



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-June 2023



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



Arkansas Tourism Ticker

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

New tourism chief in Fort Smith

Ashleigh Bachert of Tulsa was named the new executive director of Fort Smith Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), according to the Fort Smith Advertising & Promotion Commission, which oversees CVB operations. Bachert will begin her role at FSCVB as early as mid-September. (Aug. 30)

Bike tour set for 2024

Arkansas tourism officials have announced a new in-state bike tour event called the Arkansas Graveler. The six-day, 300-plus mile bike journey across county and forest backroads in northern Arkansas will take place in June 2024. The inaugural event, founded by the Ozark Foundation, will begin in Fayetteville on June 23, 2024, and finish in Jonesboro on June 29. (Aug. 24)

Crystal Bridges support

A \$7 million grant from the Walmart Foundation, the charitable arm of Walmart Inc., will ensure free general admission for Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art visitors through at least 2028. The funding will also support operations at the Momentary, a Crystal Bridges satellite featuring contemporary arts and an entertainment venue. Both sites are in Bentonville. (Aug. 20)

Arkansas Symphony home

The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra broke ground on its new \$11.75 million Stella Boyle Smith Music Center in Little Rock's East Village, creating a first-of-its-kind music-focused headquarters for the state. The new 20,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility, slated to open in September 2024, is the Symphony's first permanent home in its 58-year history. (Aug. 12) **TBP**



Arkansas Tourism Ticker: Job numbers rise, 2% tourism tax sets new record

Arkansas' tourism industry continues to show robust gains in the first half of 2023 even when compared to a record-setting 2022. The sector posted record employment of 131,800 in May, and record 2% tourism tax revenue in June.

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and June was \$12.74 million, up 8.9% compared with \$11.7 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. A record for monthly collections was set in June 2023 with \$2.71 million.

The tourism tax revenue in 2022 was \$24.04 million, up 17% compared with \$20.54 million in 2021. During 2022, revenue set a 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.

January-June hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 8.6% 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-June 2023 Tourism Ticker report are:



8.6% increase

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



8.9% increase

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



6.5% increase

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



Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities up almost 9%

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$34.78 million in January-June 2023, up 8.6% compared with \$32.02 million in the same period of 2022.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$25.82 million in January-June 2023, ahead of \$23.82 million in the same period of 2022. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$8.95 million in January-June 2023, up 9.2% compared with \$8.19 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-June 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. Pine Bluff was the only city with a decline (down 23.8%). Of the 17 cities, 7 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
2016: \$15.46 million	

Tourism tax collections by county



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

Pulaski		\$2.69 million up 16.2%
Benton		\$1.66 million up 24.2%
Garland		\$1.35 million up 5.3%
Washington		\$1.08 million up 5.7%
Sebastian		\$517,281 up 6.7%
Crittenden		\$481,469 up 11.4%
Carroll		\$464,970 down 7.9%
Craighead		\$383,499 up 13.3%
Faulkner		\$328,611 up 11.2%
Mississippi		\$311,325 up 11.8%



Arkansas' travel and tourism sector jobs set new records

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-June 2023 was 128,900, up 6.5% compared with 121,020 in the same period of 2022. During the first half of 2023, the sector reached record monthly employment of 131,800 in May. The sector had 124,400 jobs in June 2020, then fell precipitously to an estimated 74,100 in June 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 12.7%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first six months of 2023 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-June 2023: **30,400**
(up 12.7% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-June 2022: **26,980**

January-June 2021: **25,550**

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

Fort Smith

January-June 2023: **10,030**
(up 5.4% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-June 2022: **9,520**

January-June 2021: **8,700**

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

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-June 2023: **35,300**
(up 3.8% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-June 2022: **34,000**

January-June 2021: **29,250**

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



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-June 2023: **63,410**
(down 1.6% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-June 2022: **64,410**

January-June 2021: **58,830**

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

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-June 2023: **6,950**
(down 7% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-June 2022: **7,480**

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

January-June 2010: **5,640**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-June 2023	January-June 2022	% CHANGE
Bentonville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.85 million	\$1.6 million	up 15.5%
Conway <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$3.12 million	\$2.62 million	up 19.2%
El Dorado <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$210,900	\$194,094	up 8.7%
Eureka Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$963,578	\$837,582	up 15%
Fayetteville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$4.73 million	\$4.38 million	up 8.1%
Fort Smith <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$614,654	\$582,930	up 5.4%
Harrison <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$477,300	\$435,385	up 9.6%
Hot Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$4.82 million	\$4.47 million	up 7.8%
Jonesboro <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented January 1, 2022)</small>	\$3.71 million	\$2.9 million	up 27.9%
Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$9.13 million	\$8.2 million	up 11.4%
North Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$4.92 million	\$4.56 million	up 8%
Pine Bluff <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.08 million	\$1.42 million	down 23.8%
Rogers <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$676,357	\$557,275	up 21.4%
Russellville <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$249,911	\$211,964	up 18%
Springdale <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$270,745	\$260,662	up 3.9%
Texarkana <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$746,900	\$738,252	up 1.2%
Van Buren <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$430,108	\$394,784	up 8.9%





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.

