

# STATE TOURISM DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

**Name:** Jim Dailey

**Title:** Arkansas Tourism Director

**Company/Department:** Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism -- soon to be the Arkansas Department of Heritage, Parks and Tourism.

**City/State:** Little Rock, Arkansas

**We know you have many, but what is one signature adventure activity or cuisine that we need to partake in while visiting Arkansas?**

Wow, that's a tough one. The hiking and biking trails in Arkansas are second to none. In the Little Rock area, a morning or afternoon hike up Pinnacle Mountain is a must. This half-mile hike to the top will be rewarded with views of the Arkansas River, downtown Little Rock and the rolling hills of the beautiful Ouachita mountains. Or take a walk, run or bike ride on the 16-mile River Loop Trail. The signature bridge crossings of the river are pretty special -- especially the "Big Dam Bridge," a one mile long elevated biking and pedestrian span crossing the Arkansas River on top of a river navigation lock and dam.

Oh, and the food? You can't go wrong! Catfish, barbeque, soul food, fine dining -- just ask around.

**Southeast Tourism Society is hosting their annual Connections conference February 10-12, 2020 in Little Rock. For anyone driving there, do you have any must-visit locales along the way?**

At each of the major 13 roadway entries into the state, you will be greeted by one of our Arkansas Welcome Centers. Clearly, you will be welcomed by the friendliest, most informed and most helpful members of our tourism team. There's always a pot of coffee, maybe a cookie, and for sure a clean restroom. Not only will you find information specific to the immediate Welcome Center region but the entire state -- places to eat, places to stay, attractions to see -- you name it!



## **If you weren't working in tourism, what career would you explore?**

This is an interesting question because I have been blessed to try several career paths. I spent 14 years as the mayor of Little Rock, over 20 years as an office products dealer owner, 11 years as a commercial realtor & consultant and now 16 months as Arkansas Tourism Director. I think my next venture will be in some form of consulting role helping small cities. I believe every city has a story to tell and I hope to help connect the cities, the stories and the plan of action.

I love what I am doing -- selling our state -- to a degree that I feel like the "Mayor of Arkansas" because I'm now promoting 501 cities instead of one. I took this job knowing that I would only do this for a few years as we identify the next young, energetic, creative, passionate-about-Arkansas replacement Tourism Director.

## **Outside of your state, where have you experienced your best vacation in the Southeast?**

Patti and I spend most of our time vacationing in Arkansas — places like Eureka Springs, Hot Springs and our state parks such as Mount Magazine and Lake Fort Smith. However, we love the mountains of Kentucky, Tennessee and the Carolinas.

## **When you're not at your desk, how do you enjoy your time away from the office?**

Patti and I love Hallmark movies! Other than family, I love to read, hike, backpack, camp, and practice honing my photography skills. Each year a few friends and family head for the Richland Creek Wilderness Area and celebrate the season by camping and decorating a tree with snacks for the birds and animals. I call this our "Charlie Brown Christmas" camping trip. To check out some of my photos and adventures, visit <https://lastpairof.shoes>.

## **Our research found EIGHT options so, while we have your attention, what IS the official nickname for the State of Arkansas?**

I've heard most of them during my long life but you can take it from me -- Arkansas is The Natural State!