

Hot Springs

NATIONAL PARK • ARKANSAS

Long before the first Europeans came to these shores, Indians already had discovered the wonders of the hot springs of Arkansas. Tradition says this was hallowed ground; here warriors laid aside their arms and, regardless of tribe or tongue, bathed in peace.

This area, as a part of the greater Louisiana Territory, had been alternately claimed by France and Spain since the mid-1600's. However, development and settlement did not begin here until after the United States purchased Louisiana in 1803. Crude canvas shacks and log cabins were the first bathing facilities.

Medicinal bathing, traditional since ancient times, was reaching peak popularity in Europe, where great spas developed. These traditions, transplanted to the United States, caused the hot springs of Arkansas to become a Federal Reservation. Thus in 1832 was born a great national idea—that this country's natural heritage be held in trust for all people, for all time.

Although the modern bathtub, whirlpool machines, and chlorinated swimming pools have replaced social bathing in the style of the ancients, the tradition endures. Hot Springs National Park keeps its restful yet holiday air, not only in its water programs, but also along its quiet streets, on the Promenade, and on its wooded hillsides. The Hot Springs tradition is ageless.

THE HOT SPRINGS

The underground pathway of the thermal water begins as rainwater and soaks through highly fractured rocks located northwest of the springs. The water penetrates deeply into the earth's crust, where it is heated by coming in contact with a mass of hot rock. Years later the thermal water emerges from the torrid depths through a fault, or ancient break, in the earth's crust. Geologists have determined, through hydrogen isotope (Tritium) analyses, that a small amount of the thermal water is less than 20 years old, while most of it much older. Each day about 4 million liters (1 million gallons) of water at 61° C (143° F) flows from the park's 47 springs.

Chemical analysis shows the waters from the 47 springs to be practically identical. Unlike other thermal waters, Hot Springs water is remarkably pure and free of offensive odor or taste.

Of the 47 springs, 45 are sealed; water is collected, carefully cooled, and piped to central reservoirs for bathhouse and therapy use. Complicated collecting and cooling systems provide visitors with pure water in properly tempered baths that do not lose the natural gases.

Two springs are kept open so visitors may see waters emerging naturally. These—the Display Springs—are accessible from either Bathhouse Row or the Promenade. An audio station provides a message about the human and natural history of the springs.

DRINKING AND BATHING WATER

Several drinking fountains on Reserve Avenue, along the Promenade, and on Bathhouse Row provide hot thermal water. Jug fountains are located on Reserve Avenue for those who wish to



take the water home. Water from natural cold water springs may be obtained from jug fountains located at Happy Hollow Spring (on Fountain Street) and Whittington Avenue Spring. Water from park sources must not be sold or used commercially in any way.

The 17 bathing establishments—nine in the park and eight in the city—use thermal waters of the park. All are concessioners of the Federal Government, subject to regulation and inspection.

The baths—full immersion type—may be taken by direct application to the bathhouses, although a physician's advice is recommended. All bathhouses have facilities for whirlpool baths, showers, massages, and alcohol rubs.

Libbey Memorial Physical Medicine Center uses the thermal waters in its hydrotherapy program. Patients who suffer from arthritis, general injuries, or nervous system damage often find relief in this therapy. Patients must be recommended by a local federally registered physician. A list of these physicians is available at park headquarters.

Indigents may avail themselves of the baths at Government expense after having been examined by a local physician who ascertains that the patient suffers from an ailment which might be relieved by the thermal baths. Application should be made to the office of the superintendent.

THINGS TO DO

Hot Springs enjoys a favorable climate all year. The winters are mild and, except for infrequent short intervals, are conducive to outdoor recreation. The mild weather and warm sunshine are often decided aids to the bath treatments.

Visitors may hike or ride horseback on lovely wooded trails, drive on the park's scenic roads, and fish in nearby Lakes Catherine, Hamilton, or Ouachita. Boating and sporting supplies are available at the lakes.

OTHER PARK FEATURES

The five mountains of the park are clothed in dense oak-hickory forests with abundant short-leaf pine. Flowering trees are common in the understory and every season has its rewards. Particularly noteworthy are redbud and dogwood in spring, southern magnolia in summer, and colorful foliage in autumn. Wildflowers bloom all year.

SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

At the visitor center, on the corner of Central and Reserve Avenues, you can see exhibits depicting the geology of the area and the springs, the natural and human history of the park, and the development of the bathing industry. A 12-minute slide program is shown regularly in the auditorium.

Consult the park's bulletin boards or ask at the visitor center about the naturalist program.

The park's campground is nestled in Gulpha Gorge, 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) northeast of the center of the city. Tables and fireplaces are provided for both tent and trailer campers; there are no electric or water connections.

The city of Hot Springs, a separate municipality not under National Park Service jurisdiction, nearly surrounds the park. The city has many large hotels offering a choice of American or European plans, smaller hotels, motels, boardinghouses, housekeeping quarters, and furnished or unfurnished cottages. Lists of accommodations and general information are available from the Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

By car—U.S. 70 and 270, and Ark. 7.

By bus—Continental Trailways and Wolf, or their connections, serve Hot Springs.

By air—Texas International and Frontier Airlines make daily stops at Memorial Airport, 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) west of the park.

REGULATIONS

Public buildings, signs, and natural features must not be disturbed, injured, or destroyed.

Fires are one of the park's greatest perils. Campfires are permitted only in designated sites. Cigarettes and cigars should be completely extinguished.

Discard all refuse in the proper trash receptacle. Please keep your park clean.

Hunting is not permitted in the park.

Private operations are prohibited. To solicit or sell anything, no matter how minor, is not allowed, except by persons holding a contract with the Federal Government.

Pets are allowed if they are on leash or otherwise confined.

Advertising is not permitted within the park.

Commercial vehicles are prohibited from using park roads, except those operated under special-use permits or in connection with park operations.

Campers must first register at the campground office. Camping is permitted in designated sites only. In summer there is a 14-day limit; the rest of the year, 30 days.

Park roads are mountain roads; drive carefully at all times. Speed limit in the campground area is 24 kilometers per hour (15 mph). Bicycles, motorcycles, and similar wheeled vehicles are not allowed on park trails.

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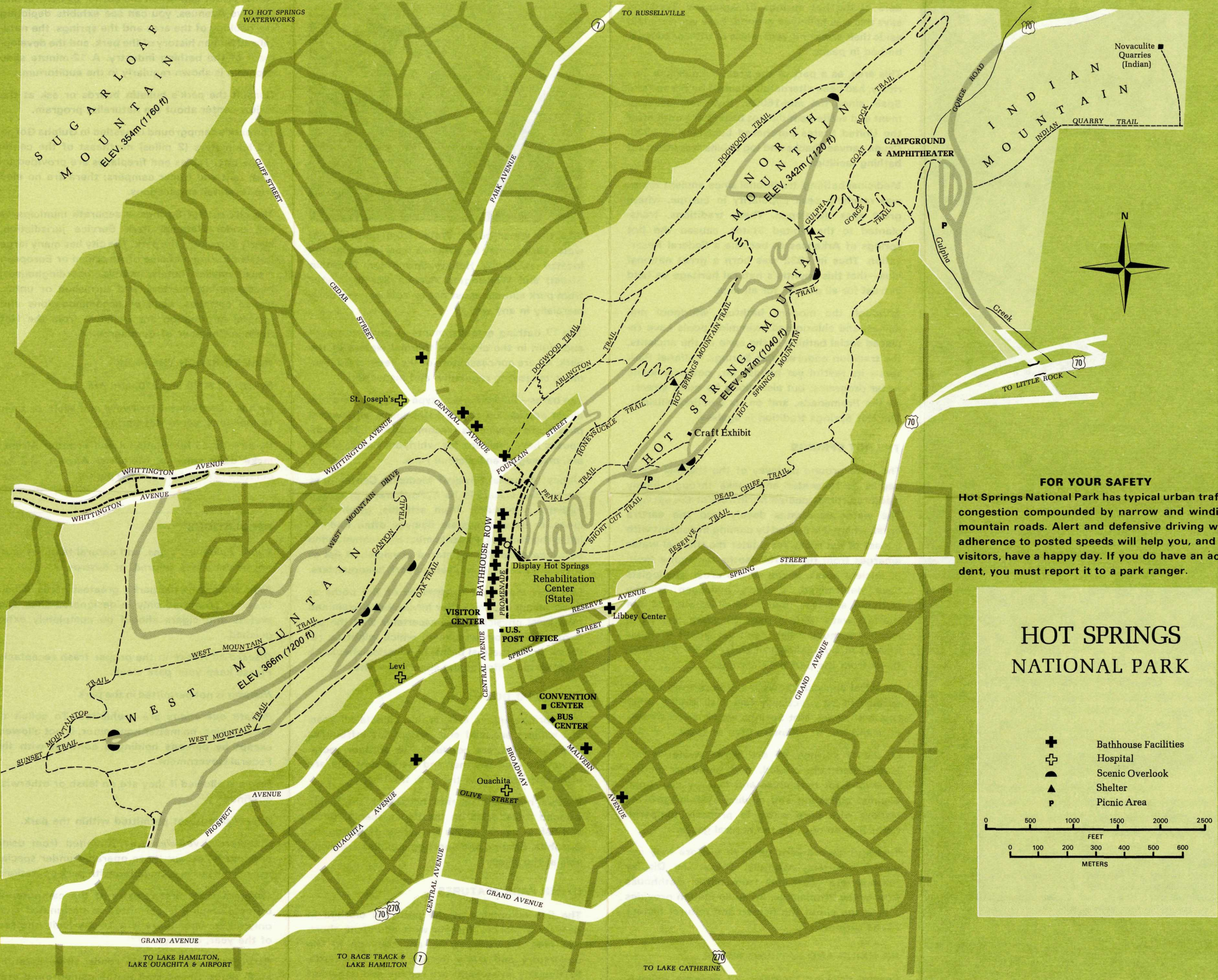
WE'RE JOINING THE METRIC WORLD

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.

Hot Springs National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Inquiries may be addressed to the Superintendent, Hot Springs National Park, Box 1860, Hot Springs, AR 71901.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



FOR YOUR SAFETY
 Hot Springs National Park has typical urban traffic congestion compounded by narrow and winding mountain roads. Alert and defensive driving with adherence to posted speeds will help you, and all visitors, have a happy day. If you do have an accident, you must report it to a park ranger.

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK

- Bathhouse Facilities
- Hospital
- Scenic Overlook
- Shelter
- Picnic Area

