



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-October 2023



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

Expanded film market

For its fourth year, the Fort Smith International Film Festival will make the move from merely showcasing and exhibiting films from around the world to being a marketplace where filmmakers can take their craft from hobby to profession. The festival will be held this year from Aug. 22-24 at TempleLive in downtown Fort Smith. (Jan. 30)

GORP incubator

The Greenhouse Outdoor Recreation Program (GORP) has launched its spring startup incubator with eight Northwest Arkansas startups. GORP is a business incubation program led by the Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (OEI) at the University of Arkansas. (Jan. 25)

Jonesboro record

Jonesboro set an all-time hotel tax collection record in 2023. Jonesboro hotels accounted for \$39.2 million in revenue for the calendar year, a nearly 8% increase when compared to 2022. The data comes from the STR or "Star" report. (Jan. 24)

Declining duck numbers

Duck hunting season in the Arkansas Delta is a seasonal economic driver but this year there has been a setback — fewer ducks. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission reported that there are about 560,000 fewer ducks in the Delta right now as compared to the average number tracked from 2009 through 2024. (Jan. 23)

Baseball moniker

"Marshals" is the team name and mascot for the Fort Smith baseball team set to begin play in the new Mid America League this spring. The name and logo was unveiled Jan. 18 during an event at the U.S. Marshals Museum in downtown Fort Smith. (Jan. 18) **TBP**



Arkansas Tourism Ticker: 2% tourism tax revenue remains on record pace

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and October was \$22.06 million, up 6% compared with \$20.8 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 October 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-October hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 5% 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-October 2023 Tourism Ticker report are:



5% increase

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



6% increase

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



6.6% increase

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



Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities up 5% through October

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$58.81 million in January-October 2023, up 5.07% compared with the \$56.02 million in the same period of 2022.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$43.75 million in January-October 2023, ahead of \$41.63 million in the same period of 2022. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$15.05 million in January-October 2023, up 4.7% compared with \$14.38 million in the same period of 2022.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 13 posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-October 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. **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-October 2023, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2022.

Pulaski		\$4.38 million up 9.7%
Benton		\$2.98 million up 14.5%
Garland		\$2.4 million up 6.9%
Washington		\$1.88 million up 7%
Carroll		\$944,385 down 8%
Sebastian		\$884,849 up 5%
Crittenden		\$812,313 up 12.3%
Craighead		\$658,625 up 14.7%
Faulkner		\$557,063 up 12.8%
Baxter		\$532,585 down 6.5%



Job growth continues in Arkansas' travel and tourism sector

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-October 2023 was 130,140, up 6.6% compared with 121,080 in the same period of 2022. The sector reached record monthly employment of 133,400 in August, and moderated back to 130,700 in October. 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 12.5%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first 10 months of 2023 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-October 2023: **30,700**
(up 12.5% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-October 2022: **27,280**

January-October 2021: **26,500**

January-October 2010: **18,070**

Fort Smith

January-October 2023: **10,200**
(up 4.6% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-October 2022: **9,750**

January-October 2021: **8,980**

January-October 2010: **8,450**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-October 2023: **36,200**
(up 3.6% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-October 2022: **34,940**

January-October 2021: **30,250**

January-October 2010: **29,670**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-October 2023: **63,900**
(down 2.7% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-October 2022: **65,700**

January-October 2021: **60,900**

January-October 2010: **64,950**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-October 2023: **7,000**
(down 7.6% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-October 2022: **7,580**

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

January-October 2010: **5,720**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-October 2023	January-October 2022	% CHANGE
Bentonville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$3.09 million	\$2.88 million	up 7.1%
Conway <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$5.24 million	\$4.62 million	up 13.4%
El Dorado <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$376,211	\$343,065	up 9.7%
Eureka Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.77 million	\$1.64 million	up 7.7%
Fayetteville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$7.97 million	\$8.53 million	down 6.6%
Fort Smith <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$1.06 million	\$1 million	up 5.6%
Harrison <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$803,172	\$768,059	up 4.6%
Hot Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$8.33 million	\$7.7 million	up 8.2%
Jonesboro <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented January 1, 2022)</small>	\$6.16 million	\$5.4 million	up 14%
Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$15.4 million	\$14.07 million	up 9.4%
North Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$8.32 million	\$7.68 million	up 8.4%
Pine Bluff <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.8 million	\$2.1 million	down 14.4%
Rogers <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$1.31 million	\$1.15 million	up 14%
Russellville <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$374,634	\$386,688	down 10.1%
Springdale <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$498,500	\$472,330	up 5.5%
Texarkana <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.21 million	\$1.23 million	down 1.4%
Van Buren <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$711,699	\$681,382	up 4.4%





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

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Contact Michael Tilley at mtilley@talkbusiness.net for approval requests.

