



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-February 2021



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

War Memorial Stadium to host national championships

The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), along with the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Arkansas Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, announced April 30 that Little Rock will be the location of the 2021, 2022, and 2023 NJCAA Football Championships at War Memorial Stadium. The postponed 2020-2021 NJCAA Football Championship is slated for June 5. (April 30)

Governor donates money to help fund Sultana Museum

Gov. Asa Hutchinson has dedicated \$750,000 toward building a Sultana museum in Marion. He made the announcement at the proposed site for the museum that will cost an estimated \$7.5 million. A fundraising campaign is now underway. A timetable for raising the money and building the museum has not been released. (April 27)

U.S. Marshals Museum seeks help with fundraising

With \$8 million still needed before production of the museum experience can start, the U.S. Marshals Museum Foundation has enlisted the help of national fundraising consulting firm Bentz Whaley Flessner (BWF). To date, the museum — near the Arkansas River in downtown Fort Smith — has raised nearly \$38.7 million for the USMM building, campus, and Hall of Honor. There remains \$12.6 million to raise to complete the museum. (April 7)

Expansion planned for Crystal Bridges

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art plans to increase its size by 50%. According to a news release, the Bentonville museum will add 100,000 square feet to the 200,000-square-foot facility. According to the release, the expansion will showcase the museum's growing collection and welcome more visitors. Since opening in 2011, Crystal Bridges has welcomed more than five million people, the release said. (April 7) **TBP**



Arkansas Tourism Ticker: Hotel numbers still down; restaurants see slight improvement

Hotel activity in Arkansas continues to suffer from COVID-19 impacts, with hotel tax revenue in the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker down more than 40% in the first two months of 2021.

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 January-February 2021 was \$1.82 million, down 20.5% compared with the \$2.3 million in the same period of 2020. The decline is less than the 22.7% for all of 2020.

January-February 2021 hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker was down 13.8% from the same period in 2020, with hotel tax revenue down 40.5% and restaurant revenue down 4.04%. The numbers are compared with the period in 2020 before the pandemic significantly curtailed the state economy.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue in 2020 was \$13.61 million, down 22.7% compared with the \$17.6 million 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 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 2021 Tourism Ticker report



13.8% decrease

Hospitality tax revenue in January-February 2021 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with the same period in 2020.



20.5% decrease

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in January-February 2021 compared with the same period in 2020.



8.2% decrease

Monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-February 2021 compared with the same period in 2020.

Hospitality tax revenue down almost 14% in 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$7.16 million in January-February 2021, down 13.8% compared with \$8.3 million in the same period of 2020.

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$43.85 million in 2020, down 18% compared with \$53.49 million in 2019.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$5.84 million in January-February 2021, down 4.04% compared with \$6.08 million in the same period of 2020. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$1.32 million in 2021, down 40.53% compared with \$2.22 million in the same period in 2020.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 11 posted hospitality tax collection declines in January-February 2021. The percentage range was a 67.9% decline in Rogers and a 127.3% increase in Pine Bluff. **TBP**











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

2020: \$13.61 million	2014: \$13.67 million
2019: \$17.6 million	2013: \$12.71 million
2018: \$16.42 million	2012: \$12.4 million
2017: \$15.89 million	2011: \$12.02 million
2016: \$15.461 million	2010: \$11.49 million
2015: \$14.815 million	

Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in January-February 2021, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2020.

Pulaski		\$415,602 down 22.13%
Benton		\$150,842 down 57.87%
Washington		\$136,168 down 37.56%
Garland		\$130,075 down 22.07%
Sebastian		\$85,065 down 8.52%
Carroll		\$78,672 up 23.82%
Crittenden		\$71,229 up 1.2%
Jefferson		\$59,560 up 38.62%
Craighead		\$58,236 down 20.78%
Mississippi		\$54,524 up 17.7%



Arkansas travel and tourism average monthly jobs down more than 8%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-February 2021 was 110,250, down 8.2% compared with 120,050 in the same period of 2020. The sector reached record monthly employment of 122,900 in December 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 2020, with the Memphis/West Memphis area posting the largest percentage decline at 20.8%. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages



Northwest Arkansas

January-February 2021: **24,300**
(down 8.3% compared with the same 2020 period)
January-February 2020: **26,500**
January-February 2019: **24,550**
January-February 2010: **16,900**

Fort Smith

January-February 2021: **8,150**
(down 11%)
January-February 2020: **9,150**
January-February 2019: **9,150**
January-February 2010: **8,200**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)
January-February 2021: **27,900**
(down 15%)
January-February 2020: **32,850**
January-February 2019: **34,050**
January-February 2010: **28,000**

Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)
January-February 2021: **55,000**
(down 20.8%)
January-February 2020: **69,500**
January-February 2019: **67,950**
January-February 2010: **62,650**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)
January-February 2021: **6,400**
(down 10.5%)
January-February 2020: **7,150**
January-February 2019: **6,850**
January-February 2010: **5,500**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-February 2021	January-February 2020	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$302,927	\$398,839	down 24%
Conway	\$661,571	\$680,267	down 2.7%
El Dorado	\$25,029	\$53,558	down 53.3%
Eureka Springs	\$136,806	\$68,925	up 98.5%
Fayetteville	\$1.03 million	\$1.08 million	down 5%
Fort Smith	\$98,552	\$135,111	down 27%
Harrison	\$105,046	\$94,104	up 11.6%
Hot Springs	\$911,561	\$894,652	up 1.9%
Jonesboro	\$79,771	\$108,154	down 26.2%
Little Rock	\$2.04 million	\$2.42 million	down 15.9%
North Little Rock	\$1.04 million	\$1.12 million	down 7.1%
Pine Bluff	\$274,569	\$120,812	up 127.3%
Rogers	\$66,447	\$206,987	down 67.9%
Russellville	\$36,936	\$50,206	down 26.4%
Springdale	\$44,509	\$56,118	down 20.7%
Texarkana	\$199,417	\$197,222	up 1.1%
Van Buren	\$95,687	\$93,013	up 2.9%





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