

ARKANSAS

GROUP TRAVEL PLANNER

2020 EDITION

ARKANSAS FILLED WITH
WORLD-CLASS MUSEUMS,
OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

HIDDEN GEMS OF
SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS
Stunning views and treasures
can be found here



**FAMOUS FACES,
SCENIC PLACES**

Explore beautiful scenery, get a glimpse into
the lives of well-known figures



WELCOME TO ARKANSAS!

“HERE, YOU CAN
TAKE PART IN
EXPERIENCES FOUND
NOWHERE ELSE
IN THE WORLD.”



We look forward to hosting your group in The Natural State!

From the breathtaking beauty of the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains, to the history and culture of the Delta, to the urban amenities of our capital city of Little Rock, there are adventures for all ages in The Natural State.

Here, you can take part in experiences found nowhere else in the world. Dig for diamonds and keep what you find at Crater of Diamonds State Park. Take a ghost tour through the Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs or learn about the wild, wild west in Fort Smith. Tour sites that commemorate Arkansas’s native sons Bill Clinton and Johnny Cash. You can also visit Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art or the Walmart Museum, both in Bentonville.

And don’t forget our outdoor activities. Arkansas is known as The Natural State for a reason! Hiking, camping, floating, rock-climbing, mountain biking and cycling are just a few of the many outdoor options waiting to be discovered in our great outdoors. The state is home to seven national park sites, including the Buffalo National River, the first in the nation. Arkansas is also home to Hot Springs National Park, the first land set aside for protection by the federal government.

The possibilities are endless in Arkansas. Enjoy your visit!

Sincerely,

Jessica Ledbetter
Sales Manager
Arkansas Tourism



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FAMOUS FACES AND SCENIC PLACES

Explore some of Arkansas's most beautiful scenery and get a glimpse into the lives of a few well-known figures

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VISTAS, CHARMING TOWNS MAKE MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

Fill your North Central/Northwest Arkansas itinerary with world-class museums and outdoor adventures

By Dave Bodle

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HAVE FUN AND LEARN ABOUT HISTORY IN CENTRAL ARKANSAS

Museums, baseball and even an old mill are enticing attractions in this charming region

By Lauren Wong

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HIDDEN GEMS OF SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS

This region is where stunning views, little-known histories and treasures unfold

By Lauren DeLorenzo

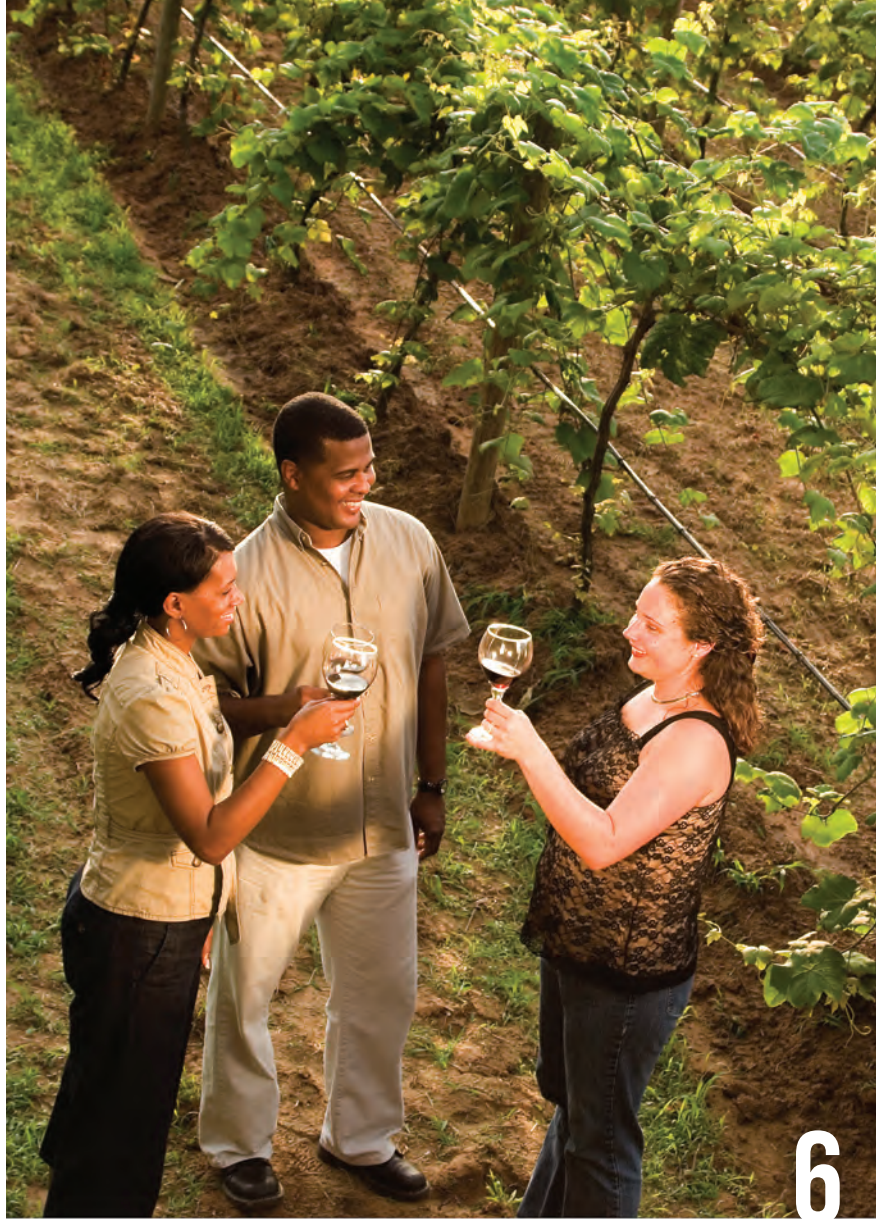
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ARKANSAS DELTA FILLED WITH CULTURE

Nature, history and Johnny Cash's childhood home can be found in the Delta region

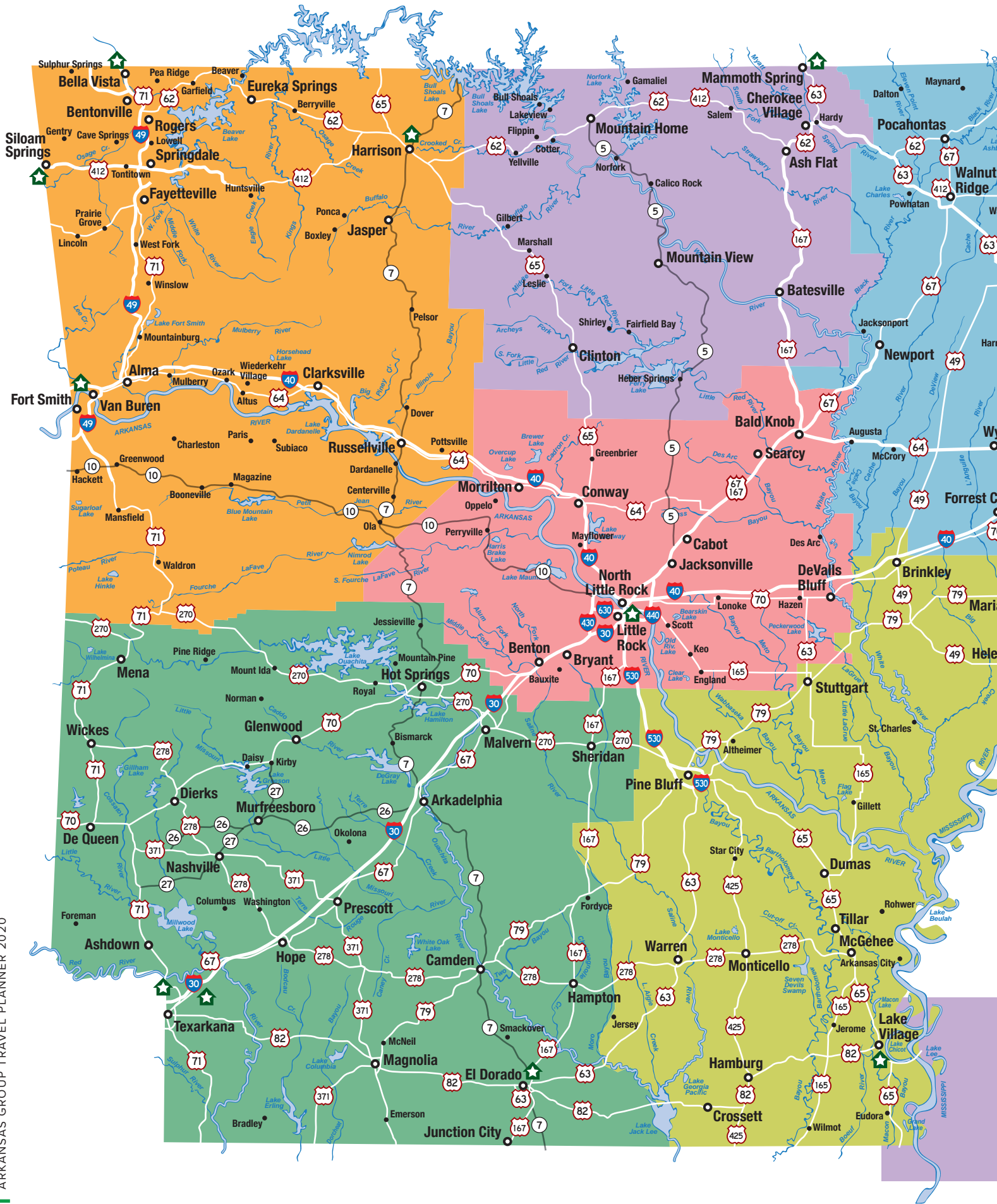
By Jaylyn Fahey

ON THE COVER: The historic Melba Theater, movie house and concert venue. (Photo courtesy of Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism)



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**FLYING MAKES
ARKANSAS
ACCESSIBLE WORLDWIDE:**

**Bill and Hillary Clinton
National Airport (LIT)**

Little Rock, AR
clintonairport.com
 p: 501-372-3439
 Six airlines (Allegiant Air, American Air Lines, Delta, Southwest, United, Frontier Airlines) offer daily flights to major hubs.

**Northwest Arkansas Regional
Airport (XNA)**

Bentonville, AR
flyxna.com
 p: 479-205-1000
 Five airlines (American Airlines, Delta, United, Allegiant Air and Frontier Airlines) service XNA.

WHETHER YOU DRIVE OR FLY, THE NATURAL STATE WORKS WELL FOR GROUPS

The Arkansas Department of Transportation welcomes you. Here are some rest areas.

■ BELLA VISTA

(1.1 miles north of U.S. Highway 71 B)
arkansas.com/place/bentonville-welcome-center
 p: 479-855-3111
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available 24/7

■ HARRISON

(1.9 miles south of Bear Creek Springs)
arkansas.com/place/harrison-welcome-center
 p: 870-741-3343
 • Monday through Friday
 8 am to 4:30 pm

■ SILOAM SPRINGS

(0.25 miles east of U.S. Highway 59)
arkansas.com/place/siloam-springs-welcome-center
 p: 479-524-4445
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available 24/7

■ VAN BUREN

(Mile Marker 2.6)
arkansas.com/place/van-burenfort-smith-welcome-center
 p: 479-474-9512
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms and vending machines available 24/7

■ MAMMOTH SPRING

(0.2 miles south of Missouri state line inside Mammoth Spring State Park)
arkansas.com/place/mammoth-spring-welcome-center
 p: 870-625-7364
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available only during business hours

■ CORNING

(2.7 miles north of State Highway 328)
arkansas.com/place/corning-welcome-center
 p: 870-857-6014
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available 24/7

■ WEST MEMPHIS

(Mile Marker 278.4, Exit 279-A)
arkansas.com/place/west-memphis-welcome-center
 p: 870-735-3637
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms and vending machines available 24/7

■ TEXARKANA

(Mile Marker 7.1)
arkansas.com/place/texarkana-welcome-center
 p: 870-772-4301
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (until 6 p.m. Memorial Day through Labor Day)
 • Restrooms and vending machines available 24/7

■ EL DORADO

(Intersection of U.S. Highway 82 and U.S. Highway 167)
arkansas.com/place/el-dorado-welcome-center
 p: 870-881-9160
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available 24/7

■ RED RIVER

(0.4 miles north of State Highway 108)
arkansas.com/place/red-river-welcome-center
 p: 870-772-7511
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available 24/7

■ HELENA-WEST HELENA

(1 mile west of the Mississippi River)
arkansas.com/place/helenawest-helena-welcome-center
 p: 870-338-7602
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available 24/7

■ LAKE VILLAGE

(Intersection of U.S. Highway 65 and State Highway 159)
arkansas.com/place/lake-village-welcome-center
 p: 870-265-5832
 • 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily
 • Restrooms available 24/7

THESE ARKANSAS AMERICAN BUS ASSOCIATION MEMBERS PROVIDE CHARTER AND TOUR SERVICES:

Arkansas Destinations, Inc.
 Little Rock, AR
ardestinations.com
 p: 501-603-0113

Francis Custom Tours Inc.
 Arkadelphia, AR
franciscustomtours.com/FCT_ContactUs.htm
 p: 870-246-3366

Jonesboro Travel Cruise & Tour
 Jonesboro, AR
jonesborotravel.com
 p: 870-932-2060

Little Rock Coaches
 Little Rock, AR
littlerocktours.com/coach-services
 p: 501-868-7287

Pinnacle Charter & Tours
 Rogers, AR
pinlimo.com
 p: 479-205-0505

Trump Tours Inc.
 Bentonville, AR
trumpgroups.com/contactus.html
 p: 479-271-9898

FAMOUS FACES *and* SCENIC PLACES

Explore some of Arkansas' most beautiful scenery and get a glimpse into the lives of a few well-known figures that helped shape The Natural State

AT A GLANCE:

Duration: 5 days

Available: Year-round

Places Explored: Hot Springs, Little Rock, Altus, Mt. Magazine State Park, Bentonville, Rogers and Fayetteville

This Itinerary is Ideal for: Adults over 21



Day 1

HOT SPRINGS

Start your day in Hot Springs on historic **Bathhouse Row** retracing the steps of 20th century crime bosses like Al Capone. The **Gangster Museum of America** exhibits highlight Hot Springs' connection to infamous outlaws from across the country. Another fascinating exhibit is "**The Boys of Spring,**" featuring the beginnings of baseball's spring training in Hot Springs. Legends such as Babe Ruth and Cy Young enjoyed the healing thermal spas. Bathhouse Row itself still offers the same relaxing experience. The **Buckstaff Bathhouse** does the traditional baths and is one of the eight bathhouses that comprise this designated National Historic Landmark District.

After visiting Bathhouse Row, a stop at **Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort** will give guests the opportunity to enjoy horse racing, sports wagering, live music and a casino. Following the races, a dinner cruise on **Lake Hamilton's Belle of Hot Springs** is a perfect ending to your day.

Day 2

LITTLE ROCK

After breakfast, check out of your Hot Springs hotel and depart for Little Rock.

Arrive in Little Rock, Arkansas' state capitol. Here, you can walk in the steps of a president at the **Clinton Presidential Library and Museum**. View an exact replica of Bill Clinton's Oval Office and Cabinet Room, as well as photographs, videos, documents and an interactive timeline highlighting domestic and foreign policies and the Clintons' lives in the White House.

View another important historic landmark at **Little Rock Central High School Historic Site**, one of the Top 10 Civil Rights Sites in the United States. The only high school functioning within the boundaries of a National Historic Site, the school and museum are a testament to the nine African-American students who integrated into the all-white school as a test of the Civil Rights act in 1957.



Across the river in North Little Rock, you will find **The Old Mill**. This replica grist mill, set in a lushly landscaped park, appeared in the opening scene of the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind* and remains one of the area's most-visited attractions.

Check into any group-friendly hotel in the area. Finish the day with an **Arkansas Travelers** baseball game at **Dickey Stephens Park** or a dinner show at **Murry's Dinner Playhouse**.

Day 3

ALTUS AND MT. MAGAZINE STATE PARK

Enjoy breakfast and depart for Altus and Arkansas' wine country.

Arkansas is the oldest and largest grape juice and wine-producing state in the southern United States. Drawn by the **Benedictine of Subiaco Abbey**, a colony of German-Swiss immigrants settled in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains and began growing grapes in the 1870s at Altus in Franklin County. Experience true farm-to-table dining at **Post Vineyards' Trellis Room**, where local flavor is grown right outside the kitchen. Then tour **St. Mary's Catholic Church**, famous for its murals adorned with gold leaf, painted by a German artist Fridolin Fuchs during World War I, with Altus residents serving as models. Visit one (or all!) of the six wineries operating in Altus, **Post Winery**, **Wiederkehr Wine Cellars**, **Mount Bethel Winery**, **Chateau Aux Arc**, **Dionysus Wine** and **Brew and Neumeier Winery** for a tour and tasting.

After experiencing the vineyards of the Arkansas River Valley, stay overnight at the highest point in Arkansas, **The Lodge at Mount Magazine**. From its setting on the mountain's south bluff, the lodge offers breathtaking views of the Petit Jean River Valley and Blue Mountain Lake in the distance.

Day 4

BENTONVILLE

Arrive in Bentonville. While in town, be sure to check out **Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art**, opened in 2011 by the Walton Family Foundation. Crystal Bridges' permanent collection spans five centuries of American masterworks ranging from the Colonial era to the current day. **21c Museum and Hotel** adds another artful element to the Bentonville scene with more than 12,000 square feet of gallery space that adjoins this 104-room boutique hotel and world-class restaurant **The Hive**. Downtown Bentonville is among one of only seven other cities to house such a unique place to stay and play.

Come and play at the **Scott Family Amazeum** children's museum and be wowed by the 50,000 square feet of hands-on exhibits and tinkering space. Take a walk down memory



Clinton Presidential Library and Museum

lane at the **Walmart Museum** inside the original 5&10 opened in downtown Bentonville in 1950. Have a soda or a milkshake at **Spark Cafe** located right next door. Take time to see and explore what life was like as far back as 14,000 years ago at the **Museum of Native American History** showcasing one of the most comprehensive artifact collections in the South.

Day 5

ROGERS AND FAYETTEVILLE

Breakfast at your hotel before departing for Rogers. Brick-paved streets lead to old-fashioned storefronts filled with unique furniture, antiques and gifts, cafes, jewelry and business offices in the historic downtown of Rogers, Arkansas, which encompasses about eight square blocks. The **Daisy Airgun Museum**, home to the world's largest collection of antique airguns, and the **Rogers Historical Museum** are also located here. Lunch is at any of Rogers' downtown cafes.

Your busy day continues in Fayetteville. Visit **Terra Studios**, home of the Original Bluebird of Happiness with glass-blowing demonstrations at **The Bluebird House Gallery**. Fifty regional artists of American arts and crafts are represented at **The Muse Gallery and Coffee House**. Explore the unique **Art Park** with sculptures, murals, art installations, fountains, labyrinth, picnic areas and walking paths.

Keep your group entertained in the evening with performances at the **Walton Arts Center** and **TheatreSquared**. Every sort of production makes stops at these two live performance hallmarks.

VISTAS, CHARMING TOWNS MAKE

Memorable EXPERIENCES

Fill your North Central/Northwest Arkansas itinerary with world-class museums, outdoor adventures, faith-based attractions and the heritage of the Ozark Mountains

By Dave Bodle





★ EUREKA SPRINGS

Old-world charm has placed the entire downtown on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic homes and the 1905 Basin Park Hotel embrace the cliffs, while one-of-a-kind shops from art galleries, boutiques, crafts and extraordinary dining line Main Street.

The Great Passion Play is “America’s No. 1 Attended Outdoor Drama,” according to the Institute of Outdoor Theater and Drama of East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. A cast of 150 costumed actors and supporting staff tell the epic story of Jesus Christ’s last days. Additional attractions on the site are the Holy Land Tour, Christ of the Ozarks statue, museums, trails and a spectacular Christmas drive-through light display. The 2020 season begins in April and continues through October. Nearby Thorncrown Chapel is an architectural must-see.

The Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge’s mission is to rescue abandoned, abused and neglected big cats. Nearly 100 animals, including tigers, lions, leopards, cougars and others are housed.

★ ROGERS

Encompassing almost eight square blocks, Rogers’ historic downtown certainly has its share of specialty shops from furniture and antiques to gifts and jewelry. Blend some interesting cafes into the mix and your morning is set. Fill the remainder of your day with these uniquely Rogers attractions.

Long before the mother’s famous *A Christmas Story* quote, “You’ll shoot your eye out,” Daisy airguns were on many little boys’ and girls’ Christmas lists. Plenty of those wishes came true. Located on a downtown corner, the Daisy Airgun Museum is a must stop for fans and collectors. Daisy airguns are part of the American story. Visitors learn about the early history of Daisy and its move to Rogers in 1958. You’ll walk through more than 130 years of history viewing 18th century guns and Daisy guns from 1888 to today.

Not to be missed, the nearby Rogers Historical Museum’s expanded campus encompasses four blocks of downtown Rogers. Its collection of artifacts tells much of the story of Northwest Arkansas. As your day comes to an end enjoy dinner downtown before an evening at The Victory Theater. Opened in 1927 and closing its doors in the early 1970s, the City of Rogers

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

purchased the theater in 2008 with the support of civic-minded donors and volunteers.

Let day two of your Rogers stay fulfill your outdoor wants with a visit to Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area. Arkansas' largest state park features hiking and biking trails, a shooting range and a visitor center with interpretive programs and exhibits focusing on the park's natural resources.

✦ BENTONVILLE

You'd be hard-pressed to find any other city comparable to Bentonville. This city of 50,000 certainly has a proud history as the headquarters for retail giant Walmart. It's also a city that embraces creativity, the outdoors and honors the area's first inhabitants.

The Walmart Museum tells a fascinating story of an American icon. After serving in World War II, Sam Walton and wife Helen bought their first Ben Franklin store in Newport, Arkansas. The museum tells the story of what followed from the move to Bentonville, the booming 1950s and the founding of Walmart in the 1960s through today's new commitments. Many years before the Walton family moved to Bentonville, Paleo Man was the neighborhood's first inhabitant. Through more than 10,000 dynamic artifacts, the Museum of Native American History traces from the Paleo

period through the Archaic, Woodlands, Mississippian, Historic and Pre-Columbian periods.

Architecture, nature and art present a glorious combination at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Before entering the building, visitors are treated to the

stunning architecture set in harmony with the Ozarks. Eight trails wind their way around the building. In addition to the permanent collections on display, the museum regularly hosts temporary exhibitions.

✦ FAYETTEVILLE

Home to the University of Arkansas, this university town is a cornucopia of entertainment, culinary delights and attractions. US News has regularly ranked Fayetteville as one of the Top 5 Best Places to Live.


Keep your group entertained in the evening with performances at the Walton Arts Center and TheatreSquared. Every sort of production makes stops at these two live performance hallmarks. This is a university town, so there's plenty of live music and hot spots to choose from. The culinary scene is extensive and makes the choices challenging. From BBQ and burger joints to fine dining American and international restaurants, you won't go hungry in Fayetteville. The Botanical Garden of the Ozarks features 12 gardens each with its own theme. Each garden is designed to inspire visitors and residents in their home gardens.

Home to the original Bluebird of Happiness and the Pink Bird of Hope, Terra Studios is dedicated to a better world through art. It just might be all fun and games. In the six-acre Art Park, visit with sculptures of fantasy people and play a giant game of chess or checkers. Experience the labyrinth and spend time in the wizard cave.

✦ FORT SMITH

In the beginning, Fort Smith was the last breath of civilization before settlers and law enforcement ventured into Indian Country. Arkansas' second largest city embraces its past, but also celebrates the present with arts and culture, shopping and a diverse restaurant scene.

Step back in time to the mid-1800s. Welcome to "Miss Laura's Social Club." The only remaining house of ill repute from Fort Smith's Old West red-light district, it now serves as the visitor center. The Victorian mansion is fully restored and now sits proudly as the



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LindaBoxSales@gmail.com

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only bordello on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Fort Smith National Historic Site visitor center has plenty of tales to tell. Its location was originally a barracks but was converted into a courthouse and jail. It was from this courthouse that Judge Isaac Parker sent many an outlaw to the nearby gallows. Not to be missed, The Trail of Tears Overlook paved half-mile path parallels the Arkansas River.

During this boisterous period in Fort Smith's history, the only law in the Indian Territory was the U.S. Marshals. To honor the marshals' service that worked out of Fort Smith, the city's successful bid to build the United States Marshals Museum was granted. The building and Samuel M. Sicard Hall of Honor opened in September of 2019. The exhibit experiences have a tentative opening of the first quarter of 2021.

The "Unexpected" brings world-class mural artists downtown for a 10-day festival of murals. A windshield tour is an absolute must, but you'll appreciate the breath of these works when you get off the coach. While downtown, take advantage of the city's place as a crossroads of cultures and enjoy the culinary expressions they brought.

★ MOUNTAIN VIEW

Home to Ozark Folk Center State Park and the state's

largest craft cooperative, Arkansas Craft Guild, Mountain View maintains the crafts and music of the Ozark Mountains. Presented as a living history, the park features more than 20 artisans demonstrating Ozark heritage crafts and musicians displaying their talents. Mingle with the craftspeople whose livelihood is their work.

Just a short distance from Mountain View, groups discover not all beauty is above ground. Blanchard Springs Caverns is an underground world with its own loveliness. Three different guided tours are available depending on your time and adventuresome level.

★ BATESVILLE

With the oldest existing Main Street in Arkansas, Batesville is well worth a visit. The downtown features an attractive streetscape with a historic movie theater, homes and churches, antique and boutique shopping and dining experiences. Race fans need to make a stop at hometown hero Mark Martin Museum and Gift Shop.

Like so many Arkansas small towns, a local college adds to the vibrancy of the community. For two days in April, the college shows its Scottish heritage at the annual Arkansas Scottish Festival. ■



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of Northwest Arkansas!

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EurekaSprings.org

**HAVE FUN AND
LEARN ABOUT**

History
**IN CENTRAL
ARKANSAS**

Museums, baseball and even an old mill are some
of the attractions in this charming region

By Lauren Wong

The Old Mill





With the Ozarks in the northwest, the Ouachita Mountains in the southwest and lakes and caverns across the state, Arkansas' natural beauty is unrivaled. Arkansas' central region is a particularly stellar location for groups, with a myriad of attractions that will appeal to visitors of all ages.

LITTLE ROCK

Bursting with endless activities, Little Rock features a trolley that can take you to most of the city's attractions, so forget parking and hop on the trolley.

If you want to do a good deed, you can start your trip by volunteering at **Heifer International**, an organization that has been working to end hunger and poverty since 1944. Heifer International works towards helping families become self-resilient by providing them with training in sustainable farming, helping farmers gain access to the market and empowering women. Guests can also visit **Heifer Village**, a hands-on, global educational facility that is home to interactive exhibits that provide a stimulating educational experience.

Clinton Presidential Library and Museum



Another popular locale is **Heifer Ranch** in Perryville, a 1,200-acre beacon of transformational education and sustainable agriculture nestled in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains. Guests will gain a deeper understanding of hunger and poverty, sustainable food systems and community development while experiencing a hands-on learning experience.

You can also enjoy a history lesson at the **Clinton Presidential Library and Museum**. Located within the Clinton Presidential Center along the banks of the Arkansas River, this library features rotating exhibits, a replica of the Oval Office and the Cabinet Room and the largest collection of presidential papers and artifacts in U.S. history. Among the permanent exhibits, you will find photographs, videos, documents and interactive stations with a timeline highlighting domestic and foreign policies and life in the White House.

Step foot in Little Rock's oldest urban park, **MacArthur Park**, to visit the **Arkansas Art Center** and **MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History**, both of which are located on this 36-acre property. Find a collection of international art and special exhibitions including live theater performances, lectures, films, poetry slams and family festivals at the Arkansas Arts Center. The center is currently under renovations and the collections will be housed in a temporary location for most of 2020. On the soil where General Douglas MacArthur was born, within the historic Tower Building of the Little Rock Arsenal, the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History features exhibits of artifacts, photographs, weapons, documents and other military items to show the contributions of Arkansas men and women who have served in the Armed Forces.

The **Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site** is a standing reminder of the nine African-American students who integrated into the all-white school as a test of the Civil Rights Act in 1957. This is the only high school functioning within the boundaries of a National Historic Site. Located across the street is the museum showing the struggles the "Little Rock Nine" faced with photographs, video recordings, news clippings and more.

If you're looking for a chance to sit back and relax, look no further than Little Rock's **Rusty Tractor Vineyards, which is scheduled to open by October**. The process of harvesting a bottle of wine takes about a year as they believe the use of machinery compromises the integrity of the grapes.

★ NORTH LITTLE ROCK

Take a trip to **The Old Mill**, a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Appearing in the opening scene of the classic 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*, this authentic reproduction of an old water-powered grist mill was built in 1933 and made to look as if it was built in the 1800s.

Spend an afternoon at either the **Arkansas National Guard Museum** or the **Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum**. The National Guard Museum shows the progression of the Arkansas guard from a frontier militia to modern military through the history



Little Rock Central High School

of Camp Robinson and Camp Pike. The Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum is the only place in the world you can see two floating Naval vessels that bookend in World War II. The submarine, USS Razorback (SS-394) is the longest-serving submarine in the world and was in the Tokyo Bay when Japan surrendered.

The USS Hogan tugboat on display moved the USS Nevada warship out of Pearl Harbor so it didn't sink while blocking other ships from escaping.

Take a seat among **Dickey-Stephens Park's** 5,800 fixed seats, 24 luxury suites, three dining areas or the grass berms in this beautiful ballpark. Sitting directly across from the Arkansas River, this minor league baseball field provides one of the best urban views overlooking downtown Little Rock. The park is home of the AA minor league Arkansas Travelers.

JACKSONVILLE

Available for private retirement and reunion events, the **Jacksonville Museum of Military History** allows you to explore both the battlefield and home front of current conflicts. The museum will take you from the Battle of Reed's Bridge to the Civil War in Arkansas. ■



Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum



INCREDIBLE ITINERARIES WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

Clinton Presidential Center

It's more than famous Southern charm and hospitality – Little Rock is essential to planning an unforgettable tour itinerary. Nestled along the banks of the beautiful Arkansas River, the capital city is home to an amazing array of world-class attractions, outstanding local cuisine, eclectic shopping and so many more pleasant surprises to be discovered. Whether it's just for a day or a longer stay, memories are waiting to be made in Little Rock.

Tour
Little Rock

LittleRock.com

Ad paid for with State and Heart of Arkansas funds.





HIDDEN *Gems* OF SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS

This region is where stunning views, little-known histories and treasures unfold

By Lauren DeLorenzo

Deep among the crystal lakes, dark leafy hollows and mountain towns of Southwest Arkansas, explorers can find hidden histories and tranquil getaways. Known for its exceptional hunting and fishing areas around the Ouachita Mountains, the region draws adventurers and sightseers to its many resorts, golf courses, boating opportunities, water sports and scuba diving experiences.

The city of **Hot Springs** catches the eye of travelers looking for a lush escape, and the healing waters the city was named for has drawn people to the valley for centuries. The city's historic center used to be a vacation hotspot for bootlegging gangsters and leaders of organized crime of the 1930s, and is now filled with museums, gorgeous architecture, exciting activities and the natural beauty that the region is famous for.

Wegner Quartz Crystal Mines



Hot Springs National Park



★ HOT SPRINGS

Hot Springs National Park is located within Hot Springs and in 1832 was the first land set aside for protection by the federal government, essentially making it the first national park. Hot Springs National Park is best known for the 47 hot springs that come out of the Hot Springs Mountain at an average of 143 degrees Fahrenheit. Visitors can, and are encouraged, to drink the water when it arrives at the surface of Hot Springs Mountain. Thousands of visitors endorse the good quality of the hot springs water and fill bottles to take it home. The park is a popular place for hiking and also features a museum and visitor center. Another beloved element of the park is its historic Bathhouse Row, which features eight bathhouses that are designated as a National Historic Landmark District. These bathhouse buildings were constructed between 1892 and 1923 and are a wonderful place to stroll and enjoy the beautiful architecture.

One of the more popular attractions in Hot Springs is the Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort. Horse racing, sports wagering, live music, and of course, the casino, attract visitors year-round.

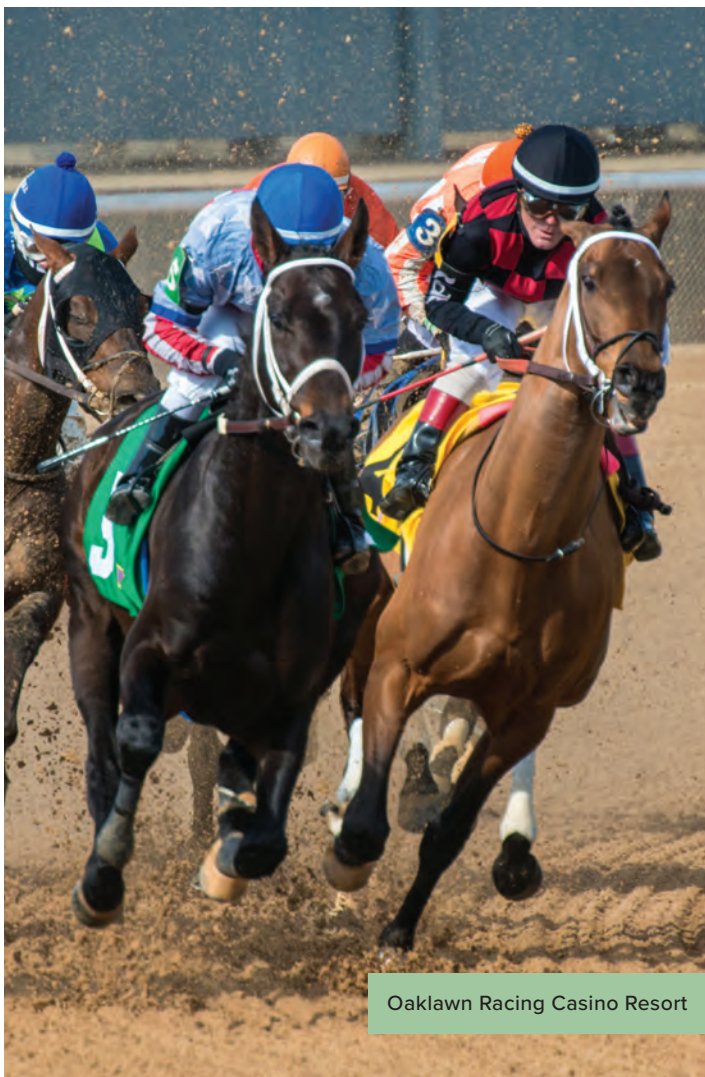
Other highlights of the town include the National Park Aquarium, the Arkansas Alligator Farm and Petting Zoo, Galaxy Connection, the Josephine Tussaud Wax Museum and the Garvan Woodland Gardens, which sit on the peninsula of Lake Hamilton. With more than 100 permanent and traveling exhibits, Mid-America Science Museum is a favorite stop for student and adult groups. Visitors can retrace the steps of 20th century crime bosses at the Gangster Museum of America, which features exhibits on Al Capone (who frequented Hot Springs in the early 1920s), and other infamous outlaws across the country. After treating yourself to a dip in the springs, jump on board a cruise ship with the Belle of Hot Springs. Sightsee, dine and take in the sunset on Lake Hamilton with your own private party.

★ HOPE

Just over 80 miles from Hot Springs is Hope, the birthplace of former U.S. President Bill Clinton. Groups can travel back in time to the President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site, which preserves the home where Bill Clinton spent his formative years. The home is the spot where Clinton says “In this house I learned to walk and talk, I learned to pray, I learned to read and I learned to count by number cards my grandparents tacked on the kitchen window.” Clinton lived in this house for the first four years of his life with his mother and maternal grandparents.

★ EL DORADO

Stories have long told of El Dorado, a city of abundant riches. This town certainly lives up to the myth. El Dorado was at the heart of the 1920s oil boom, and its connection to the railroads helped launch the state’s petroleum industry. Here, visitors will find a wealth of excitement, and can join in on the



Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort

Crater of Diamonds State Park



best of Arkansas' festivals, carnivals, gun shows, historical reenactments, museums and dining experiences.

The Murphy Arts District brings music, theater, dance, art and food to El Dorado through a range of immersive events and programs. Groups can visit one of the regular farmers markets, see a play in the renovated 1920s-era theater, explore photography and sculpture at the Mad Art Gallery, and finish off by dining on farm-to-table food at the Griffin Restaurant. If that's not enough to satisfy a culture craving, the South Arkansas Arts Center offers monthly gallery exhibits, community theater productions and a range of creative classes for groups to get their hands on.

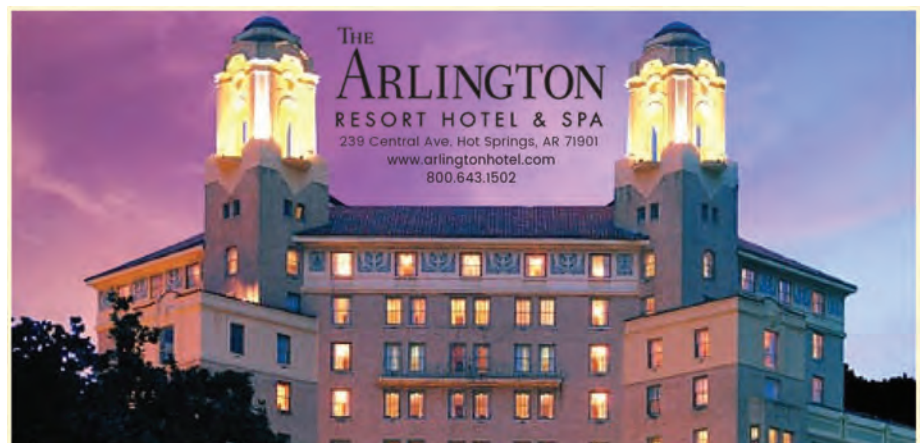
★ CRATER OF DIAMONDS STATE PARK

Though this region is bursting with natural beauty, you can't take the view home with you. But you can take home its treasures. The Crater of Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro is one of the only places in the world where the public can hunt for real diamonds. Visitors can search the 37-acre eroded surface of a volcanic crater for gemstones and rocks and take home their findings. The visitor center displays uncut diamonds and exhibits which demonstrate the unique geology of the region. Visitors can rent diamond-hunting tools and learn the best techniques to find precious stones. Not only has the public found more than 33,000 diamonds in this park, but it was also the place where the largest

diamond in the United States, the 40.23 carat Uncle Sam diamond, was discovered.

★ MOUNT IDA

For groups looking for a guided experience, the Wegner Crystal Mines in Mount Ida provide group tours where guides will bring you into the 40-acre mine site and teach you how to get the most out of your dig. Tools are provided in this collecting experience which is great for people of all ages. At the site's museum, visitors can marvel at a 2,000-pound quartz crystal, a 4,400-pound amethyst geode and a hoard of other treasures. There are many mines to explore: The Crystal Forest Mine, the Phantom Mine (famous for rare Phantom Quartz Crystals) and the Tailings Area are just a few. Group accommodations and customized digs are available here. ■





Hampton
Archeological
Museum
State Park



ARKANSAS DELTA FILLED WITH *Culture*

Nature, history and even Johnny Cash's childhood home can be found in the Arkansas Delta region

By Jaylyn Fahey

Those seeking a locale filled with history, culture and heritage can find all that and more in Arkansas. The Natural State is rich with ancestry and preserves it in a memorable way. Here are some cities in the upper and lower Delta Region that have plenty to offer groups.

★ WILSON

Hampson Archeological Museum State Park exhibits a nationally renowned collection from the Nodena site, a 15-acre palisades village that once thrived on the Mississippi River. The museum interprets the lifestyles of the farming-based civilization that lived there from 1400 A.D. to 1650 A.D. The artifacts and exhibits share the story of this aboriginal population of farmers who cultivated crops and supplemented their food resource with hunting native game while developing art, religion and political structure. After touring the museum, take a lunch break at **Wilson Café**, the sweetheart of the square located on one end of town. The café's veggie plate and array of fresh salad selections feature ingredients sourced from Wilson Gardens, located 100 yards from the café. arkansasstateparks.com/parks/hampson-archeological-museum-state-park

Johnny Cash Boyhood Home



★ DYESS

The **Historic Dyess Colony** was created in 1934 as part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal to aid in the nation's economic recovery from the Great Depression. As a federal agricultural resettlement community, it provided a fresh start for nearly 500 impoverished Arkansas farm families including that of music legend Johnny Cash. Because of this, the **Johnny Cash Boyhood Home** was created. The home is furnished as it appeared when the Cash family lived there and tells the story of Dyess Colony and how growing up in the Colony influenced Cash and his music. dyesscash.astate.edu/

★ WEST MEMPHIS

Gaming, racing, gambling, **Southland Park Gaming and Racing** has it all. With more than 2,000 slots and regular giveaways, this 80,000-square-foot casino allows visitors to play blackjack, craps and roulette. Visitors can place their bets at the High Limit Room before trying their luck at greyhound racing. Southland conducts nine-dog racing year-round. Find a quick bite between wins or dine in the casino. Sammy Hagar's Red Rocker features classic bar food and multiple televisions while Shine Bar's trendy atmosphere will complement your winnings. southlandcasino.com

★ JONESBORO

Activate your inner environmentalist and visit **Crowley's Ridge Nature Center**. The 17,000-square-foot center tells the story of a unique ridge atop the Mississippi Delta with indoor and outdoor exhibits, films and trails. It features a three-story education, exhibit and meeting facility on 160 acres. Explore nature along the diverse trails that run through wetlands, forest and prairie. Jonesboro is a town where more than 50 businesses successfully served the African American community from the 1920s to the 1960s. Visitors can tour the town's **African American Cultural Center**, a day trip that includes a 30-minute film and a guided tour. Be sure to stop at the Arkansas State University Museum for fun family activities as well. arkansas.com/attractions-culture/african-american-cultural-center

★ BLYTHEVILLE

Housed in the historic Kress Building, the **Delta Gateway Museum** illustrates historical themes in the world's most fertile agricultural regions. Exhibits focus on the development of cotton and soybeans along with interrelated topics such as earthquakes, rivers and flood control. There are hands-on exhibits for kids in grades four to six. Admission is free. deltagatewaymuseum.weebly.com/

★ HELENA

Explore the rich history of the Arkansas Delta at the **Delta Cultural Center**. Through engaging exhibits, historic properties and educational programs, the museum is a must-see. With free admission, visitors can see exhibits like A Heritage of Determination, Civil War in the Delta and Delta Sounds Exhibit. The Cultural Center is home to the radio show King Biscuit Time, a daily blues radio program you are able to visit. The Delta Cultural Center hosts many fascinating collections from art to music to photography. By the end of your visit, you will be overwhelmed with culture, heritage and history. deltaculturalcenter.com

★ PINE BLUFF

For those obsessed with trains and transportation, the **Arkansas Railroad Museum** is the place for you. Take a tour of this museum and learn about the history of the cotton belt. Just down the road, guests can find the **Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame**, a free-admission museum that includes displays of Johnny Cash, Alan Ladd, Tracy Lawrence, Art Porter and Al Green, all stars who hail from Arkansas. arkansasarailroadmuseum.org

★ WALNUT RIDGE

Located alongside **Rock N Roll Highway 67**, Walnut Ridge has an interesting history. August 1942 saw the opening of the **Army Air Forces Flying School** where more than 4,500 students graduated. The **Wings of Honor World War II Museum** located on the grounds of the **Walnut Ridge Airport** preserves the history of the airfield. Thirty-five years before the museum opened its doors, the airfield had a famous group of visitors.

In September 1964, the Beatles landed at the airport for a planned vacation nearby. The secret didn't last long and two days later much of the town was waiting for a glimpse of the group before their plane left.

The inaugural **Beatles at the Ridge Music Festival** was held in September 2012. The event has become a popular festival for music lovers across the world. Regardless of when you visit Walnut Ridge, the Beatles sculpture titled **"British Invasion of the Rock N Roll Highway"** and the **Guitar Walk** honoring the musicians that played Highway 67 are both must-sees. ■



Discover the real America at the original gateway to the American West and future home of The United States Marshals Museum! Relive a history that inspired the iconic tale of True Grit and walk along the Trail of Tears. Explore the majesty of the Ozarks by train. Discover a growing gallery of world-renowned public art. Visit the barbershop where Elvis received his famous military buzz cut and more.

Fort Smith • Sallisaw, OK • Tahlequah, OK • Park Hill, OK • Fayetteville • Bentonville • Altus

Justice, Art and the Trail of Tears

Day 1

Miss Laura's Visitors Center: Tour the first former bordello listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With arrangements, "Miss Laura" will greet your group and give a guided tour.

Fort Smith National Historic Site: Relive a history that inspired the iconic tale of *True Grit* as you tour the court where Judge Isaac C. Parker and Deputy U.S. Marshals brought the most infamous outlaws of the American West to justice. Groups also learn about the Five Civilized Tribes and see the remains of the first Fort Smith as they walk along a paved portion of the Trail of Tears path.

Day 2

Arrive at **Sequoyah's Cabin:** Tour the cabin that was home to Sequoyah—also called George Gist—who developed the Cherokee Alphabet in 1821.

Lunch at **Restaurant of The Cherokee:** Head to Tahlequah and enjoy a unique lunch complete with fried bread, drink and dessert. Visit the **Cherokee Nation Heritage Center**, tour the Ancient Village and the museum's two main galleries, which includes The Trail of Tears exhibits and see Adam's Corner Rural Village.

Day 3

Driving Tour – **Historic District & Public Art:** Discover a growing gallery of world-renowned urban and contemporary art along Garrison Avenue and the timeless architecture of Belle Grove Historic District.

The Clayton House: Tour the antebellum home that William Clayton—prosecuting attorney for Judge Parker—doubled in size and shaped into an Italianate-

style mansion in 1821. Tour includes lunch and/or high tea with prior arrangement.

Dinner at **Taliano's:** Housed in the James Sparks Home (1887), this Romanesque mansion features hand-carved fireplaces and original chandeliers.

Day 4

Depart for Northwest Arkansas!

Driving Tour of Fayetteville: A step-on guide will take you on a tour through *hog country* and home of the University of Arkansas; includes a drive to Mount Sequoyah. **Terra Studios:** See where the *Bluebirds of Happiness* are made, enjoy a glass blowing demonstration and view pieces by regional artists at the Muse Gallery. Tour and Lunch at **Peel Mansion:** Tour the 1875 mansion built for Colonel Samuel West Peel and visit the Heritage Garden. Followed by a catered lunch in the mansion. **Dinner:** Enjoy dinner at The Catfish Hole before heading back to Fort Smith.

Day 5

River Valley Nature Center: Built on 170 secluded acres, the center offers an array of exhibits that focus on Arkansas plants & wildlife. **Chaffee Crossing Historic District:** Tour the WWII training facility and the barbershop where Elvis received the "buzz cut heard around the world" after being drafted.

Mount Magazine: Enjoy lunch at the lodge as you look out over the beautiful scenery. Tour the Visitors Center and visit the gift shop. **Arkansas Wine Country:** Visit St. Mary's Church, then experience the tradition of Swedish wine making and enjoy dinner at Wiederkehr Wine Cellar.

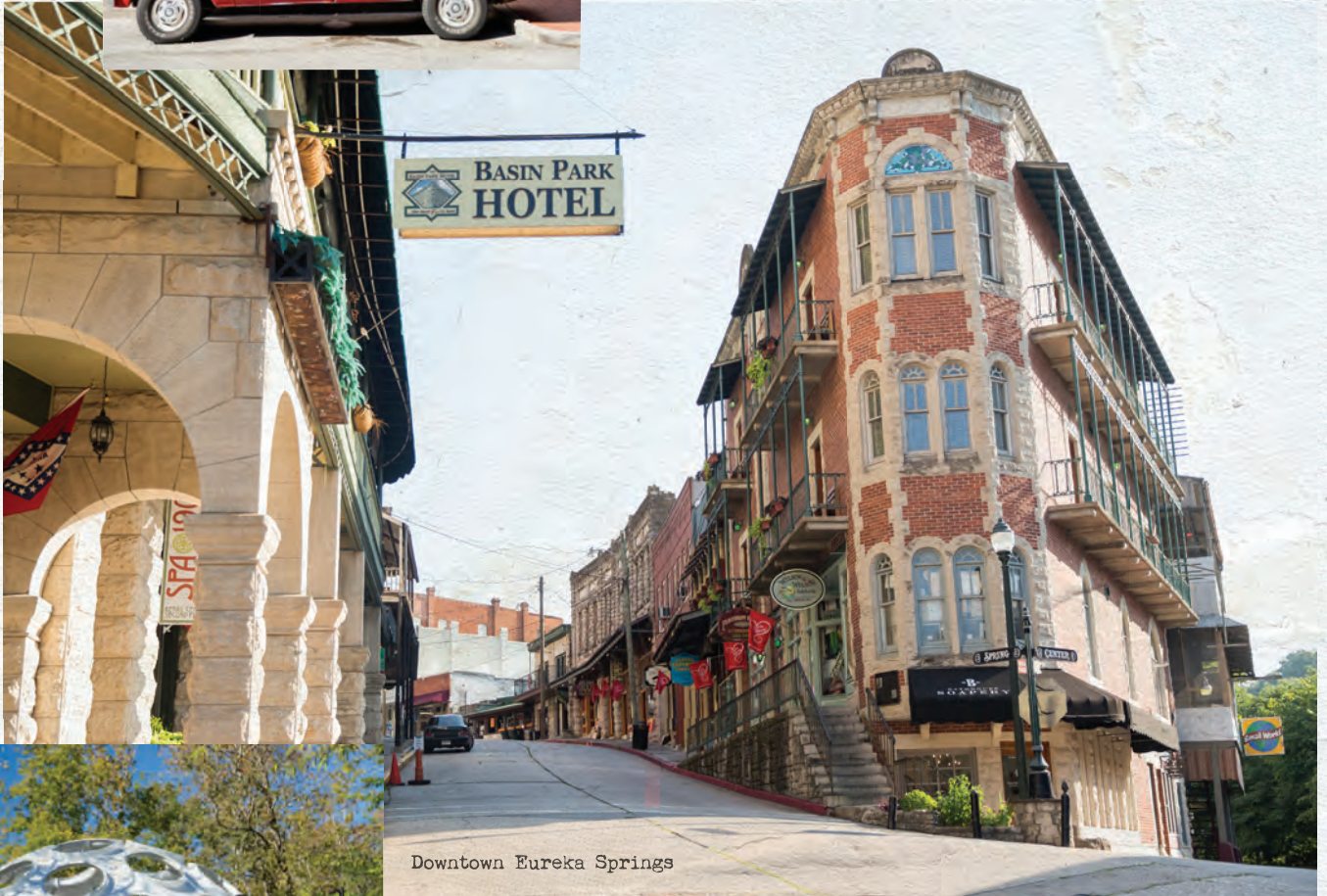


TOUR FORT SMITH

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THIS IS MY ARKANSAS ADVENTURE

The Walmart Museum, Bentonville



Downtown Eureka Springs

Crystal Bridges, Bentonville



Fayetteville



ARKANSASGROUPTRAVEL.COM