



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-February 2022



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

River boat tourism on the rise

AAA Travel advisors reported a significant increase in U.S. river cruise interest and bookings. The latest data from AAA Travel shows that 2022 domestic river cruise bookings have surpassed pre-pandemic levels, up 25% from 2019 year-to-date. (April 26)

\$28 million entertainment venue announced

The city of North Little Rock has announced its newest economic development project that will include an electronic driving range and other entertainment options. The Maly Entertainment Center will be on the 30-acres formerly owned by Wild River Country on Crystal Hill Road and will be similar to T-Shotz, a family entertainment venue in Kansas City. (April 22)

Large art festival coming to Bentonville

The festival organizer behind one of the country's most well-known music festivals is planning a significant tourism event in Benton County this fall that will incorporate music, art and technology, further enhancing the region's reputation as an emerging cultural destination. FORMAT (For Music+Art+Technology) will take place Sept. 23-25, at the 250-acre Sugar Creek Airstrip at 3100 Price Coffee Road. (April 19)

Future School of Fort Smith students work on trails

Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative, students from the Future School of Fort Smith will soon make things a little more pleasant for those hitting the trails in the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest. The Future School's outdoor education program recently received the \$5,000 grant for tools and equipment needed to clean up the Buckhorn OHV Trail System in Chester. (April 11) **TBP**



Tourism ticker shows broad recovery in Arkansas' tourism sector

Hospitality tax collections and tourism job numbers in the first two months of 2022 show a post-COVID-19 recovery, with double-digit percentage gains in tax revenue compared to the pre-pandemic months of January and February 2020.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue in January and February was \$2.7 million, up 48% compared with \$1.82 million in the same period of 2021 and up 17.6% over the same period in 2019. The 2021 collections of the tax (\$20.54 million) set an annual record for the tax, and January and February 2022 set new monthly records.

January-February hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 27.3% compared with the same period in 2021, and up 14.5% compared with the same period in 2020.

The tourism industry entered 2022 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 2021, 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-February 2022 Tourism Ticker report



27.3% increase

Hospitality tax revenue in January-February 2022 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with the same period in 2021.



8% increase

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in January-February 2022 compared with the same period in 2021.



9.5% increase

Gain in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-February 2022 compared with the same period in 2021.

Hospitality tax revenue posts healthy gains in first two months of 2022

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$9.08 million in January-February 2022, up 27.3% compared with \$7.13 million in the same period in 2021. Collections were also up 14.5% above \$7.93 million in the same pre-pandemic period of 2020.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$7.08 million in January-February 2022, well ahead of \$5.83 million in the same period of 2021. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$1.999 million in January-February 2022, up 53.2% compared with \$1.3 million in the same period of 2021. Hotel tax collections in the first two months are also above \$1.73 million in the first two months of 2020, which suggests the hotel industry has recovered from the pandemic shutdowns.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 16 posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-February 2022, with Texarkana being the only city to post a decline (down 17.8%). **TBP**

Following are the past 12 years of 2% tax collections

2021: \$20.54 million	2015: \$14.81 million
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

Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in January-February 2022, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2021.

Pulaski		\$599,482 up 44.2%
Washington		\$239,706 up 76%
Benton		\$235,677 up 56.2%
Garland		\$224,610 up 72.7%
Sebastian		\$128,652 up 51.2%
Crittenden		\$113,7581 up 59.7%
Craighead		\$92,293 up 58.5%
Carroll		\$88,019 up 11.9%
Mississippi		\$85,586 up 57%
Faulkner		\$74,904 up 41.6%



Arkansas travel and tourism average monthly jobs up almost 10%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in Jan.-February 2022 was 120,700, up 9.5% compared with 110,250 in the same period of 2021. The sector first reached record monthly employment of 122,900 in December 2019, the fell precipitously to an estimated 75,000 in April 2021.

Of the eight metro areas in or connected to Arkansas, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides tourism employment data on five. All five posted employment gains compared with the same period in 2021, with the central Arkansas area posting the largest percentage increase at 15.8%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first two months of 2022 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages



Northwest Arkansas

January-February 2022: **26,150**

(up 7.6% compared with the same 2021 period)

January-February 2021: **24,300**

January-February 2020: **26,500**

January-February 2010: **16,690**

Fort Smith

January-February 2022: **9,150**

(up 12.3%)

January-February 2021: **8,150**

January-February 2019: **9,150**

January-February 2010: **8,200**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-February 2022: **32,300**

(up 15.8%)

January-February 2021: **27,900**

January-February 2019: **32,850**

January-February 2010: **28,000**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-February 2022: **7,300**

(up 14%)

January-February 2021: **6,400**

January-February 2019: **7,150**

January-February 2010: **5,450**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-February 2022	January-February 2021	% CHANGE
Bentonville (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$389,755	\$302,927	up 28.7%
Conway (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$795,639	\$661,571	up 20.3%
El Dorado (hotel tax)	\$48,060	\$25,029	up 92%
Eureka Springs (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$238,699	\$136,806	up 74.5%
Fayetteville (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$1.24 million	\$1.03 million	up 20.2%
Fort Smith (hotel tax)	\$155,455	\$98,552	up 57.7%
Harrison (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$111,875	\$105,046	up 6.5%
Hot Springs (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$1.25 million	\$911,561	up 37.6%
Jonesboro (hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented Jan. 1.)	\$470,818	\$79,771	up 490.2%
Little Rock (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$2.54 million	\$2.04 million	up 24.1%
North Little Rock (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$1.33 million	\$1.04 million	up 27.9%
Pine Bluff (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$320,756	\$251,550	up 27.5%
Rogers (hotel tax)	\$106,658	\$67,486	up 58%
Russellville (hotel tax)	\$56,038	\$36,936	up 51.7%
Springdale (hotel tax)	\$65,226	\$39,714	up 64.2%
Texarkana (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$163,952	\$199,417	down 17.8%
Van Buren (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$110,095	\$95,687	up 15.1%





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