



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



2017 Report



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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Following are recent reports from Arkansas' tourism industry.

Elaine Massacre Memorial

About 100 sharecroppers met at a church in the town of Elaine, a small town in Phillips County that sits in the vast Mississippi Delta Region. Armed black guards protected the people inside. Suddenly, white men appeared outside. No one knows definitively who fired the first shot, but during an altercation bullets flew, and one white man was killed. Whites poured into that part of the county and formed an armed mob. The 1,000-man mob began to slaughter blacks. A groundbreaking for a memorial was held April 10 in Helena. The memorial will be placed in the vicinity of the county courthouse and the federal courthouse building, Elaine Massacre Memorial co-chair David Solomon told Talk Business & Politics. (April 9)

Festivals return

Arkansas' two largest cities dropped details of their annual music festivals on April 4, with Little Rock-based RiverFest Music Festival and Fort Smith-based Peacemaker Festival announcing headliners. RiverFest will be held on the weekend of May 25-27, welcoming Young the Giant, Young Thug, Kip Moore, Highly Suspect, Jamey Johnson, Margo Price, Echosmith, Rachel Potter, and Levelle Davison. Two months later, Peacemaker, on July 27 and 28, will host Anderson East, The Cadillac Three, Paul Thorn, and Ray Wylie Hubbard. Both festivals issued press releases stating more announcements will be forthcoming. (April 4)

Experience Fayetteville joins gay and lesbian tourism group

Experience Fayetteville, the city's tourism bureau, has joined the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA), an organization that provides a network of free tourism resources and information for the LGBTQ community worldwide. The Clinton House Museum, operated by Experience Fayetteville, also joined the organization. According to a news release, they are the first organizations in Arkansas to become IGLTA members. IGLTA has members in 41 states and 75 countries, promoting LGBTQ-friendly accommodations, transportation, destinations, service providers and more, with the goal of "expanding LGBTQ tourism globally," according to the release. (April 3)

Madison Murphy tourism person of the year

Madison Murphy, El Dorado native and former board chairman of Murphy Oil, was named Arkansas' Tourism Person of the Year for his financial support of the Murphy Arts District (MAD) in El Dorado. Murphy is board chairman Murphy USA and was instrumental in the creation of the Murphy Arts District, known as MAD, in El Dorado. The new arts and entertainment district includes an outdoor amphitheater, farm-to-table restaurant, and music hall. He is also a founding member of El Dorado Festivals and Events, which gave rise to the project. (March 13) **TBP**



Growth moderates but continues for Arkansas' tourism industry in 2017

Jobs, city hospitality revenue and the state's 2% tourism tax all showed gains in 2017, even up against tough comparisons with healthy gains in 2016, according to the Arkansas Tourism Ticker. The only surprise was a dip in tourism industry jobs in central Arkansas.

Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism set a record of \$15.897 million in 2017, and also marked the eighth consecutive year of revenue growth.

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.

2017 marked the third consecutive year of growth as measured by the Arkansas Tourism Ticker. 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. **TBP**

Results for the 2017 Tourism Ticker report



2.18% increase

Hospitality tax revenue in 2017 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with 2016 revenue



2.8% increase

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in 2017 compared with 2016.



2.94% increase

Increase in Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in 2017 compared with 2016.

Hospitality tax revenue up in 12 of 17 cities surveyed, combined hotel tax up 3.82%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$45.989 million in 2017, up 2.18% compared with the \$45.007 million in 2016.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$33.764 million in 2017, up 1.59% compared with the \$33.233 million in 2016. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$12.224 million in 2017, up 3.82% compared with the \$11.774 million in 2016.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, five posted hospitality tax collection declines for the year (El Dorado, down 7.86%; Fort Smith, down 4.08%; Jonesboro, down 2.64%; Springdale, down 0.76%; and Fayetteville, down 0.17%). Of the 12 cities with gains, the range was a 26.82% gain in Rogers and a 0.56% gain in Pine Bluff.

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 in 2016, the range was a 12.11% gain in Springdale and a 2.66% gain in Conway.

The state's tourism tax revenue totaled \$15.897 million in 2017, up 2.8% compared with 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 \$1.763 million in June 2017. **TBP**

Past eight years of 2% tax collections.

2017: \$15.897 million	2013: \$12.716 million
2016: \$15.461 million	2012: \$12.405 million
2015: \$14.815 million	2011: \$12.025 million
2014: \$13.677 million	2010: \$11.492 million

Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of collecting 2% tourism tax in 2017, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with 2016.

Pulaski		\$3.5 million up 5.15%
Benton		\$2.098 million up 8.39%
Garland		\$1.472 million up 3.72%
Washington		\$1.32 million down 3%
Carroll		\$732,929 down 0.72%
Sebastian		\$568,397 down 2.75%
Craighead		\$482,879 up 26.79%
Faulkner		\$385,218 up 6.02%
Baxter		\$367,173 down 2.91%
Crittenden		\$346,891 down 1.87%



Job growth continues in state's tourism sector

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in 2017 was 118,700, up 2.94% compared with 2016.

Travel and tourism sector employment began the year with 116,000 jobs in January, rose to an industry record 118,800 in October, and ended the year with 115,700 jobs in December. Each month of 2017 with the exception of December (December 2016 had 115,800 jobs) showed a gain over the comparable month in 2016.

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 Northwest Arkansas posting the largest percentage gain (7.93%). Following is the average monthly employment during 2017 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

2017: **25,720** (up 6.06% compared with 2016)

2016: **24,250**

2010: **18,150**



Fort Smith

2017: **9,630** (up 1.3%)

2016: **9,500**

2010: **8,450**

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

2017: **33,090** (down 3.8%)

2016: **34,400**

2010: **29,760**

Memphis-West Memphis (Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

2017: **68,150** (up 5.1%)

2016: **64,840**

2010: **65,090**

Texarkana (Arkansas-Texas)

2017: **6,970** (up 4.8%)

2016: **6,650**

2010: **5,750**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	2017	2016	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$2.284 million	\$2.238 million	up 2.05%
Conway	\$4 million	\$3.934 million	up 1.67%
El Dorado	\$325,512	\$353,293	down 7.86%
Eureka Springs	\$1.432 million	\$1.407 million	up 1.75%
Fayetteville	\$3.329 million	\$3.335 million	down 0.17%
Fort Smith	\$852,733	\$888,959	down 4.08%
Harrison	\$706,465	\$669,773	up 5.48%
Hot Springs	\$6.161 million	\$5.984 million	up 2.95%
Jonesboro	\$673,961	\$692,266	down 2.64%
Little Rock	\$13.982 million	\$13.741 million	up 1.76%
North Little Rock	\$6.921 million	\$6.817 million	up 1.52%
Pine Bluff	\$1.564 million	\$1.555 million	up 0.56%
Rogers	\$1.022 million	\$806,618	up 26.82%
Russellville	\$423,082	\$416,736	up 1.52%
Springdale	\$474,954	\$478,608	down 0.76%
Texarkana	\$1.231 million	\$1.196 million	up 2.9%
Van Buren*	\$601,888	\$489,273	up 23.02%

Note: *Van Buren's hotel tax rate rose from 1% to 3% in January 2017.





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