



My Drift

Title: Arkansas

Written By: Jerry D. Petersen

Date: 16 Feb 2023

Article Number: (414-2023-4)

Arkansas is one of the few states I have not written about or visited. Yes, Arkansas is kind of a forgotten place for people like me who know little about it. Well, that is going to change by the end of this article.



Arkansas is a landlocked state in the Southcentral United States. It is bordered by Missouri to the north, Tennessee and Mississippi to the east, Louisiana to the south, and Texas and Oklahoma to the west. The state's diverse geography ranges from the mountainous regions of the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains, which make up the Interior Highlands, to the densely forested land in the south known as the Arkansas Timberlands, to the eastern lowlands along the Mississippi River and the Arkansas Delta.

Arkansas is the 29th largest by area and the 34th most populous state, with a population of just over 3 million. The capital and most populous city is Little Rock in the central part of the state, a hub for transportation, business, culture, and government. The northwestern corner of the state includes the Fayetteville–Springdale–Rogers Metropolitan Area. Fort Smith is the largest city on the western side of Arkansas. The largest city in the state's eastern part is Jonesboro. The largest city in the state's southeastern part is Pine Bluff.



Little Rock

7 Largest Cities in Arkansas

Little Rock – 203,000

Fayetteville – 98,000

Fort Smith – 90,000

Springdale – 88,000

Jonesboro – 81,000

Rogers – 72,000

Conway – 66,000

Early History

Indian Platform Mounds were constructed by deliberately heaping soil, rock, or other materials (such as ash, shell, and the remains of burned buildings) onto natural land surfaces. In Arkansas and elsewhere in eastern North America, Native Americans built earthen mounds for ritual or burial purposes or as the location for important structures, but mound-building ceased shortly after European contact due to changes in religious and other cultural practices.



Before European settlement of North America, Arkansas, was inhabited by indigenous peoples (Indians) for thousands of years. The Caddo, Osage, and Quapaw peoples first encountered European Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto in 1541, who crossed the Mississippi River and marched across central Arkansas and the Ozark Mountains. After finding nothing of value and encountering native resistance the entire way, he and his men returned to the Mississippi River where de Soto fell ill. From his deathbed he ordered his men to massacre all the men of the nearby village of Anilco, who he feared had been plotting with a powerful tribe down the Mississippi River. His men obeyed and did not stop with the men but were said to have massacred women and children as well. He died the following day in what is believed to be the vicinity of modern-day McArthur, Arkansas, in May 1542. His body was weighted down with sand, and he was consigned to a watery grave in the Mississippi River under cover of darkness by his men.

Later, explorers included the French Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet in 1673, and Frenchmen Robert La Salle and Henri de Tonti in 1681. Tonti established Arkansas Post at a Quapaw village in 1686, making it the first European settlement in the territory. The early Spanish or French explorers of the state gave it its name, which is probably a phonetic spelling of the Illinois tribe's name for the Quapaw people, who lived downriver from them. The region was organized as the Territory of Arkansas on July 4, 1819, with the territory admitted to the United States as the state of Arkansas on June 15, 1836. Historically and modernly, the people of Arkansas call themselves either "Arkansans" or "Arkansawyers".

Arkansas calls itself “The Natural State”. Why? Arkansas is nicknamed the Natural State because of its beautiful lakes, rivers, mountains, and wildlife.

Lakes - There are 2,340 named lakes and reservoirs in Arkansas. Here are three of the more popular ones:



Lake Ouachita

Lake Ouachita is the state's largest lake and one of the cleanest lakes in the nation. With over 40,000 acres to explore and very little shoreline development, this lake offers an experience like no other in the state.



Beaver Lake

Featuring 28,000 acres of clear water that attracts thousands of water sports lovers, fishermen, hikers, and birdwatchers, **Beaver Lake** is located in the Ozark Highlands near the town of Rogers and features forests, tall bluffs, and meadows crisscrossed by hiking trails. Beaver Lake is nationally renowned for bass fishing and has even become a destination for many fishing tournaments. Boating, scuba diving, water skiing, wakeboarding, kayaking, swimming, and picnicking are also popular.



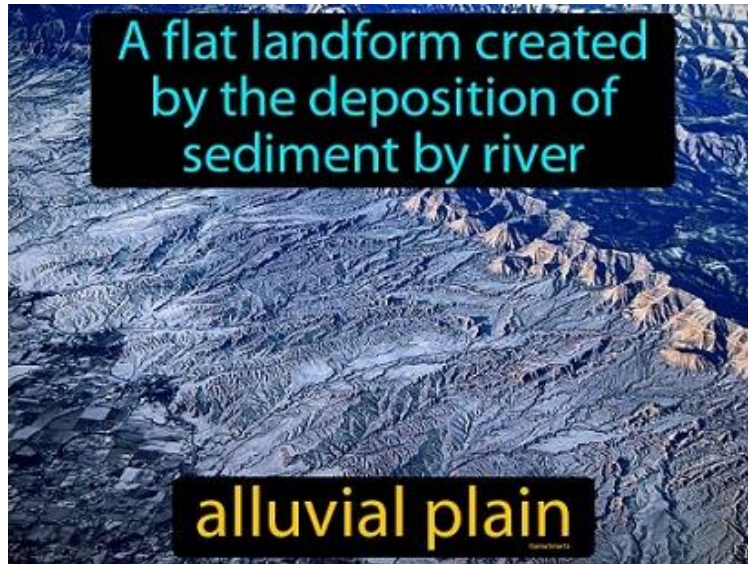
Greers Ferry Lake

At the foot of Round Mountain in the beautiful Ozark Mountains of north-central Arkansas stands Greers Ferry Dam. Behind that structure dedicated in 1963 by the late President John F. Kennedy, glistens one of the foremost recreational areas in the United States, **Greers Ferry Lake**. With over 30,000 acres of water surface, the lake serves as a playground for all kinds of water sports. Eighteen parks around the shoreline provide modern campgrounds, boat launches, swim areas and marinas.

Rivers - Arkansas has approximately 90,000 miles of rivers and streams. 33 rivers are generally recognized as passing through Arkansas or along one of its borders; more than half of Arkansas's rivers also enter or run along the borders of other states.

We will look at four rivers – Three are clear and great for fishing. The other one is the biggest, longest, and most famous river in the US. However, it is polluted and not too good for fishing.

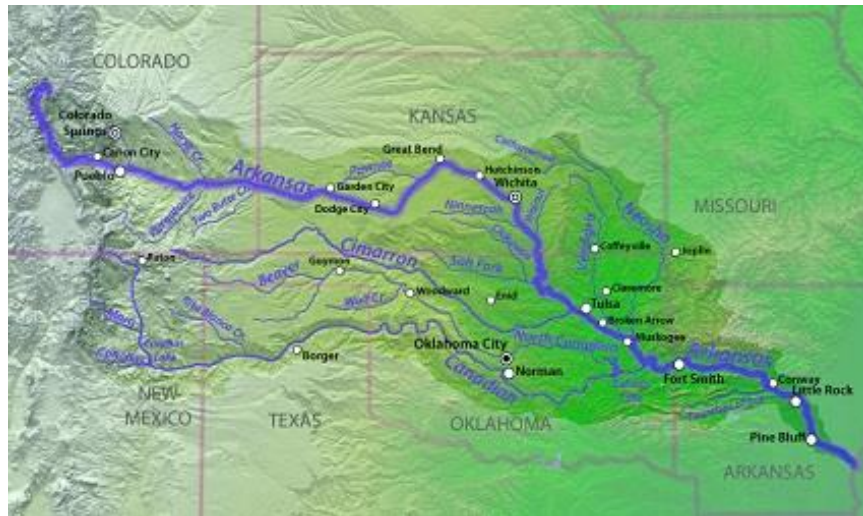
The Mississippi River is a dominant physical feature of many states in the middle-United States, including Arkansas. It flows along almost the entire eastern border of Arkansas. The river created what is often referred to as the “Delta” of eastern Arkansas, which is part of the nation's largest alluvial plain.



Frisco Bridge – Railroad Bridge across the Mississippi River

The Frisco Bridge was built across the Lower Mississippi River south of Saint Louis. Once called, “the Great Bridge,” it connects railroad traffic between Memphis, Tennessee and West Memphis, Arkansas. The bridge is 4,887 feet long and rises to 65 feet above the river. It had to be built high so that steamboats and other water vessels could go under it. The Frisco Bridge helped revolutionize railroad traffic across the Mississippi.

The Arkansas River is a major tributary of the Mississippi River. It generally flows to the east and southeast as it traverses the states of Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. The river's source basin lies in Colorado, specifically the Arkansas River Valley. It flows east into the Midwest via Kansas, and finally into the South through Oklahoma and Arkansas. At 1,469 miles, it is the sixth-longest river in the United States.



Arkansas River Map



Arkansas River

The Arkansas River is known for exceptional trout fishing, particularly fly fishing since the 19th century, when cutthroat trout dominated the river. Today, brown trout dominate the river, which also contains rainbow trout. Trout Unlimited considers the Arkansas one of the top 100 trout streams in America, a reputation the river has had since the 1950s.

The Little Red River, emerging icy cold from beneath massive dam at Greers Ferry Lake is a premier-class trout stream. Trout were introduced to the Little Red in 1966, some three years after the completion of the lake project. Rainbows, browns, and cutthroats are caught for some 35-river miles below the dam. Brown trout running 5 to 8 pounds are common, and a 20- to 30-pounder is possible in the river that produced the 40-pound, 4-ounce world record.



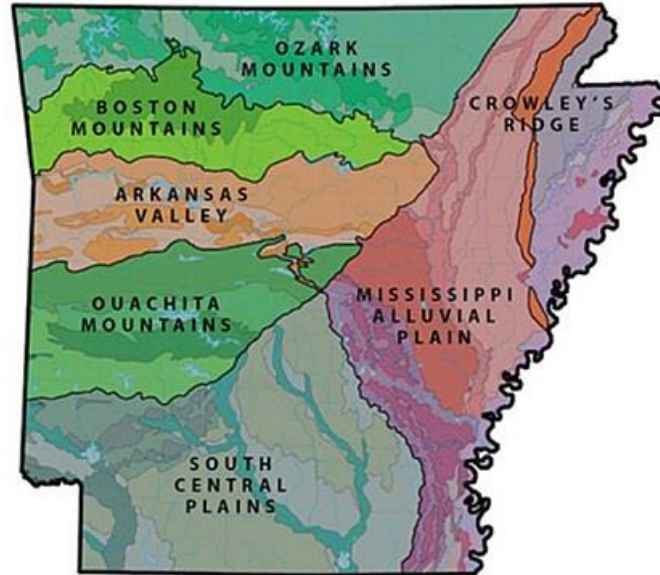
Little Red River

The White River is a 722-mile river that flows through the U.S. states of Arkansas and Missouri. Originating in the Boston Mountains of northwest Arkansas, it arcs northwards through southern Missouri before turning back into Arkansas, flowing southeast to its mouth at the Mississippi River. The White River is world-renowned for some of the finest trout fishing anywhere. It is home to 4 species of trout - Rainbow, Brown, Cutthroat and Brook.



White River

Terrain



Arkansas can generally be split into two halves, the highlands in the northwest and the lowlands of the southeast. The highlands are part of the Southern Interior Highlands, including The Ozark, Boston, and Ouachita mountains. The southern lowlands include the Gulf Coastal Plain and the Arkansas Delta. This split can yield to a regional division into northwest, southwest, northeast, southeast, and central Arkansas. These regions are broad and not defined along county lines. Arkansas has seven distinct natural regions: the Ozark Mountains (includes the Boston mountains), Arkansas River Valley, Ouachita Mountains, Gulf Coastal Plain (also called South Central Plains), Crowley's Ridge, and the Arkansas Delta (also called the Mississippi Alluvial Plain), with Central Arkansas (Little Rock area) sometimes included as a blend of multiple regions.

Tallest Mountains

Arkansas has a lot more altitude than most people realize — the Ozarks are the largest mountain range between the Appalachians and the Rockies. To the south, the Ouachitas offer plenty of elevation as well. Aside from breathtaking views, these mountains offer plenty of outdoor recreation, from hiking to bicycling to wildlife watching. Here are Arkansas's tallest peaks:

Mount Magazine (2,753 Feet)

Mount Magazine is more than just a mountain — it's a destination all its own. Spend a night at the majestic Mount Magazine lodge or cabins and admire the views. Travel a network of trails on horses, ATVs, mountain bikes or your own two feet. To experience Magazine's more extreme side, check out the rock-climbing routes or watch hang-gliders launch off the side of the mountain!



Mount Magazine Lodge

Rich Mountain (2,681 Feet)

You'll find plenty to do on Rich Mountain, which straddles the Arkansas-Oklahoma border. Take your car, motorcycle or road bike for a scenic trip along Highway 88 (also known as Skyline Drive). Stop by Queen Wilhelmina State Park and check out a hiking trail — including the 225-mile Ouachita Trail — and enjoy the local flora and fauna. The Queen Wilhelmina State Park lodge is also one of the states finest.

Poteau Mountain (2,661 Feet)

This area was once a hunting ground for the Osage tribe and later served as home for the Quapaw and Caddoan tribes. American settlers later moved into the area. Today, Poteau Mountain sits within the Poteau Mountain Wilderness area. Follow Forest Road 158, which traverses 22 miles of ridgeline on Poteau Mountain and offers endless amazing views of the Ouachita Mountains.

Black Fork Mountain (2,661 Feet)

Tied with Poteau Mountain as the third-tallest mountain in Arkansas, Black Fork is located in the Ouachita National Forest. Traverse the six-mile Black Fork Mountain Trail for a challenge that rewards you with incredible views of the surrounding area, as well as unique plant life and even the rare chance to spot a black bear.

Wild Animals in Arkansas

The state's low population density, varied topography, and wild landscapes have allowed many native species to thrive here. Arkansas's mountains and forests are excellent places to see birds and wildlife. There are 400 native bird species and more than 150 butterfly and moth species. You can spot great blue herons, snowy owls, ruby-throated hummingbirds, white ibis, golden-crowned kinglets, and four species of the oriole. Arkansas is home to the red-cockaded woodpecker, one of the rarest endangered birds.



Snowy Owl



White Ibis



Red-Cockaded Woodpecker

Arkansas has 16 native bat species, including the endangered Rafinesque's big-eared bat, the hoary bat, and Seminole bat. Many of its animals include mammals and rodents common to most forested states.



Seminole Bat



Red Fox



Cotton Tail Rabbit

Arkansas's predators include coyotes, gray foxes, red foxes, and bobcats. Among its rodents are 12 mouse species, ground squirrels and the southern flying squirrel. Its small mammals include river otters, shrews, pocket gophers, cottontail rabbits and opossums.

Arkansas has some strange mammals like the nine-banded armadillo and the eastern woodrat. It also has strange rodents you will only find here like the

thirteen-lined ground squirrel, the southern bog lemming, and the Texas deer mouse.



Eastern Woodrat



Texas Deer Mouse



Striped Skunk

The state is home to two species of skunk, the eastern spotted skunk and the striped skunk, and several shrew species.

Reptiles and amphibians include the most common types, but they also include some weird species like prairie lizards, Texas horned lizards, bull snakes, eastern garter snakes and Gulf crayfish. Arkansas also has alligators, turtles, and geckos.



Yes, Arkansas has Alligators

Arkansas's official animal is the white-tail deer. This deer is abundant in the state, and game hunting is an important part of the state's economy. Elk were once hunted to extinction, but conservation efforts have reintroduced them to the area surrounding the Buffalo National River in northwest Arkansas. Black bears have also returned to the state after years of absence.

The Most Dangerous Animals in Arkansas

Some Arkansans joke that the most dangerous animals in their state are careless, armed game hunters. Jokes aside, Arkansas has some dangerous animals, including alligators and bears, but attacks on humans are rare. The most dangerous animals to humans are the state's poisonous snakes and spiders.

- Arkansas has copperhead snakes, timber rattlesnakes, and the western banded rattlesnake.
- Arkansas is home to the venomous brown recluse spider.



Timber Rattlesnake



Brown Recluse Spider

A Few More Arkansas Attractions

Crater of Diamonds State Park is a 911-acre Arkansas state park in Pike County near the town of Murfreesboro. The park features a 37.5-acre plowed field, the world's only diamond-bearing site accessible to the public. Diamonds have continuously been discovered in the field since 1906, including the graded-perfect Strawn-Wagner Diamond, found in 1990, and the Uncle Sam, found in 1924, which at over 40 carats is the largest diamond ever found in the United States.



3.72-carat diamond found at Arkansas State Park

Hot Springs is a city in the Ouachita Mountains of Arkansas. It's known as "The American Spa" for its naturally heated springs. Nearby Hot Springs National Park is home to 47 natural hot springs.

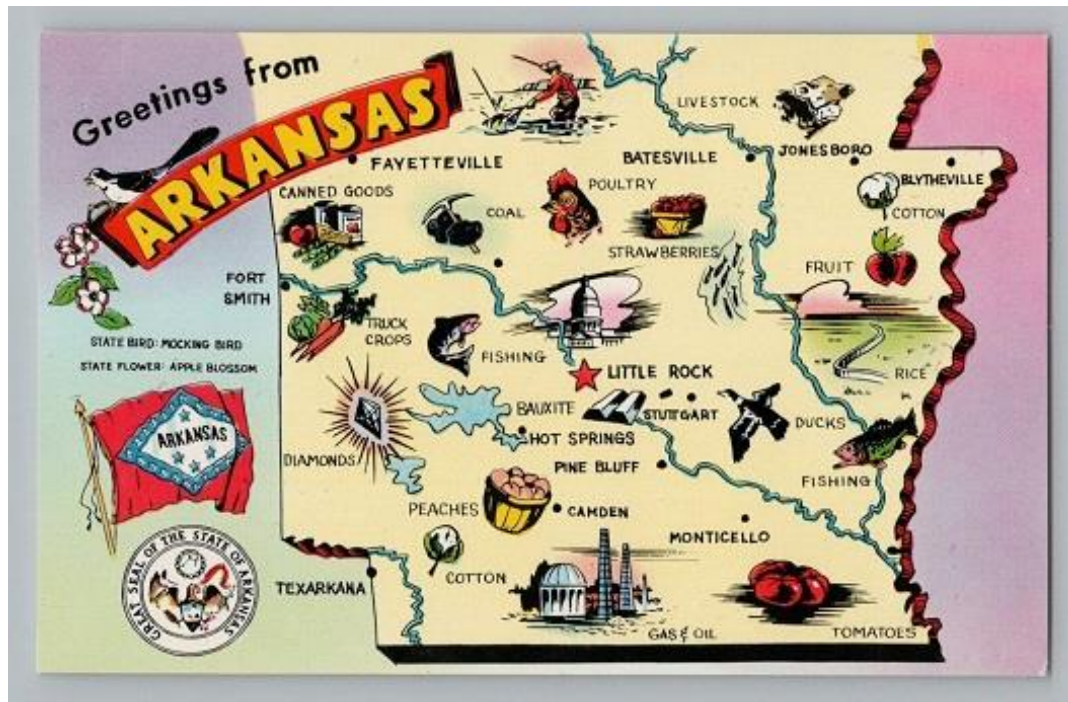


Hot Springs National Park

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is a 459-acre wildlife refuge for abused, abandoned, and neglected big cats. The Eureka Springs, Arkansas, refuge houses 100 or more animals.



Attractions Map



Summary

Well, I had no idea Arkansas had so much to offer. I learned a lot about this state I knew little about. Here are a few highlights:

- Arkansas has many beautiful lakes and rivers with great trout fishing.
- Arkansas has two scenic mountain ranges that provides a home to an abundance of wildlife.
- Arkansas has the only active diamond mine in the United States.
- Arkansas has several hot springs that soaking in will cure all your ailments. At least some Indian Witch Doctors believe this to be true.
- The mighty Mississippi River runs along the entire eastern border of Arkansas.
- Arkansas is the #1 producer of rice in the United States.
- There are Alligators and bears in Arkansas along with poisonous snakes and spiders.

Bigdrifter44@gmail.com

Bigdrifter.com