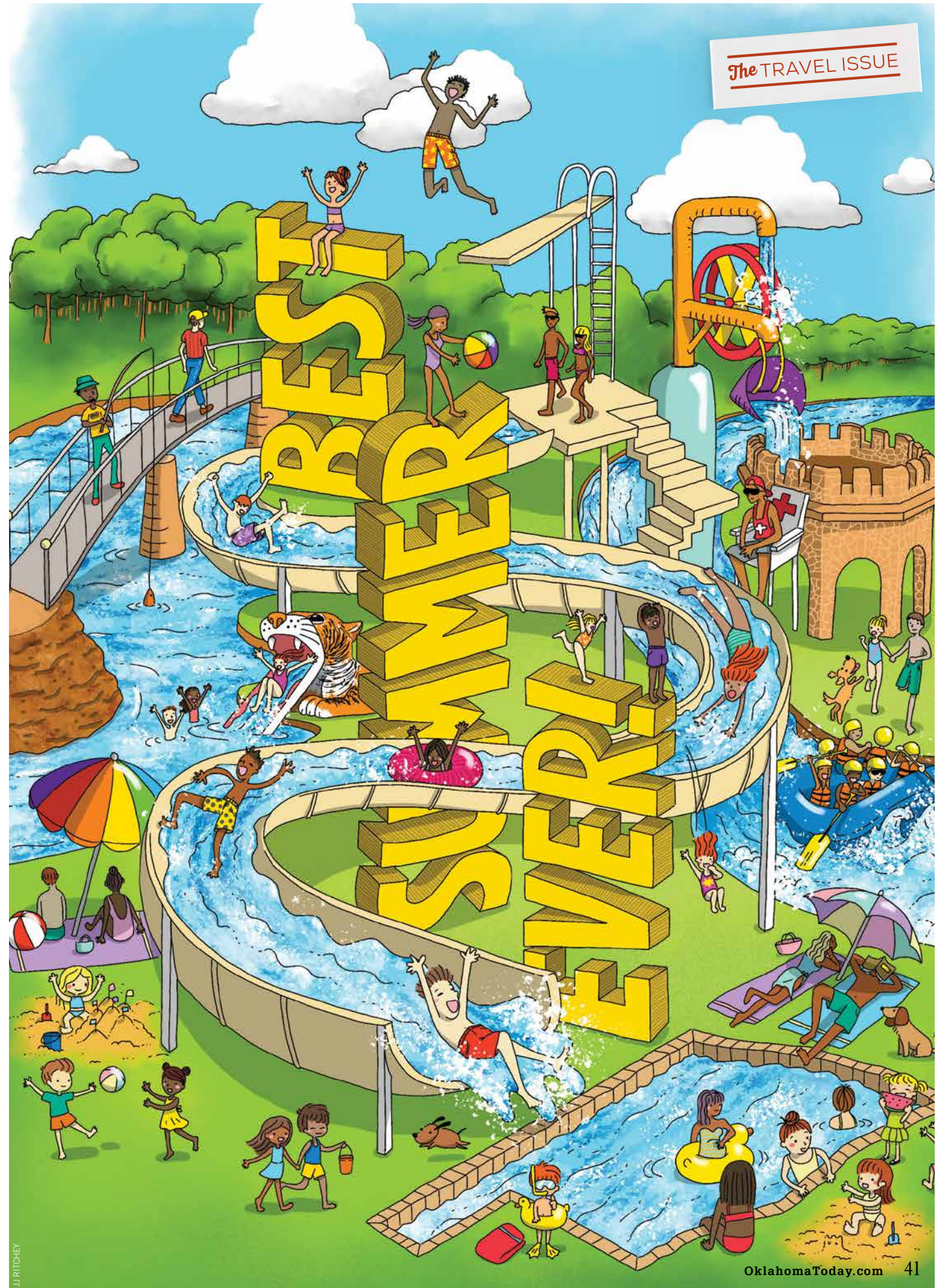
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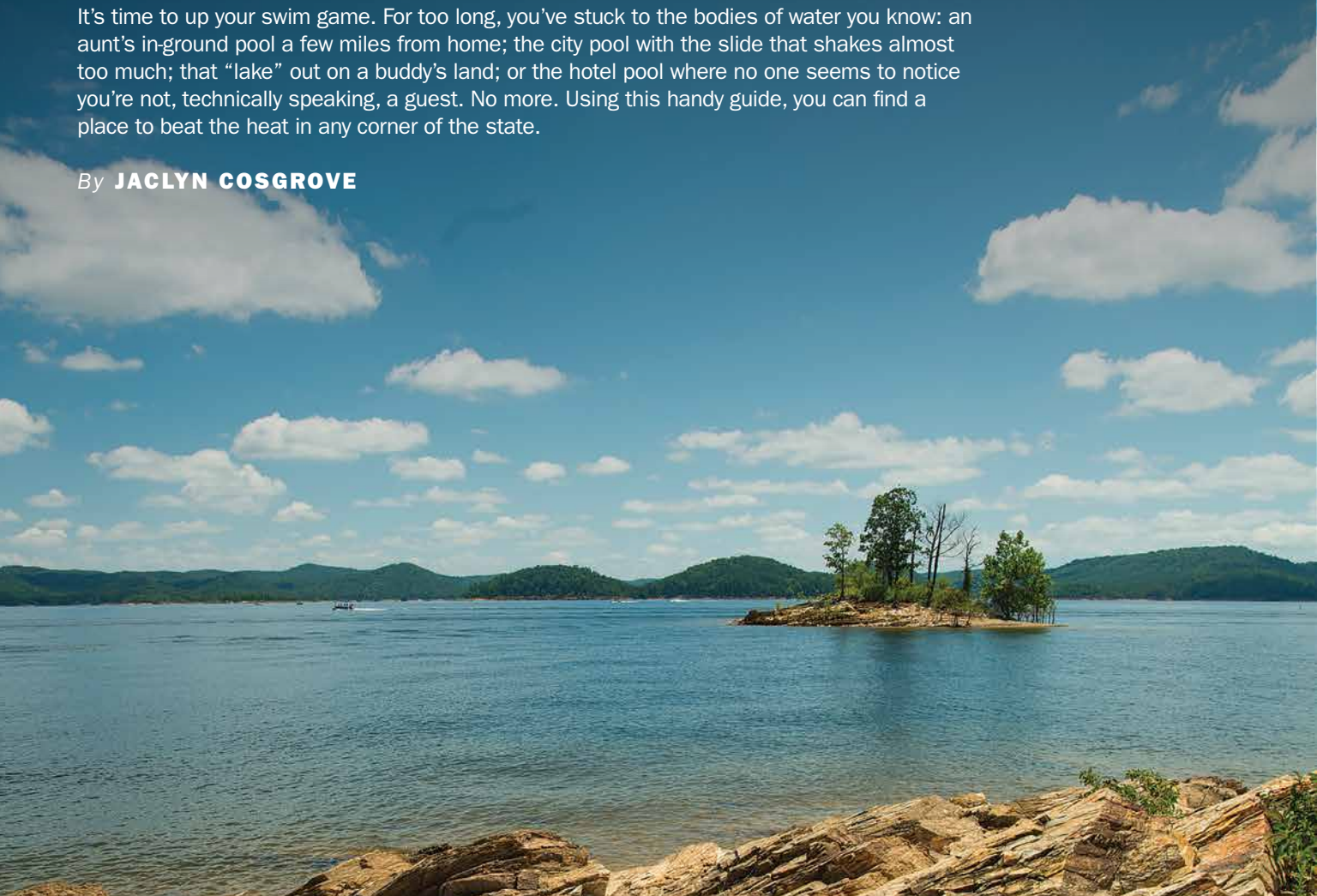
The TRAVEL ISSUE



SUPER SOAKERS

It's time to up your swim game. For too long, you've stuck to the bodies of water you know: an aunt's in-ground pool a few miles from home; the city pool with the slide that shakes almost too much; that "lake" out on a buddy's land; or the hotel pool where no one seems to notice you're not, technically speaking, a guest. No more. Using this handy guide, you can find a place to beat the heat in any corner of the state.

By **JACLYN COSGROVE**



BEAVERS BEND STATE PARK

In the Three Dog Night song "Never Been to Spain," singer Cory Wells notes he has never been to heaven, but he has been to Oklahoma. He easily could have been referencing southeast Oklahoma's rolling hills, thick forests, and deep mountain waters. Here, Beavers Bend State Park's 14,000 acres offer hiking, paddle boating, ziplining, canoeing, skiing, wake boarding, swimming, and fishing. The lake's 180 miles of shoreline also are prime spots for picnics, camping, and bird watching. More intrepid travelers even can rent scuba gear to explore an entirely new world beneath the waves. *4250 South State Highway 259A near Hochatown, (580) 494-6300 or TravelOK.com/parks.*

TRIP TIP: Hochatown, just outside the state park area, is a traveler's dream with spas, wineries, and excellent restaurants including Abendigo's, Grateful Head Pizza Oven & Tap Room, The Moon Tower Bar and Grill, and the Blue Rooster.

HOURS: The park is open year-round, weather permitting.

ADMISSION: Free.

KIM BAKER/OKLAHOMA TOURISM



HEATHER OSBORN

ROMAN NOSE STATE PARK

After a hike along the trails at Roman Nose State Park, cool spring water is a balm. Roman Nose has three springs, including the Big Spring, tucked away near the swimming pool. One of the original seven Oklahoma state parks, Roman Nose showcases features built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s, when workers completed, among other things, a swimming area that still is used today. Along the stream that flows from Middle Spring, visitors will see boulders lining the bank. The CCC placed these dolomite behemoths, and they create picturesque little waterfalls. On Lake Watonga, park visitors also can go canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboating with equipment rented at the Roman Nose General Store. *3236 South State Highway 8A near Watonga, (580) 623-7281 or TravelOK.com/parks.*

TRIP TIP: If you venture into the springs, water shoes will help you navigate the rock floor.

HOURS: Springs open year-round. Pool open seasonally, Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

PUBLIC POOL FEES: 3 and under, free; ages 4-12, \$5; ages 13 and up, \$6; seniors 62 and older, \$3.50.

WENTZ CAMP AND POOL

It feels like something out of an idyllic period in history, and for decades, Ponca City has kept the Wentz Camp and Pool in pristine condition. Constructed in 1928 in the Romanesque Revival style, the pool is fifty feet wide by 150 feet long and goes from three and a half feet deep at one end to ten and a half feet deep under the diving boards. While the kids are splashing around, adults enjoy the scenery: Wentz Camp and Pool sits at the bottom of a steep incline and overlooks Lake Ponca. "It's so nice in the evenings," says Terri Sherbon, Ponca City recreation superintendent. "If you've had a rotten day, you sit and look from the swimming pool onto the lake. It's a relaxing place to be." *2932 LA Cann Drive, (580) 767-0432 or poncacity.gov.*

TRIP TIP: Pack a towel to lay on the steps leading down to the pool. It's the perfect place to relax and read while the kids splash in the water.

HOURS: Open Tuesday through Sunday, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

ADMISSION: Children 12 and under, \$1 (must be accompanied by a parent or guardian). Adults and children 13 and older, \$2.

BRANDON SNIDER/OKLAHOMA TOURISM



RIVERSPORT RAPIDS

Perhaps you have a deep desire to go whitewater rafting but also are fearful of falling off and being left behind to live as a forest person. You're in luck! Just travel to Riversport Rapids near downtown Oklahoma City. This new attraction offers Class II-IV whitewater rafting and kayaking. To start your trip, you'll meet a guide who will teach you how to paddle and remain safe during the adventure. You'll get fitted for a helmet and flotation device, and then it'll be time for fun. A conveyor belt takes guests to the top of the rapids and then—whoosh! Tubing, dragon boating, and stand-up paddleboarding also are available, as is access to the Oklahoma River Trails system popular with runners, cyclists, and even equestrians. 800 Riversport Drive, (405) 552-4040 or riversportokc.org.

TRIP TIP: Wear secure footwear. No flip flops are allowed.

HOURS: Hours vary by season. For more information, visit riversportokc.org.

ADMISSION: Prices vary from \$29 per day for kids up to 7 years of age to \$179 for season passes. Visit riversportokc.org for more information.



LORI DUCKWORTH

GAGE ARTESIAN BEACH

About a century ago, a group of Ellis County residents decided they wanted to drill for oil, but water gushed out of the well instead. Today, that site is home to Gage Artesian Beach. Manager Pat Jacoby notes that this water is rich in minerals, including magnesium, and visitors notice that their skin is softer than when they came. Those with arthritis also find their muscle aches soothed. The pool usually is a heat-busting sixty-eight degrees—with plenty of room to spread out. "It's almost the size of a football field, and there's a natural spring down there," Jacoby says. The sandy-bottomed pool starts out at two feet and slopes to about fourteen feet beneath the high diving board. There's also a low-dive board plus two slides, a basketball goal, and a concession stand with hot dogs, pizza, nachos, Frito chili pies, pretzels, and candy. Nearby, there's a playground with a merry-go-round that's more than a hundred years old. *East Independence Avenue and State Highway 15, (580) 334-8750.*

TRIP TIP: Gage Artesian Beach doesn't accept credit cards, so bring cash.

HOURS: Each day from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day.

ADMISSION: \$2, children 3 and younger, free.



GEORGIA READ



MIKI GALLOWAY/OKLAHOMA TOURISM

CRYSTAL BEACH WATERPARK

So often, summertime water-based activities have a distinctly elementary school bent. Not so at Woodward's Crystal Beach Waterpark. "I think it's kind of unique in that, when they designed it, they gave it different areas for different ages," says Trenton Sunderland, Crystal Beach Waterpark general manager. There are two whitewater slides for older children and adults. There's a play area in the middle of the pool with two slides, random spouts of shooting water, and a giant bucket that soaks all. Younger kids typically hang there. The wading area is a popular hangout spot for toddlers. And the five-lane pool is a place where health-conscious grownups can get in some laps. Anyone wanting a break from swimming can walk over to the nearby miniature golf course, which features a full eighteen holes. 108 Temple Houston Drive, (580) 256-9990 or visitwoodward.com.

TRIP TIP: The concession stand features Dairy Queen treats such as Dilly Bars.

HOURS: Monday-Thursday, noon to 7 p.m.; Friday-Saturday, noon to 8 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. from late May to mid-August.

ADMISSION: \$4, children 12 and younger; \$5 for adults and children 13 and older, \$1 for non-swimmers.

CITY OF MIAMI WATER PARK

Combine the words "Miami" and "water," and thoughts may turn to a place outside the boundaries of Oklahoma. This no longer will be the case after a visit to the City of Miami Water Park. The enormous swimming pool covers 20,000 square feet, and the water park features animal figure slides, aquatic equipment, a forty-five-foot speed slide, and a thirty-five-foot circular slide. A wading pool is available for younger children, who also can take a break from swimming to visit the playground area. Meanwhile, adults enjoy a lounging area where they can catch some rays. 110 Eighth Avenue Southeast, (918) 542-6384 or miamiokla.net.

TRIP TIP: Lockers are available, and there's also a concession stand.

HOURS: Tuesday-Sunday, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., Memorial Day weekend through mid-August.

ADMISSION: Adults 14 and older, \$4; children 13 and younger: \$3.



GARY CROW

WATER-ZOO INDOOR WATER PARK

Oklahoma summers can make five minutes outdoors about as appealing as a pet rattlesnake. Fear not, cabin fever sufferer. The Water-Zoo Indoor Water Park in Clinton always is eighty-three degrees. "We're the only indoor water park in Oklahoma," says general manager Danny Mann. "And we have a new ride called slideboarding. It's an interactive slide that combines video games and water slides." Visitors take an interactive board with four buttons into a slide with twenty-five LED lights. Inside, the colors flash, and riders match that color with the button on the board. It's like the *Guitar Hero* of water rides. The Water-Zoo also offers a shallow pool area for toddlers, a lazy river, and a wave pool. With more than 300,000 gallons of water and 500 feet of water slides, it's impossible not to have a blast. 1900 Boulevard of Champions, (580) 323-9966 or water-zoo.com.

TRIP TIP: BYOT: Bring your own towels.

HOURS: Hours vary by season. Check water-zoo.com to schedule your trip.

ADMISSION: \$15.99 to \$34.99, depending on age of visitor and day of visit.



LORI DUCKWORTH



LORI RIDDLE HOLLOWAY

ILLINOIS RIVER

For decades, Oklahomans have sought out the serenity of the Illinois River and the Oklahoma Ozarks that surround it. The Illinois River begins in Arkansas, but its cool, clear waters wind through more than sixty miles of Oklahoma that are popular for canoeing and kayaking. Longer trips down the Illinois offer interesting and sometimes challenging waters. Meanwhile, the Upper Illinois is easy-flowing with a rock bottom and pebble-lined shores. The state of Oklahoma maintains thirteen areas that provide public access to the river, and fourteen commercial outfitters rent rafts, canoes, and kayaks. Visitors with their own equipment also can float the Illinois by purchasing a private float permit.

TRIP TIP: Bring plenty of water and food for your trip. Also, leave glass and Styrofoam at home.

HOURS: Paddling season is Memorial Day to Labor Day.

ADMISSION: Private float passes are \$1 per day or \$10 per year. Outfitters' prices vary, depending on length and type of trip.

LORI DUCKWORTH



BLUE HOLE PARK

The appropriately named Blue Hole Park encompasses twelve acres near Salina, and its crystal blue waters call to travelers for whom air conditioning isn't quite getting it done. This spring-fed pool usually is around sixty degrees throughout the season—a refreshing dip on a hot summer day. The pool starts shallow and descends to about eighteen feet, and it's common to spot local wildlife—visitors might even catch a crawfish. Sit in the shallow areas to enjoy a small waterfall and flat spots perfect for lawn chairs and tanning. An on-site concession stand sells burgers, snow cones, and more treats. Wanda Chancellor, who has owned the park for forty years, has one rule she is keen on visitors following: "I stomped the alcohol out, and I think that helped it a bunch," she says. 158 N4470 near Salina, (918) 434-5507.

TRIP TIP: Along with swim shoes, lawn chairs, noodles, and rafts, bring cash for admission and concessions.

HOURS: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sunday-Thursday; 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

ADMISSION: \$10 per car.

MEDICINE PARK

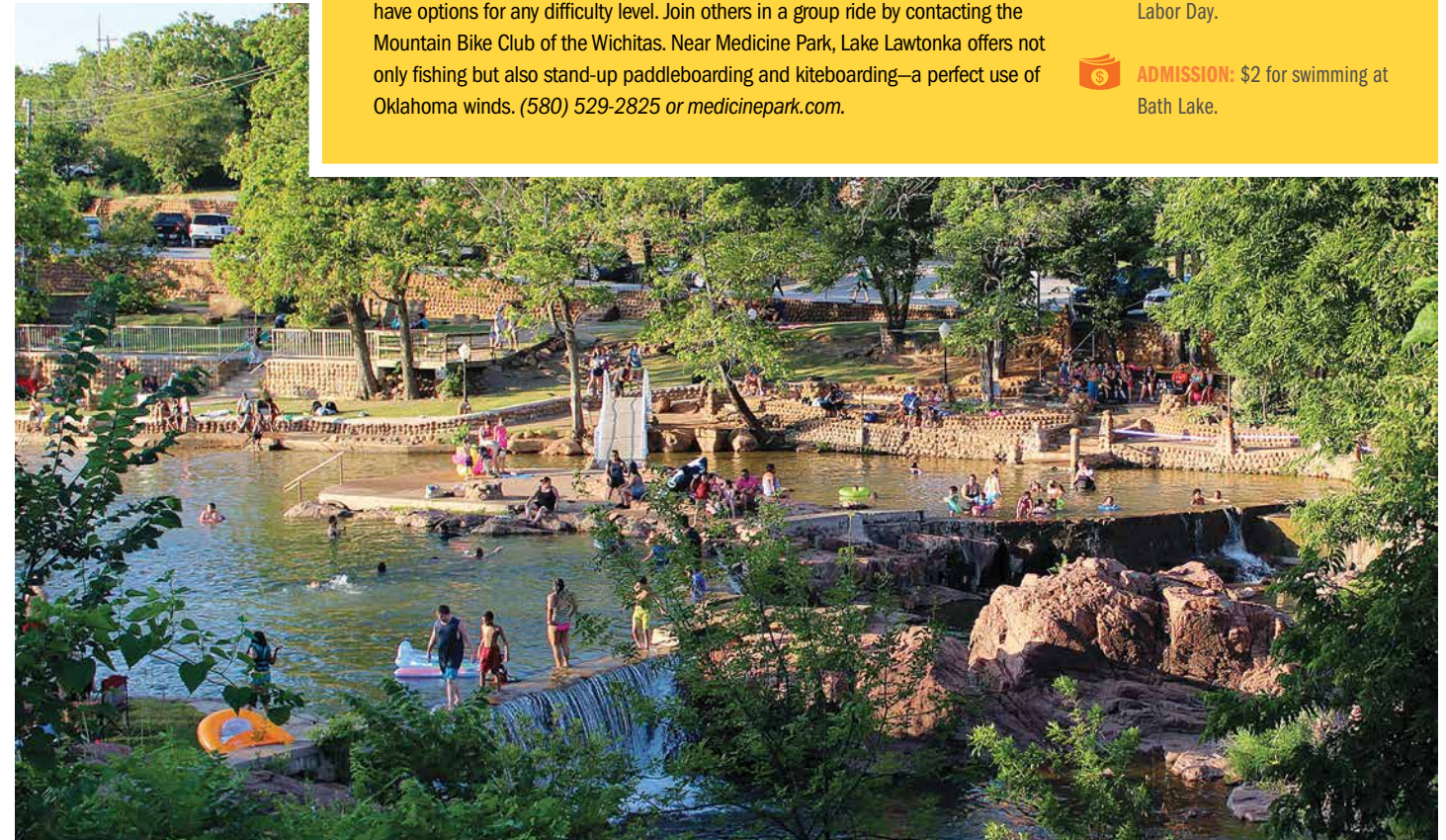
One of Oklahoma's original tourist spots, Bath Lake at Medicine Park offers a quiet getaway among some of Oklahoma's most memorable terrain. Established in 1907, Bath Lake has seen continuous updates to its original architecture including the red cobblestones and granite that give Medicine Park its unique appearance. Swimming at Bath Lake will feel great after biking along the popular Lawton bike trails, which have options for any difficulty level. Join others in a group ride by contacting the Mountain Bike Club of the Wichitas. Near Medicine Park, Lake Lawtonka offers not only fishing but also stand-up paddleboarding and kiteboarding—a perfect use of Oklahoma winds. (580) 529-2825 or medicinepark.com.

TRIP TIP: Stick around for live music at the Mayor's Red Dirt Ball May 26-28.

HOURS: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with lake monitors from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

ADMISSION: \$2 for swimming at Bath Lake.

LILLIAN FISHER



CHICKASAW NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

In 1976, Platt National Park and Arbuckle Recreation Area joined to form the Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Today, Oklahoma's oldest national park offers a full day of fun. Two waterways, Travertine and Rock creeks, offer great swimming within the park. Nearby, the Lake of the Arbuckles is filled with spring-fed clear, cool water and is a great place to go skiing, kayaking, tubing, and wakeboarding. Meanwhile, Veterans Lake, built in 1933, is a sixty-seven-acre lake that's great for small boat use, fishing, and kayaking. With more than twenty miles of trails, visitors have ample opportunity to see wildlife like deer, turkeys, and more than a hundred species of bird within the park's blend of forest and prairie. And while visiting the park, check out the small buffalo herd that calls this land home. 901 West First Street near Sulphur, (580) 622-7234 or nps.gov/chic.

TRIP TIP: Summer weekends can be busy, so take a weekday off for a less crowded swim.

HOURS: The park is open twenty-four hours a day, all year. The Travertine Nature Center and other facilities have variable seasons and hours.

ADMISSION: Free to swim.

ANDREW J. CRANE





GROW CHART

Tracey Payton Miller knows gardens. As a horticulturist with the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service in Cleveland County, she helps Oklahomans turn their backyards into productive miniature farms. With her help, anyone can grow fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, herbs, and more. *The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service has offices in every county in the state. oces.okstate.edu.*




BUG LOVE
A single ladybug can eat up to fifty aphids a day, says Payton Miller. Worried about stings from bees and wasps? "Go out and do your harvesting and weeding in the morning when they're not as active," she says. And that old saw about marigolds scaring off bugs? They can attract tomato-eating spider mites. Skip them.


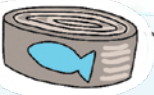
POLLINATORS
For plants like squash and cucumber, it's important to attract pollinators. Payton Miller says African blue basil attracts wasps and honeybees. Flowering mint, catmint, and hummingbird shrub will do the same. If lettuce or broccoli are in the mix, leave one plant to flower and bolt after harvest.

TOMATOES
When transplanting tomato plants, cut the bottom leaves off the plant and bury it deep. The stem will grow new roots, giving the plant access to a greater supply of water and nutrients. Payton Miller protects her own plants by placing bottomless coffee cans around them while they're young.




CRITTERS
To keep raccoons, squirrels, and birds from eating ripe vegetables, Payton Miller recommends picking them before they get ripe. "If you pick the fruit at the first flush of color and let it ripen indoors, that will help you avoid 90 percent of your pest problems," she says.


TIMERS
Timers are inexpensive and take much of the guesswork out of watering. Place a tuna can or a measuring cup under the soaker hose and see how long it takes for it to accumulate an inch of water. Set the timer for that amount of time every two to three days.



SOAKER HOSES
Soaker hoses take the water right where it needs to be—the soil. Sprinklers may soak the leaves but could leave the roots thirsty. The best time to water is around 5:30 or 6 o'clock in the morning—the water has time to get down in the soil before the sun comes out.

SOIL
"One of the biggest mistakes I see after people have constructed their raised beds is overdoing it with nutrients," says Payton Miller. "A little bit of compost goes a long way—usually what we tell people is 70 percent topsoil, 30 percent compost mix in a raised bed."



SEEDING VS. TRANSPLANTING
"It's easier to seed plants that have a large seed," says Payton Miller. Plants like cucumbers, squash, and melons do better when they grow right in the ground, while peppers, tomatoes, and lettuce tend to produce a better harvest when started indoors.

RAISED BEDS
Payton Miller says many gardeners build raised beds. They are easy to construct—many stores sell kits that make it even easier—and they allow for better drainage, make it a snap to amend the soil, and help gardeners avoid trying to grow in red clay or sand common to Oklahoma.

ROAD TO KNOWWHERE

No matter where your summer travel plans lead, these books will take you to every corner of Oklahoma.

By **LEIGHONA BERNSTEIN** and **KARLIE TIPTON**



1. In the latest of his hilarious works, David Sedaris gives readers a glimpse into his personal writing in *Theft By Finding: Diaries 1977-2002*. Sedaris' book tour will come to Magic City Books in Tulsa on June 14. booksmarttulsa.com.
2. Few authors capture Oklahoma summer like Wilson Rawls. *Where the Red Fern Grows* and *Summer of the Monkeys* are two classic stories of discovery, adventure, and heartbreak in the Cherokee Nation near Tahlequah.
3. After the April 30 premiere of the Starz network show *American*

Gods—which was filmed partly in Ponca City, Oklahoma City, and McAlester—viewers may be scratching their heads. Reading Neil Gaiman's chaotic mix of ancient folklore and fantasy won't answer all the questions, but it can prepare readers for the ride.

4. The first book in a trilogy, Tim Tingle's *How I Became a Ghost* tells the story of a Choctaw boy, Isaac, and his experience on the Trail of Tears. On the day he and his family are forced to move, Isaac develops the ability to see the future, giving him a glimpse of the tragedies about to unfold.

5. In 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, the women's basketball team at Oklahoma Presbyterian College in Durant defied expectations to earn the Amateur Athletic Union national title. Lydia Reeder tells this epic sports tale in her book *Dust Bowl Girls*.

6. Ada native Ken Hada's *Bring an Extry Mule* recalls the ties that bind the joy, sadness, and realism of small town life. A raw and authentic examination of life's nuances, Hada's poetry is a deep and fulfilling read perfect for a quiet summer night on the porch.

7. In *Empire of the Summer Moon*, S.C. Gwynne recounts Comanche chief Quanah Parker's birth to onetime captive Cynthia Ann Parker, his battle against American forces, his retirement at Star House, and everything in between. *Star House* is open by appointment. (580) 429-3420.

8. Thomas P. Stafford set a record for traveling the highest speed ever attained by a human—24,791 miles per hour—led the Apollo 10 mission, and commanded the first joint U.S.-Soviet mission. Stafford explores his story in *We Have Capture*, and readers can

learn more at the Stafford Air and Space Museum in his hometown of Weatherford. (580) 772-5871 or staffordmuseum.org.

9. Before the film adaptation won three Academy Awards in 1931, *Cimarron* was an instant classic. The story is set in the town of Osage and the Cherokee Outlet after the Land Run. In 1927, author Edna Ferber stayed at the T.B. Ferguson House in Watonga to gather inspiration. (580) 623-5069 or okhistory.org.

10. *Telegraph Days* by Larry McMurtry is set in No Man's Land in 1876.

Orphan Nellie Courtright and her brother make their way in a new town, and their adventures include a friendship with Buffalo Bill, a shootout at the O.K. Corral, and a run-in with Jesse James.

11. Ponca City native Joyce Carol Thomas' National Book Award-winning *Marked by Fire* starts with a tornado and a prayer. In it, young Abyssinia Jackson learns important lessons of roots, survival, family, and the power she possesses as a woman.

12. Outside of Toni Morrison's 1997 novel *Paradise*, the all-black town

of Ruby, Oklahoma, does not technically exist—though Langston appears to have been its main inspiration. But Morrison stocks *Paradise* with such a rich array of damaged characters and a tragic sense of magical realism that readers may picture themselves walking down Ruby's streets.

13. Oklahoma City writer and editor Pam Fleischaker has worked as a consultant on a number of national political campaigns, and she was vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro's press secretary in 1984. Fleischaker's 2001

book *American Woman: Lost and Found in Oklahoma* is a collection of hilarious essays about the former Washington, D.C., resident's experiences in her adopted home state.

14. Kiowa and Choctaw artist and writer Steven Paul Judd of Norman usually specializes in scripts and screenplays. But in his new book, *The Last Pow-Wow*, co-written with Kiowa and Apache storyteller That Native Thomas, he uses a different format to set the stage for nine storylines that culminate at a powwow in a two hundred-foot-tall, three mile-wide tepee.

COLD WAR

With summer on the horizon, Okie thoughts turn to cool treats on hot nights. Two *Oklahoma Today* editors celebrate Oklahoma's most famous drive-through icons.

BRAUM'S ICE CREAM AND DAIRY STORES

Braum's is among the more cheerful words entrenched in Oklahomans' vernacular. Never used in connection with anything foreboding or scandalous, the name is a harbinger of delicious things to come. Braum's food is hefty, the ingredients identifiable, the ice cream and frozen yogurt tiers above bland soft-serve.

Now in its legacy stage, Braum's doesn't have anything to prove. Its decades-old commercials are a case in point. That familiar, hazy trifecta of hypnotically rotating sundaes reinforces the accompanying lullaby: "Only Braum's gives you so much more." With the exception of a stint with actor Jim Varney in the mid-'80s, Braum's doesn't script heart-warming or humorous commercials to shape its image, because it knows hunger and omnipresence conquer all.

To call Braum's an institution is both redundant and understated. It's like describing outer space as foreign. This chain is an earthbound galaxy uniting people from all walks of life. Ask a group of Oklahoma expats what they miss about the state, and someone will inevitably and understandably pine for Braum's, which has 128 locations in Oklahoma alone. An old-fashioned banana split and a chicken filet sandwich are reasonable demands that don't even require a visitor to vacate a vehicle. Need a bacon-wrapped steak, family-sized lasagna, or even a car sun shade bearing the company's confectionary insignia? The Fresh Market caters to convenience-oriented desires without the supercenter shuffle. And all store locations are within a three hundred-mile radius of the Braum's Family Farm in Tuttle, so it's some of the freshest dairy you can get in these parts without a cow at your disposal.

A few years ago, I met some Italian men at a party who had voyaged across the Atlantic to drive Route 66. When they asked where they should stop for authentic Oklahoma food, I told them they should probably go to Braum's. I don't know if they took my advice, but I like to picture them in a convertible on the Mother Road, a bag of burgers between them, milkshakes hoisted to the sky, rejoicing in the newfound glory of Oklahoma's fast food empire.

—MEGAN ROSSMAN

SONIC DRIVE-INS

When I was living in England more than a decade ago, a coworker asked me what I missed most about Oklahoma. To my surprise, I heard myself blurt out, "Sonic!" Apparently, the distinctly American concept of drive-in fast food had a special place in my heart.

Indulging in gluttony within the privacy of your own vehicle is a special kind of escapism. You're absently, contentedly eating those onion rings while chasing them with a Waffleberry Brownie Master Blast.

What's so compelling about this Oklahoma chain? For the hurried driver, a quick zip to the local Sonic can prevent day-ruining hunger. Oh, those French toast sticks served with a tiny tub of dipping syrup! Those breakfast burritos with scrambled eggs or Breakfast Toasters on Texas toast! Route 44 sodas at any time! A person could eat every meal for a fortnight at Sonic without ever ordering the same item twice.

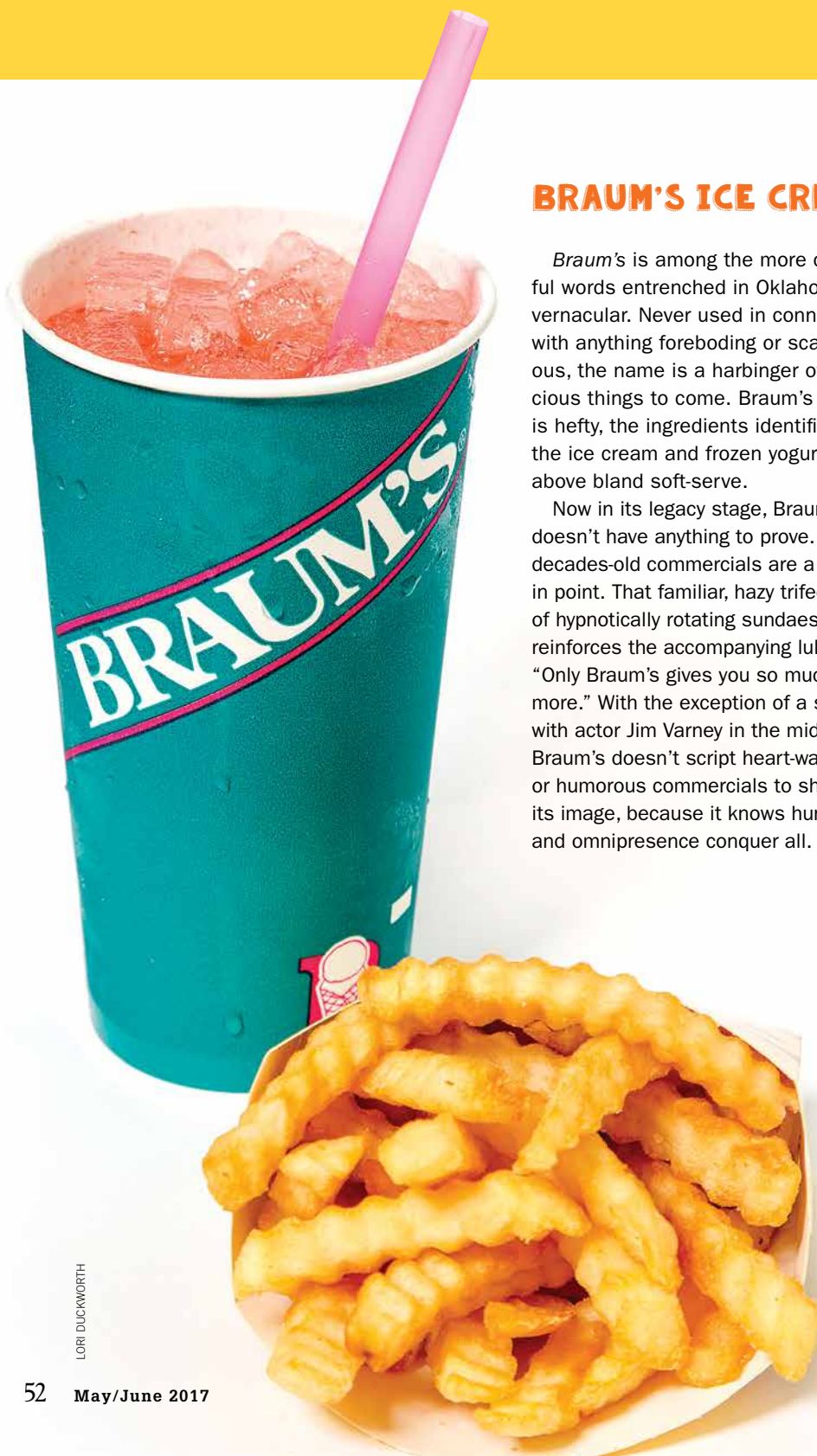
Chili cheese tots, mozzarella sticks, Ched 'R' Peppers, and coneys—the choices can be overwhelming. New creations appear on the lighted car-side menu boards seemingly every month. Bonkers drink flavor combinations like Frozen Blue Raspberry Lemonade are just the tip of the iceberg on the Sonic drink menu: Some genius mathematician decided that there are more than 1.3 million possibilities. My favorite is a mango slush with fresh strawberries added.

Speaking of the drink menu, let us pause for a moment of reverence for Sonic ice. It's crunchy, comforting, and

patented. People even install special copycat ice makers in their homes and call it Sonic ice. It's not. You can, however, get the real thing by the bag.

Sonic also supports educational causes, contributing to youth-oriented fundraisers and encouraging corporate employees to volunteer in local elementary schools. But by far, the largest impact Sonic has made on American culture has been to create a place for small-town teenagers to congregate. Imagine a small town without a Sonic. Where would all the young people hang out? The lyrics to John Mellencamp's "Jack & Diane" just as easily could apply to Sonic as Taste Freez. It's an evocative, consistent, and ubiquitous component of the coming-of-age process for every Oklahoman.

—SARA COWAN



LORI DUCKWORTH



LORI DUCKWORTH