



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-February 2023



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

The outdoor economy

Arkansas First Gentleman Bryan Sanders hopes to double the state's outdoor recreation economy from its current \$3.5 billion to \$7 billion in the next 10 years. Sanders was tapped by his wife, Gov. Sarah Sanders, to chair the Natural State Advisory Council, whose purpose is to establish Arkansas as an outdoor recreation destination and grow the outdoor economy. (May 9)

Hemingway writer

The Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center (HPMEC) in Piggott has selected its 2023 writer-in-residence. Matthew Pitt of Fort Worth will serve in this role from June 1-30, according to Dr. Adam Long, executive director of the Arkansas Heritage Sites. (May 9)

Opera in the Ozarks

A \$34 million grant from the Walton Family Foundation will fund a new theater building for Opera in the Ozarks in Eureka Springs. The foundation was created in 1987 and is led by the family of Walmart Inc. founders Sam and Helen Walton. Annie Proietti, one of their granddaughters, is the board chair. The Walton's youngest son, Jim Walton, is Proietti's father. (May 4)

U.S. Marshals Museum

After more than 16 years of starts and stops and fundraising struggles, the U.S. Marshals Museum will open July 1. The national museum, located near the Arkansas River in downtown Fort Smith, could draw as many as 125,000 visitors in the first full year. (April 25) **TBP**



Arkansas Tourism Ticker shows healthy tourism sector in early 2023

The 2022 gains in the state's leisure and hospitality (tourism) sector continue in early 2023. Arkansas' tourism tax is up 15.7%, with tourism sector jobs up almost 5% in the first two months of 2023.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and February was \$3.12 million, up 15.7% compared with the \$2.7 million in the same period of 2022. The tourism tax revenue in 2022 was \$24.04 million, up 17% compared with the \$20.54 million in 2021. Revenue set a new monthly record in June of \$2.52 million, with collections for each month topping \$1 million for the first time.

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.

January-February hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 16% compared with the same period in 2022.

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 2023 Tourism Ticker report are:



16% increase

Hospitality tax revenue in January-February 2023 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with the same period in 2022.



15.7% increase

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in January-February 2023 compared with the same period in 2022.



4.8% increase

Gain in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-February 2023 compared with the same period in 2022.



Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities up 16%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$10.43 million in January-February 2023, up 16% compared with \$8.9 million in the same period of 2022.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$8.08 million in January-February 2023, ahead of the \$7.02 million in the same period of 2022. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$2.35 million in January-February 2023, up 19.6% compared with the \$1.96 million in the same period of 2022.

All of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-February 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. Of the 17 cities, 12 posted double-digit percentage gains. **TBP**











Following are the past 13 years of 2% tax collections

2022: \$24.04 million	2015: \$14.81 million
2021: \$20.54 million	2014: \$13.67 million
2020: \$13.61 million	2013: \$12.71 million
2019: \$17.6 million	2012: \$12.4 million
2018: \$16.42 million	2011: \$12.02 million
2017: \$15.89 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 2023, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2022.

Pulaski		\$705,035 up 17.6%
Benton		\$368,616 up 56.4%
Garland		\$298,125 up 32.7%
Washington		\$270,462 up 12.8%
Sebastian		\$146,279 up 13.7%
Crittenden		\$128,178 up 12.7%
Craighead		\$103,035 up 11.6%
Faulkner		\$88,104 up 17.6%
Carroll		\$81,097 down 7.9%
Miller		\$63,673 up 27.7%



Job numbers up almost 5% in Arkansas' travel and tourism sector

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-February 2023 was 126,500, up 4.8% compared with 120,700 in the same period of 2022. The sector reached record monthly employment of 126,600 in March. The sector had 124,400 jobs in February 2020, then fell precipitously to an estimated 74,100 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. Of the five, three posted employment gains compared with the same period in 2022, with Northwest Arkansas posting the largest percentage increase at 12.2%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first two months of 2023 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-February 2023: **29,350**
(up 12.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

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

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

January-February 2010: **16,900**

Fort Smith

January-February 2023: **9,600**
(up 5% compared with the same 2022 period)

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

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

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

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-February 2023: **32,550**
(up 0.8% compared with the same 2022 period)

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

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

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



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-February 2023: **61,350**
(down 0.3% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-February 2022: **61,550**

January-February 2021: **55,000**

January-February 2010: **62,650**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-February 2023: **6,850**
(down 6.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

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

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

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



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-February 2023	January-February 2022	% CHANGE
Bentonville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$495,006	\$389,755	up 27%
Conway <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$941,913	\$795,639	up 18.4%
El Dorado <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$66,846	\$48,060	up 39.1%
Eureka Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$247,376	\$238,699	up 3.6%
Fayetteville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.47 million	\$1.15 million	up 27.6%
Fort Smith <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$173,656	\$156,371	up 11.1%
Harrison <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$140,450	\$111,875	up 25.5%
Hot Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.37 million	\$1.25 million	up 9.3%
Jonesboro <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented Jan. 1, 2022)</small>	\$1.2 million	\$470,818	up 156.7%
Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$2.87 million	\$2.5 million	up 14.6%
North Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.48 million	\$1.33 million	up 11%
Pine Bluff <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$322,786	\$320,756	up 0.6%
Rogers <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$175,430	\$106,658	up 64.5%
Russellville <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$61,382	\$56,038	up 9.5%
Springdale <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$73,858	\$65,226	up 13.2%
Texarkana <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$212,899	\$185,124	up 15%
Van Buren <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$119,713	\$110,095	up 8.7%





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

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