



# HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS

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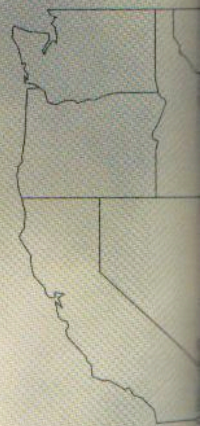
**HOT SPRINGS, Ark.** – Although better known for its healing thermal waters, Hot Springs also enjoys a nationwide reputation as a golfer's paradise with resort courses, old-timey country club layouts and executive style play. A trip to Hot Springs will reveal just about any style of golf course around. "There's a lot of variety," said Myron McCormick, a local resident and avid golfer. Hot Spring Country Club offers 45 holes of golf, including two 18-hole championship courses – the Arlington and the Majestic.

The Arlington is the "newer" of the two, built in 1927 by William Diddel. However, it received a makeover in 1994 by two-time Masters Champion, Ben Crenshaw, to restore it to its original classic design. A shorter course by today's standards, the 6,690-yard course (from the back tees) sits at

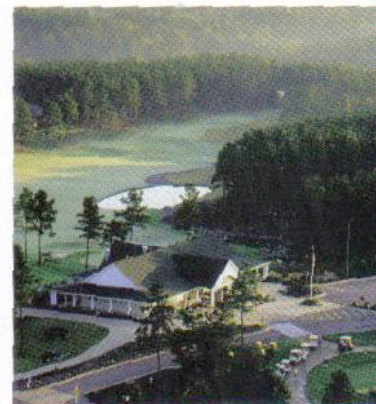
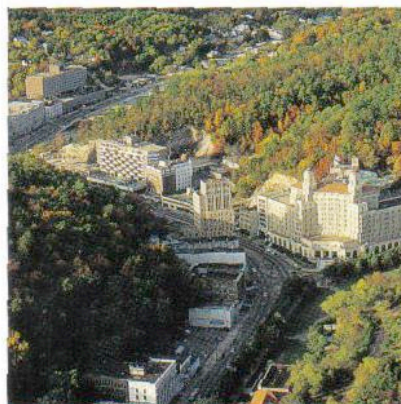
the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains that overlook Hot Springs. "The Arlington is a nice track," McCormick said. "It has that feel of an older type country club."

The Majestic, which was constructed in 1898 by Willie Park Jr. and renovated in 2001, offers golfers more character and fairly straight tree-lined fairways. It's a little longer than its sister course, and it offers golfers plenty of water and sand hazards. "The greens also have more undulation," said McCormick. Hot Springs Country Clubs is part of Arkansas' Natural State Golf Trail, 15 of the better courses in the state.

Glenwood Country Club, which is about 35 miles from Hot Springs, also is on the Natural State Golf Trail and was carved out of the rolling terrain of the Ouachita Mountains.







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**"THE DIAMONDHEAD GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB IN HOT SPRINGS IS A SHOT-MAKER'S COURSE"**, said McCormick "with plenty of hills and doglegs."

The Belvedere Country Club was one of the first resort courses built in Hot Springs, the city that touts itself as "America's First Resort." Perhaps the biggest variety and most challenging courses will come if you stay at Hot Springs Village, the country's largest gated community on 27,000 acres along a 13.5-mile stretch of land.

With rental villas available starting at about \$75 a night, Hot Springs Village grants guests access to seven championship-caliber courses—spending time about 15 miles out of town definitely is worth the drive.

With four of the top 10 ranked courses in Arkansas, Hot Springs Village is best known for its caliber of golf. However, McCormick said the word hasn't spread too far. "If you're going to (visit) somewhere, and you're a golf fanatic, then Hot Springs Village is the best kept secret in the country," he said. "Everything is related to a Spanish name."

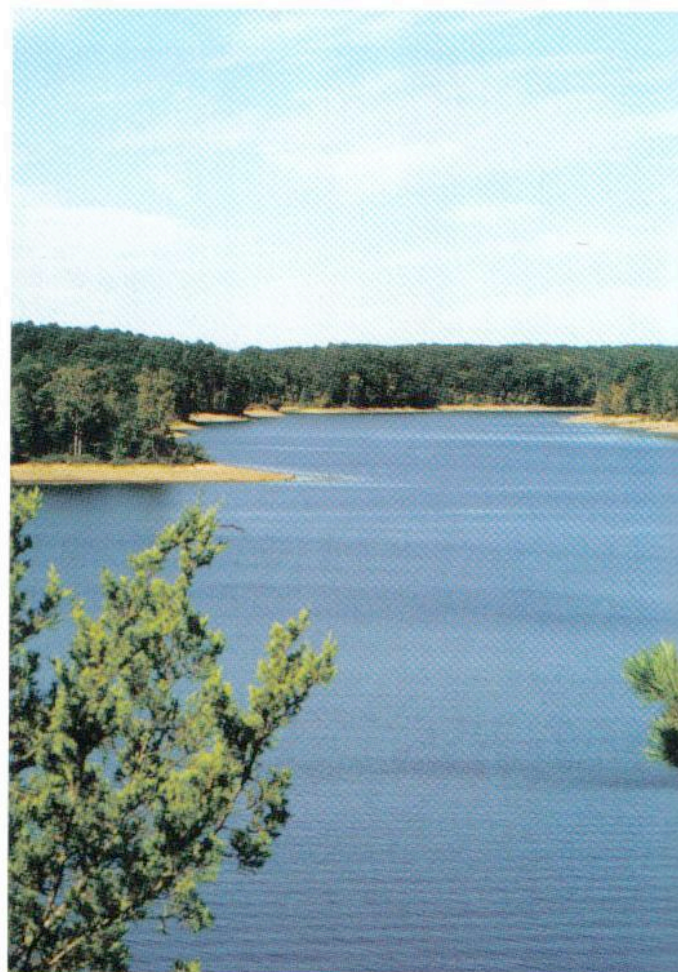
Which is appropriate, considering that Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto led one of the first expeditions through Arkansas in the 1500s. In fact, Hot Springs Village named its first course after the famed adventurer. "All the courses are a little different, but there're no links style," McCormick said. "Most of them have fairly generous fairways, except the Ponce de Leon course. It's the toughest, and it's not very wide open."

Tom Clark, of the Maryland-based Ault, Clark and Associates, designed all but one of the Hot Springs Village courses. Clark, an architect of dozens of United States golf courses, also designed the Woods course at the Kingsmill Golf Club and Resort in Williamsburg, Va.

"These are not Tom Fazio courses, or (Jack) Nicklaus courses," McCormick said. "He's not a big name designer, but these are very nice courses." Arkansas native John Daly, whose hometown is about

70 miles north of Hot Springs, opened the Ponce de Leon course in 1991 — just one week after his surprising PGA Championship victory at Crooked Stick in Carmel, Ind. At nearly 7,000 yards from the tips,





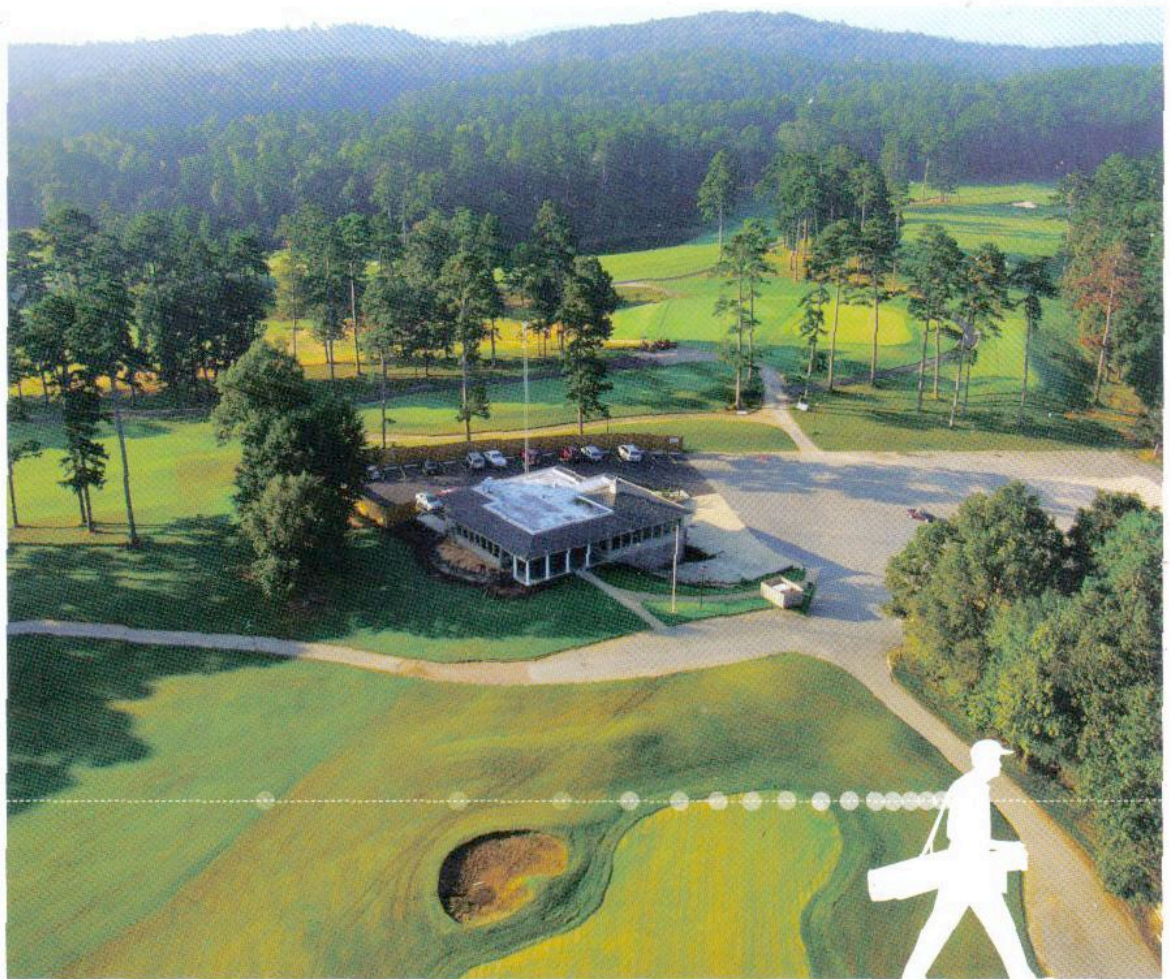
*“This is a golfer’s haven,” said McCormick. “We have a lot of people who move here from Florida and California just for the golf.”*

the Ponce course is a favorite among lower handicap golfers. However, if you move up to the blue or white tees, you’ll cut off anywhere from 500 to 1,000 yards, making it enjoyable for the weekend duffer. The Balboa opened in 1987, but it’s scheduled for renovations in 2008. Wide open fairways with less slope than most of the other Village course lead up to fast-paced greens.

Other courses at the Village include the par-62 executive Coronado, which has no sand traps; the privately owned 7,560-yard Diamante; and the newest layout, the Grenada, which opened in 2004 and features some of the most scenic views at Hot Springs Village.

**PERHAPS THE BEST COURSE AT HOT SPRINGS VILLAGE — AND MAYBE IN THE ENTIRE STATE — IS THE ISABELLA. THIS IS A PLAYER-FRIENDLY COURSE THAT RECENTLY ADDED NINE NEW HOLES, WHICH WILL GIVE ISABELLA VISITORS EVEN MORE VARIETY.** Isabella’s signature No. 15





doglegs to the left, and the green is protected by water on the left and plenty of sand on the right. "This is a golfer's haven," said McCormick. "We have a lot of people who move here from Florida and California just for the golf."

### TODAY, GOLF MIGHT ATTRACT BOTH VISITORS AND PERMANENT TRANSPLANTS ALIKE, BUT MIGRATION TO THE HOT SPRINGS REGION OF ARKANSAS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR THOUSANDS OF

**YEARS.** Thanks to 47 separate springs along a 400-yard stretch of land, American Indians have been enjoying the natural thermal baths for the past millennium. After making extensive journeys through Arkansas and the Southeastern U.S., de Soto died in 1542 just 150 miles from Hot Springs on the banks of the Mississippi River. Less than 300 years later, the first inn was built in Hot Springs, and the first bathhouse was erected to cater to those looking for healing spring waters.

In 1832, Congress established Hot Springs Reservation, 40 years before land was set aside in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho for Yellowstone National Park. "But because Hot Springs was designated a reservation first, Yellowstone gets all the recognition in the public eye," said Jeff Heitzman, a park ranger and Hot Springs historian. "But we're recognized by the park service as the first," Heitzman said, adding that the Hot Springs designation was changed to a national park in 1921. The government originally set aside Hot Springs land to protect the waters, and starting in the late 1800s, 46 of the springs were closed to safeguard them. No. 27, the tunnel spring, never closed and was designated as a display spring. By then, bathhouses had popped up everywhere, extracting the 143-degree water from the springs to offer medicinal treatments for whatever the ailment. In Hot Springs heyday, 20 bathhouses lined the streets, offering treatments that included "sitz" baths, needle showers and equipment, such as steam cabinets and douche cannons. Hot Springs bathhouses were patterned after European bathhouses, which were patterned after Roman bathhouses.





*due to the resurgence of tourism in Hot Springs, the park service has reopened three of the original 47 springs in the city.*

**“BY 1946, WE HAD GIVEN ALMOST A MILLION BATHS WHEN IT WAS STILL CONSIDERED FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES,” HEITZMAN SAID. “NOW, IT’S MORE FOR PEOPLE TO RELAX. BUT THEY’RE STILL DOING BATHS THE WAY THEY WERE 100 YEARS AGO.”**

With the advancements in antibiotics and other medical practices in the 1950s, the popularity of Hot Springs’ bathhouses dwindled, and most of them closed. Because they were on federal land, the buildings reverted back to the park service after operations ceased. The Buckstaff, one of eight bathhouses left standing on Bathhouse Row, is the only one to remain open and still offers spa treatments under private ownership. The remaining bathhouses fell into disrepair, but efforts are under way to redevelop these buildings.





Chuck Dodson's family goes back five generations in Hot Springs, and he remembers the downward spiral that the Downtown underwent in the 1960s and '70s. "Downtown Hot Springs was in bad shape," he said. "It was ugly; it was dirty; there were empty buildings." Due to the resurgence of tourism in Hot Springs, the park service has reopened three of the original 47 springs in the city.

The park service also is in the middle of a \$19 million renovation plan to revamp the remaining bathhouses and eventually lease them to private entities. The Fordyce is the visitors' center and museum for the national park and the Lamar will be used for storage and office space. However, the Quawpaw is expected to reopen as a family style bathhouse, and the Ozark will be the new home of the new Museum of Contemporary Art.

Three others – the Superior, Maurice and Hale – are expected to be available for lease this year, as well. "We have an amazing amount of interest in these bathhouses," said Diane East of the National Park Service. However, you don't have to wait for the Quawpaw to reopen, or head to the Buckstaff to enjoy a bathhouse atmosphere.

### SPRING-FED BATHS AND OTHER SPA TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE ARLINGTON HOTEL RESORT AND SPA, THE AUSTIN HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTER AND THE SPRINGS HOTEL—FORMERLY CALLED THE DOWNTOWNER.

Although the water that comes from the springs is slightly radioactive and has been dated to about 4,000 years old, it still entices people to fill up jugs of water at stations throughout Hot Springs. "Our water is probably the most drinkable water around," Heitzman said. And the best part – it's free. ★

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