



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-December 2023



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

## **Steel Horses and Marshals**

The Steel Horse Rally is partnering with the U.S. Marshals Museum to add a new event to Fort Smith's annual motorcycle event — the Bikes and Badges antique motorcycle show. Now in its ninth year, the Steel Horse Rally is slated for May 3-4 in downtown Fort Smith. (March 18)

## **New theater name**

Argenta Community Theater in North Little Rock announced it will rebrand as Argenta Contemporary Theatre in an effort to broaden its reach and scope. Launched 14 years ago in the downtown Argenta Arts District of North Little Rock, the community theatre brings productions and events to the stage. (March 6)

## **'Hip Hideaways'**

Springdale-based nonprofit Northwest Arkansas Council has established a cohort of fast-growing regions including Northwest Arkansas to address growth challenges while continuing to raise awareness and attract people. The Northwest Arkansas Council recently launched the Coalition of Hip Hideaways. (March 4)

## **Outdoor money**

The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism is awarding \$4.34 million in Outdoor Recreation Grants to projects within 29 counties across the state. The grants fall into two categories: Facilities for Underdeveloped Neighborhoods Park grants and matching grants. (Feb. 19)

## **New mill owners**

War Eagle Mill, a historic landmark in Arkansas, has a new owner. Mark and Cristin Hall of Bentonville have taken ownership of the property southeast of Rogers in Benton County from Elise and Marty Roenigk of Eureka Springs. The financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. (Feb. 16) **TBP**



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker: 2% tourism tax revenue sets a new record in 2023

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and December was \$25.44 million, up 5.8% compared with \$24.04 million in 2022. Revenue in each month of 2023 set a new record, with those gains compared to record numbers in 2022.

The 2% revenue was boosted in part by 13.7% and 8% year-over-year gains, respectively, in Benton and Pulaski counties.

A record for monthly 2% collections was set in June 2023 with \$2.71 million. The state's 2% tourism tax revenue fell almost 23% in 2020, and fell to levels not seen since 2014. Also, the 2023 2% revenue is up 50% compared with \$12.71 million in 2013.

The tourism sector posted record employment of 127,500 in March, and finished the year with 126,600 jobs in December.

January-December hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 5.9% 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-December 2023 Tourism Ticker report are:



**5.9% increase**

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



**5.8% increase**

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



**3.4% increase**

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

# Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities up 5.9% through December

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$70.08 million in January-December 2023, up 5.9% compared with \$66.16 million in the same period of 2022.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$52.06 million in January-December 2023, up 6.5% from \$48.87 million in the same period of 2022. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$18.02 million in January-December 2023, up 4.2% compared with \$17.28 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-December 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. The biggest annual gain was 12.66% in Jonesboro, with the biggest decline being -12.4% in Pine Bluff. **TBP**











## Following are the past 14 years of 2% tax collections

<b>2023:</b> \$25.44 million	<b>2016:</b> \$15.46 million
<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

## Tourism tax collections by county



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

<b>Pulaski</b>		\$5.04 million up 8%
<b>Benton</b>		\$3.45 million up 13.7%
<b>Garland</b>		\$2.66 million up 6.7%
<b>Washington</b>		\$2.21 million up 7.6%
<b>Carroll</b>		\$1.06 million down 7.3%
<b>Sebastian</b>		\$1.02 million up 3.5%
<b>Crittenden</b>		\$959,534 up 11.2%
<b>Craighead</b>		\$770,363 up 16%
<b>Faulkner</b>		\$643,548 up 13.2%
<b>Mississippi</b>		\$603,822 up 8.8%



# Tourism job growth dips slightly, but ahead of 2022 levels

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-December 2023 was 127,000, up 3.4% compared with 122,800 in the same period of 2022. The sector reached record monthly employment of 127,500 in March, and dipped to 126,600 in December. 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, two 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 2023 for the metro regions. **TBP**

## Monthly employment averages

### Northwest Arkansas

January-December 2023: **31,000**  
(up 14.8% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-December 2022: **27,010**

January-December 2021: **26,020**

January-December 2010: **18,150**

### Fort Smith

January-December 2023: **10,070**  
(up 2.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-December 2022: **9,850**

January-December 2021: **9,430**

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

### Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-December 2023: **34,700**  
(down 2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-December 2022: **35,400**

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

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



### Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-December 2023: **62,500**  
(down 5.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-December 2022: **65,900**

January-December 2021: **58,450**

January-December 2010: **65,090**

### Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-December 2023: **6,900**  
(down 9.2% compared with the same 2022 period)

January-December 2022: **7,600**

January-December 2021: **7,000**

January-December 2010: **5,750**



# Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-December 2023	January-December 2022	% CHANGE
<b>Bentonville</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$3.69 million	\$3.42 million	<b>up 7.7%</b>
<b>Conway</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$6.27 million	\$5.59 million	<b>up 12.1%</b>
<b>El Dorado</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$438,114	\$420,924	<b>up 4.1%</b>
<b>Eureka Springs</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$2.05 million	\$2.08 million	<b>down 1.4%</b>
<b>Fayetteville</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$9.71 million	\$9.31 million	<b>up 4.24%</b>
<b>Fort Smith</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$1.23 million	\$1.18 million	<b>up 4.6%</b>
<b>Harrison</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$955,728	\$898,827	<b>up 6.3%</b>
<b>Hot Springs</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$9.98 million	\$9.17 million	<b>up 8.9%</b>
<b>Jonesboro</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented January 1, 2022)</small>	\$7.38 million	\$6.55 million	<b>up 12.66%</b>
<b>Little Rock</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$18.37 million	\$16.95 million	<b>up 8.4%</b>
<b>North Little Rock</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$9.92 million	\$9.2 million	<b>up 7.8%</b>
<b>Pine Bluff</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$2.14 million	\$2.44 million	<b>down 12.3%</b>
<b>Rogers</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$1.65 million	\$1.46 million	<b>up 12.5%</b>
<b>Russellville</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$399,755	\$448,675	<b>down 11%</b>
<b>Springdale</b> <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$618,658	\$582,831	<b>up 6.1%</b>
<b>Texarkana</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.47 million	\$1.6 million	<b>down 8.5%</b>
<b>Van Buren</b> <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$838,168	\$819,051	<b>up 2.3%</b>





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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](mailto:mtilley@talkbusiness.net) for approval requests.

