



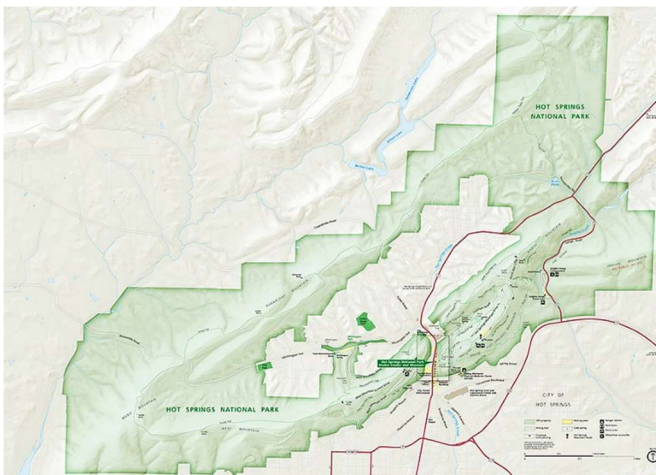
The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

RICK'S ROADS

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2022.10.04
Hot Springs National Park, AR



Hey, let's add another National Park to the list, shall we? This one is a bit odd, though, since Hot Springs is a city, and the park exists in and around the city center.

Not all of the city is NPS territory, though. On a map, the NP looks like it has a big hole in it.

HSNP covers 5500 acres, with miles and miles of hiking trails, but it's



the famous Bathhouse Row that is its true claim to fame.

The first thing I did when I got here, though, was to drive the steep, switchback road called Hot Springs Mountain Scenic Drive.

It was built as a carriage road in the 1880's, and it leads to

a picnic area, an overlook with a pagoda, and an observation tower.

I parked at the tower and walked down to the white pagoda. Very nice view indeed, looking over the city of Hot Springs, with the Ouachita Mountains out in the distance.



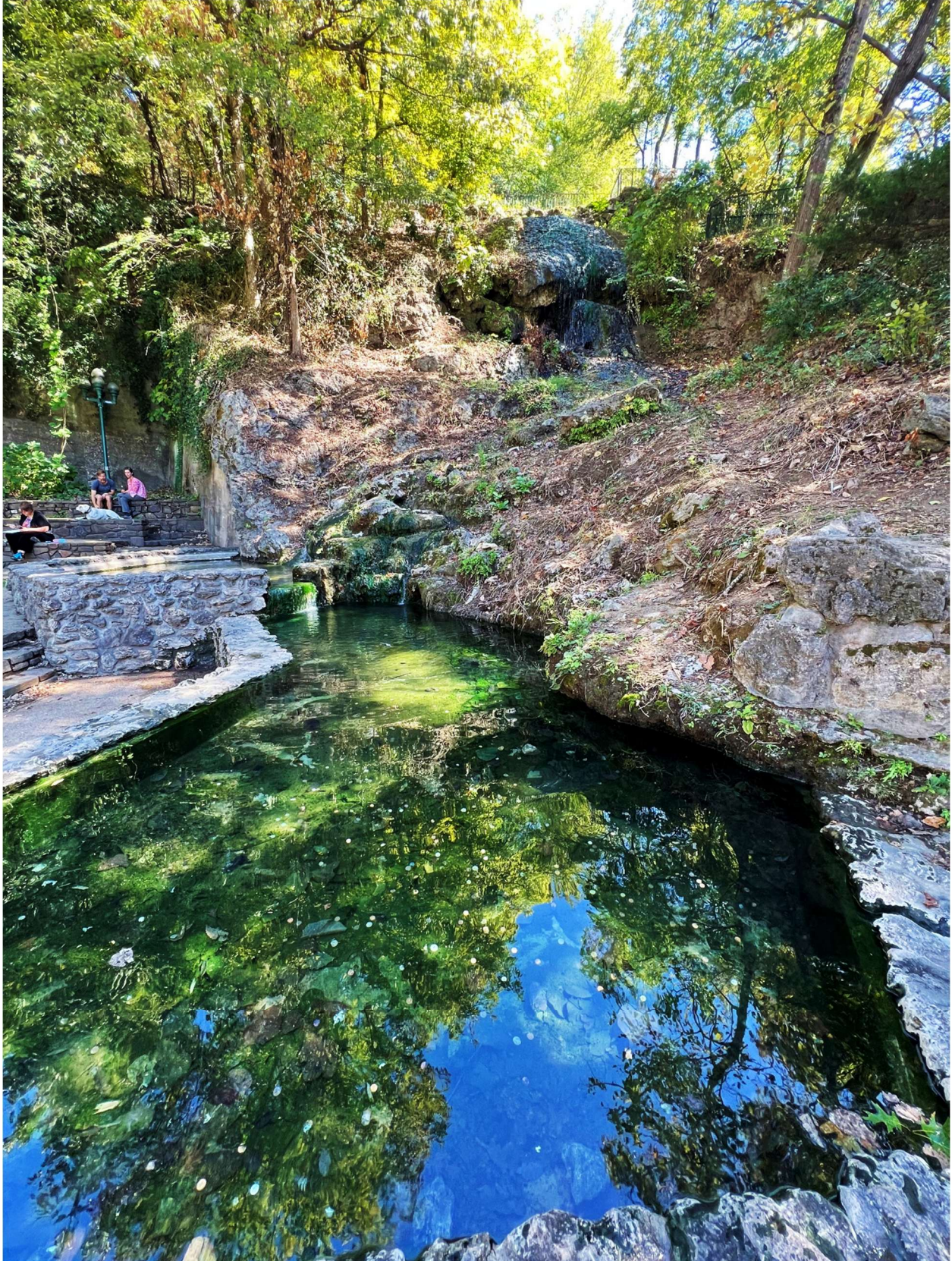
The observation deck of Hot Springs Mountain Tower stands at 216 feet above the mountain top. It has an elevator, fortunately. Not so fortunately, they charge \$14 to ride it.

As a Senior Citizen, obviously in deference to my accrued wisdom, I would've been accorded a \$3 discount.



That's a nice gesture, I guess, but after seeing the views from Grand Canyon's South Rim, or Olympic's Hurricane Ridge, or Chicago's Skydeck, or any Crater Lake overlook, I just did not believe that I'd get as much joy out of my admission fee as I would out of the three gallons of gas I could buy with that same \$11. The free view from the pagoda had been pleasing enough.

So, I wound my way back down to street level, found a parking spot, and set about exploring on foot.



A thermal spring at a public park downtown.

Exploring Bathhouse Row

For Your Safety

Take drinking water and wear appropriate clothing and shoes. Stay on established trails. Leaving the trail can be hazardous.

Keep pets on a leash at all times. Clean up after your pet.

Horses are allowed on non-paved trails.

Please report vandalism or graffiti to a law enforcement ranger. For emergencies, call 911. To reach National Park Service law enforcement dispatch call 888-692-1162.

Leave No Trace

Please leave objects as you find them. Leave rocks, plants, and flowers for others to enjoy. Historic structures and artifacts help tell the story of the past.

Respect wildlife. Observe only from a distance.

Be considerate of others. Let nature's sounds prevail.

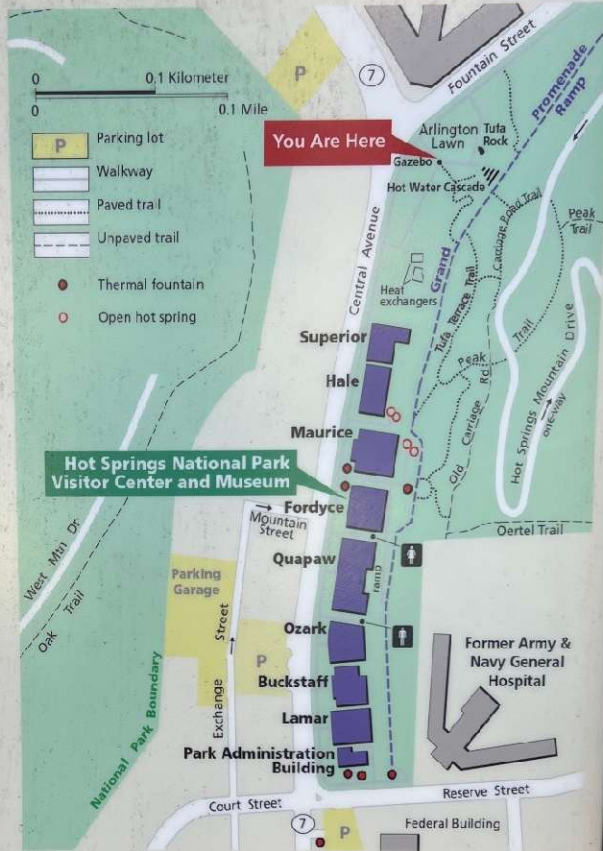
Dispose of waste, including pet waste, properly; pack it in, pack it out.



Leave No Trace Logo
©1999 by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics

There are numerous trails on Bathhouse Row to discover. From this location on Arlington Lawn, you can access the following trails:

Early 1900s postcards of Hot Springs National Park.



Trail	Trail Blaze Color	Distance (one way)	Elevation	Difficulty
Grand Promenade Trail	Black	0.5 mi (0.8 km)	615-737 ft (187-225 m)	Easy
Tufa Terrace Trail	Green	0.2 mi (0.3 km)	649-716 ft (198-218 m)	Easy
Oertel Trail	Red	1.4 mi (2.3 km)	679-863 ft (204-263 m)	Moderate to Strenuous
Peak Trail - To Observation Tower	White	0.54 mi (0.87 km)	669-1036 ft (204-316 m)	Moderate to Strenuous
Carriage Road Trail	White	0.17 mi (0.3 km)	670-132 ft (204-223 m)	Easy
Arlington Lawn via Tufa Terrace Trail (Western section)	Green	0.31 mi (0.5 km)	620-665 ft (189-203 m)	Easy

Distances shown are for the trails only and do not include the travel distance from your current location. All these trails can be accessed from the Grand Promenade Trail.





About a century ago, Bathhouse Row was very popular with underworld figures (like Al Capone) and prominent athletes (like Babe Ruth).

Law enforcement was “friendly” towards the money that the mob was bringing to town, and they looked the other way when it came to prostitution and the shady, not-so-legal underpinnings that came with the legal casinos.

The casinos were shut down in the 1960’s, and the bathhouse city cleaned itself up.





America's Baden-Baden



Jesse James, "outlaw" and stage robber, on the Malvern Road to Hot Springs

"Better take your guns. You might meet robbers on this road."

Outlaw to stage passengers after taking their money, 1874

"[Al Capone] was a good tipper. . . . All those gangsters, they were just people."

Jim Lemons, bathing attendant, Majestic Bathhouse, 1930-1987

...ple came to the s
ons and enjoyed
y ways. These his
home by visitors
activities and intere





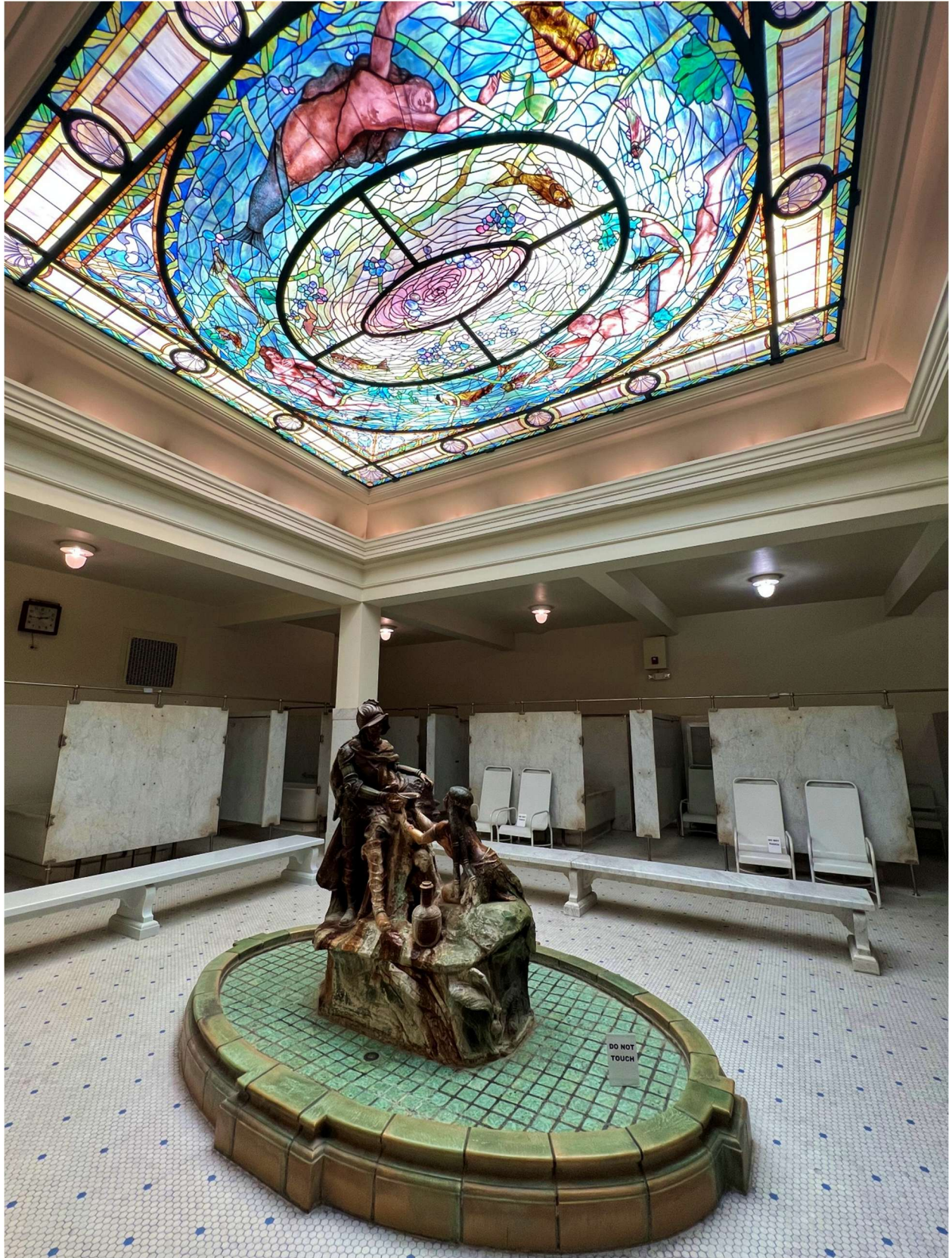












DO NOT TOUCH



All of those indoor photos were taken in in the Fordyce Bathhouse (exterior view, left), which also serves as the HSNP Visitor Center and Historic Museum. In 1915, it was hailed as “the best in Hot Springs.”

Even though some of the bathing facilities look almost like an old and strange hospital, there’s no denying the luxury of the stained glass, elaborate tile floors, ornate statuary, and cherry wood furnishings.

I did not take a thermal spring bath. There are no outdoor options anywhere in town, and only two bathhouses – Quapaw and The Buckstaff, the latter of which has been open continuously since 1912, offer baths to the public.

So, no bath for me, but I did crave food.



I did a little wander around town and – hello! – I saw a place that looked right up my alley: Grateful Head Pizza Oven & Beer Garden. No need to seek further. Up the stone stairs I went.

There was a great outdoor deck, and I chose a table at the far end so I could see the whole thing.

The pizza was good and so was the IPA. Better be for \$30 (including tip). I strolled back to Blue Maxx, then headed to my Site For The Nite: the Gulpha Gulch Campground (50% off = \$17, with hookups).

