



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-February 2020



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

## **Stone Bank partners with Arkansas Folk Festival**

COVID-19 has shuttered many festivals and annual celebrations around the state including the Arkansas Folk Festival in Mountain View. There's a group trying to put together a concert in its place. Working with Daren Dortin, executive producer of the Ozark Highlands Radio program, a handful of area performers were chosen to perform. The online concert is scheduled to stream May 28, 7:30 p.m. at [www.cabinfever.stonebank.com](http://www.cabinfever.stonebank.com). It can be followed on Facebook. The performance will also be archived on the Stone Bank YouTube Channel. (May 11)

## **New director named at Main Street Siloam Springs**

Main Street Siloam Springs announced May 11 that interim executive director Stacy Morris has been promoted to the job in a full-time role. Morris has worked for the nonprofit for eight years and is the former manager of the Siloam Springs Farmers Market. She has lived in Siloam Springs for 30 years and worked in banking for 15 years before staying home to raise her children. She rejoined the workforce to help area farmers connect to their consumers through the farmers market. (May 11)

## **Gaming operations set for limited openings**

Gov. Asa Hutchinson said May 7 the state will allow a limited opening of three gaming operations in Arkansas on May 18. He said the facilities will open at one-third capacity with "stringent social distancing" rules in place. The governor said in the daily COVID-19 press conference from Texarkana that operators of the three gaming facilities brought ideas on how they could open. The operators have worked with the Arkansas Department of Health, and detailed guidelines on how they can open will be released Thursday or Friday, Gov. Hutchinson said. (May 7)

## **BITE NW Arkansas food festival postponed until the fall**

Event organizers said April 14 the sixth annual BITE NW Arkansas food festival, originally scheduled for June 19-20, has been postponed. The event will be rescheduled for fall 2020 in downtown Rogers, with festival dates to be announced at a later time. "Out of respect for our community and local partners, we feel postponing BITE NW Arkansas is the right thing to do in this unprecedented time," event chairman Jay Allen said. (April 14) **TBP**



# Arkansas' tourism tax off to a good start in early 2020, but ...

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and February was up 13.2% compared with the same period in 2019. The tax was up 7.2% in 2019. February revenue of \$1.366 million set a new monthly record for the tax.

January-February hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 3.8% compared with the same period in 2019. The tourism tax revenue in the cities was up 5.2% in 2019.

The only drop in the report was in monthly average employment in the tourism sector.

Numbers from the first two months of 2020 are up against broad gains in 2019. Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism set a new record in 2019 and hospitality tax collections among 17 Arkansas cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism ticker topped the \$53 million mark in 2019. The year marked the fifth 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 January-February 2020 Tourism Ticker report



**3.8% increase**

Hospitality tax revenue in January-February 2020 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with the same period in 2019.



**13.2% increase**

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in January-February 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.



**0.04% decrease**

Decrease in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-February 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.

# Hospitality tax revenue up in 14 of 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$8.105 million in January-February 2020, up 3.8% compared with the \$7.806 million in the same period in 2019.

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$53.49 million in 2019, up 5.2% compared with the \$49.319 million in 2018.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$6.248 million in January-February 2020, up 4.1% compared with the \$6.003 million in the same period of 2019. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$1.856 million in January-February 2020, up 2.95% compared with the \$1.803 million in the same period of 2019.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, four posted hospitality tax collection declines for the first two months (El Dorado, down 1.4%; Harrison, down 1%; Russellville, down 8.1%; and Springdale down 1.9%). Of the 13 cities with gains, the range was a 25.5% gain in Eureka Springs and a 0.4% gain in Texarkana. **TBP**

## Following are the past 10 years of 2% tax collections.

<b>2019:</b> \$17.608 million	<b>2014:</b> \$13.677 million
<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

## Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in January-February 2020, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2019.

<b>Pulaski</b>		\$533,707 up 7.53%
<b>Benton</b>		\$358,019 up 17.55%
<b>Washington</b>		\$218,084 up 10.5%
<b>Garland</b>		\$166,916 up 12.14%
<b>Sebastian</b>		\$92,991 up 4.9%
<b>Craighead</b>		\$73,512 up 10%
<b>Crittenden</b>		\$70,387 up 23.1%
<b>Carroll</b>		\$63,540 up 31.6%
<b>Faulkner</b>		\$50,640 up 2%
<b>Mississippi</b>		\$46,296 up 6%



# Arkansas travel and tourism job numbers up 4.2%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-February 2020 totaled 120,050, down 0.04% compared with 120,100 in the same period of 2019. The sector reached record monthly employment of 120,800 in July 2019.

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 employment gains compared with the same period in 2019, with the Memphis-West Memphis area posting the largest percentage gain (22.8%). The monthly average was unchanged in the Fort Smith metro/ Following is the average monthly employment during the first two months of 2020 for the metro regions. **TBP**

## Monthly employment averages

### Northwest Arkansas

Jan.-Feb. 2020: **26,500**

(up 7.9% compared with the same 2019 period)

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

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

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

### Fort Smith

Jan.-Feb. 2020: **9,150** (unchanged)

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **9,150**

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

Jan.-Feb. 2010: **8,200**

### Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

Jan.-Feb. 2020: **32,850** (down 3.5%)

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **34,050**

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

Jan.-Feb. 2010: **28,100**

### Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

Jan.-Feb. 2020: **7,150** (up 4.4%)

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **6,850**

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

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



### Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

Jan.-Feb. 2020: **69,500** (up 22.8%)

Jan.-Feb. 2019: **67,950**

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

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



# Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	Jan.-Feb. 2020	Jan.-Feb. 2019	% CHANGE
<b>Bentonville</b>	\$398,839	\$373,988	<b>up 6.6%</b>
<b>Conway</b>	\$680,267	\$660,308	<b>up 3%</b>
<b>El Dorado</b>	\$54,990	\$55,752	<b>down 1.4%</b>
<b>Eureka Springs</b>	\$155,264	\$123,697	<b>up 25.5%</b>
<b>Fayetteville</b>	\$1.088 million	\$1.044 million	<b>up 4.2%</b>
<b>Fort Smith</b>	\$135,111	\$128,959	<b>up 4.8%</b>
<b>Harrison</b>	\$94,104	\$95,089	<b>down 1%</b>
<b>Hot Springs</b>	\$986,433	\$956,188	<b>up 3.2%</b>
<b>Jonesboro</b>	\$108,154	\$87,626	<b>up 23.4%</b>
<b>Little Rock</b>	\$2.426 million	\$2.332 million	<b>up 4.1%</b>
<b>North Little Rock</b>	\$1.126 million	\$1.12 million	<b>up 0.5%</b>
<b>Pine Bluff</b>	\$250,563	\$243,682	<b>up 2.8%</b>
<b>Rogers</b>	\$206,987	\$191,292	<b>up 8.2%</b>
<b>Russellville</b>	\$46,493	\$50,580	<b>down 8.1%</b>
<b>Springdale</b>	\$56,118	\$57,203	<b>down 1.9%</b>
<b>Texarkana</b>	\$197,222	\$196,367	<b>up 0.4%</b>
<b>Van Buren</b>	\$93,013	\$88,456	<b>up 5.2%</b>





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