The River, the Ridge & the Romance of the Delta

VISITOR’S GUIDE & MAP
ABOUT
HELENA, ARKANSAS

Lying in a valley of Crowley’s Ridge, a geological formation, Helena-West Helena’s hilly landscape distinguishes it from the typically flat marshlands of most Mississippi and Arkansas Delta towns. The current city represents a consolidation, effective on January 1, 2006, of the two Arkansas cities of Helena and West Helena.

The city traces its historical roots back to the founding of the port town of Helena in 1833 on the Mississippi River, which began its emergence as a major port shortly after steamboats began traveling the river in 1811. The agricultural wealth of Arkansas’s eastern Delta region flowed through Helena, and it was here that the culture of the Deep South made its most enduring penetration into Arkansas.

Pinned between the river on the east and Crowley’s Ridge immediately to the west, Helena was unable to accommodate the industrialization that began reaching the area in the early 20th century. Thus, West Helena was founded in 1909 to the west of Crowley’s Ridge around the factories and mills for which Helena had lacked the space. After the cities consolidated into one, they collectively became known as Helena-West Helena. Throughout this guide, Helena-West Helena is referred to simply as Helena for ease (Helena-West Helena is a bit of a mouthful).

Today, Helena serves as the county seat for Phillips County, Arkansas and is home to just over 12,000 people. There are a multitude of reasons to explore our city including but not limited to: historic downtown Cherry St., the Mississippi River, and our rich blues heritage. Numerous Civil War Helena sites offer a unique “you were there” perspective, and tell more than just the typical story. Please use this guide to explore what we have to offer and don’t hesitate to email or call with any questions.

Beyond our attractions, Helena is best known for its people and our small town hospitality. We are genuinely delighted to invite you to visit the place we call home, so come on!
Delta Blues And Beyond
Helena celebrates American music and culture at its best. As the home of “King Biscuit Time,” the longest running blues radio show, and the world famous King Biscuit Blues Festival, Helena has played a rich role in blues and music heritage over the years.

Civil War Helena
Our unique history as an occupied Confederate city that became a refuge for freedom seekers, invites the exploration of the issues that defined the Civil War. It provides the opportunity for students of all ages to make a meaningful connection to the past and to foster an understanding of the war that changed our nation.

Historic Homes & Churches
Helena has an impressive number of historic homes and churches that have been preserved over the years. Antebellum and Victorian homes can be found throughout the city, particularly in and around the downtown district.

Mississippi River & the Great Outdoors
Geography and wildlife are two of Helena and the greater Phillips County region’s greatest features. Located at the southern tip of Crowley’s Ridge, home to numerous lakes, bordered by a national forest and three rivers, the area has something to offer every outdoor enthusiast.

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/explore-helena
King Biscuit Blues Festival
The King Biscuit Blues Festival is one of the nation’s foremost showcases of blues music, held every Columbus Day weekend in October. Tens of thousands of blues enthusiasts, as well as historians, from all over the world converge upon Historic Downtown Helena to hear stirring and uplifting performances of this American art form.

King Biscuit Time Radio Show
The longest running blues radio show in the country, King Biscuit Time still broadcasts live from the studio at the Delta Cultural Center’s Visitor Center. The show has been running continuously for over 70 years and has been hosted for over 60 of those years by its current host, Blues Hall of Famer “Sunshine” Sonny Payne. Visitors can watch the live broadcasts every weekday at 12:15pm at the Delta Cultural Center and often get to be on the show. Mr. Sonny loves having guests!

Warfield Concerts
Warfield Concerts are outstanding musical events that are free of charge to all through the generosity of a former citizen of Helena. The late Samuel Drake Warfield provided in his will the means for setting up the concerts which have been named for him. Recently the concerts have featured Ailey II, Dance Afrika, and A Tribute to Pavarotti.

For more information about additional festivals & events in Helena, please see page 16.
Freedom Park, 750 Biscoe
Freedom Park is the first location in Arkansas designated as a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site. Once the location of a Contraband camp, this park is dedicated to interpreting the African American experience during the war.

Fort Curtis, 350 Columbia
The original Fort Curtis was built soon after the Union army occupied Helena in 1862. New Fort Curtis allows visitors to experience an earthen fort firsthand, including the huge 24-pounder guns. Exhibits tell the story of the original fort and this unique reconstruction.

Battery C, Entrance at the End of Yorkshire
One of four earthen batteries erected by the Union army in 1862, Battery C briefly fell to the Confederates during the Battle of Helena on July 4, 1863. This distinct site also affords a stunning view of the city.

Confederate Cemetery, Entrance on North Holly
This historic cemetery is beautifully positioned on top of Crowley’s Ridge. It is the burial place of Gen. Patrick Cleburne, known as “the Stonewall Jackson of the West.” Exhibits interpret the cemetery’s history.

Magnolia Cemetery, Entrance on Wire Road
This African American Cemetery was established before the Civil War. One of the first black Legislators of Arkansas, W. H. Grey, successful businessman Abraham Miller and his wife, well-known philanthropist, Eliza A. Miller, members of pioneering black families, and Civil War veterans are all buried here.

Learn more about our Civil War sites and story »
VisitHelenaAR.com/civilwarhelena
Pillow Thompson House, 718 PERRY ST
The Pillow-Thompson House is arguably Helena’s most impressive historic home. The home, built in 1896 by Jerome B. Pillow, is one of the finest examples of Queen Anne architecture in the South.

Edwardian Inn, 317 SOUTH BISCOE
Built in 1904 by the Clem brothers, who built several other homes in Helena. The inn is one of the better examples in Arkansas of the Colonial Revival style.

St. Mary’s Catholic Church, 123 COLUMBIA STREET
Built in 1934 by architect and industrial designer Charles Eames. This church was his first large commission, and one that he always spoke of as being one of his finest works. Eames is considered to modern furniture design what Frank Lloyd Wright’s name is to architecture.

Estevan Hall, 653 SOUTH BISCOE
Built in the 1820s, this home is probably the oldest home in Phillips County. Estevan Hall is currently being restored in preparation for its new life as the Civil War Helena Visitor Center.

Moore-Hornor Home, 323 BEECH
The Moore-Hornor Home, built in 1859, served as a hospital following the Battle of Helena. Bullet holes in the parlor doors are a vivid reminder of the Battle of Helena. A wayside interpreting civilian life under martial law is located opposite the house, on the northwest corner of the New Fort Curtis lot.

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/historic-homes-and-churches
MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS

A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE SITES

Mississippi River and the Helena River Park
The only downtown on the Mississippi River for the 300 miles between Memphis and Vicksburg, Helena is the perfect launching point for a river adventure, whether its fishing for monster catfish or canoeing to Buck Island.

Delta Heritage Trail
This rails-to-trails conversion is being developed in phases along the former Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way that stretches from one mile south of Lexa (six miles west of Helena) to Rohwer, and extending via the Mississippi River levee to Arkansas City. The trail is currently 21 miles long.

Old Town Lake
Located in Lake View off Highway 44, this beautiful oxbow lake has a boardwalk that extends right into the middle of the lake. The lake is a serene place to fish or simply enjoy the beauty of the Cypress trees rising from the water.

St. Francis National Forest and the Mississippi River State Park
At 22,600 acres, the St. Francis is one of the smallest and most diverse national forests in the country. The Mississippi River State Park, located within the forest, is currently centered on Bear Creek Lake Recreation Area, which includes a visitor center and two campgrounds.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR NATURE TOURISM SITES
VisitHelenaAR.com/ms-river-great-outdoors
Festivals & Events
Helena is home to some of the most-loved music festivals in a locale unlike any other. From the grassy slopes of our Mississippi River levee amphitheatre, you can see the mighty Mississippi River to one side and Helena’s historic downtown storefronts on the other. This backdrop is host to two major annual festivals and a number of smaller festivals and events—so pack your lawn chair!

Museums
The Delta region is rich in culture and history which can be explored in both of Helena’s museums: the Delta Cultural Center and the Helena Museum.

Shopping
Helena is home to some of the best boutiques and gift shops in the Mississippi and Arkansas Delta. Most of our shopping is concentrated on Cherry St. in downtown Helena and in the Midland Heights district. Whether you’re looking for King Biscuit Blues Festival souvenirs, antique collectibles, or handmade jewelry, there is something for everyone.

Dining
From BBQ and burgers to soul food, Helena’s food scene is rooted in American culinary staples. After touring our historic sites, our visitors are always happy to learn that Helena is blessed with down-home cooking galore. Pair that with a front porch conversation with our friendly locals, and you have a recipe that can’t be beat!

Lodging
Our friends who have the opportunity to spend more than a day in Helena will find our local accommodations are the perfect way to rise and shine. After touring the sights and sounds of Helena, kick back and relax in your choice of settings. Whether you desire a traditional hotel, or want to try out a historic bed and breakfast, Helena accommodates in true Southern style.

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/explore-helena
King Biscuit Blues Festival
Held annually over Columbus Day weekend, this festival regularly attracts tens of thousands of visitors to one of the largest celebrations of blues music in the country.

Wild Hog Music and Motorcycle Rally
This three-day celebration of classic rock and motorcycles has routinely attracted thousands of visitors to downtown Helena. Whether you love the music of the 1960’s and 1970’s, motorcycles, or fair food, this laidback festival had something for you. Delbert McClinton recently headlined. Come see Cherry St. lined with “hogs”!

Arkansas Delta Family Gospel Festival
Sponsored by the Delta Cultural Center, this free festival features local and regional talent performing traditional and contemporary gospel music. It’s a great family event.

Legendary Blues Festival
Annual festival held in downtown Helena featuring traditional blues artists. Recent headliners include the Grammy Award winning group, Harold Melvin’s Blue Notes.

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/festivals-events
EVENTS

Helena Farmers Market
Every Saturday morning from June until September, enjoy the best of locally grown produce, home-baked goods, and the work of artisans and craftpeople. The downtown market is also a great place to meet the locals.

Helena Holiday Festival
Every year Helena rings in the December holiday season with a series of events including the lighting of the historic downtown district and Christmas tree, choir performances, a Christmas carol sing-along, and a synthetic ice skating rink.

Second Saturdays
Helena Second Saturdays is a free downtown street fair held on Cherry Street every second Saturday of the month from 5-8pm, April-September. Many of the downtown boutiques stay open late for shoppers. Highlights include an arts and crafts market, food court, live blues and gospel music, a kid zone, and beer garden.

King Biscuit Blues Festival 5K & 10K Run
The Kenneth Freemeyer Memorial 5K, 10K and 1 Mile Fun Run takes you down the beautiful Mississippi River and through historic downtown Helena.

Tour da’ Delta
The Tour da’ Delta is an annual bike ride that takes cyclists across the Mississippi River, around a beautiful cypress filled lake, and through the rolling hills that wind through the St. Francis National Forest.

Warfield Concerts
Warfield Concerts are outstanding musical events that are free of charge to all through the generosity of the late Samuel Drake Warfield who provided in his will the means for setting up the concerts.

MUSEUMS

The Delta Cultural Center, a museum of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, is dedicated to interpreting the history of the Arkansas Delta. The center is comprised of two museum locations - the Depot and the Visitors Center, with exhibits on the Civil War, the settlement of the Delta region, and a live radio studio where King Biscuit Time is broadcast every weekday at 12:15pm.

The Helena Museum has an impressive collection that includes a diorama of the Battle of Helena, Thomas Hindman’s desk, Patrick Cleburne’s prayer book and one of the largest collections of Edison artifacts. Like “Grandma’s attic”, this museum’s unique artifacts are not to be missed. Free admission.

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/festivals-events
LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/museums-attractions
SHOPPING

Helena is home to some of the best boutiques and gift shops in the Delta.

BOUTIQUES - GIFTS & COLLECTIBLES

The Blossom Shop & Bookstore
306 Cherry St
Phone: 870-753-9004

Brian’s Framing
605 Oakland Ave
Phone: 870-338-3700

Cotton and Kudzu
413 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-8339

Delta Gypsy Caravan
509 Cherry St
Phone: 870-816-6466

Handworks
227 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-4340

The Mud Puddle
661-A Oakland Ave
Phone: 870-572-1160

Something Special
610 Oakland Ave
Phone: 870-338-7277

Watson’s Flowers & Gifts
107 S 5th St
Phone: 870-572-3755

West Helena Flowers & Gifts
513 Plaza
Phone: 870-572-3446

SOMETHING SPECIAL

BOUTIQUES - CLOTHING

Bella
227 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-4340

Harts Shoes
401 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-6682

SOUVENIRS

Cotton & Kudzu Mall
413 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-8339

Helena Museum Gift Shop
623 Pecan
Phone: 870-338-7790

Delta Cultural Center Gift Shop
141 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-4350

THRIFT STORES & ANTIQUES

Gracious Living
306 Cherry St
Phone: 870-753-9004

Myrna’s
315 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-8228

Teapots & Turtles
347 S. Sebastian
Phone: 870-338-0259

MUSIC

Bubba’s Blues Corner
105 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-3501

Gist Music
307 Cherry St
Phone: 870-338-8441

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/shopping
LODGING

At any price point, Helena accommodates in true Southern style.

From the first step you take into the Edwardian Inn, you cannot help but be swept back in time. You can feel the enchantment of a bygone era. The Edwardian Inn is an outstanding example of the fine homes built in Helena around the turn of the century. A night’s stay includes a gourmet breakfast the following morning, cooked by proprietor Dana Chadwick.

For booking information, visit www.edwardianinn.com
Edwardian Inn
317 South Biscoe
Phone: 870-753-9004

The Best Western Inn blends southern hospitality with great value. Amenities include a seasonal pool, on-site business center, and a full complimentary breakfast. Exterior room entrances make the Best Western a popular choice among boaters and motorcyclists.

For booking information:
Best Western Inn · 1053 Hwy 49 West
Phone: 870-572-2592

The Delta Inn is a clean and affordable motel located conveniently on Highway 49, offering a seasonal pool and complimentary breakfast. Guest rooms have a modern look with exterior entrances.

For booking information:
Delta Inn · 1207 West Highway 49
Phone: 870-572-7915

Crown Inn & Suites
412 Sebastian St
Phone: 870-572-2597

Sands Motel
1086 Hwy. 49 W
Phone: 870-572-6774

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/lodging
DINING

From BBQ and burgers to soul food, Helena’s food scene is rooted in American culinary staples.

**AMERICAN**

- **August Moon**
  108 Garland Ave.
  Phone: 870-572-5523

- **Bistro Bar & Grill**
  213 Plaza
  Phone: 870-572-9707

- **Burger Shack**
  372 N. Sebastian St.
  Phone: 870-572-2271

- **Corner Market**
  345 S 7th St
  Phone: 870-572-4355

- **Cypress Corner Barbeque**
  8298 Highway 1 S
  Lexa, AR 72355
  Phone: 870-295-6546

- **Downtown Bar & Grill**
  520 B Walnut
  Phone: 870-714-2940

- **Granny Dee’s**
  426 Cherry St
  Phone: 870-338-8862

- **Kelly’s**
  297 Richmond Hill Dr
  Phone: 870-572-5500

- **Pasquale’s Tamales**
  1005 Hwy. 49
  Phone: 870-338-1109
  or 870-338-1632

- **Ray’s Dairy Maid**
  5322 Hwy 49
  Barton, AR 72312
  Phone: 870-572-3060

- **T-Mac’s**
  3136 Hwy 49
  Phone: 870-572-0125

- **West Helena Fish Market**
  101 E Plaza
  Phone: 870-572-3060

**CHINESE**

- **#1 Chinese Buffet**
  838 N Sebastian St
  Phone: 870-572-6868

- **August Moon**
  108 Garland Ave
  Phone: 870-572-5523

**MEXICAN**

- **El Canaveral**
  849 N Sebastian St
  Phone: 870-572-5444

- **El Rio Lindo**
  101 Missouri St
  Phone: 870-753-9466

**FAST FOOD**

- **Baskin Robbins**
  213 Plaza Street
  Phone: 870-338-3200

- **Daylight Donuts**
  664 N Sebastian
  Phone: 870-572-5552

- **Hunts Brothers’ Pizza**
  626 N Sebastian
  Phone: 870-572-9899

- **Kentucky Fried Chicken**
  789 N Sebastian St
  Phone: 870-572-9334

- **McDonald’s**
  843 N Sebastian
  Phone: 870-572-1199

- **Pizza Hut**
  704 N Sebastian St
  Phone: 870-572-2579

- **Sonic**
  798 N Sebastian St
  Phone: 870-572-3488

- **Subway**
  770 N Sebastian St
  Phone: 870-572-7700

- **Wendy’s**
  278 Richmond Hill Dr
  Phone: 870-572-1332

LEARN MORE » VisitHelenaAR.com/dining
Downtown Museums & Attractions

1. Freedom Park
2. Estevan Hall, 1826
3. Edwardian Inn, 1904
4. St. Mary’s Catholic Church
5. Centennial Church (National Historic Landmark)
6. Fort Curtis (Replica of Union Fort)
7. Moore-Borner House, 1869
8. Phillips County Library
10. Helena Museum, 1891
11. Phillips County Courthouse
12. Court Square Park
13. Doughboy Monument
14. River Park-Boardwalk and River Outlook
15. Delta Cultural Center (2 sites)
16. Cherry Street Pavilion
17. Levee Walk
18. Magnolia Cemetery
19. Confederate Cemetery / Maple Hill Cemetery
20. Battery C (Civil War Earthwork)
21. American Legion Hut & Merci Car
22. Arkansas Welcome Center

Visit us online to explore Helena further: www.visithelenaar.com