



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-August 2020



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

Walton Family Foundation supports water park near Siloam Springs

The city of Siloam Springs and Oklahoma-based utility Grand River Dam Authority broke ground Oct. 29 on a 30-acre whitewater park on the Illinois River, and the Walton Family Foundation is providing 95% of the money for the \$33 million project. The WOKA Whitewater Park will be built at the old spillway of Lake Frances in Oklahoma and near Watts, which is about seven miles southwest of Siloam Springs. (Oct. 29)

Partnership to add 'world-class' trails at central Arkansas parks

A public-private partnership between Arkansas State Parks, the City of Little Rock and the Arkansas Parks & Recreation Foundation with philanthropic support from the Walton Family Foundation will connect 28 miles of trails to three parks in and around Little Rock. The joint trails collaboration connects trails at Pinnacle Mountain State Park and the soon to be constructed trails at River Mountain Park and Two Rivers Park in the city of Little Rock. (Oct. 28)

Historic preservation leads to \$224 million in private investments over last decade

Historic preservation in Arkansas has been a significant economic engine, according to a report commissioned by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPP). Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism Secretary Stacy Hurst said Monday (Oct. 26) the report demonstrates how vital historic preservation is to the state's economy by noting that in the last decade the Arkansas Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit has attracted nearly \$224 million in private investment for the rehabilitation of historic properties. (Oct. 26)

Final hurdle cleared for grant program to help service, hospitality businesses

The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT), the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC), and the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) received approval Oct. 16 to proceed with a grant program utilizing \$50 million in CARES Act funds for Arkansas businesses in industries significantly impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency. **TBP**



COVID-19 still pushes double-digit declines in tourism sector

While the pace of decline is slowing somewhat, Arkansas' tourism industry continues to face daunting economic headwinds for large and small businesses in a sector likely to not see real relief until COVID-19 is better contained.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and August was \$8.981 million, down 24.9% compared with \$11.953 million in the same period in 2019. The August number is a slight improvement compared with the 30.4% decline through June. The tax was up 7.2% in 2019. February revenue of \$1.366 million set a new monthly record for the tax.

January-August hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker fell 20.6% compared with the same period in 2019. The decline is an improvement compared with the 21.9% decline between January and June. 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-August 2020 Tourism Ticker report



20.6% decrease

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



24.9% decrease

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



14.6% decrease

Decrease in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-August 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 \$28.716 million in January-August 2020, down 20.6% compared with \$36.173 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 \$49.319 million in 2018.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$22.932 million in January-August 2020, down 13.53% compared with \$26.52 million in the same period of 2019. The decline is an improvement over the 16.3% decline through June. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$5.783 million in January-August 2020, down 40.1% compared with \$9.652 million in the same period of 2019. The decline is worse compared with 37.7% decline through June.

All 17 of the cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker posted hospitality tax collection declines for the first eight months with the declines ranging from 49.2% in Springdale and 4.1% 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-August 2020, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2019.

Pulaski		\$1.664 million down 35.35%
Garland		\$983,113 down 26.41%
Benton		\$862,960 down 46.7%
Washington		\$573,366 down 44.1%
Carroll		\$487,887 down 1.89%
Sebastian		\$329,983 down 24.97%
Baxter		\$326,482 up 7.3%
Crittenden		\$293,627 down 10.72%
Craighead		\$225,235 down 17.8%
Faulkner		\$208,469 down 25.3%



Arkansas travel and tourism average monthly jobs down 14.6%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-August 2020 was 103,530, down 14.6% compared with 121,240 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. All five posted employment losses compared with the same period in 2019, with the Memphis-West Memphis area posting the largest percentage decline (16.1%). Following is the average monthly employment during the first eight months of 2020 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-August 2020: **24,100**
(down 6.2% compared with the same 2019 period)
January-August 2019: **25,700**
January-August 2018: **26,900**
January-August 2010: **18,070**

Fort Smith

January-August 2020: **8,700**
(down 9.4%)
January-August 2019: **9,600**
January-August 2018: **9,500**
January-August 2010: **8,400**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)
January-August 2020: **29,800**
(down 16%)
January-August 2019: **35,500**
January-August 2018: **34,210**
January-August 2010: **29,410**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)
January-August 2020: **59,800**
(down 16.1%)
January-August 2019: **71,300**
January-August 2018: **70,790**
January-August 2010: **65,000**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)
January-August 2020: **6,300**
(down 11%)
January-August 2019: **7,080**
January-August 2018: **7,000**
January-August 2010: **5,640**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-August 2020	January-August 2019	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$1.171 million	\$1.787 million	down 34.5%
Conway	\$2.609 million	\$3.012 million	down 13.4%
El Dorado	\$169,484	\$275,039	down 38.4%
Eureka Springs	\$706,059	\$985,435	down 28.4%
Fayetteville	\$3.824 million	\$4.683 million	down 18.3%
Fort Smith	\$421,322	\$622,621	down 32.3%
Harrison	\$407,170	\$484,766	down 16%
Hot Springs	\$4.042 million	\$4.903 million	down 17.6%
Jonesboro	\$369,983	\$450,303	down 17.8%
Little Rock	\$7.988 million	\$9.964 million	down 19.8%
North Little Rock	\$4.168 million	\$5.072 million	down 17.8%
Pine Bluff	\$1.013 million	\$1.057 million	down 4.1%
Rogers	\$463,673	\$973,396	down 52.4%
Russellville	\$192,989	\$254,742	down 24.2%
Springdale	\$193,332	\$380,500	down 49.2%
Texarkana	\$758,229	\$844,581	down 10.2%
Van Buren	\$383,753	\$420,674	down 8.8%





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

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