



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-February 2019



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

## **Racing Commission approves Pine Bluff casino, rejects bids for Pope County**

Five of the half-dozen applicants for casino gaming licenses in Arkansas went home rejected following a highly-anticipated June 13 meeting that put the rare spotlight on the Arkansas Racing Commission (ARC). The seven-person commission approved a lone proposal by the Quapaw Nation of Oklahoma to immediately begin construction on a \$215 million hotel and casino complex in Jefferson County. After naming the five applications requesting casino permits in Pope County, ARC Attorney Byron Freeland told the gaming panel that none of the proposals had received letters of recommendations from current local city officials or the county judge where the casinos would be located. (June 13)

## **New Capitol exhibit focuses on Fort Smith history**

A new exhibit at the Arkansas Capitol Building in Little Rock highlights the history of Fort Smith, the state's second largest city, and a settlement established two years before Arkansas was named a U.S. territory. Entitled "Arkansas's Western Post," the capitol's summer exhibit "highlights episodes and individuals from Fort Smith's more than twenty decades." (June 10)

## **Arkansas Arts Center announced \$128 fundraising goal**

The Arkansas Arts Center (AAC) announced a \$128 million fundraising campaign on May 15 and further noted that it had received commitments exceeding \$118 million to-date. The Little Rock-based art museum will undergo a major renovation led by renowned architect Jeanne Gang and Studio Gang. The new AAC will include a revitalized landscape which will expand the connection between the architecture and MacArthur Park. (May 16)

## **Electronic game wagers top \$5.2 billion in 2018**

Electronic games of skill (EGS) wagers at Oaklawn's and Southland's casinos topped \$5.2 billion in wagers, according to data from the Arkansas Racing Commission. The wager amount accounts for the two casinos at the respective Hot Springs and West Memphis facilities before voters approved last November full-fledged casino gambling. Oaklawn reported \$2,051,202,966 in EGS wagers in 2018, up from \$1,940,971,842 in 2017. Southland reported \$3,165,093,790 in EGS wagers last year, an increase from \$3,060,821,691 in 2017. (May 1) **TEP**



# Early numbers suggest Arkansas' tourism industry off to a good start in 2019

January-February hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 2.1% compared with the same period in 2018, and the state's 2% tourism tax revenue posted healthy growth of 4.1% in the two-month period.

The early 2019 numbers are up against impressive gains in 2018. Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism set a new record in 2018 and hospitality tax collections among 17 Arkansas cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism ticker topped the \$50 million mark in 2018. The year marked the fourth consecutive year of growth as measured by the Arkansas Tourism Ticker.

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 Jan.-Feb. 2019 Tourism Ticker report



**2.1% increase**

Hospitality tax revenue in Jan.-Feb. 2019 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with the same period in 2018.



**4.1% increase**

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in Jan.-Feb. 2019 compared with the same period in 2018.



**3.2% increase**

Increase in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in Jan.-Feb. 2019 compared with the same period in 2018.



# Hospitality tax revenue up in 12 of 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$7.805 million in Jan.-Feb. 2019, up 2.1% compared with the \$7.643 million in the same period in 2018.

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$50.847 million in 2018, up 2.36% compared with the \$49.319 million in 2017.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$6.003 million in Jan.-Feb. 2019, up 2.28% compared with the \$5.869 million in the same period of 2018. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$1.801 million in Jan.-Feb. 2019, up 1.57% compared with the \$1.773 million in the same period of 2018.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, five posted hospitality tax collection declines for the year (Conway, down 0.8%; Eureka Springs, down 40.9%, Jonesboro, down 1.1%; Pine Bluff, down 5.7%; and Rogers, down 0.01%). Of the 12 cities with gains, the range was a 14.2% gain in Bentonville and a 0.6% gain in Harrison.

Five cities posted hospitality tax collection declines in 2018 (Texarkana, down 5.03%; Russellville, down 1.63%, Fort Smith, down 1.49%; Springdale, down 1.45%; and Jonesboro, down 0.59%). Of the 12 cities with gains during 2018, the range was a 26.82% gain in Rogers and a 0.56% gain in Pine Bluff. **TBP**

## Following are the past nine years of 2% tax collections

<b>2018:</b> \$16.428 million	<b>2013:</b> \$12.716 million
<b>2017:</b> \$15.897 million	<b>2012:</b> \$12.405 million
<b>2016:</b> \$15.461 million	<b>2011:</b> \$12.025 million
<b>2015:</b> \$14.815 million	<b>2010:</b> \$11.492 million
<b>2014:</b> \$13.677 million	

## Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of collecting 2% tourism tax from Jan.-Feb. 2019, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with 2018.

<b>Pulaski</b>		\$496,348 up 7.76%
<b>Benton</b>		\$304,559 up 7.95%
<b>Washington</b>		\$197,361 up 8.48%
<b>Garland</b>		\$148,842 up 14.23%
<b>Sebastian</b>		\$88,656 up 1.2%
<b>Craighead</b>		\$66,828 up 2.86%
<b>Crittenden</b>		\$57,185 up 20.9%
<b>Faulkner</b>		\$49,661 up 0.22%
<b>Carroll</b>		\$48,278 up 6.42%
<b>Mississippi</b>		\$43,692 down 2.02%



# Tourism sector job growth up 3.2% to begin 2019

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in Jan.-Feb. 2019 was 120,100, up 3.2% compared with 116,350 in the same period of 2018. The sector reached record monthly employment of 120,600 in November 2018.

Of the eight metro areas in or connected to Arkansas, the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides tourism employment data on five. Three of the five posted 2018 employment gains compared with 2017, with Northwest Arkansas posting the largest percentage gain (4.19%). Following is the average monthly employment during 2018 for the metro regions. **TBP**

## Monthly employment averages

### Northwest Arkansas

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **24,550**

(down 3.3% compared with the same 2018 period)

Jan.-Feb. 2018: **25,400**

Jan.-Feb. 2017: **24,300**

Jan.-Feb. 2010: **16,900**

### Fort Smith

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **9,150** (up 1.66%)

Jan.-Feb. 2018: **9,000**

Jan.-Feb. 2017: **9,500**

Jan.-Feb. 2010: **8,450**

### Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-

North Little Rock-Conway)

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **34,050** (up 3.65%)

Jan.-Feb. 2018: **32,850**

Jan.-Feb. 2017: **32,000**

Jan.-Feb. 2010: **28,000**



### Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **67,950** (down 0.01%)

Jan.-Feb. 2018: **68,050**

Jan.-Feb. 2017: **66,600**

Jan.-Feb. 2010: **62,650**

### Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **6,850** (up 1.5%)

Jan.-Feb. 2018: **6,750**

Jan.-Feb. 2017: **6,700**

Jan.-Feb. 2010: **5,450**



# Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	Jan.-Feb. 2019	Jan.-Feb. 2018	% CHANGE
<b>Bentonville</b>	\$373,988	\$327,501	<b>up 14.2%</b>
<b>Conway</b>	\$660,309	\$665,419	<b>down 0.8%</b>
<b>El Dorado</b>	\$54,485	\$47,742	<b>up 14.1%</b>
<b>Eureka Springs</b>	\$123,697	\$209,332	<b>down 40.9%</b>
<b>Fayetteville</b>	\$1.044 million	\$1.005 million	<b>up 3.9%</b>
<b>Fort Smith</b>	\$128,959	\$127,902	<b>up 0.8%</b>
<b>Harrison</b>	\$95,089	\$94,528	<b>up 0.6%</b>
<b>Hot Springs</b>	\$956,188	\$916,680	<b>up 4.3%</b>
<b>Jonesboro</b>	\$87,626	\$88,579	<b>down 1.1%</b>
<b>Little Rock</b>	\$2.332 million	\$2.273 million	<b>up 2.6%</b>
<b>North Little Rock</b>	\$1.12 million	\$1.07 million	<b>up 4.7%</b>
<b>Pine Bluff</b>	\$243,682	\$258,338	<b>down 5.7%</b>
<b>Rogers</b>	\$191,292	\$191,549	<b>down 0.01%</b>
<b>Russellville</b>	\$50,566	\$48,377	<b>up 4.5%</b>
<b>Springdale</b>	\$57,203	\$54,495	<b>up 5%</b>
<b>Texarkana</b>	\$196,367	\$175,906	<b>up 11.6%</b>
<b>Van Buren</b>	\$88,456	\$87,233	<b>up 1.4%</b>





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