

Column: Culture calls in new tour offerings

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By Dennis Tanner

I've been a fan of MJ Tours ever since taking daughter Amanda on a Thanksgiving weekend to a major art show in Chicago many years ago.

While other travel operators might specialize in cruises, the Caribbean, Las Vegas or Europe, owner MJ Keating concentrates on cultural tours involving museums, galleries, theater or similar activities.

But there's nothing that says you can't mix a bit of light-hearted entertainment with doses of culture, which is what is being offered in a Nov. 30-Dec. 4 motorcoach tour to Missouri and Illinois. On one hand, the tour includes tickets to three popular theaters in Branson, Mo., during its annual Festival of Lights. On the other hand, there are stops at the Gateway Arch, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, the Old Courthouse and the Cathedral Basilica in St. Louis as well as visits to the Lincoln Presidential Museum and a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house in Springfield, Ill.

Priced at \$740 per person, double occupancy, it includes all meals, transportation, attraction tickets and four nights' lodging.

To find out more about the trip, a tour of Greece in October or other packages, call MJ Tours, (231) 796-0177, or visit <http://www.mjtoursllc.com>.

I can't help but love a tour that visits the museum of one of this country's beloved presidents and also the Christmas show of a Shoji Tabuchi, a high-energy Asian violinist whose regular shows are known for evoking high levels of patriotism.