



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-April 2022



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



Arkansas Tourism Ticker

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

Arkansas joins 'Confluence Accords'

Outdoor recreation officials from Arkansas, Maryland, and New Hampshire have signed the Outdoor Recreation Industry Confluence Accords. The signing, which happened in Little Rock, brings the total number of states in the coalition to 16. The Confluence of States is a nonpartisan organization developing a national platform to grow the outdoor recreation industry, protect the nation's wild places and transform conservation into a driver for economic prosperity. (June 22)

Film Festival receives 364 submissions

The Fort Smith International Film Festival, now in its second year, received 364 submissions from more than 50 countries and the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations. The festival received submissions from 32 countries the first year. Presented by Arvest Bank, the 2022 Fort Smith International Film Festival will be August 26-27 at TempleLive in downtown Fort Smith. (June 22)

Windgate grant helps Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra announced it has received a \$1.5 million two-to-one challenge grant from the Windgate Foundation to help build the future ASO Stella Boyle Smith Music Center. The grant from the Windgate Foundation plus the \$3 million in matching donations ASO will need to raise by April 2023 will move the nonprofit organization \$4.5 million to its \$9 million goal and allow it to break ground on the new community music center. (June 14)

Marriott Hotel planned for Walmart corporate campus

Walmart and Marriott International signed a franchise agreement for the retail giant to build and own an AC Hotel on its new home campus in Bentonville. The AC Hotel by Marriott will be operated by a third party, not yet determined. The hotel has been part of the campus design since the beginning but the decision to partner with Marriott is a more recent event. (May 31) **TBP**



Arkansas' tourism sector posts significant gains in early 2022

Arkansas' leisure and hospitality sector continues to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic slowdown in 2020. Hospitality tax collections, tourism jobs and the state's 2% tourism tax posted healthy gains in the first four months of 2022.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue in January-April was \$6.83 million, up 32.3% compared with \$5.16 million in the same period of 2021 and up 37.7% over the same period in pre-pandemic 2019. The 2021 collections of the tax (\$20.54 million) set an annual record for the tax, and each of the first four months of 2022 set new monthly records.

January-April hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 20.6% compared with the same period in 2021, and up 43.1% compared with the same period in 2020.

The tourism industry entered 2022 from a rebound year in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic shuttered much of the state and national economy for much of 2020 and into 2021. 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-April 2022 Tourism Ticker report



20.6% increase

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



32.3% increase

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



9.9% increase

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



Double-digit gains posted in hospitality tax revenue among key cities

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$20.108 million in January-April 2022, up 20.6% compared with \$16.67 million in the same period in 2021. Collections were also up 17.4% above \$17.13 million in the same pre-pandemic period of 2019.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$15.2 million in January-April 2022, well ahead of \$13.09 million in the same period of 2021. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$4.9 million in January-April 2022, also better than \$3.58 million in the same period of 2021. Hotel tax collections in the first four months are also above \$4.41 million in the first four months of 2019, which suggests the hotel industry has recovered from the pandemic shutdowns.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 15 posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-April 2022, with Russellville (down 2.3%) and Texarkana (down 2%) being the only cities to post declines. **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-April 2022, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2021.

Pulaski		\$1.44 million up 38.4%
Garland		\$720,231 up 45.7%
Benton		\$682,925 up 53.1%
Washington		\$587,743 up 53.2%
Sebastian		\$285,829 up 26.8%
Crittenden		\$269,497 up 39.9%
Carroll		\$257,148 up 0.5%
Craighead		\$217,519 up 50.7%
Mississippi		\$182,334 up 37.7%
Faulkner		\$174,982 up 27.2%



Job recovery continues in Arkansas travel and tourism sector

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-April 2022 was 121,150, up 9.9% compared with 110,200 in the same period of 2021. The sector first reached record monthly employment of 122,900 in December 2019, then 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 16.9%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first four months of 2022 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-April 2022: **26,600**
(up 7% compared with the same 2021 period)
January-April 2021: **24,850**
January-April 2020: **23,600**
January-April 2010: **17,350**

Fort Smith

January-April 2022: **9,300**
(up 10.7%)
January-April 2021: **8,400**
January-April 2019: **8,500**
January-April 2010: **8,300**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)
January-April 2022: **33,070**
(up 16.9%)
January-April 2021: **28,300**
January-April 2019: **30,200**
January-April 2010: **28,600**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)
January-April 2022: **63,050**
(up 11.6%)
January-April 2021: **56,500**
January-April 2019: **61,600**
January-April 2010: **63,700**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)
January-April 2022: **7,400**
(up 13.8%)
January-April 2021: **6,500**
January-April 2019: **6,400**
January-April 2010: **5,500**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-April 2022	January-April 2021	% CHANGE
Bentonville (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$959,050	\$748,624	up 28.1%
Conway (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$1.61 million	\$1.57 million	up 2.5%
El Dorado (hotel tax)	\$122,129	\$84,104	up 45.2%
Eureka Springs (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$499,389	\$435,162	up 14.7%
Fayetteville (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$2.85 million	\$2.42 million	up 18%
Fort Smith (hotel tax)	\$335,108	\$262,575	up 27.6%
Harrison (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$266,952	\$244,073	up 9.4%
Hot Springs (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$2.74 million	\$2.38 million	up 15.4%
Jonesboro (hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented Jan. 1)	\$1.63 million	\$185,330	up 784%
Little Rock (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$5.26 million	\$4.19 million	up 25.5%
North Little Rock (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$2.91 million	\$2.5 million	up 16.3%
Pine Bluff (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$955,494	\$585,855	up 63.1%
Rogers (hotel tax)	\$265,139	\$165,439	up 60.3%
Russellville (hotel tax)	\$133,042	\$136,142	down 2.3%
Springdale (hotel tax)	\$142,319	\$98,709	up 44.2%
Texarkana (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$457,557	\$466,738	down 2%
Van Buren (hotel and restaurant tax)	\$247,129	\$227,949	up 8.4%





Arkansas Tourism Ticker

Talk Business & Politics Administrative Assistant Kathy Reed contributed to this report.

Permission from Talk Business & Politics must be obtained for any use of this material.
Contact Michael Tilley at mtilley@talkbusiness.net for approval requests.

