

Little Rock, Arkansas

Take some time to visit Little Rock, Arkansas, and you'll find a vibrant city of skyscrapers with a relaxed and open feel. Look closer and you'll discover a storied and challenging past, if you take advantage of the varied opportunities to learn about the city's rich history. Little Rock, the geographic, political and financial center of Arkansas, invites you to stroll through historic sites with beautiful architecture and expansive lawns, and enjoy satisfying traditional foods.

As the capitol of Arkansas, Little Rock was home to Bill Clinton during his 12 years as governor. On the night in 1992 that he was elected president of the United States, Clinton delivered his acceptance speech from the front steps of the city's historic Old State House. As the oldest surviving state capitol building west of the Mississippi River, this Greek-Revival style edifice with lovely, shaded grounds once housed both houses of the Arkansas General Assembly. Proceedings were not always genteel, and an 1837 disagreement between legislators turned into a fatal knife fight. Later conflict resulted in occupation of the building by Union troops during the Civil War. A new Capitol Building was constructed in 1912, and the Old State House is now open to visitors as a museum with exhibits related to Arkansas history and culture.

Little Rock's Central High School gained national attention in 1957 in one of the most important events of the Civil Rights Movement. Governor Orval Faubus refused to comply with new school integration laws and called in the Arkansas National Guard to prevent African-American students from entering the school. President Eisenhower and the U.S. Army intervened, and nine black students were escorted into the all-white school and then persevered, under military protection, through a tense academic year. The school still functions as a fully-integrated public high school, but is also a National Park Service site. You can learn more about Civil Rights events at a nearby visitor center, and tours of the school are scheduled on selected weekdays.

There are many other interesting historic sites and museums in the city, and Little Rockers are very proud of a new attraction. The William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum is housed in an elevated, glass-and-metal building situated by the Arkansas River. Exhibits in the museum utilize videos, photographs and interactive stations to highlight President Clinton's work and achievements.

When you're ready for a break from sight-seeing and history, you'll find plenty of shopping and entertainment in the revitalized River Market area. A vibrant music and nightlife scene thrives among the skyscrapers of the downtown. Little Rockers love music. You can find acoustic, techno, symphony, rock, and any other genre you want in their eclectic mix of clubs. When you've built up an appetite, be sure to try Arkansas-style catfish or pork barbeque. Restaurants offer a range of international and domestic cuisines, but Little Rock is best known for comfort foods.

As you explore Little Rock, you'll find a city which treasures its past, the good and the bad, because of the lessons the community has learned. Today the community welcomes diversity and embraces an exciting 21st century.

Source(s):

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