



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-December 2021



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

## **Submissions from Russia, Ukraine part of Fort Smith International Film Festival**

As of March 22, 183 entries have been submitted for the Fort Smith International Film with 102 from 33 different countries and 81 from the United States. Dr. Brandon Chase Goldsmith, executive director of the festival, said that included in those submissions are “Valera,” submitted from a director in Ukraine, and “One,” submitted from the Russian Federation. (March 22)

## **Arkansas Roots Music Festival returns to Jonesboro**

KASU and the Department of English, Philosophy and World Languages at Arkansas State University, together with the West End Neighborhood Association, will present the Arkansas Roots Music Festival on April 16. The festival will begin at 1 p.m. at City Water and Light Park. If it rains, the festival will move to Fowler Center on the ASU campus. (March 16)

## **Dr. Jay Barth named director of the William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum**

Dr. Jay Barth of Little Rock has been named as the new director of the William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, effective March 13, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) announced. In his role as director, Barth will coordinate all the efforts of the Clinton Library with NARA. (March 9)

## **Cella, Ott inducted into the Arkansas Tourism Hall of Fame**

Hot Springs, horses and hotels are the backgrounds of Louis Cella and Bill Ott who were inducted Feb. 28 into the Arkansas Tourism Hall of Fame during the 48<sup>th</sup> annual Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism in Fayetteville. (March 1) **TBP**



# 2% tourism tax sets new record, up 16.7% compared with 2019

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax set a new record in 2021, and overall hospitality tax revenues in 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker set a new record, but job numbers and hotel tax revenues are behind the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between in 2021 was \$20.54 million, up 51% compared with the \$13.61 million in 2020 and up 16.7% over what was a record \$17.6 million in 2019. July set a new series record for the tax with \$2.48 million in revenue from the tax.

The 2021 hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 31.3% compared with 2020, and up 7.7% compared with 2019, according to the Arkansas Tourism Ticker.

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 2021 Tourism Ticker report



**31.1% increase**

Hospitality tax revenue in 2021 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with 2020.



**51% increase**

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in 2021 compared with 2020.



**10.8% increase**

Gain in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in 2021 compared with 2020.

# Prepared food tax up 10.7% over pre-pandemic levels; hotel tax down 0.6%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$57.61 million in 2021, up 31.3% compared with the \$43.86 million in 2020, and up 7.7% from 2019 revenue of \$53.49 million.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$43.476 million in 2021, well ahead of the \$35.08 million in 2020. The revenue also was up 10.7% compared with what were previous record collections of \$39.27 million in 2019.

Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$14.13 million in 2021, up 61.1% compared with the \$8.77 million in 2020. Hotel tax collections in 2021 were down 0.6% compared with the previous record of \$14.21 million in 2019.

All 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker posted hospitality tax collection increases in 2021. The range of gains was 83.4% in Russellville and 20.6% in Pine Bluff. **TBP**











## Following are the past 12 years of 2% tax collections

<b>2021:</b> \$20.54 million	<b>2015:</b> \$14.81 million
<b>2020:</b> \$13.61 million	<b>2014:</b> \$13.67 million
<b>2019:</b> \$17.6 million	<b>2013:</b> \$12.71 million
<b>2018:</b> \$16.42 million	<b>2012:</b> \$12.4 million
<b>2017:</b> \$15.89 million	<b>2011:</b> \$12.02 million
<b>2016:</b> \$15.46 million	<b>2010:</b> \$11.49 million

## Tourism tax collections by county



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

<b>Pulaski</b>		\$3.96 million up 58.5%
<b>Garland</b>		\$2.24 million up 49.7%
<b>Benton</b>		\$2 million up 53.3%
<b>Washington</b>		\$1.51 million up 71.7%
<b>Carroll</b>		\$1.19 million up 43.2%
<b>Sebastian</b>		\$825,186 up 66.2%
<b>Crittenden</b>		\$737,080 up 58%
<b>Baxter</b>		\$568,148 up 19.9%
<b>Craighead</b>		\$554,317 up 60.6%
<b>Faulkner</b>		\$525,448 up 68.8%



# Tourism job numbers recover, but still lag 2019 levels

Monthly average tourism sector jobs 2021 was 115,800, up 10.8% compared with 104,450 in 2020. The 2021 average 6,150 jobs less, or down 5%, compared with what was a record year for sector employment 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. Four of the five posted employment gains compared with 2020. Of the five, only the Northwest Arkansas metro had tourism jobs above the pre-pandemic period in 2019. Following is the average monthly employment during 2021 for the five metro regions. **TBP**

## Monthly employment averages

### Northwest Arkansas

2021: **26,020**

(up 5.1% compared with the 2020)

2020: **24,750**

2019: **26,010**

2010: **18,150**

### Fort Smith

2021: **9,430**

(up 9.6% compared with 2020)

2020: **8,600**

2019: **9,510**

2010: **8,450**

### Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

2021: **31,880**

(up 8.4% compared with 2020)

2020: **29,400**

2019: **35,560**

2010: **29,760**



### Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-October 2021: **58,450**

(down 4% compared with 2020)

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

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

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

### Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

2021: **7,000**

(up 9.4% compared with 2020)

2020: **6,400**

2019: **7,100**

2010: **5,750**



# Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	2021	2020	% CHANGE
<b>Bentonville</b>	\$2.7 million	\$1.82 million	<b>up 48.8%</b>
<b>Conway</b>	\$5.18 million	\$4.05 million	<b>up 27.7%</b>
<b>El Dorado</b>	\$315,009	\$239,816	<b>up 31.35%</b>
<b>Eureka Springs</b>	\$1.95 million	\$1.27 million	<b>up 53.5%</b>
<b>Fayetteville</b>	\$8.17 million	\$5.96 million	<b>up 37.1%</b>
<b>Fort Smith</b>	\$961,940	\$643,175	<b>up 49.6%</b>
<b>Harrison</b>	\$882,988	\$642,388	<b>up 37.5%</b>
<b>Hot Springs</b>	\$8.21 million	\$6.19 million	<b>up 32.7%</b>
<b>Jonesboro</b>	\$797,952	\$563,717	<b>up 41.5%</b>
<b>Little Rock</b>	\$14.76 million	\$12.04 million	<b>up 22.6%</b>
<b>North Little Rock</b>	\$8.23 million	\$6.46 million	<b>up 27.3%</b>
<b>Pine Bluff</b>	\$1.9 million	\$1.58 million	<b>up 20.6%</b>
<b>Rogers</b>	\$888,257	\$651,343	<b>up 36.4%</b>
<b>Russellville</b>	\$467,867	\$255,122	<b>up 83.4%</b>
<b>Springdale</b>	\$430,939	\$287,094	<b>up 50.1%</b>
<b>Texarkana</b>	\$1.65 million	\$1.14 million	<b>up 44%</b>
<b>Van Buren</b>	\$743,700	\$591,682	<b>up 25.7%</b>





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