



Arkansas Tourism Ticker



January-August 2024



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association & the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism



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

Butchery program

Brightwater: A Center for the Study of Food, a department of NorthWest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville, is accepting applications for its new artisanal butchery program. Program graduates will be prepared for various roles, including retail butchers, meat cutters, artisanal deli specialists, restaurant butchers and entrepreneurs. (Dec. 19)

Brothel museum

The Fort Smith Board of Directors approved \$522,579 for Miss Laura's Brothel Museum. The Fort Smith Convention and Visitors Bureau operated out of Miss Laura's, located at 2 N. B St. in downtown Fort Smith, for many years. (Dec. 18)

Pickleball development

A \$50 million pickleball development is planned for east of Interstate 49 along the new segment of Emma Avenue in Springdale, according to a partnership group. The first-of-its-kind project in the region will include a 70,000-square-foot building with 23 indoor pickleball courts and 30 outdoor courts. (Dec. 18)

Artist grants

Artists in Central Arkansas and the Arkansas Delta now have the chance to receive \$10,000 fellowships to support their creative work through Catalyze, a program of the Mid-America Arts Alliance. This year, the program expanded its reach, offering opportunities to artists across 31 counties, up from 16 in previous cycles. The additional counties now include 15 from the Arkansas Delta region. (Dec. 10)

Graveler event

The Ozark Foundation's second annual Arkansas Graveler, a five-day bike journey across county and forest backroads from the Ouachita National Forest in western Arkansas to scenic Greers Ferry Lake in north central Arkansas, will take place June 3-8, 2025. The event will begin in Mena on June 3 and finish in Heber Springs on June 8. The course is known as The Bigfoot Route. (Nov. 25) **TBP**



Arkansas Tourism Ticker: 2% tourism tax revenue on pace to set new record

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue between January and August was \$18.39 million, up 5.2% compared with \$17.48 million in the same period of 2023. The August revenue of \$2.25 million set a new record for the month.

A record for monthly 2% collections was set in June with \$2.83 million.

Of the top five counties in terms of 2% tax collections, Pulaski and Garland counties posted declines of 0.83% and 2.68%, respectively. Benton County posted the largest percentage increase among the top five counties at 14.76%.

The 2% tourism tax revenue in 2023 was \$25.44 million, up 5.8% compared with \$24.04 million in 2023. Revenue in each month of 2023 set a new record, with those gains compared to record numbers in 2023.

January-August hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 3.7% compared with the same period in 2023.

The Arkansas Tourism Ticker is managed by Talk Business & Politics, and sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism. 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-August 2024 Tourism Ticker report are:



3.7% increase

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



5.2% increase

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



0.9% increase

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

Hospitality tax revenue in 17 cities up 3.7% through August

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$48.48 million in January-August 2024, up 3.7% compared with \$46.77 million in the same period of 2023.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$36.43 million in January-August 2024, up 4.5% compared with \$34.86 million in the same period of 2023. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$12.05 million in January-August 2024, up 1.3% compared with \$11.9 million in the same period of 2023.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, 14 posted hospitality tax revenue increases in January-August 2024 compared with the same period in 2023. **TBP**

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-August 2024, and the percentage change compared with the same period in 2023.

Pulaski		\$3.5 million down 0.83%
Benton		\$2.58 million up 14.76%
Garland		\$1.93 million down 2.68%
Washington		\$1.65 million up 12.78%
Sebastian		\$769,313 up 7.67%
Carroll		\$690,775 up 0.02%
Crittenden		\$658,105 up 2.74%
Craighead		\$553,303 up 8.4%
Baxter		\$469,874 up 9.6%
Faulkner		\$455,533 up 2.94%

Travel and tourism sector jobs up slightly through August

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in January-August 2024 was 128,150, up 0.9% compared with 127,010 in the same period of 2023. The sector reached record monthly employment of 130,200 in March. Sector jobs have fully recovered from the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when job numbers fell to an estimated 74,700 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 Northwest Arkansas posting the largest percentage increase at 3%. Following is the average monthly employment during the first eight months of 2024 for the metro regions. **TBP**

Monthly employment averages

Northwest Arkansas

January-August 2024: **31,710**
(up 3% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-August 2023: **30,775**

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

Fort Smith

January-August 2024: **10,275**
(up 2% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-August 2023: **10,075**

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

Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

January-August 2024: **35,030**
(up 0.4% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-August 2023: **34,900**

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



Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

January-August 2024: **62,430**
(down 0.4% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-August 2023: **62,650**

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

Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

January-August 2024: **6,825**
(down 1.4% compared with the same 2023 period)

January-August 2023: **6,925**

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

Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

CITY	January-August 2024	January-August 2023	% CHANGE
Bentonville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$2.78 million	\$2.37 million	up 17.35%
Conway <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$4.37 million	\$4.19 million	up 4.2%
El Dorado <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$325,142	\$306,709	up 6%
Eureka Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.3 million	\$1.33 million	down 2.6%
Fayetteville <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$6.65 million	\$6.23 million	up 6.8%
Fort Smith <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$874,472	\$848,324	up 3.08%
Harrison <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$645,420	\$639,132	up 1%
Hot Springs <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$6.99 million	\$5.77 million	up 3.15%
Jonesboro <small>(hotel and restaurant tax; 2% restaurant tax implemented January 1, 2022)</small>	\$5.17 million	\$4.88 million	up 5.9%
Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$12.49 million	\$12.34 million	up 1.25%
North Little Rock <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$6.77 million	\$6.7 million	up 1%
Pine Bluff <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$1.45 million	\$1.45 million	up 0.17%
Rogers <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$1.09 million	\$912,525	up 19.6%
Russellville <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$267,747	\$315,446	down 15.1%
Springdale <small>(hotel tax)</small>	\$438,341	\$384,970	up 13.9%
Texarkana <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$949,525	\$992,528	down 4.3%
Van Buren <small>(hotel and restaurant tax)</small>	\$584,269	\$577,256	up 1.2%





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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.

