

Park Facilities

The Visitor Center and Old Post Park are operated and maintained by the Corps of Engineers' Russellville Project Office, which is located adjacent to the Visitor Center.

Recreation facilities include campsites, picnic shelters, boat launch ramp, playground, baseball/softball field, football/soccer field, tennis courts, basketball courts, and the Visitor Center.

The picnic shelters and athletic fields may be reserved in advance for a fee. Campsites are open year-round and camping fees are charged.

For information or reservations, call, write or visit the Project Office between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Russellville Project Office
Corps of Engineers
 1598 Lock and Dam Road
 Russellville, Arkansas 72802

Telephone: (479) 968-5008

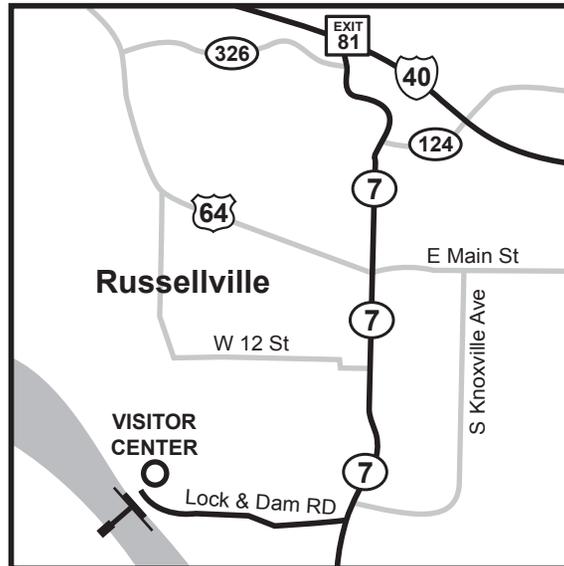
Visitor Center Hours

Open 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday - Friday
 (year-round)

Open Saturdays and Sundays
 (Memorial Day - Labor Day 10-4
 Hours subject to change)

Open Memorial day, 4th of July, and Labor Day. Closed all other Federal holidays.

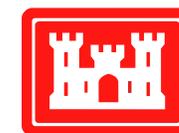
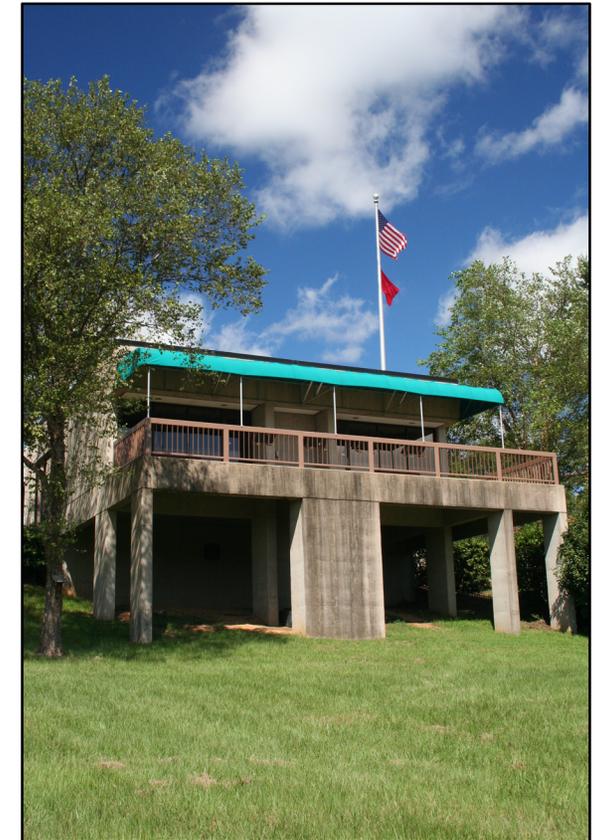
For more information on hours of operation or group tours, contact the Project Office at the address and telephone number listed above.



ROAD MILEAGES TO VISITOR CENTER	
FROM	MILES
Fort Smith, Arkansas	80
Little Rock, Arkansas	81
Memphis, Tennessee	208
Kansas City, Missouri	355
Pine Bluff, Arkansas	123
St. Louis, Missouri	408
Shreveport, Louisiana	234

ARKANSAS RIVER VISITOR CENTER

Renaissance of a River

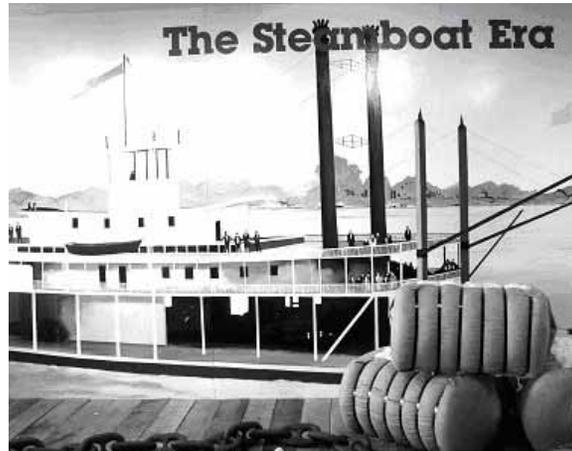


**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
 Little Rock District

WELCOME TO THE ARKANSAS RIVER VISITOR CENTER

Located near the midpoint of the 450-mile McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, this facility was designed to acquaint visitors with the Arkansas River and its man-made transformation into a safe, useful and productive waterway.

The theme of the Visitor Center is "Renaissance of a River." Interpretive exhibits tell the story of the development of the River Valley from Indian days to the present.



The Visitor Center was dedicated August 29, 1985. The keynote speaker was U.S. Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt of Harrison, Arkansas. Visitors from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and many foreign countries toured the center's exhibit area in just the first six months of operation.

Local History

For thousands of years, the Arkansas River Valley served as a bountiful homeland for America's only true natives, the American Indians. The Osage, Quapaw, Caddo, and other Ar-

kansas tribes coexisted in relative harmony while sharing in the riches of their unspoiled mother earth.

The first white men entered the Valley in the mid-1500s. Explorers and fur traders led the way for the settlers who began establishing communities along the river.



In the early 1800s, the River Valley was the center of the Cherokee Nation. The Treaty of Council Oaks, by which the Cherokees relinquished lands south of the Arkansas River, was negotiated at a grove of large oak trees near Dardanelle Rock in what is now the city of Dardanelle.

Dwight Mission, the first Cherokee school west of the Mississippi, was established on Illinois Bayou at the western edge of what is now Russellville in 1821. The mission and an Army post at Fort Smith did much to stimulate commercial traffic on the river. During the 1800s, thousands of steamboats brought supplies and passengers up the river and hauled cotton, furs and other products downriver to the Mississippi and onto points of commerce such as Memphis and New Orleans.

The development of railroads and the treacherous conditions on the river contributed to the decline of the steamboat in the early 1900s.

It was after World War II before any serious attempts were made to tame the Arkansas. But by the 1970s, the river was again the dominant force in the development of the Arkansas River Valley.

Norristown

The Visitor Center and Old Post Road Park occupy the former site of Norristown, a once thriving river town and former Pope County seat. The park derives its name from the fact that the first postal route in this part of Arkansas ran through Norristown. As early as 1834, a four-horse coach was used to carry mail through Norristown on the route between Little Rock and Dwight Mission.

The old Military Road from Little Rock to Fort Smith also passed through Norristown. Traffic on this road, which crossed the river by ferry, included military personnel, postal riders, wagons, and the famous stagecoaches.

During its heyday, steamboats would stop at Norristown to deliver goods to local merchants and to take on fuel wood and bales of cotton for shipment to New Orleans.



In the late 1800s, the ferry between Dardanelle and Pope County was replaced by a pontoon bridge. At 2,208 feet, it was the longest pontoon bridge ever constructed across a moving body of water. The bridge was completely washed out four times during its more than 30 years of service.