

HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS

By: Harry and Linda Kaye Perez

Looking for a hot spot for a quick get-away? This one is cool, hip, and yes, hot. It is Hot Springs, Arkansas, also known as Spa City. The most notable features of the area are the hot springs; but there is also interesting history, beautiful scenery, great fishing, fabulous art galleries, and outstanding restaurants. The waters of the hot springs have drawn people to this area dating back as far as the late 1700s. Many believed that the minerals and the temperature of the water (143o F) provided therapeutic and healing powers. Even now, the bathhouses pipe in this water directly from the springs and actually have to cool it slightly before it can be used in the thermal baths. Many of the bathhouses that were closed between the 1950s and the 1970s have been resurrected as art museums, the National Park Services offices and the Hot Springs Visitors Center and Museum. Only the Buckstaff, the Quapaw and the Arlington Bathhouses remain in operation.

WHERE TO STAY:

There are so many places to stay while in Hot Springs, from elegant inns to famous hotels. Staying at the Lookout Point Lakeside Inn is the ultimate experience in discovering the Lake Hamilton area, eight miles south of downtown Hot Springs. Owners, Ray & Kristie Rosset, built this magnificent bed and breakfast in 2003 in the Ouachita Mountains overlooking Lake Hamilton. The grounds are incredible with tranquil gardens and waterfalls. The Inn offers 14 distinctly different rooms and suites, four of which are pet friendly. If you are celebrating a special occasion, the innkeepers offer everything from chocolates to roses, but the pièce de résistance is a private sunset cruise on Lake Hamilton on the Lookout Point pontoon boat piloted by owner, Captain Ray.

Another highly recommended stay would be at the Arlington Hotel, dating back to 1875, right in the center of the Hot Springs historical area. Some rather interesting characters have graced her doors to the likes of Wyatt Earp, Babe Ruth, Andrew Carnegie, and several U.S. Presidents, including Theodore Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. Al Capone was a regular at the Arlington and always stayed in the same suite on the fourth floor, now referred to as the Al Capone Suite (Room 443). The Arlington has 203 guest rooms, valet parking, four restaurants, a Starbucks in the lobby, and of course, a complete thermal bath and spa on the 3rd floor of the hotel.



B&B on Lake Hamilton, 8 miles from Hot Springs



Popular wedding venue at Garvan Gardens



Sculpture at one of the many art museums along Central Avenue, also known as Bathhouse Row



Ten large bathhouses line Central Avenue



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EATING:

Since 1928, McClard's Bar-B-Q has provided guests with the best hickory smoked beef, pork and ribs and its famous sauce. This award-winning restaurant has been kept alive and well by four generations of McClard's and has racked up an impressive list of repeat visitors, including President Bill Clinton, who, we were told, once had to eat in the kitchen because there were no seats available. Don't be put off by the exterior look, or you will miss some of the best barbeque around. Be patient; it gets crowded, but is well worth the wait.

In the heart of historic downtown Hot Springs, near the Arlington Hotel, is a small restaurant specializing in to-die-for hotcakes served with warm maple syrup. The Pancake Shop is open everyday from 6:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and serves a wide variety of breakfast items.

The Bleu Monkey Grill is also a great place for lunch or dinner and offers some unique and delicious combinations.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO:

Climb (or ride the elevator) to the top of the 216-foot Hot Springs Mountain Tower for a fabulous 140-mile, 360o panoramic view of the city of Hot Springs, the Hot Springs National Park and the Ouachita Mountains. In addition to the Tower, there are miles of scenic trails for both the novice and the expert hiker.

Visit the Oaklawn Park with live horse racing from mid-January through mid-April and simulcasts from other tracks during the rest of the year. Try your luck at the slots, electronic blackjack, craps, roulette and poker.

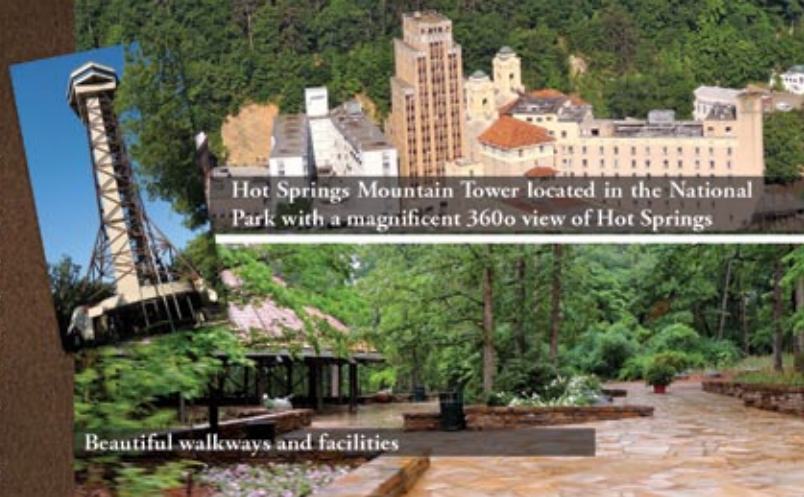
Spend a day at the 210-acre Garvan Woodland Gardens, a world-renowned botanical garden and walk through the six-story high glass chapel, a favorite place for weddings in the area. The plants, flowers, and glass art of James Hayes woven into the landscape will take your breath away.

Explore the Gangster Museum and learn more about the seedy characters who vacationed here in the 1900s or the Mid-America Science Museum, home to the world's most powerful conical Tesla Coil. Take the magnificent scenic walk along the winding, red-brick pathways of the Grand Promenade, a favorite of visitors in the 1930s and 1940s.

Stroll Central Avenue and Bathhouse Row in the heart of the historic Hot Springs where you can peruse a dozen art galleries.

And, no trip to Hot Springs would be complete without trying at least one of the thermal mineral baths offered. Quapaw is unique in that in addition to four thermal mineral pools at varying water temperatures, they have a one-of-a-kind steam cave.

The popularity of the resort atmosphere, the beautiful surroundings and thermal mineral baths made this place what it is today. Hot Springs truly is HOT, HOT, HOT.



Hot Springs Mountain Tower located in the National Park with a magnificent 360o view of Hot Springs

Beautiful walkways and facilities



Premier Accommodations in the heart of Hot Springs



Racing and Gaming facility in Hot Springs



Museum of Contemporary Art, makes it home in the Ozark Bathhouse.

Hot Springs Visitor Information
www.hotspings.org

Garvan Woodland Gardens
www.garvangardens.org
(800) 366-4664

Hot Springs Mountain Tower
www.hotspings.org/places/hot-springs-mountain-tower
(501) 623-6035

McClard's Bar-B-Q
www.mclards.com
(501) 624-9686

Lookout Point Lakeside Inn B&B
www.Lookoutpointinn.com
(501) 525-6155 or (866) 525-6155

Pancake Shop
www.pancakeshop.com
(501) 624-5720

Arlington Hotel
www.arlingtonhotel.com
(501) 623-7771 or (800) 643-1502

Bleu Monkey Grill
www.bleumonkeygrill.com
(501) 520-4800

Oaklawn Racing & Gaming
www.oaklawn.com
(800) 625-5296