



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-April 2017



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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Following are recent reports from Arkansas' tourism industry

Arts had \$131 million impact in Northwest Arkansas; an economic driver

Northwest Arkansas' nonprofit arts and cultural events generated an estimated \$131.2 million in economic activity in 2015, according to a new report from Americans for the Arts of Washington, D.C. (July 10)

Rural Airbnb becoming more popular in Arkansas, hosts earned \$1.3 million last year

Airbnb stays in less-populated areas of the state outpaced urban markets last year, according to a report released June 27 by Airbnb. (June 27)

Pocahontas has become a Mecca for live theater enthusiasts

When Kelly Grooms stepped on to the stage of the newly established Downtown Playhouse in Pocahontas, it was a place he knew well. (June 20)

Marshals Museum design changes reduce construction cost by more than 50%

A change in "design and construction modifications" has cut \$17 million from the cost to build the U.S. Marshals Museum planned to be built near the Arkansas River in downtown Fort Smith. (June 13)

Sen. Cotton, Rep. Hill join congressional Democrats to introduce Little Rock Central expansion plan

U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., and U.S. Rep. French Hill, R-Little Rock, joined together with civil rights icon U.S. Rep. John Lewis of Georgia and U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont to introduce legislation expanding boundaries of the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. (May 23) **TBP**



Early 2017 numbers show Arkansas' tourism sector keeping pace with solid 2016

Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism tax set records in March and April, but the number of tourism jobs in the state fell slightly compared to 2016. Overall, pace of growth in the tourism sector is slowing compared to 2016, but expansion continues in the state's second largest industry.

To be sure, the 2017 numbers are compared against a robust 2016 and an impressive growth trend in 2015. The 2016 Arkansas Tourism Ticker report showed 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, and 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 2017 January-April ticker report



2.05% increase

Hospitality tax revenue in the two-month period among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker.



2.17% increase

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in January-April 2017 compared with the same period in 2016.



0.17% decrease

Decrease in Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-April 2017 compared with the same period in 2016.



Hospitality tax revenue up in 11 of 17 cities surveyed, combined hotel tax up 2.94%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$14.619 million in January-April 2017, up 2.05% compared to the \$14.325 million in the same period of 2016.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$10.949 million in January-April 2017, up 1.76% compared to the \$10.76 million in the same period of 2016. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$3.669 million in January-April 2017, up 2.94% compared to the \$3.564 million in the same period of 2016.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, six posted hospitality tax collection declines to begin the year (Rogers, down 18.96%; El Dorado, down 16.2%; Bentonville, down 3%; Texarkana, down 1.37%; Fort Smith, down 1.08%), and Pine Bluff, down 0.28%). Of the 11 cities with gains, the range was a 36.86% gain in Russellville and a 0.45% gain in North Little Rock.

Only four cities 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.

Also, the state's tourism tax revenue totaled \$4.563 million in the first four months of 2017, up 2.17% compared to the same period in 2016. Arkansas' 2% tourism tax generated \$15.461 million in 2016, up 4.36% over the \$14.815 million in 2015. Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism tax hit a monthly record of \$1.656 million in July 2015. Tourism tax collections of \$1.374 million in March and \$1.298 million in April set new monthly records for the tax. **TBP**

Past seven years of 2% tax collections

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

Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of collecting 2% tourism tax in the January-April period, and the percentage increase/decrease from the same period in 2016.

Pulaski		\$1.073 million up 4.26%
Benton		\$566,021 up 11.28%
Garland		\$410,137 down 5.69%
Washington		\$379,744 down 6.43%
Sebastian		\$166,946 down 1.95%
Carroll		\$147,127 down 7.55%
Craighead		\$138,446 up 20.74%
Faulkner		\$112,847 up 5.34%
Crittenden		\$108,240 down 11.05%
Mississippi		\$107,897 down 4.16%



Tourism sector jobs down slightly to begin 2017

Monthly average Arkansas tourism sector jobs for the first four months of 2017 was 115,700, down just 0.17% compared to the same period in 2016.

Travel and tourism sector employment began the year with 114,800 jobs in January, rising to 116,900 jobs in April. However, the preliminary jobs number for May shows employment at 117,800. If the number stands, it will mark 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. Four of the five posted early 2017 employment gains compared with the same period in 2016, with Memphis-West Memphis area posting the largest percentage gain (6.2%). **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

Jan.-April 2017: **24,800**

(up 1.2% compared to same period in 2016)

Jan.-April 2016: **24,500**

Jan.-April 2010: **17,350**



Fort Smith

Jan.-April 2017: **9,480** (up 2.5%)

Jan.-April 2016: **9,250**

Jan.-April 2010: **8,300**

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

Jan.-April 2017: **32,400** (down 5.5%)

Jan.-April 2016: **34,300**

Jan.-April 2010: **28,600**

Memphis-West Memphis (Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

Jan.-April 2017: **67,100** (up 6.2%)

Jan.-April 2016: **63,200**

Jan.-April 2010: **63,700**

Texarkana (Arkansas-Texas)

Jan.-April 2017: **6,800** (up 3.8%)

Jan.-April 2016: **6,550**

Jan.-April 2010: **5,500**



Tourism Tax Collections (by city)

CITY	Jan.-April 2017	Jan.-April 2016	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$685,429	\$706,752	down 3%
Conway	\$1.303 million	\$1.29 million	up 1%
El Dorado	\$102,390	\$122,278	down 16.2%
Eureka Springs	\$299,932	\$287,390	up 4.36%
Fayetteville	\$1.105 million	\$1.051 million	up 5.1%
Fort Smith	\$272,133	\$275,112	down 1.08%
Harrison	\$212,149	\$198,848	up 6.7%
Hot Springs	\$1.995 million	\$1.903 million	up 4.8%
Jonesboro	\$204,874	\$199,848	up 2.5%
Little Rock	\$4.565 million	\$4.453 million	up 2.5%
North Little Rock	\$2.263 million	\$2.253 million	up 0.45%
Pine Bluff	\$510,879	\$512,290	down 0.28%
Rogers	\$237,537	\$293,096	down 18.96%
Russellville	\$150,857	\$110,225	up 36.86%
Springdale	\$131,159	\$128,856	up 1.79%
Texarkana	\$381,143	\$386,437	down 1.37%
Van Buren	\$195,238	\$161,351	up 21%





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