



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-August 2021



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

State officials partner with Cyclo-cross World Championships

Experience Fayetteville announced Dec. 15 that the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT) is now an official partner of the Walmart 2022 Cyclo-cross World Championships. The event is scheduled in Fayetteville from Jan. 28-30. It's just the second time the United States has hosted the event in its 72-year history. (Dec. 15)

Old State House museum director to retire

Bill Gatewood, the long-time director of the Old State House Museum, will retire on Dec. 31, 2021 after a 35-year career with the state and 29 years with the museum. Gatewood joined the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism in 1986 as an exhibit shop supervisor. In 1990, he moved to a museum consultant position with the department before a door opened at the Old State House. (Dec. 1)

Delta Heritage Trail lands \$20 million federal grant

The U.S. Department of Transportation awarded \$20,482,208 to the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to construct the final 13.4-mile section of the southeast Arkansas trail through its Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant Program. (Nov. 17)

Arkansas to receive \$3 million from feds to support tourism rebound

Arkansas will receive more than \$3 million from federal grants aimed at supporting travel, tourism and outdoor recreation. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo. The state's grant funding is part of \$314 million in American Rescue Plan money that is being allocated to 34 states. (Nov. 8)

Marshals Museum moving closer to enough funds to build exhibits, galleries

The Fort Smith-based U.S. Marshals Museum has received an influx of contributions in the wake of a \$5 million matching gift that was announced over the summer, meaning production of the museum experience could start soon and the museum could open within a year. (Nov. 8) **TBP**



Arkansas tourism in recovery, job numbers still lag 2019 record levels

Hospitality tax collections show the Arkansas tourism industry is rebounding from 2020 and will break 2019 tax revenue collections, but the sector still lags record job numbers and hotel tax revenue posted in 2019, according to the Arkansas Tourism Ticker.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and August was \$13.81 million, up 53.9% compared with the \$8.98 million in the same period in 2020 and up 15.6% over the same period in 2019. The 2019 collections set a record for the tax. Collections of the tax set monthly records for the six months between March and August. July set a new series record for the tax with \$2.48 million in revenue from the tax.

January-August hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 30.6% compared with the same period in 2020, and up 3.9% compared with the same period in 2019.

The tourism industry entered 2021 following a year in which the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered much of the state and national economy for much of the year. The state's 2% tourism tax revenue fell almost 23% in 2020, and fell to levels not seen since 2014. 2019 set several records for the sector in terms of hospitality tax revenue and job gains, and 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 2021 Tourism Ticker report



30.6% increase

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



53.9% increase

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



6.7% increase

Gain in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-August 2021 compared with the same period in 2020.

Hospitality tax revenue up in all 17 cities surveyed, tops 2019 records

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$37.57 million in January-August 2021, up 30.6% compared with \$28.77 million in the same period in 2020, and up 3.9% from January-August 2019 revenue of \$36.16 million.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$28.92 million in January-August 2021, well ahead of \$22.99 million in the same period of 2020. The revenue also was up 9.1% compared with what were previous record collections of \$26.52 million in the same period of 2019.

Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$8.64 million in January-August 2021, up 49.5% compared with \$5.78 million in the same period of 2020. Hotel tax collections are down 10.3% compared with the previous record of \$9.64 million in the same period of 2019.

All 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-August 2021. The range of gains was 79.8% in Eureka Springs and 7.3% in Rogers. **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: \$15.46 million	2010: \$11.49 million
2015: \$14.81 million	

Tourism tax collections by county



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

Pulaski		\$2.59 million up 55.8%
Garland		\$1.6 million up 62.9%
Benton		\$1.2 million up 39.7%
Washington		\$956,115 up 66.75%
Carroll		\$795,337 up 63%
Sebastian		\$537,266 up 62.8%
Crittenden		\$498,605 up 66.7%
Baxter		\$400,625 up 22.7%
Craighead		\$355,811 up 58%
Faulkner		\$349,269 up 67.5%



Arkansas travel and tourism average monthly jobs lag records set in 2019

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-August 2021 was 110,500, up 6.7% compared with 103,530 in the same period of 2020. The 2021 period is on the average 10,740 jobs less, or down 8.9%, compared with the same period in 2019. The sector first reached record monthly employment of 122,900 in December 2019, then fell precipitously to an estimated 75,100 in April 2020.

Of the eight metro areas in or connected to Arkansas, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides tourism employment data on five. Three of the five posted employment gains compared with the same period in 2020. Following is the average monthly employment during the first eight months of 2021 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-August 2021: **25,800**

(up 7% compared with the same 2020 period)

January-August 2020: **24,100**

January-August 2019: **25,700**

January-August 2010: **17,870**

Fort Smith

January-August 2021: **8,800**

(up 1.1%)

January-August 2020: **8,700**

January-August 2019: **9,600**

January-August 2010: **8,400**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-August 2021: **29,700**

(down 0.3%)

January-August 2020: **29,800**

January-August 2019: **35,500**

January-August 2010: **29,410**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-August 2021: **59,600**

(down 0.3%)

January-August 2020: **59,800**

January-August 2019: **71,300**

January-August 2010: **65,000**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-August 2021: **6,600**

(up 4.7%)

January-August 2020: **6,300**

January-August 2019: **7,080**

January-August 2010: **5,640**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-August 2021	January-August 2020	% CHANGE
Bentonville	\$1.72 million	\$1.17 million	up 47%
Conway	\$3.39 million	\$2.6 million	up 30.2%
El Dorado	\$214,607	\$169,484	up 26.6%
Eureka Springs	\$1.26 million	\$706,059	up 79.8%
Fayetteville	\$5.14 million	\$3.82 million	up 34.5%
Fort Smith	\$630,712	\$421,322	up 49.7%
Harrison	\$566,129	\$407,170	up 39%
Hot Springs	\$5.55 million	\$4.11 million	up 35.2%
Jonesboro	\$486,280	\$369,983	up 31.4%
Little Rock	\$9.55 million	\$7.98 million	up 19.6%
North Little Rock	\$5.45 million	\$4.16 million	up 30.8%
Pine Bluff	\$1.26 million	\$1 million	up 26.3%
Rogers	\$497,430	\$463,673	up 7.3%
Russellville	\$289,916	\$192,989	up 50.2%
Springdale	\$259,748	\$193,332	up 34.4%
Texarkana	\$1.04 million	\$758,229	up 37.2%
Van Buren	\$492,517	\$383,753	up 28.3%





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