



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-June 2017



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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Following are recent reports from Arkansas' tourism industry.

U.S. Rep. Womack: U.S. Marshals Museum more than just Fort Smith

The United States Marshals Museum has begun to move dirt on its new site at the intersection of H Street and Riverfront Parkway. U.S. Rep. Steve Womack, R-Rogers, noted the challenges the museum has overcome to get on track to its Sept. 24, 2019 opening date as well as some of the challenges ahead, namely fundraising. (Oct. 17)

Officials hope a star UA football player can help draw tourists

The Pocahontas City Hall sits on historic ground. A century ago, Wear Kibler Schoonover's boyhood home was located on that spot. Schoonover would become the first football player in the history of the University of Arkansas and the former Southwest Conference to make the All-American team. (Oct. 11)

Next Arkansas tourism director named

Former Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey will replace Joe David Rice as tourism director of the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Department. Rice, who is retiring after 30 years with the agency, is the final departure of a veteran management team responsible for managing and promoting the state's park system and tourism assets. (Sept. 20)

Arkansas golf industry on the mend

When Fayetteville's Razorback Park Golf Course pulled up its golf tees in the spring of 2015, it was among a string of high-profile golf course closings across Arkansas that year, offering a snapshot into the struggles of an industry that had vastly overbuilt during the so-called Tiger Woods era. (Sept. 17)

New name announced for Crystal Bridges managed venue

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art has released details on its plans for an arts venue under development in the former Kraft Foods plant on Southeast E Street in Bentonville. The venue is named The Momentary, and it will serve as a space for multi-disciplinary programming that includes visual and performing arts and an artist-in-residency program. (Aug. 20) **TBP**



Arkansas' tourism sector posts improved trends in first half of 2017

After dipping slightly in the first four months of the year, the state's second largest industry posted a new record 2% tourism tax collection with tourism job growth returning to positive territory.

For example, during the first four months of the year, 2% tourism tax growth was up 2.17%. May and June activity pushed the gain to 4.38%. June set a new record with \$1.763 million, and the month also marked the first time collection of the tax was above the \$1.7 million mark.

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 on Page 6, 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-June ticker report



2.97% increase

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



4.38% increase

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



1.29% increase

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

Hospitality tax revenue up in 14 of 17 cities surveyed, combined hotel tax up 5.74%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$22.73 million in January-June 2017, up 2.97% compared to the \$22.073 million in the same period of 2016. The collections were up 7.38% against the same period in 2015.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$16.938 million in January-June 2017, up 2.06% compared to the \$16.596 million in the same period of 2016. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$5.791 million in January-June 2017, up 5.74% compared to the \$5.476 million in the same period of 2016.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, three posted hospitality tax collection declines to begin the year (El Dorado, down 12.02%; Fort Smith, down 3.68%; and Jonesboro, down 0.28%). Of the 14 cities with gains, the range was a 36.14% gain in Russellville and a 0.27% 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 \$7.818 million in the first half of 2017, up 4.38% 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. **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-June period, and the percentage increase/decrease from the same period in 2016.

Pulaski		\$1.794 million up 6.71%
Benton		\$1.007 million up 11.34%
Garland		\$747,683, down 3.87%
Washington		\$655,802 down 2.6%
Carroll		\$307,984 down 1.64%
Sebastian		\$281,386 down 5.28%
Craighead		\$241,701 up 33.81%
Faulkner		\$195,298 up 8.91%
Crittenden		\$177,915 down 5.03%
Mississippi		\$175,787 down 4.39%



Tourism sector jobs rebound in the first half of 2017

Monthly average Arkansas tourism sector jobs for the first half of 2017 was 116,900, up 1.29% compared to the same period in 2016. The jobs rebounded from being down 0.17% in the first four months of 2017.

Travel and tourism sector employment began the year with 114,800 jobs in January, rising to 121,500 jobs in June. Preliminary numbers show 121,900 jobs in July, and if not revised would 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 (5.55%). **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

Jan.-June 2017: **25,300**
(up 3.05% compared to same period in 2016)
Jan.-June 2016: **24,550**
Jan.-June 2010: **22,800**



Fort Smith

Jan.-June 2017: **9,630** (up 2.4%)
Jan.-June 2016: **9,400**
Jan.-June 2010: **9,250**

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

Jan.-June 2017: **33,050** (down 4.36%)
Jan.-June 2016: **34,560**
Jan.-June 2010: **32,510**

Memphis-West Memphis (Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

Jan.-June 2017: **68,280** (up 6.35%)
Jan.-June 2016: **64,200**
Jan.-June 2010: **64,480**

Texarkana (Arkansas-Texas)

Jan.-June 2017: **6,960** (up 4.97%)
Jan.-June 2016: **6,630**
Jan.-June 2010: **6,110**



Tourism Tax Collections (by city)

CITY	Jan.-June 2017	Jan.-June 2016	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$1.118 million	\$1.091 million	up 2.48%
Conway	\$2.003 million	\$1.958 million	up 2.3%
El Dorado	\$160,809	\$182,781	down 12.02%
Eureka Springs	\$542,099	\$539,531	up 0.48%
Fayetteville	\$1.68 million	\$1.602 million	up 4.86%
Fort Smith	\$428,238	\$444,599	down 3.68%
Harrison	\$340,603	\$327,628	up 3.96%
Hot Springs	\$3.093 million	\$2.943 million	up 5.1%
Jonesboro	\$321,176	\$322,628	down 0.28%
Little Rock	\$7.001 million	\$6.83 million	up 2.5%
North Little Rock	\$3.466 million	\$3.457 million	up 0.27%
Pine Bluff	\$790,725	\$771,768	up 2.46%
Rogers	\$406,083	\$365,448	up 11.12%
Russellville	\$244,961	\$179,936	up 36.14%
Springdale	\$223,448	\$214,579	up 4.13%
Texarkana	\$601,750	\$594,767	up 1.17%
Van Buren	\$304,593	\$246,858	up 23.39%





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