



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



March 2017



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Following are recent reports from Arkansas' tourism industry

Tourism department hires marketer, motorcycle enthusiast as group travel manager

The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism in Little Rock has hired a new manager of group travel and motorcycle tourism. (March 5)

Hotel industry officials say Airbnb should be held to same standard

A recent market report indicates the hotel business is faring well against Airbnb on a global scale, but those within Arkansas' hospitality industry are bracing for the possibility of a more profound impact in the future, as the residential guest rental industry grows. (Feb. 20)

Gateway Planning says plan will 'accelerate momentum' for downtown Fort Smith

Gateway Planning revealed a detailed draft for downtown Fort Smith's strategic redevelopment at a special study session with city officials Jan. 31, from the Riverfront Pavilion. Scott Polikov of the Dallas-based firm behind Rogers, Ark.'s downtown redevelopment said the initiative would "accelerate momentum" on private investment. (Feb. 1)

Hotel revenue on the rise in most of Arkansas, especially in NWA and Jonesboro

Hotels in the northern half of the state saw increases in key performance metrics in 2016, with the Northwest Arkansas region and Jonesboro posting the highest gains in revenue per available rooms over the past five years. (Jan. 30) **TBP**



Arkansas' tourism sector continues growth in 2016, 2% tax revenue up more than 4%

Arkansas' tourism industry posted broad gains in employment and revenue during 2016, with the annual numbers up against tough comparisons with robust growth in 2015.

The 2016 Arkansas Tourism Ticker report shows a 4% gain in hospitality tax revenue among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the report, a 4.36% increase in collections of the state's 2% tourism tax, and a 1.58% increase in Arkansas tourism industry jobs compared to 2015.

In 2015, the report showed a 7.41% increase in hospitality tax revenue among the 17 Arkansas cities, 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 Arkansas Tourism Ticker is managed by Talk Business & Politics, sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association. 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. **TBP**

Results for the 2016 ticker report



4% increase

Hospitality tax revenue in 2016 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker.



4.36% increase

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in 2016 compared with 2015.



1.58% increase

Increase in Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in 2016 compared with 2015.

Hospitality tax revenue up in 13 of 17 cities surveyed, hotel tax up almost 5%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$45.007 million in 2016, up 4% compared to the \$43.275 million in the same period of 2015.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$33.233 million in 2016, up 3.7% compared to the \$32.047 million in 2015. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$11.774 million in 2016, up 4.86% compared to the \$11.227 million in the same period of 2015. Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, four posted hospitality tax collection declines in 2016 (El Dorado, down 7.39%; Pine Bluff, down 4.37%; Rogers, down 2.07%; and Russellville, down 1.76%). Of the 13 cities with gains, the range was a 12.11% gain in Springdale and a 2.66% gain in Conway.

During 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. **TBP**

Past seven years of 2% tax collections

- 2016:** \$15.461 million
- 2015:** \$14.815 million
- 2014:** \$13.677 million
- 2013:** \$12.716 million
- 2012:** \$12.404 million
- 2011:** \$12.025 million
- 2010:** \$11.492 million

Tourism tax collections by county



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

Pulaski		\$3.328 million up 5.55%
Benton		\$1.935 million up 9.44%
Garland		\$1.419 million up 3.1%
Washington		\$1.36 million up 14.36%
Carroll		\$738,239 up 4.93%
Sebastian		\$584,472 up 9.13%
Craighead		\$380.835 up 8.42%
Baxter		\$378,192 up 6%
Mississippi		\$372,091 up 17.84%
Faulkner		\$363,346 up 0.68%



Tourism sector job gains slow in 2016, but set new record for employment

Monthly average Arkansas tourism sector jobs in 2016 was 115,300, up 1.58% compared with the 113,500 during the same period of 2015.

Travel and tourism sector employment began the year with 116,000 jobs in January, rising to a record of 117,300 jobs in February, and declining to 113,300 in July before recovering to 116,100 in December. The December employment was above the 1125,700 posted in December 2015.

Sector employment in December was up 17.15% compared to the 99,100 jobs in December 2010 — a gain of 17,000 jobs in the six-year period.

Of the eight metro areas in or connected to Arkansas, the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides tourism employment data on five. All five posted 2016 employment gains compared with 2015, with Fort Smith posting the largest percentage gain (9.19%), and the central Arkansas area posted a 0.88% gain. Following are comparisons of the monthly employment averages during the years noted. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

2016: **24,250** (up 4.5% compared to 2015)

2015: **23,140**

2010: **21,990**



Fort Smith

2016: **9,500** (up 9.19% compared to 2015)

2015: **8,700**

2010: **9,110**

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

2016: **34,400** (up 0.88% compared to 2015)

2015: **34,100**

2010: **32,300**

Memphis-West Memphis (Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

2016: **64,840** (up 0.93% compared to 2015)

2015: **64,240**

2010: **64,860**

Texarkana (Arkansas-Texas)

2016: **6,650** (up 2.15% compared to 2015)

2015: **6,510**

2010: **6,240**



Tourism Tax Collections (by city)

CITY	2016	2015	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$2.238 million	\$2.152 million	up 3.95%
Conway	\$3.934 million	\$3.832 million	up 2.66%
El Dorado	\$353,293	\$381,471	down 7.39%
Eureka Springs	\$1.407 million	\$1.32 million	up 6.62%
Fayetteville	\$3.335 million	\$3.066 million	up 8.76%
Fort Smith	\$888,959	\$799,821	up 11.14%
Harrison	\$669,730	\$639,922	up 4.66%
Hot Springs	\$5.984 million	\$5.784 million	up 3.47%
Jonesboro	\$692,266	\$639,096	up 8.32%
Little Rock	\$13.741 million	\$13.153 million	up 4.47%
North Little Rock	\$6.817 million	\$6.603 million	up 3.25%
Pine Bluff	\$1.555 million	\$1.626 million	down 4.37%
Rogers	\$806,618	\$823,680	down 2.07%
Russellville	\$411,698	\$419,079	down 1.76%
Springdale	\$478,608	\$426,905	up 12.11%
Texarkana	\$1.196 million	\$1.149 million	up 4.16%
Van Buren	\$489,273	\$454,817	up 7.58%





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