



Old Mill Spring



Whitaker Point



Thorncrow Chapel

ARKANSAS TOURISM TICKER

January-February 2016



Editor's note: The Arkansas Tourism Ticker is sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association.



Arlington Hotel



Big Piney

ARKANSAS TOURISM TICKER

Ticker notes from tourism industry leaders:

“The significant growth in tax revenue which reflects the spending of visitors to Arkansas has been phenomenal to see. The Hospitality and Tourism industry is ever-evolving and adapting to fit the needs of both Arkansans and visitors. The Tourism Ticker is a great resource in measuring the success of the industry. We are proud to see these numbers.”

– *Montine McNulty,*

executive director of the Arkansas Hospitality Association

“I think the positive numbers are because of a lot of things. We’re getting more people traveling and getting better ADRs [average daily rates] in the hotels – that’s helping everything,” Rice said. “We’ve had great weather, low gas prices and a great improvement in our tourism product across the state. We’ve had one hell of a good marketing campaign. We have a really good team and it’s all research-based. The money in our marketing is delivering the right message to the right people at the right time.”

– *Joe David Rice,*

tourism director for the Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism

Travel and tourism sector growth continues into 2016

By Talk Business & Politics Staff

Arkansas' tourism industry ended the first two months of 2016 with a more than 4% growth in tourism taxes among 17 cities and a more than 5% growth in tourism jobs. The pace continues that posted by the industry in 2015.

In 2015, the Arkansas Tourism Ticker reported a 7.41% increase in hospitality tax revenue among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the report, an 8.31% increase in collections of the state's 2% tourism tax, and a 5.04% increase in Arkansas tourism industry jobs compared to 2014.

The January-February report finds that \$6.722 million in hospitality taxes were collected by the 17 cities, up 4.34% compared to the same period in 2015.

Joe David Rice, tourism director for the Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism, said factors in the gains include low gas prices, good weather and good marketing.

"I think the positive numbers are because of a lot of things. We're getting more people traveling and getting better ADRs [average daily rates] in the hotels – that's helping everything," Rice said. "We've had great weather, low gas prices and a great improvement in our tourism product across the state. We've had one hell of a good marketing campaign. We have a really good team and it's all research-based. The money in our marketing is delivering the right message to the right people at the right time."

The Arkansas Tourism Ticker is managed by Talk Business & Politics, sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association, and is published every two months, or six times a year. The ticker uses the following three measurements to review the health of the state's tourism industry.

- Hospitality tax collections – prepared food tax and lodging tax – of 17 Arkansas cities (cities listed below along with collections for each city);
- Tourism sector employment numbers as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; and
- Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax.

Results for the January-February 2016 ticker report are:

4.34% increase



Hospitality tax revenue in January-February 2016 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker

10.72% increase



Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in 2015 over 2014

6.2% increase



Increase in Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-February 2016 compared to the same period in 2015



Hospitality Taxes

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$6.722 million in January-February 2016, up 4.34% compared to the \$6.442 million in the same period in 2015.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$5.198 million in January-February 2016, up 3.83% compared to the \$5.006 million in the first two months of 2015. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$1.524 million in January-February 2016, up 6.12% compared to the \$1.436 million in the same period of 2015.































Four cities (Harrison, down 0.7%; Pine Bluff, down 13.9%; Rogers, down 11.1%; and Russellville, down 35%) among the 17 posted hospitality tax collection declines in the January-February 2016 period. Percentage changes among the 17 cities ranged from the 35% decline in Russellville to a 126.8% gain in El Dorado. However, collections in the cities may be impacted by the timing of tax payments from hotels, restaurants and other entities that collect and remit hospitality taxes.

During the 2015, Texarkana was the only city among the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker to post an annual decline in collections. Percentage changes for the cities during the year ranged from a decline of 0.86% in Texarkana to a high of 30.2% in El Dorado



The list of cities and collections:

( restaurant &  hotel)

- Bentonville  
- Conway  
- El Dorado 
- Eureka Springs  
- Fayetteville  
- Fort Smith 
- Harrison  
- Hot Springs  
- Jacksonville  
- Jonesboro 
- Little Rock  
- North Little Rock  
- Pine Bluff  
- Rogers 
- Russellville 
- Springdale 
- Texarkana  
- Van Buren  













Statewide Tourism Tax

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax generated \$1.979 million in January-February 2016, up 10.72% over the \$1.788 million in the same period of 2015. Collections in January and February each set new records for the tax.

Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism tax in 2015 totaled \$14.815 million, up 8.31% compared to the \$13.677 million in 2014. The record collections marked the first time the tax topped \$14 million and marked the fifth consecutive year of year-over-year gains of the tax.



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of collecting 2% tourism tax in January and February, and the percentage increase/decrease from the same period in 2015.

Pulaski:	 \$451,411 down 1.1%
Benton:	 \$219,926 up 6.75%
Washington:	 \$209,954 up 53.5%
Garland:	 \$157,237 up 17.35%
Sebastian:	 \$84,173 up 7.79%
Carroll:	 \$59,343 up 17.36%
Crittenden:	 \$58,894 up 33.86%
Craighead:	 \$58,185 up 11.7%
Mississippi:	 \$51,353 up 60.98%
Union:	 \$47,173 up 22.95%

Tourism Job Numbers

Monthly average jobs in January-February was 116,650, up 6.2% compared to the 109,850 during the same period of 2015.

Travel and tourism sector employment ranged from 116,000 in January to a high of 117,300 in February. The February level, if not revised, set a new record for the sector.

Of the eight metro areas in or connected to Arkansas, the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides tourism employment data on five. All five posted January-February employment gains compared to the same period in 2015, with Northwest Arkansas posting the largest gain (11.7%). Following are comparisons of the monthly employment averages during the years noted.



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Northwest Arkansas

January-February 2016: **24,350**

January-February 2015: **21,800**

January-February 2010: **16,900**

Fort Smith

January-February 2016: **9,100**

January-February 2015: **8,850**

January-February 2010: **8,200**

Central Arkansas *(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)*

January-February 2016: **33,850**

January-February 2015: **31,350**

January-February 2010: **28,000**

Memphis-West Memphis

January-February 2016: **62,550**

January-February 2015: **62,450**

January-February 2010: **62,650**

Texarkana *(Arkansas-Texas)*

January-February 2016: **6,450**

January-February 2015: **6,250**

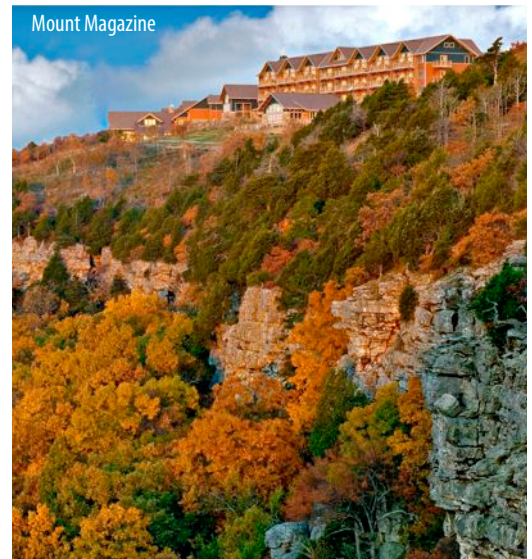
January-February 2010: **5,450**



Tourism Tax Collections (by city)

CITIES AND COLLECTION AMOUNTS

Jan.-Feb. 2016	Jan.-Feb. 2015	
Bentonville \$316,440	\$291,576	up 8.5%
Conway \$614,342	\$599,133	up 2.5%
El Dorado \$127,824	\$47,307	up 126.8%
Eureka Springs \$1.32 million	\$109,270	up 17%
Fayetteville \$481,815	\$451,148	up 6.8%
Fort Smith \$125,845	\$114,705	up 9.7%
Harrison \$91,939	\$92,603	down 0.7%
Hot Springs \$806,008	\$789,380	up 2.1%
Jonesboro \$95,611	\$79,593	up 20.1%
Little Rock \$2.204 million	\$2.091 million	up 5.4%
North Little Rock \$1.054 million	\$1.014 million	up 4%
Pine Bluff \$234,296	\$271,986	down 13.9%
Rogers \$96,378	\$108,353	down 11.1%
Russellville \$47,791	\$73,497	down 35%
Springdale \$61,246	\$45,625	up 34.2%
Texarkana \$178,769	\$165,556	up 8%
Van Buren \$78,590	\$68,647	up 14.5%





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