



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-October 2020



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

## **Downtown Bentonville site for planned new hotel**

A South Carolina hotel developer has filed a preliminary development plan with the city of Bentonville for technical review, signaling its intention to build a 17,737-square-foot micro-hotel south of the downtown square. Greenville-based Windsor Aughtry is proposing the six-story development at 223 S. Main St. The company paid \$1.29 million for the land in December 2018 in two separate deals. (Jan. 11)

## **New manager named for Fort Smith Convention Center**

The Fort Smith Convention Center has a new general manager with the new year. Tim Seeberg left his position as the general manager Jan. 4, and Marc Mulherin began as the new general manager. Mulherin will lead the Oak View Group team in selling and marketing the Fort Smith Convention Center, securing live entertainment, increasing meetings and conventions, consumer and trade shows, as well as local corporate and social events. (Jan. 5)

## **Walnut Ridge Park to receive \$150,000 grant**

Stewart Park in Walnut Ridge is about to get major facility upgrades that will include a disc golf park. Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism's outdoor activities recreation grants approved a 50/50 match grant of \$146,281 for a project that will be about \$300,000 total. A timetable for work to begin on the various projects covered by the grant was not released. (Dec. 28)

## **Arkansas Cinema Society expanding to Northwest Arkansas**

Little Rock-based nonprofit Arkansas Cinema Society (ACS) will expand to Northwest Arkansas full-time in 2021. The organization plans to open an office and launch a variety of efforts to support filmmakers and the creative community in Northwest Arkansas. ACS hired Fayetteville resident Kody Ford as its new director of statewide outreach and educational programming/NWA program director. (Dec. 16) **TBP**



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker: Gains seen but tourism industry still being hit hard

Arkansas' travel and tourism industry is showing slight improvement but is not close to returning to the record-setting trends of 2019 that were continuing into early 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the state economy.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and October was \$11.72 million, down 23% compared with the \$15.2 million in the same period in 2019. The October number is a slight improvement compared with the 24.9% through August and the 30.4% decline through June. The tax was up 7.2% in 2019. February revenue of \$1.36 million set a new monthly record for the tax.

January-October hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker fell 18.8% compared with the same period in 2019. The biggest hit was in lost revenue from hotel collections. The decline is an improvement compared with the 20.6% decline between January and August, and a 21.9% decline between January and June. Total 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-October 2020 Tourism Ticker report



**18.8% decrease**

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



**23% decrease**

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



**4.8% decrease**

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

# Hospitality tax revenue down almost 19% in 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$36.78 million in January-October 2020, down 18.8% compared with the \$45.306 million in the same period in 2019. The last time January-October collections were lower was in 2014 when combined collections totaled \$34.15 million.

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$53.49 million in 2019, up 5.2% compared with the \$49.31 million in 2018.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$29.37 million in January-October 2020, down 11.2% compared with the \$26.52 million in the same period of 2019. The decline is an improvement over the 13.5% decline through August. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$7.41 million in January-October 2020, down 39.4% compared with the \$12.23 million in the same period of 2019. The decline is slightly better than the 40.1% decline through August.

All 17 of the cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker posted hospitality tax collection declines for the first 10 months with the declines ranging from 55.8% in Rogers and 1.6% in Pine Bluff. **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-October 2020, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2019.

<b>Pulaski</b>		\$2.14 million down 34.28%
<b>Garland</b>		\$1.29 million down 18.82%
<b>Benton</b>		\$1.11 million down 46.86%
<b>Washington</b>		\$751,394 down 43.14%
<b>Carroll</b>		\$726,184 up 6.19%
<b>Baxter</b>		\$424,392 up 10.61%
<b>Sebastian</b>		\$420,346 down 25.34%
<b>Crittenden</b>		\$388,376 down 6.02%
<b>Craighead</b>		\$293,193 down 14.69%
<b>Faulkner</b>		\$267,873 down 24.45%



# Arkansas travel and tourism average monthly jobs down almost 15%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-October 2020 was 103,650, down 14.8% compared with 121,660 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 (17.2%). Following is the average monthly employment during the first eight months of 2020 for the metro regions. **TEP**

## Monthly employment averages



### Northwest Arkansas

January-October 2020: 24,500  
(down 5.76% compared with the same 2019 period)  
January-October 2019: **26,000**  
January-October 2018: **26,900**  
January-October 2010: **18,070**

### Fort Smith

January-October 2020: **8,670**  
(down 9.2%)  
January-October 2019: **9,550**  
January-October 2018: **9,480**  
January-October 2010: **8,450**

### Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)  
January-October 2020: **29,700**  
(down 16%)  
January-October 2019: **35,390**  
January-October 2018: **34,300**  
January-October 2010: **29,670**

### Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)  
January-October 2020: **60,400**  
(down 17.2%)  
January-October 2019: **73,000**  
January-October 2018: **70,640**  
January-October 2010: **64,950**

### Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)  
January-October 2020: **6,300**  
(down 11.26%)  
January-October 2019: **7,100**  
January-October 2018: **6,950**  
January-October 2010: **5,720**



# Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-October 2020	January-October 2019	% CHANGE
<b>Bentonville</b>	\$1.52 million	\$2.29 million	<b>down 33.7%</b>
<b>Conway</b>	\$3.38 million	\$3.72 million	<b>down 9.1%</b>
<b>El Dorado</b>	\$214,813	\$338,278	<b>down 36.5%</b>
<b>Eureka Springs</b>	\$1.05 million	\$1.32 million	<b>down 20.6%</b>
<b>Fayetteville</b>	\$4.92 million	\$5.95 million	<b>down 17.4%</b>
<b>Fort Smith</b>	\$544,627	\$790,603	<b>down 31.1%</b>
<b>Harrison</b>	\$541,369	\$610,706	<b>down 11.4%</b>
<b>Hot Springs</b>	\$5.17 million	\$5.97 million	<b>down 13.4%</b>
<b>Jonesboro</b>	\$468,840	\$568,900	<b>down 17.6%</b>
<b>Little Rock</b>	\$10.03 million	\$12.45 million	<b>down 19.4%</b>
<b>North Little Rock</b>	\$5.36 million	\$6.29 million	<b>down 14.7%</b>
<b>Pine Bluff</b>	\$1.29 million	\$1.31 million	<b>down 1.6%</b>
<b>Rogers</b>	\$550,921	\$1.24 million	<b>down 55.8%</b>
<b>Russellville</b>	\$219,405	\$353,704	<b>down 38%</b>
<b>Springdale</b>	\$238,963	\$484,775	<b>down 50.7%</b>
<b>Texarkana</b>	\$967,543	\$1.05 million	<b>down 8%</b>
<b>Van Buren</b>	\$491,168	\$527,262	<b>down 6.8%</b>





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

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Contact Roby Brock at [robby@talkbusiness.net](mailto:robby@talkbusiness.net) for approval requests.

