



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-February 2024



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



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

New Crystal Bridges exec

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and its contemporary art and performance venue, the Momentary, in Bentonville, have promoted Lela Davidson to chief operating officer. According to a news release, Davidson will manage all operations to “enhance the museums’ outreach, revenue, and reputation.” (May 16)

Casino fight

Investing in Arkansas has formed to oppose a possible constitutional amendment to repeal a controversial Pope County casino license. The latest move is part of ongoing legal actions by the Choctaw Nation and the Cherokee Nation for the lucrative gaming license. (May 14)

Hemingway writer

Annamarie Kelly-Harbaugh, an Ohio native, has been selected as the writer-in-residence at the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center (HPMEC) in Piggott. She is the author of “Here Be Dragons: A Parent’s Guide to Rediscovering Purpose, Adventure and the Unfathomable Joy of the Journey.” (May 7)

New marketing director

The Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau (LRCVB) announced April 16 the hiring of Olumide Yerokun as director of marketing. Yerokun will manage a variety of promotional strategies and activities to boost the bureau’s tourism efforts for Little Rock. (April 16)

Nature Center money

The Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA) has contributed \$500,000 to a reimagined Janet Huckabee River Valley Nature Center (JHRVC). A fundraising campaign to help the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission expand the center was announced in March 2023. (April 11) **TBP**



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

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and February was \$3.4 million, up 8.7% compared with \$3.12 million in the same period of 2023. Revenue in each of the first two months of 2024 set a new record, with those gains compared to record numbers in 2023. A record for monthly collections was set in June 2023 with \$2.71 million.

The tourism tax revenue in 2023 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.

January-February hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 5.07% 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 on Page 6 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-February 2024 Tourism Ticker report are:



1.55% increase

Hospitality tax revenue in January-February 2024 among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with the same period in 2023.



8.7% increase

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in January-February 2024 compared with the same period in 2023.



0.87% increase

Gain in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in January-February 2024 compared with the same period in 2023.

Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities moderates to begin 2024

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$10.59 million in January-February 2024, up 1.55% compared with \$10.43 million in the same period of 2023.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$8.404 million in January-February 2024, ahead of \$8.08 million in the same period of 2023. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$2.19 million in January-February 2024, down compared with \$2.35 million in the same period of 2023.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 10 posted hospitality tax collection increases in January-February 2024 compared with the same period in 2023. **TEP**











Following are the past 14 years of 2% tax collections

2023: \$25.44 million	2016: \$15.46 million
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

Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in January-February 2024, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with the same period in 2023.

Pulaski		\$745,524 up 5.7%
Benton		\$463,139 up 25.6%
Garland		\$300,333 up 0.7%
Washington		\$276,629 up 2.3%
Sebastian		\$162,956 up 11.4%
Craighead		\$137,404 up 33.4%
Crittenden		\$134,030 up 4.6%
Faulkner		\$97,150 up 10.3%
Mississippi		\$93,946 up 9%
Carroll		\$80,062 down 1.3%



Arkansas' travel and tourism sector job growth moderates

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-February 2024 was 127,700, up 0.5% compared with 127,000 in the same period of 2023. The sector reached record monthly employment of 128,100 in February, and rose to a new record of 130,400 in March. 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 2023, with Texarkana posting the largest percentage increase at 0.76%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first two months of 2024 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-February 2024: **29,500**

(up 0.34% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-February 2023: **29,400**

January-February 2010: **16,900**

Fort Smith

January-February 2024: **9,700**

(up 0.52% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-February 2023: **9,650**

January-February 2010: **8,200**

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-February 2024: **33,000**

(down 2.1% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-February 2023: **33,700**

January-February 2010: **28,000**



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-February 2024: **59,800**

(down 1.9% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-February 2023: **60,950**

January-February 2010: **62,650**

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-February 2024: **6,650**

(up 0.76% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-February 2023: **6,600**

January-February 2010: **5,450**



Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-February 2024	January-February 2023	% CHANGE
Bentonville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$558,036	\$495,006	up 12.7%
Conway <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1 million	\$941,913	up 6.6%
El Dorado <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$69,906	66,846	up 4.6%
Eureka Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$187,828	\$247,376	down 24.1%
Fayetteville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.64 million	\$1.47 million	up 11.1%
Fort Smith <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$154,068	\$173,656	down 11.3%
Harrison <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$125,414	\$140,450	down 10.7%
Hot Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.35 million	\$1.37 million	down 1.4%
Jonesboro <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented January 1, 2022)</small>	\$1.27 million	\$1.2 million	up 5.5%
Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$2.872 million	\$2.871 million	up 0.04%
North Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.52 million	\$1.48 million	up 2.8%
Pine Bluff <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$341,822	\$322,786	up 5.9%
Rogers <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$147,577	\$175,430	down 15.9%
Russellville <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$28,438	\$61,382	down 53.7%
Springdale <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$62,465	\$73,858	down 15.4%
Texarkana <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$213,002	\$212,899	up 0.05%
Van Buren <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$127,471	\$119,713	up 6.5%





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

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