



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-October 2019



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

Wild River Country sued for default on loans

The future of Wild River Country in North Little Rock is in doubt following a foreclosure action by Waco, Texas-based JTS Capital Group against owners of the waterpark. The owners, JTS alleges, have defaulted on about \$2 million in loans. JTS alleges that the defendants defaulted on the notes "by failing to make payments on time and in the amount due." As of Jan. 17, the defendants have not filed a response to the JTS action. The lawsuit was assigned to Pulaski County Circuit Court Judge Mackie Pierce. (Jan. 17)

New resort planned in Eureka Springs

The developers of a new hospitality destination in Eureka Springs say it will be a regional draw for mountain bikers, motorcyclists, foodies and sightseers. Pine Mountain is a redevelopment of the Pine Mountain Village and Pine Mountain Jamboree at 2075 E. Van Buren Ave., and about 40 acres of adjoining forested hills. The \$10 million development will incorporate two farm-to-table restaurants, a fast-casual cafe, 15 cabins, boutique shopping, a 200-person event center, outdoor event space and more than three miles of mixed-use walking/hiking/biking trails. (Jan. 15)

Back in the Main Street program

64.6 Downtown, the organization responsible for the Unexpected Project, Invest Fort Smith summits and the upcoming Levitt AMP free music concert series, has succeeded in putting Fort Smith on the roster of Main Street communities in Arkansas. Fort Smith has been part of Main Street as a Downtown Network Community since 2007, and has been working towards the goals of becoming a Main Street program, which means focusing on the areas set by the National Main Street: economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. (Jan. 13)

AMP revenue up almost 9% in 2019

The Walmart Arkansas Music Pavilion (AMP) in Rogers sold over 7,000 more tickets, and top-line revenue increased 8.7% in 2019, from 2018. Meanwhile, construction started Nov. 1 on a \$17.1 million project to expand the venue, west of Interstate 49. Ticket sales rose 3.8% to 201,917 in 2019, from 2018. Ticket revenue increased less than 1% to \$7.7 million, and the average ticket price rose by 5 cents to \$38.74. Top-line revenue increased to \$17.5 million in 2019, from \$16.1 million in 2018. Total revenue rose as a result of increases in client usage and ancillary revenues. (Nov. 26) **TBP**



State tourism tax up 7% through October, Garland County up almost 15%

Arkansas' travel and tourism economy gained momentum through 2019, with the pace of gains increasing in the September-October period. The state's 2% tourism tax revenue between January and October was up 7% compared with the same period in 2018, and also a gain from the 6.2% year-over-year increase through the first eight months of 2019.

June and July were the first two months the collection was above \$1.8 million.

January-October hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 5.3% compared with the same period in 2018. That's just slightly better than the 5.2% gain among the cities during the first eight months of 2019.

Numbers from the first eight months of 2019 are up against broad 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.-Oct. 2019 Tourism Ticker report



5.3% increase

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



7% increase

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



4.45% increase

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

Hospitality tax revenue up more than 5% in 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$36.111 million in January-October 2019, up 5.2% compared with the \$34.332 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 \$43.306 million in January-October 2019, up 5.3% compared with the \$43.012 million in the same period of 2018. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$12.234 million in January-October 2019, up 6.9% compared with the \$11.446 million in the same period of 2018.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, three posted hospitality tax collection declines for the first six months (Eureka Springs, down 0.4%; Pine Bluff, down 3.2%; and Russellville, down 1.5%). Of the 14 cities with gains, the range was a 22.4% gain in El Dorado and a 2.6% gain in Conway.

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 26.2% gain in Springdale and a 2.7% gain in Harrison. **TBP**

Following are the past nine years of 2% tax collections

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

Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in Jan.-Oct. 2019, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2018.

Pulaski		\$3.262 million up 8.3%
Benton		\$1.974 million up 6.2%
Garland		\$1.597 million up 14.7%
Washington		\$1.321 million up 9.9%
Carroll		\$683,860 up 4.6%
Sebastian		\$563,005 up 10%
Crittenden		\$413,265 up 19.7%
Baxter		\$383,701 up 0.5%
Faulkner		\$354,553 up 9.5%
Craighead		\$343,682 up 4%



Travel and tourism job numbers up 4.45% through October

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-October 2019 was 121,660, up 4.2% compared with 116,470 in the same period of 2018. The sector reached record monthly employment of 123,400 in September.

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 employment gains compared with the same period in 2018, with central Arkansas posting the largest percentage gain (3.7%). Following is the average monthly employment during the first eight months of 2019 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

Jan.-Oct. 2019: **26,000**

(down 3.3% compared with the same 2018 period)

Jan.-Oct. 2018: **26,900**

Jan.-Oct. 2017: **26,400**

Jan.-Oct. 2010: **18,070**

Fort Smith

Jan.-Oct. 2019: **9,550** (up 0.7%)

Jan.-Oct. 2018: **9,480**

Jan.-Oct. 2017: **9,600**

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

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

Jan.-Oct. 2019: **35,590** (up 3.7%)

Jan.-Oct. 2018: **34,300**

Jan.-Oct. 2017: **33,200**

Jan.-Oct. 2010: **29,670**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

Jan.-Oct. 2019: **73,000** (up 3.3%)

Jan.-Oct. 2018: **70,640**

Jan.-Oct. 2017: **66,900**

Jan.-Oct. 2010: **64,950**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

Jan.-Oct. 2019: **7,080** (up 1.8%)

Jan.-Oct. 2018: **6,950**

Jan.-Oct. 2017: **6,800**

Jan.-Oct. 2010: **5,720**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	Jan.-Oct. 2019	Jan.-Oct. 2018	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$2.293 million	\$2.124 million	up 7.95%
Conway	\$3.728 million	\$3.601 million	up 3.5%
El Dorado	\$338,278	\$297,634	up 13.7%
Eureka Springs	\$1.323 million	\$1.328 million	down 0.4%
Fayetteville	\$5.958 million	\$5.719 million	up 4.2%
Fort Smith	2019: \$790,603	\$731,694	up 8.1%
Harrison	\$610,706	\$594,885	up 2.7%
Hot Springs	\$5.973 million	\$5.486 million	up 8.9%
Jonesboro	\$568,900	\$552,420	up 3%
Little Rock	\$12.451 million	\$11.898 million	up 4.6%
North Little Rock	\$6.29 million	\$5.938 million	up 5.9%
Pine Bluff	\$1.318 million	\$1.361 million	down 3.2%
Rogers	\$1.245 million	\$1.152 million	up 8.1%
Russellville	\$353,704	\$358,961	down 1.5%
Springdale	\$484,775	\$384,053	up 26.2%
Texarkana	\$1.051 million	\$973,443	up 8%
Van Buren	\$527,262	\$508,369	up 3.7%





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