



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-April 2018



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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**Following are recent reports
from Arkansas' tourism industry.**

Marshals Museum construction

The United States Marshals Museum (USMM) has begun construction on its new \$50 million location on the banks of the Arkansas River near downtown Fort Smith. For USMM President and CEO Patrick Weeks, Thursday (July 26) marked a “big day” in the completion of the project. “It’s been 11 years. We’re now sitting here in mid-2018, and we’re finally not just breaking ground — we’ve done that, last year we spent just about \$900,000 on bringing in 53,000 cubic yards of dirt to build the building pad out and put that through a settlement period — but now we’re getting ready to start another \$18.2 million of construction,” Weeks said .” (July 26)

Tourism development manager named

Joy Barlogie is the new tourism development manager for the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. She previously served as account supervisor at CJRW, working primarily on the Arkansas Tourism account. As tourism development manager, Barlogie will be responsible for the development and expansion of tourism and establishing contacts with hospitality-related businesses and with local, state, and federal agencies involved in the tourism industry. She also will identify possible funding sources for tourism projects, administer three tourism grant programs, and consult with communities and organizations on behalf of the department. (July 23)

New state tourism website

State tourism officials are launching a new Arkansas.com website they say offers major advertising innovation available in fewer than half of states. Tourism-related businesses will now be able to advertise on Arkansas.com, buy placement, and purchase leads generated by the website, which had 4.3 million visitors last year. The model is cooperative and considerably less expensive than traditional media. (July 9)

Sultana museum planned

Underneath a soybean field near Marion lies one of the most under-reported tragedies in the country’s history. On April 27, 1865, the steamboat Sultana exploded on the Mississippi River about 7 miles from Memphis. The boat carried more than 2,000 Union soldiers on their way home from the recently ended Civil War. At least 1,200 died. It’s considered the worst maritime disaster in U.S. history. A nonprofit group, the Sultana Historic Preservation Society, is set to embark on an ambitious plan to build an interactive museum detailing the tragedy in Marion. Museum plans are being formulated and it could cost as little as \$4 million or as much as \$10 million based on building size, technology used and fundraising efforts. The museum could be as large as 17,000 square feet, and preliminary plans call for it to be built in downtown Marion. (June 11) **TBP**



Arkansas' tourism numbers rise to begin 2018

The state's tourism industry showed signs of moderating in the back half of 2017, but picked up the pace in the first four months of 2018, according to the Arkansas Tourism Ticker. With growth of only 0.8% in January through April, tourism jobs was the only metric to not show a healthy gain.

Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism tax is on pace to set a new record and post the ninth consecutive year of revenue growth. Revenue from the tax set a record of \$15.897 million in 2017.

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.

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 January-April 2018 Tourism Ticker report



7.03% increase

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



3.3% increase

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



0.8% increase

Increase in Arkansas' tourism industry jobs compared with the same period in 2017.

Hospitality tax revenue up in 11 of 17 cities surveyed, combined hotel tax up 12.2%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$15.649 million in the first four months of 2018, up 7.03% compared with the same period in 2017.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$11.531 million in the first four months, up 5.31% compared with the same period in 2017. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$4.117 million, up 12.2% compared with the same period in 2017.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, six posted hospitality tax collection declines for the year (Fort Smith, down 0.07%; Jonesboro, down 3.57%; Russellville, down 14.6%; Springdale, down 8%; Texarkana, down 1.39%; and Van Buren, down 3.2%). Of the 11 cities with gains, the range was a 69.2% gain in Rogers and a 1.19% gain in Little Rock.

Only five cities posted hospitality tax collection declines in 2017 (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.

The state's tourism tax revenue totaled \$4.715 million in the first four months of 2018, up 3.31% compared with the same period in 2017. The tourism tax revenue totaled \$15.897 million in 2017, up 2.8% compared with the 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 the January-April period, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2017.

Pulaski		\$1.105 million up 2.99%
Benton		\$644,436 up 13.85%
Garland		\$1.472 million up 3.72%
Washington		\$1.32 million down 3%
Carroll		\$151,740 up 3.14%
Sebastian		\$185,652 up 11.21%
Craighead		\$126,967 down 8.29%
Faulkner		\$114,010 up 1.03%
Mississippi		\$102,569 down 4.94%
Crittenden		\$112,954 up 4.36%



Tourism sector adds just 930 jobs

The average monthly tourism sector employment through April was 116,630, up 930 jobs compared with the same period in 2017.

Travel and tourism sector employment began the year with 116,000 jobs in January, rose to an industry record 117,800 in March, and fell to 116,000 in April.

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 average employment gains during the January-April period. The Fort Smith metro saw the average monthly tally fall 3.16%. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-April 2018: **26,180** (up 5.56%)

January-April 2017: **24,800**

January-April 2010: **17,350**



Fort Smith

January-April 2018: **9,180** (down 3.16%)

January-April 2017: **9,480**

January-April 2010: **8,300**

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

January-April 2018: **33,480** (up 3.33%)

January-April 2017: **32,400**

January-April 2010: **28,600**

Memphis-West Memphis (Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-April 2018: **69,080** (up 2.95%)

January-April 2017: **67,100**

January-April 2010: **63,700**

Texarkana (Arkansas-Texas)

January-April 2018: **6,850** (up 0.7%)

January-April 2017: **6,800**

January-April 2010: **5,500**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-April 2018	January-April 2017	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$747,937	\$685,429	up 9.12%
Conway	\$1.426 million	\$1.303 million	up 9.43%
El Dorado	\$108,089	\$102,390	up 5.57%
Eureka Springs	\$392,107	\$299,932	up 30.73%
Fayetteville	\$1.335 million	\$1.105 million	up 20.79%
Fort Smith	\$271,939	\$272,133	down 0.07%
Harrison	\$215,787	\$212,149	up 1.71%
Hot Springs	\$2.181 million	\$1.995 million	up 9.35%
Jonesboro	\$197,555	\$204,874	down 3.57%
Little Rock	\$4.619 million	4.565 million	up 1.19%
North Little Rock	\$2.332 million	\$2.263 million	up 3.05%
Pine Bluff	\$565,210	\$510,879	up 10.63%
Rogers	\$401,911	\$237,537	up 69.2%
Russellville	\$130,202	\$152,459	down 14.6%
Springdale	\$120,556	\$131,159	down 8%
Texarkana	\$375,845	\$381,143	down 1.39%
Van Buren	\$188,933	\$195,238	down 3.2%





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