



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-August 2023



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

ASU Heritage Sites assistant director hired

Arkansas State University has named an assistant director of the Heritage Sites. Penny Toombs will take on the role after serving as the director of two of the A-State Heritage Sites, which includes the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home and Southern Tenant Farmers Museum since 2020. (Nov. 15)

New baseball team

The newly formed Mid America League has selected Fort Smith as one of six team locations expected to play ball in May 2024. A Fort Smith team owner or owner group has not yet been named, and General Manager Greg Kigar said public input will help select a team name. (Nov. 9)

Momentary director hired

Jill Wagar, a member of the founding executive team of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, is the new director at the Momentary, a Crystal Bridges sister organization in the city featuring contemporary arts and an entertainment venue. (Nov. 7)

Jonesboro A&P director hired

The Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission has hired Craig Rickert as its first executive director. Rickert comes to the A&P after working for six years as director of communications for Jonesboro Unlimited. (Oct. 31)

New Arkansas tourism director

Gov. Sarah Sanders has appointed Dalaney Thomas to be the director of tourism at the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism. Thomas previously worked at Arkansas-based ad agency CJRW where she was account manager for Arkansas Tourism and Oaklawn for almost nine years. (Oct. 23) **TBP**



Arkansas Tourism Ticker: Job growth continues, 2% tax revenue on record pace

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and August was \$17.48 million, up 7.2% compared with \$16.31 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 sector posted record employment of 133,400 in August, and has remained above 130,000 jobs since April.

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 August 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-August hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 7.6% 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 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-August 2023 Tourism Ticker report are:



7.6% increase

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



7.2% increase

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



7% increase

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



Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities up 7.6% against record 2022 levels

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$46.88 million in January-August 2023, up 7.6% compared with \$43.57 million in the same period of 2022.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$34.86 million in January-August 2023, ahead of \$32.43 million in the same period of 2022. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$12.01 million in January-August 2023, up 7.9% compared with \$11.13 million in the same period of 2022.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 15 posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-August 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. Pine Bluff and Texarkana had 18.2% and 2.2% declines, respectively, compared with the same period in 2022. Of the 17 cities, six 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-August 2023, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2022.

Pulaski		\$3.53 million up 11.4%
Benton		\$2.25 million up 16.7%
Garland		\$1.98 million up 9%
Washington		\$1.47 million up 9.2%
Sebastian		\$714,503 up 8.4%
Carroll		\$690,643 down 7.9%
Crittenden		\$640,575 up 10.4%
Craighead		\$510,388 up 12.4%
Faulkner		\$442,529 up 11.9%
Baxter		\$428,460 down 7.2%



Record job numbers posted in Arkansas' travel and tourism sector

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-August 2023 was 130,300, up 7% compared with 121,800 in the same period of 2022. The sector reached record monthly employment of 133,400 in August. Sector jobs have fully recovered from the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when job numbers fell to an estimated 74,300 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 14.8%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first eight months of 2023 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-August 2023: **31,400**
(up 14.8% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-August 2022: **27,350**

January-August 2021: **25,800**

January-August 2010: **17,870**

Fort Smith

January-August 2023: **10,700**
(up 10.3% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-August 2022: **9,700**

January-August 2021: **8,800**

January-August 2010: **8,400**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-August 2023: **38,600**
(up 11.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-August 2022: **34,710**

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

January-August 2010: **29,410**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-August 2023: **64,000**
(down 2.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-August 2022: **65,460**

January-August 2021: **59,600**

January-August 2010: **65,000**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-August 2023: **7,100**
(down 6.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-August 2022: **7,570**

January-August 2021: **6,600**

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



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-August 2023	January-August 2022	% CHANGE
Bentonville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$2.37 million	\$2.2 million	up 7.8%
Conway <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$4.19 million	\$3.63 million	up 15.5%
El Dorado <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$306,709	\$273,415	up 12.2%
Eureka Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.33 million	\$1.26 million	up 6%
Fayetteville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$6.23 million	\$5.88 million	up 6.1%
Fort Smith <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$848,324	\$786,480	up 7.9%
Harrison <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$639,132	\$589,588	up 8.4%
Hot Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$6.77 million	\$6.27 million	up 8%
Jonesboro <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented January 1, 2022)</small>	\$4.88 million	\$3.62 million	up 34.8%
Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$12.34 million	\$11.14 million	up 10.8%
North Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$6.7 million	\$6.14 million	up 9%
Pine Bluff <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.45 million	\$1.77 million	down 18.2%
Rogers <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$1.02 million	\$854,163	up 20%
Russellville <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$315,446	\$281,138	up 12.2%
Springdale <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$384,970	\$361,981	up 6.4%
Texarkana <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$992,528	\$1.01 million	down 2.2%
Van Buren <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$577,256	\$532,716	up 8.4%





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

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