

Get to Little Rock

Follow this editor through Arkansas's capital for a weekend of fun, perfect weather, and lots of surprises.



top: The Clinton Presidential Center was designed to reflect Clinton's vision of a "bridge to the 21st century." *above:* The center also houses 80 million pages of paper and more than 79,000 artifacts.

It's the forward-thinking attitude and the culture. The young rock-and-roll bands not yet famous but soon to be discovered. The architecture that blows your mind, and the absolute ease of the entire town. It's pure fun, smart shopping, and delicious dining. With all this, Little Rock grabs hold of you and won't let go.

That's what it did to me. This capital city ranks as one of my personal favorites. Follow my lead for a good time.

Too, Too Easy

While you're in Little Rock, you'll want to be in the middle of the action. That can be summed up in three words: President Clinton Avenue. A canary yellow trolley travels up and down the street so you don't need a car to navigate this part of town. Just climb aboard the River Rail Trolley (50 cents adults, free ages 5 and younger). It stops at the Clinton Presidential Center, The Peabody hotel, and various other places.

Get Going

Three days were just not enough—the city offers so much activity. If there's one thing you can't miss, though, it's the William J. Clinton Presidential Center.

Whatever your politics, this place rocks. The architecture, rich with views both inside and out, left me staggering. Start on the top floor of the museum to see an exact replica of the Oval Office (look for the blue Play-Doh "DAD" on the desk, the dog drink coaster, and the family pictures).

Then work your way down to the lower level. Here you'll spy childhood drawings and, of course, some trademark saxophones. Admission costs \$7 adults, \$5 seniors, and kids under 6 get in free. You can purchase a headset tour for \$5, but you really don't need it.

Also visit the Clinton Museum Store, a short drive or trolley ride away. Among the cool offerings: a bobblehead doll of the President, an "I Miss Bill" T-shirt, and a book of Clinton family paper dolls. ▶



above: Sticky Fingerz Rock-n-Roll Chicken Shack brings live music, a kickin' dance floor, spicy chicken fingers, and funky surroundings to downtown. right: Ooh and aah over the jewelry at Box Turtle.

Food and Some Fun

Vermillion Water Grille features a raw bar and fresh exotic fish dishes in a white-tablecloth atmosphere. Bosco's brews ales on-site, serves amazing meals, and offers outdoor diners a view of musicians playing at the Riverfront Amphitheatre overlooking the Arkansas River. Top choice: the salmon, which costs \$13 at lunch and \$18 at dinner (size stays the same).

Sticky Fingerz Rock-n-Roll Chicken Shack, a Bohemian joint with folk art and wacky decor, brings in crowds with its music. The tunes sound even better with the fried chicken fingers, which come with a choice of dipping sauces and coatings, from Voodoo to Creamy Cilantro. For more entertainment, check out Crush Wine Bar, where locals relax after work, or Willy D's, a rotating piano player spot.

Sleeping In

I stay at the Courtyard by Marriott Little Rock Downtown. It's within walking distance of all the happenings (including the Clinton Presidential Center), plus it boasts a modern lobby and exceptionally clean rooms. Rates start at \$159.



left: The Full Moon sells notepaper with funny sayings, baby clothing, high-end decorating items, and pottery, such as these Gail Pittman bowls. below: Hitch a ride on the trolley for only 50 cents, or pay \$2 for the entire day.



Other options include the noted Peabody Little Rock. Even though the hotel is famous for its marching ducks, I find the place too crowded and the experience pricey (\$199 and up). There's also a Doubletree Hotel with updated rooms and rates starting at \$129. (Check the Internet for packages that are even less expensive.)

If you really max out Little Rock, you'll be going to bed late and getting up early, for this town pulls even late sleepers from the bed. It's just that fun. Believe me. —JENNIFER MCKENZIE FRAZIER

For more information: Contact the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau at www.littlerock.com, (501) 376-4781, or 1-800-844-4781. ☐

Off the Main Drag

While many restaurants and music venues sit on President Clinton Avenue, fab shopping is scattered around town. My favorites include:

- Box Turtle, a boutique best known for its amazing array of jewelry. From shirts designed by local artists to charm bracelets, custom-ordered dog portraits, and local music CDs, this place is a gem.
- The Full Moon for rugs, colorful glassware, precious baby gear, hand-painted reading glasses, handbags, great pajamas, a slew of picture frames, and artist-signed Gail Pittman pottery.