

LANDSCAPE:

Rugged terrain (Ouachita Mountains) heavily forested

CLIMATE:

Mean temperature: January 41F – July 81F

Mean annual rainfall: 54”

POPULATION:

89,657

COUNTY SEAT:

Hot Springs (population 35,750)

The county was formed on April 5, 1873, and named for Augustus H. Garland, Governor of Arkansas, U.S. senator, and Grover Cleveland's attorney general.

Unusual natural resources have drawn visitors to the Garland County area since the 1500s. Hernando de Soto was the first famous person to "stay awhile" in the Hot Springs area of Garland County. In 1832, Hot Springs National Park, became the first national reservation set aside for recreational purposes and is the only National Park within a city. The 47 springs along the base of Hot Springs Mountain sustained a thriving American Spa that attracted the famous and infamous alike to its “healing thermal waters” for more than a century. Among them Sam Houston; President Theodore Roosevelt, who came to orate at the State Fair in 1910; President Franklin D. Roosevelt to celebrate the Arkansas Centennial in 1936; William Jennings Bryan; Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and John F. Kennedy; outlaws Cole Younger and Jesse and Frank James, who came to rob stagecoaches; gangster Al Capone; William "Bat" Masterson, who helped raise funds to rebuild the city after the fire of 1905; Carry Nation; Helen Keller; Jack Dempsey; Will Rogers; Babe Ruth; Joe DiMaggio; John Barrymore; and Douglas Fairbanks, to name a few. Almost a hundred years ago, major league baseball teams began coming to Hot Springs for spring training. The Chicago Cubs were first, followed by the Pittsburgh Pirates, the Boston Red Sox, and the St. Louis Cardinals. As for entertainers, so many great names have performed in Hot Springs, from the days of the old Opera House to the latest Las Vegas acts, that a listing of them would take a catalog.

Most of these famous people came because of the "healing, thermal waters." Today the famous bathhouses of Bathhouse Row are all but a memory, yet people continue to come to Hot Springs and the beautiful hills and lakes surrounding it. [Gallery Walk](#), which is held downtown the first Thursday of each month, features exhibits and art shows from some 25 galleries. Attractions such as [Magic Springs](#), [Mid-America Museum](#), which offers a "hands-on" approach to the exhibits of life, energy, matter, and perception, and the [Hot Springs Mountain Tower](#) draw thousands of visitors annually.

Hot Springs also offers [live thoroughbred racing](#) from January through April and simulcasting from other race tracks, from May through the fall each year, which draws crowds of thousands.

One of the largest quartz crystal mine operations in North America is located in Garland County and allows visitors to dig for their own crystals for a daily fee and keep whatever they find at no additional charge.

Lake Ouachita and Lake Catherine State Parks are nestled in the Ouachita Mountains within an hour's drive of one another. Lake Ouachita State Park located northwest of Hot Springs on Lake Ouachita has 102 campsites and features all water sports. Lake Catherine State Park also offers camping, water sports, and hiking. Lake Ouachita, a Corps of Engineers lake, has 975 miles of shoreline (the largest in the state), while the smaller Lake Catherine has only 80 miles. The third lake in the area to offer recreational facilities is Lake Hamilton with 240 miles of shoreline and is the most populated of the three lakes. The Ouachita National Forest has camping and recreational facilities. Charlton Recreation Area along Red Creek has swimming, fishing, picnicking, hiking and camping sites. Recreation and tourism have always been mainstays of the county's economy, along with livestock production and logging in its plentiful forests to create a stable industrial base. Garland County has had a full-time staff in its industrial development office since 1989. The county's Enterprise Zone program makes businesses eligible for tax breaks and credit for creating new jobs.