

# Fort Smith: A True Western Town!

## Highlights

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1. Miss Laura's Visitors Center
2. Fort Smith Museum of History
3. Fort Smith National Historic Site
4. River Valley Nature Center
5. Arkansas & Missouri Railroad
6. Arkansas Wine Country

## Itinerary Summary

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Relive the colorful history of the original gateway to the Wild West that inspired pop-culture classics like, "True Grit," and is recognized as a, "Top 10 True Western Town of 2016," by *True West* magazine. Discover *The Natural State* at its finest with a train excursion through the Arkansas River Valley and Ozark Mountains. And observe one-of-a-kind works of art as you drive along a truly historic downtown area. Experience Fort Smith, Arkansas!

## Day-by-Day Itinerary Copy

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### *Day One*

Arrive in beautiful **Fort Smith** and then experience a one-of-a-kind prelude to the adventures waiting.

**Afternoon:** A guided tour through **Miss Laura's Visitor Center** – the first former-bordello to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Out of seven houses of ill-repute on "The Row" of Fort Smith's red-light district during the early 1900's, Miss Laura's is the only one still remaining. With prior arrangements, Miss Laura will be in costume to greet the group and give the tour. Refreshments of sarsaparilla and peanuts are available, by request.

**Fort Smith Museum of History** – 150 years of Fort Smith history and its role in the early frontier, Civil War and lawlessness of the Old West. Experience the Darby Room and discover Fort Smith's famous son and **World War II hero, William O. Darby and, "Darby's Rangers."** Enjoy an old-fashioned soda at the working drug store and soda fountain.

**Evening:** **Barbecue dinner served on the banks of the Arkansas River** at the River Park Events Building. **Miss Laura's Players** will perform **The Medicine Show on Hanging Day**, an original comedy skit. Step back into a colorful past, both novel & entertaining.

### *Day Two*

**Morning:** **Driving tour of Downtown Mural Art & Historic Fort Smith** with a step-on Guide – You'll learn more about the rough and tumble days of early Fort Smith, view the awe-inspiring murals painted by world-renowned mural artists along downtown's Garrison Avenue, and see the 22-square block **Belle Grove Historic District**, spanning 150 years of architecture. The entire area was added to the National Register of Historic Places in the 1970's. Some blocks are still paved with the original bricks. Tour the Clayton House (circa 1850's), which was the home of Judge Parker's Prosecuting Attorney.

**Fort Smith National Historic Site** – tour Hangin’ Judge Isaac C. Parker’s Courtroom, the old jail known as “hell on the border” and see a replica of the famed gallows where 79 men met their fate.

**Afternoon:** Lunch will be at **Taliano’s Italian Restaurant**, in the restored J. M. Sparks home, built in 1887. This Romanesque Victorian style home includes hand-carved fireplaces and original chandeliers.

Following lunch, it’s time to shake things up, Elvis Presley style! Visit the Chaffee Barber Shop and

Military Museums. Learn the history of Fort Chaffee, built in 19 41 to train World War II recruits. See the restored barber shop where many got their “buzz” cut, including Elvis Presley in 1958!

**Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center** – sitting on 170 acres of land that used to be part of Fort Chaffee, the center focuses on the wide variety of animals and birds that call the area home. In addition to resident Canada geese and small mammals and turtles that can be viewed here year round, many colorful songbirds stop by on their journeys to and from wintering grounds farther south.

**BrickCity Emporium** – laidback atmosphere. Over 160 unique shops in one building, including: artisans, crafts, gifts, food & specialty items, and a café with sitting area.

**Evening:** Dinner at **Calico County** – a landmark of the Fort Smith area where you’ll enjoy tastes of down-home Southern cooking served in an environment of American memorabilia that provides for a nostalgic ambiance.

**OTHER OPTIONS:**

**A & M Railway** – Train excursion through the mighty Arkansas River Valley and majestic Ozark Mountains. One-way or roundtrip available.

**Head to Arkansas Wine Country** – Tour St. Mary’s Church on St. Mary’s Mountain. Arrive at Wiederkehr’s Wine Cellar for a tour of the winery followed by tasting the wines and visiting the Gift Shop.

**Church Tours** – Tour the historic Immaculate Conception Catholic Church or First Lutheran Church that have been in Fort Smith for decades and feature breathtaking architecture and interesting histories.

\*\*\*lunch can be prearranged

## **YouTube Video Link**

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- Experience Fort Smith, Arkansas (Meet the Locals): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWnM28kelu4>
- Experience Fort Smith, Arkansas (Downtown Mural Art): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dk10fD1vRM&nohtml5=False>