

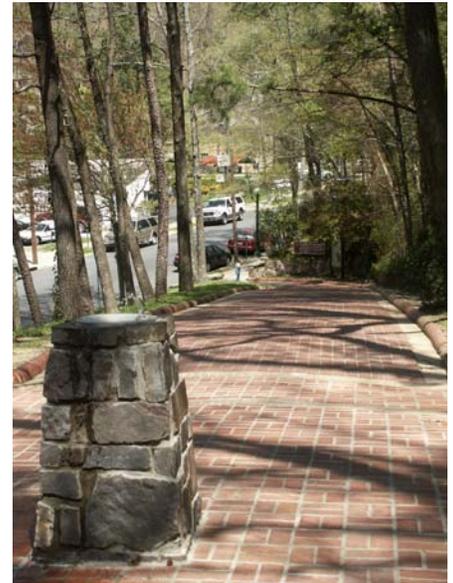
# Hot Springs

National Park  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Hot Springs National Park  
Arkansas



## Do Drink the Water



Is the water from the hot springs good to drink?

Water from the hot springs is Hot Springs National Park's primary resource. Congress first protected the resource in 1832, and they intended for it to be *used*.

Drinking the hot springs' water is perfectly normal, even encouraged. Go ahead. "Quaff the elixir," as they used to say in the heyday of the spa (c. 1880- 1950 was the Golden Age of Bathing at Hot Springs National Park). Thousands of visitors highly endorse the good quality of the hot springs' water and fill bottles to take home.

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### Early Water Use

In the 1800s, springs were considered a practically guaranteed source of safe- to- drink water. Springs were categorized according to supposed mineral contents: sulphur springs, magnesia springs, chalybeate (or iron) springs, etc., and each type was considered medicinal for specific ailments. Spring waters acquire minerals by dissolving them out of rocks below the earth's surface. The hot springs' waters rise from an estimated maximum depth of around 8000 feet, having fallen as rain over 4000 years ago. On average 700,000 gallons are collected from the springs every day at an average temperature of 143° F (62° C). Some of the old- fashioned spring- category names survive here and there, but now that cities and rural associations must treat their water, springs do not always inspire the trust they did in the past. In the early 1900s people sipped at almost every seep in the park. This is not recommended today, so we provide specific fountains where visitors may collect the water.

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### Fountains Today

Hot water "jug fountains" are located at Libbey Memorial Physical Medicine Center on Reserve Street, at the National Park Service Administration Building on Reserve Street, at Hill Wheatley Plaza on Central Avenue, and between the Hale and Maurice Bathhouses on Bathhouse Row. You may also drink the hot springs' water at the Noble Fountain on Reserve Avenue (at the south entrance of the Grand Promenade) and at the Dripping Spring between the Hale and Maurice Bathhouses.

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## Safe Water

The park does not claim the water is curative, but the park *does* certify that it is safe to drink. The water is colorless, odorless, and tasteless- - it lacks much iron and sulphur. The government still protects the springs. The park's Water Quality Laboratory and state- certified analysts ensure that the water meets rigorous federal and state drinking water standards. The water is tested regularly at numerous sampling points.

The water is naturally potable (good to drink) when it arrives at the surface of Hot Springs Mountain. A century ago the terms "sterile water" and "potable water" were synonymous, and you may encounter the phrase "naturally sterile Hot Springs water."

One of the water's gases was even thought to be germicidal, but this was not really accurate. The water is not sterile. Modern scientists have incredibly powerful microscopes that enable them to examine the water more closely than the first users would have dreamed possible. Scientists do find micro- bacteria but none of concern. Bacteria are found nearly everywhere on earth, and most are not harmful. The park's water- - as stated before- - is certified safe for drinking.

The hot water jug fountains receive only the *hot* spring water- - which need not be treated, so it is not. Note: the Hale/Maurice jug fountain has no parking lot, so fewer visitors use it. Consequently the water there turns lukewarm in the pipe, but it is safe. Just let it run until it is comes out hot.

About sediments: minerals often precipitate out of the water and stick to the insides of pipes carrying it. Occasionally the accumulated sediments break off and settle in the bottom of your container. It may look unappetizing but is not toxic. If you dislike the sediments, dump the water out and get more at a different spigot. By the way, a sealed container will temporarily prevent loss of the water's gases, although some of the minerals may settle out eventually. Many visitors report the spring water is delicious when served chilled.

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## Cold Springs

The park also has jug fountains serving cold spring water at Happy Hollow and Whittington springs. The actual springs are a few yards away from the respective fountains. These two fountains dispense the water from cold springs, whose sources are different from the hot springs. Whittington Spring flows out of West Mountain, and Happy Hollow Spring flows out of North Mountain. The Arkansas Department of Health requires formal treatment of these springs, and ozone filtration systems are used because they have been deemed the least intrusive of the acceptable methods. All ozone is removed from the water by the time it reaches the spigot. There is no "treated" taste. Many companies that commercially bottle spring water use the same process- - but they do not use the same water. The park provides spring water free of charge at all of its jug fountains. Regulations prohibit private individuals from selling any of the park's waters.

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## Fountain Maintenance

Finally, fountains are sometimes closed briefly for routine maintenance. Pipes totally clogged by minerals mean a dry fountain, and servicing averts this problem. Please be patient, and remember: the park never closes all the fountains at once. Spring water is always available at Hot Springs National Park.

# Fountains Supplying Spring Water of Hot Springs National Park

