

The Natural State: Tourism, Parks

The scenic beauty of Arkansas prompted Governor Bill Clinton to proclaim Arkansas "The Natural State" in 1988; the 77th General Assembly adopted this cognomen as the official state nickname in 1989. Three national forests, seven National Park Service sites, forty-five state parks, thirteen major lakes, the Ozark and Ouachita Mountain ranges, over 9,700 miles of streams and rivers, plus abundant wildlife, museums, historical sites and other attractions make Arkansas a top destination for both in-state and visiting tourists.

In the year 2000 travel and tourism accounted for 49,381 jobs in the Natural State and expenditures of over 3.8 billion dollars. In that same year Arkansas saw 20,336,000 "person-trips," reflecting both in-state and out-of-state travelers making a trip of 100 miles or more, with an average expenditure per each of \$188.98. Arkansas's travel-generated payroll in 2000 was \$661,026,000.

Geography

Arkansas, with a surface area of approximately 53,182 square miles, ranks 29th among the states of the Union in size. Within or along its borders are found 9,740 miles of streams and 453,868 acres of lakes, with a total surface area exceeding 1,100 square miles.

Arkansas is roughly evenly divided between lowlands and highlands, with elevations ranging between approximately 50 feet above sea level in the southeast to Mount Magazine's height of 2,823 feet. The state is located between 33° and 36° 30' North latitude, and 89° 41' and 94° 42' West longitude. Average annual temperatures for Little Rock, the state capital, measured over 1961-1990, reveal maximum temperatures as high as 112° in July and -5° in February, with an annual average precipitation of 50.86 inches. Growing seasons range from 180 days in the high northwestern Ozark plateau to as long as 240 days in the eastern Delta country.