

Bath is a town in the [Eastern Panhandle](#) of [West Virginia](#), United States. It is the county seat of [Morgan County](#). The town is incorporated as **Bath**, but it is often referred to by the name of its [post office](#), **Berkeley Springs**. The population of the town was 663 according to the [2000 United States Census](#). The town is located within the [Hagerstown-Martinsburg, MD-WV Metropolitan Statistical Area](#).

Berkeley Springs is a noted arts community with working artists accounting for approximately 1% of the county population of 16,000. Since 1994, the town has been listed in all four editions of John Villani's "100 Best Art Towns in America," one of only 11 towns to so rate.

History


In 1748, [George Washington](#), then just 16 years old, was part of the survey party that surveyed the [Eastern Panhandle](#) region for [Thomas Fairfax, 6th Lord Fairfax of Cameron](#). He later returned several times over the next several years with his half-brother, Lawrence, who was ill and hoped that the warm springs might improve his health. The springs, and their rumored medicinal benefits, attracted numerous [Native Americans](#) as well as Europeans to the area.

While vacationing in the area in 1767, Washington made note of how busy the town had become. Lord Fairfax had built a summer home there and a "private bath" making the area a popular destination for [Virginia](#)'s social elite. With the advent of independence, the Virginia Legislature established a town around the spring in December 1776. The town was officially named Bath, in honor of England's spa city of [Bath](#). George Washington, his family members and several of the colonial elite were among the town's first landowners. The town's main north-south street was named Washington and the main east-west street was named Fairfax. Also, four acres were set aside for "suffering humanity." The park was made part of the West Virginia state park system in 1925.

Bath's population increased during and immediately after the [American Revolutionary War](#) as wounded soldiers and others came to the area believing that the warm springs had medicinal qualities. Bath gained a reputation as a somewhat wild town where eating, drinking, dancing and, gambling on the daily horse races were the order of the day.

Bath became known to the world as Berkeley Springs in 1802 when the Virginia postal system was established and there was already a Bath, Virginia in Bath County. The waters were known as Berkeley Springs because the protocol was to name springs after the county in which they were located. At that time, Bath was part of Berkeley County named after colonial Governor Norborne Berkeley.

Geography

Bath (Berkeley Springs) is located at  [39°37′32″N 78°13′37″W](#)[39.62556°N 78.22694°W](#) (39.625562, -78.226862),^[2] in the [Appalachian Mountains](#). The town lies in the [Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia](#) 26 miles NW of [Martinsburg, West Virginia](#) and 36 miles W of [Hagerstown, Maryland](#). Berkeley Springs is the county seat of Morgan County. Morgan County makes up one of the western counties in the Eastern Panhandle.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the town has a total area of 0.2 square miles (0.6 km²), all land.

The main road through town is [U.S. Route 522](#). West Virginia Route 9 runs east and west through the town.

Weather

There are two rivers in Morgan County. The Potomac makes up the northern border and the Cacapon River cuts through the center of the county connecting with the Potomac at Great Cacapon. The Cacapon and Sleepy Creek Mountains are the two most notable mountains to the county. Berkeley Springs is nestled in the extreme northern Shenandoah Valley at an elevation of around 499 feet. Warm Springs Run cuts through the center of the town and eventually connects with the Potomac River near the Hancock Station. Sleepy Creek connects with the Potomac along River Road north and east of the town.

Berkeley Springs experiences a wide array of various weather conditions. There are four distinct seasons in the area. The summers are usually warm, but can occasionally get hot. The fall is variable, and winter is very unpredictable. Temperatures in winter can vary from -4 degrees Fahrenheit to around the lower 70s (rare). In recent years the area has had around 15-25 inches of snow. The spring season usually has a lot of precipitation. The past few years have been noticeably wetter than average.

Severe weather does affect the area and can be dangerous at certain times. July 18, 2006, was an example when, on a summer day that was very moist and humid, a cold front sparked storms. Berkeley Springs Emergency Management reported 2.75" hail that caused \$750,000 in damage. Flash flooding caused an additional \$125,000 in damage. Wind damage accounted for \$13,000.

Other notable events include Hurricane Ivan which caused two tornadoes in the county. It also resulted in numerous road closures from flooding.

The 2009-10 winter season was the worst for Morgan county since records have been kept. Nearly 100 inches of snow fell over the county. Best estimates for the county are around 90 inches. Three big snowfalls accounted for a large amount of the total snowfall for the season. 33 inches, 17 inches and 13 inches were the top three biggest snowfalls for the year. It had been since 2003 since Morgan County had a double digit snowfall accumulation and this season the County had three. The county had their first blizzard since 1996 and that was the 13 inch storm in mid Feb.

Demographics

As of the [census^{\[1\]}](#) of 2000, there were 663 people, 331 households, and 160 families residing in the town. The [population density](#) was 2,706.0 inhabitants per square mile (1,023.9/km²). There were 379 housing units at an average density of 1,546.9 per square mile (585.3/km²). The racial makeup of the town was 97.13% [White](#), 1.66% [African American](#), 0.15% [Native American](#), 0.30% from [other races](#), and 0.75% from two or more races. [Hispanics or Latinos](#) of any race were 0.60% of the population.