



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-April 2023



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

## **Sports complex**

Progress on the proposed \$50 million Jonesboro Sports Complex has been slower than anticipated, but Steering Committee Chairman Kevin Hodges thinks construction could begin before the end of the year. City officials hosted nine community meetings in recent weeks to inform the public about the proposed project and to get feedback, he said. (July 18)

## **Soccer stadium**

A Tampa, Fla.-based professional soccer organization is partnering with a new Arkansas team to bring professional soccer to the state. The United Soccer League (USL) and USL Arkansas announced July 12 plans to establish men's and women's soccer teams and build a 5,000-seat stadium in Rogers. Estimates show the stadium will cost about \$15 million, and the aim is for it to open in early 2026. (July 12)

## **Something new**

Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts executive director Dr. Victoria Ramirez is ready to wear a new hat. With renovation of the new museum in Little Rock's MacArthur Park complete, Ramirez and her team are prepared to run an arts center instead of a construction site. (July 10)

## **Museum opening**

The relief was palpable among many of the 350 who gathered June 29 to open the U.S. Marshals Museum in Fort Smith. It was a project 16 years in the making. Doug Babb said what is now a "glorious opening" was a "difficult task" and sometimes felt like an "impossible dream." Babb, chair of the U.S. Marshals Museum Board of Directors, said a year after it was announced Fort Smith was selected as the museum site, the Great Recession hit. (June 29) **TBP**



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker: Tax revenue, jobs point to continued industry gains

Healthy gains to begin 2023 for the state's leisure and hospitality (tourism) sector are continuing. Arkansas' tourism tax is up more than 10% between January and April, with average tourism sector jobs up more than 5% in the first four months of 2023.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and April was \$7.547 million, up 10.4% compared with the \$6.834 million in the same period of 2022. Revenue in each month of 2023 set a new record, with those gains compared to record numbers in 2022.

The tourism tax revenue in 2022 was \$24.049 million, up 17% compared with the \$20.544 million in 2021. Revenue set a new monthly record in June of \$2.528 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.

January-April hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 11.65% 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-April 2023 Tourism Ticker report are:



**11.65% increase**

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



**10.4% increase**

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



**5.2% increase**

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



# Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities up 11.65%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$22.311 million in January-April 2023, up 11.65% compared with the \$19.983 million in the same period of 2022.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$16.744 million in January-April 2023, ahead of the \$15.12 million in the same period of 2022. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$5.566 million in January-April 2023, up 14.5% compared with the \$4.862 million in the same period of 2022.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 16 posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-April 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. The exception was Pine Bluff, which had a more than 25% decline related to a vendor making a sizable payment in April 2022 for taxes due back to July 2017. **TBP**











## Following are the past 13 years of 2% tax collections

<b>2022:</b> \$24.04 million	<b>2015:</b> \$14.81 million
<b>2021:</b> \$20.54 million	<b>2014:</b> \$13.67 million
<b>2020:</b> \$13.61 million	<b>2013:</b> \$12.71 million
<b>2019:</b> \$17.6 million	<b>2012:</b> \$12.4 million
<b>2018:</b> \$16.42 million	<b>2011:</b> \$12.02 million
<b>2017:</b> \$15.89 million	<b>2010:</b> \$11.49 million
<b>2016:</b> \$15.46 million	

## Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in January-April 2023, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2022.

<b>Pulaski</b>		\$1.66 million up 15.7%
<b>Benton</b>		\$964,236 up 41.2%
<b>Garland</b>		\$774,621 up 7.6%
<b>Washington</b>		\$641,743 up 9.2%
<b>Sebastian</b>		\$315,645 up 10.4%
<b>Crittenden</b>		\$301,258 up 11.8%
<b>Carroll</b>		\$245,679 down 4.5%
<b>Craighead</b>		\$236,095 up 8.5%
<b>Faulkner</b>		\$197,947 up 13.1%
<b>Jefferson</b>		\$146,349 up 26.3%



# Job numbers continue to rise in Arkansas' travel and tourism sector

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-April 2023 was 127,500, up 5.24% compared with 121,150 in the same period of 2022. The sector reached record monthly employment of 131,700 in May. The sector had 124,400 jobs in April 2020, then fell precipitously to an estimated 74,100 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. Of the five, three posted employment gains compared with the same period in 2022, with Northwest Arkansas posting the largest percentage increase at 12.4%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first four months of 2023 for the metro regions. **TBP**

## Monthly employment averages

### Northwest Arkansas

January-April 2023: 29,900  
(up 12.4% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-April 2022: **26,600**

January-April 2021: **25,500**

January-April 2010: **17,780**

### Fort Smith

January-April 2023: 9,800  
(up 5.4% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-April 2022: **9,300**

January-April 2021: **8,400**

January-April 2010: **8,380**

### Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-April 2023: 33,800  
(up 2.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-April 2022: **33,070**

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

January-April 2010: **29,250**



### Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-April 2023: 62,200  
(down 1.3% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-April 2022: **63,050**

January-April 2021: **56,500**

January-April 2010: **64,680**

### Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-April 2023: 6,900  
(down 6.7% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-April 2022: **7,400**

January-April 2021: **6,300**

January-April 2010: **5,600**



# Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-April 2023	January-April 2022	% CHANGE
<b>Bentonville</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.14 million	\$959,050	<b>up 19.7%</b>
<b>Conway</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$2.02 million	\$1.61 million	<b>up 25.7%</b>
<b>El Dorado</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$159,458	\$122,129	<b>up 30.6%</b>
<b>Eureka Springs</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$569,429	\$493,642	<b>up 15.3%</b>
<b>Fayetteville</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$3.06 million	\$2.7 million	<b>up 13.1%</b>
<b>Fort Smith</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$372,641	\$358,162	<b>up 4%</b>
<b>Harrison</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$303,309	\$261,952	<b>up 15.8%</b>
<b>Hot Springs</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$3.14 million	\$2.76 million	<b>up 13.4%</b>
<b>Jonesboro</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented Jan. 1, 2022)</small>	\$2.5 million	\$1.63 million	<b>up 52.9%</b>
<b>Little Rock</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$5.88 million	\$5.23 million	<b>up 12.4%</b>
<b>North Little Rock</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$3.13 million	\$2.91 million	<b>up 7.6%</b>
<b>Pine Bluff*</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$715,505	\$955,494	<b>down 25.1%</b>
<b>Rogers</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$404,952	\$265,139	<b>up 52.7%</b>
<b>Russellville</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$155,231	\$133,042	<b>up 16.7%</b>
<b>Springdale</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$162,662	\$142,319	<b>up 14.3%</b>
<b>Texarkana</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$482,719	\$478,729	<b>up 0.8%</b>
<b>Van Buren</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$263,319	\$246,829	<b>up 6.7%</b>

**Note:** \*Pine Bluff had a vendor make a sizable payment in April 2022 for taxes due back to July 2017. The large payment is the cause of the year-over-year decline.





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