



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-December 2020



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

Travel advisor promotes heritage tourism

Heritage tourism is more relevant and important to Arkansas than ever, according to travel advisors. But just what is it, and how can Arkansas cities capitalize on it? During the 2021 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism on March 3, Cheryl Hargrove with Hargrove International Inc. discussed "Heritage Tourism: More Relevant than Ever." (March 3)

Legendary Fort Smith restaurant owner dies

Tom Caldarera Jr., the popular restaurant owner and community leader who, along with his family, likely catered thousands of weddings, reunions, wakes and community events in the Fort Smith area, has died. He was 90. Caldarera opened Taliano's Italian Restaurant at 14th and B streets in Fort Smith with partner Jim Cadelli in 1970. The restaurant was in the renovated Sparks Mansion built in 1887, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Feb. 14)

Fayetteville first to be named a 'Bike City'

The city of Fayetteville is the first U.S. city to be named a Bike City by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), a world governing body of cycling, according to a news release. Experience Fayetteville said the city joins cities and regions across the globe, such as Copenhagen and Paris that have previously received the designation because of their commitment to developing cycling at all levels, from elite competition to the use of bicycles for leisure and transportation. (Feb. 4)

Arkansas Arts Center rebrands, expands capital campaign

The Arkansas Arts Center has rebranded as the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, a tribute to its origins as well as a strategic move to position the museum for future growth. In addition, museum leaders announced an expansion of its \$128 million capital campaign to a new goal of \$142 million. While unveiling the museum's new brand, AMFA leaders announced the capital campaign supporting the construction of its new museum building has raised \$135,944,426, surpassing its previous goal of \$128 million. (Jan. 25) **TBP**



Arkansas Tourism Ticker: Tourism industry ends 2020 with significant losses

Arkansas' travel and tourism industry, which was enjoying more than a decade of growth, posted double-digit percentage declines in key categories in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the state in March 2020.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue in 2020 was \$13.61 million, down 22.7% compared with the \$17.608 million in 2019. The full-year number is a slight improvement compared with the 24.9% decline through August and 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-December hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker fell 18% compared with 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 in the 17 cities 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-December 2020 Tourism Ticker report



18% decrease

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



22.7% decrease

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in January-December 2020 compared with 2019.



14.35% decrease

Decrease in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-December 2020 compared with 2019.

Hospitality tax revenue down almost 18% in 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$43.857 million in 2020, down 18% compared with the \$53.49 million in 2019. The last time January-December collections were lower was in 2014 when combined collections totaled \$40.29 million.

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 \$36.098 million in 2020, down 10.63% compared with the \$26.52 million in 2019. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$8.759 million in 2020, down 38.4% compared with the \$14.216 million in 2019. The decline is slightly better than the 39.4% decline through October.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 16 posted hospitality tax collection declines in 2020. Only Pine Bluff posted a gain. The percentage range was a 55.3% decline in Rogers and a 0.8% increase in Pine Bluff. **TBP**

Following are the past 11 years of 2% tax collections.

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2020: \$13.610 million | 2014: \$13.677 million |
| 2019: \$17.608 million | 2013: \$12.716 million |
| 2018: \$16.428 million | 2012: \$12.405 million |
| 2017: \$15.897 million | 2011: \$12.025 million |
| 2016: \$15.461 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-December 2020, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2019.

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Pulaski |  | \$2.49 million down 34.6% |
| Garland |  | \$1.49 million down 14.47% |
| Benton |  | \$1.3 million down 47% |
| Washington |  | \$880,467 down 42.5% |
| Carroll |  | \$832,847 up 6.27% |
| Sebastian |  | \$496,422 down 24.7% |
| Baxter |  | \$473,705 up 11.1% |
| Crittenden |  | \$466,504 down 4% |
| Craighead |  | \$345,180 down 15.64% |
| Faulkner |  | \$311,226 down 24.32% |



Arkansas travel and tourism average monthly jobs down more than 14%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in 2020 was 104,450, down 14.35% compared with 121,950 in 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 Central Arkansas area posting the largest percentage decline (17.3%). Following is the average monthly employment during 2020 for the metro regions.

By comparison, total employment in Arkansas fell 0.76% during 2020. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages



Northwest Arkansas

January-December 2020: **24,750**

(down 4.8% compared with the same 2019 period)

January-December 2019: **26,010**

January-December 2018: **26,800**

January-December 2010: **18,150**

Fort Smith

January-December 2020: **8,600**

(down 9.5%)

January-December 2019: **9,510**

January-December 2018: **9,460**

January-December 2010: **8,450**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-December 2020: **29,400**

(down 17.3%)

January-December 2019: **35,560**

January-December 2018: **34,390**

January-December 2010: **29,670**

Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-December 2020: **60,900**

(down 15.1%)

January-December 2019: **71,720**

January-December 2018: **70,530**

January-December 2010: **65,090**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-December 2020: **6,400**

(down 9.9%)

January-December 2019: **7,100**

January-December 2018: **6,920**

January-December 2010: **5,750**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

| CITY | January-December 2020 | January-December 2019 | % CHANGE |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Bentonville | \$1.82 million | \$2.71 million | down 32.9% |
| Conway | \$4.05 million | \$4.48 million | down 9.4% |
| El Dorado | \$239,816 | \$387,307 | down 38.1% |
| Eureka Springs | \$1.27 million | \$1.53 million | down 16.8% |
| Fayetteville | \$5.96 million | \$7.11 million | down 16.2% |
| Fort Smith | \$643,175 | \$920,247 | down 30.1% |
| Harrison | \$642,388 | \$720,222 | down 10.8% |
| Hot Springs | \$6.18 million | \$6.96 million | down 11.2% |
| Jonesboro | \$563,717 | \$699,438 | down 19.4% |
| Little Rock | \$12.04 million | \$14.87 million | down 19% |
| North Little Rock | \$6.46 million | \$7.5 million | down 13.9% |
| Pine Bluff | \$1.58 million | \$1.57 million | up 0.8% |
| Rogers | \$651,343 | \$1.45 million | down 55.3% |
| Russellville | \$255,122 | \$408,738 | down 37.6% |
| Springdale | \$287,094 | \$522,984 | down 45.1% |
| Texarkana | \$1.14 million | \$1.24 million | down 7.9% |
| Van Buren | \$591,682 | \$626,912 | down 5.6% |





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