



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-June 2020



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



Arkansas Tourism Ticker

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

Entertainment districts approved in downtown Fort Smith, Chaffee Crossing

Permanent entertainment districts are now a reality in downtown Fort Smith and Chaffee Crossing. The Fort Smith Board of Directors on Tuesday (Sept. 1) approved the districts, and added emergency clauses to allow for immediate use by groups and businesses. (Sept. 1)

Bass Pro Shops founder buys former Dogpatch USA site

Johnny Morris, a conservationist and founder of Springfield, Mo.-based Bass Pro Shops, announced Aug. 4 the purchase of the former Dogpatch USA theme park in northern Arkansas. The 400-acre park property is along Arkansas Highway 7 between Harrison and Jasper in Newton County, which has a population of about 7,800. Specific plans for the property have yet to be determined, but any development is expected to be an extension of Morris' other properties, connecting families and nature, according to a news release. (Aug. 4)

Director named for two ASU Heritage sites

Penny Toombs, a long-time educator for Piggott Public Schools, has been appointed as the director of the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home and Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, two of Arkansas State University's Heritage Sites. Toombs has a background in K-12 education. (Aug. 27)

Walton Arts Center schedules first show since COVID-19

Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Bonnie Bishop will be the first artist to take the stage at Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville since programming was suspended in March due to health and safety precautions for COVID-19. Bishop was originally scheduled to perform on March 21 as part of the West Street Live Series presented by Neal Pendergraft. (Aug. 26)

LRCVB CEO named chair-elect of international convention group

Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau (LRCVB) President and CEO Gretchen Hall has been named 2020-2021 chair-elect of Destinations International (DI) Board of Directors, having served most recently as the board's secretary/treasurer. Destinations International serves destination marketing professionals, and has almost 6,000 members and partners from nearly 600 destinations across 13 countries. (July 20) **TBP**



Tourism ticker shows impact of COVID-19 between March and June

Arkansas' tourism industry is not in ICU, but COVID-19 certainly has one of the state's largest economic sectors on its heels. The state's 2% tourism tax is down 30.4% between January and June, and job numbers are down almost 14%.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and June was \$5.905 million, down 30.4% compared with the \$8.488 million in 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, but then, well, COVID.

January-June hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker fell 21.9% compared with the same period in 2019. The tourism tax revenue in the cities was up 5.2% in 2019.

The tourism industry entered 2020 following a robust 2019, and for the first two months of 2020, collections were up 3.8%, the state's 2% tourism tax revenue was up 13.2%, and the average monthly job numbers were down only 0.04%.

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-June 2020 Tourism Ticker report



21.9% decrease

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



30.4% decrease

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



13.7% decrease

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

Hospitality tax revenue down in all 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$20.844 million in January-June 2020, down 21.9% compared with the \$26.692 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 \$16.509 million in January-June 2020, down 16.3% compared with the \$19.731 million in the same period of 2019. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$4.335 million in January-June 2020, up 37.7% compared with the \$6.96 million in the same period of 2019.

All 17 of the cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker posted hospitality tax collection declines for the first six months with the declines ranging from 40.5% in El Dorado and 5.6% in Pine Bluff. **TBP**











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

2019: \$17.608 million	2014: \$13.677 million
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

Tourism tax collections by county



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

Pulaski		\$1.181 million down 38.08%
Benton		\$641,646 down 45.15%
Garland		\$565,769 down 37.25%
Washington		\$425,148 down 45.12%
Carroll		\$260,092 down 17.6%
Sebastian		\$220,395 down 31.44%
Crittenden		\$198,559 down 16%
Baxter		\$167,854 down 11.7%
Craighead		\$163,108 down 18.6%
Faulkner		\$141,112 down 29.2%



Arkansas travel and tourism average monthly jobs down almost 14%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-June 2020 was 104,030, down 13.7% compared with 120,600 in the same period of 2019. The sector reached record monthly employment of 120,800 in June 2019.

Of the eight metro areas in or connected to Arkansas, the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides tourism employment data on five. All five posted employment losses compared with the same period in 2019, with the Memphis-West Memphis area posting the largest percentage decline (16%). Following is the average monthly employment during the first six months of 2020 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

Jan.-June 2020: **23,700**

(down 7% compared with the same 2019 period)

Jan.-June 2019: **25,500**

Jan.-June 2018: **26,780**

Jan.-June 2010: **17,780**

Fort Smith

Jan.-June 2020: **8,600** (down 9.5%)

Jan.-June 2019: **9,500**

Jan.-June 2018: **9,360**

Jan.-June 2010: **8,380**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

Jan.-June 2020: **29,700** (down 15.6%)

Jan.-June 2019: **35,200**

Jan.-June 2018: **34,000**

Jan.-June 2010: **29,250**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

Jan.-June 2020: **6,300** (down 10.6%)

Jan.-June 2019: **7,050**

Jan.-June 2018: **6,900**

Jan.-June 2010: **5,600**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

Jan.-June 2020: **59,200** (down 16%)

Jan.-June 2019: **70,400**

Jan.-June 2018: **70,030**

Jan.-June 2010: **64,680**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	Jan.-June 2020	Jan.-June 2019	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$861,616	\$1.309 million	down 34.2%
Conway	\$1.879 million	\$2.242 million	down 16.2%
El Dorado	\$126,312	\$212,132	down 40.5%
Eureka Springs	\$412,734	\$661,543	down 37.6%
Fayetteville	\$2.789 million	\$3.524 million	down 20.9%
Fort Smith	\$288,568	\$457,329	down 36.9%
Harrison	\$292,003	\$345,198	down 15.4%
Hot Springs	\$2.74 million	\$3.572 million	down 23.3%
Jonesboro	\$275,579	\$326,374	down 15.6%
Little Rock	\$5.964 million	\$7.391 million	down 19.3%
North Little Rock	\$3.009 million	\$3.782 million	down 20.4%
Pine Bluff	\$738,634	\$782,085	down 5.6%
Rogers	\$391,071	\$711,213	down 45%
Russellville	\$145,606	\$184,822	down 21.2%
Springdale	\$147,828	\$239,430	down 38.26%
Texarkana	\$558,293	\$638,223	down 12.5%
Van Buren	\$274,008	\$310,809	down 11.8%





Arkansas Tourism Ticker

Talk Business & Politics Administrative Assistant Kathy Reed contributed to this report.

Permission from Talk Business & Politics must be obtained for any use of this material.
Contact Roby Brock at robby@talkbusiness.net for approval requests.

