



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker



2019 Report



sponsored by the Arkansas Hospitality Association



# Arkansas Tourism Ticker

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

## **Old marketing slogan returns for Little Rock**

The Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau is returning to an old marketing slogan during its 50th anniversary year: “Big on Little Rock.” The slogan is the same as the one used by the LRCVB in the early-mid-1990s. After that, the slogan was “City Limitless.” Since 2013, it has been “Southern Accent.” The new slogan was unveiled during a press event Feb. 27 at the Statehouse Convention Center by LRCVB President and Chief Executive Officer Gretchen Hall. She said the LRCVB had run the “Southern Accent” campaign for several years and did research to see if new messaging would resonate better. The logo and the look are different than the 1990s. (Feb. 27)

## **Napper named director of Arkansas Tourism**

Travis Napper has been named director of Arkansas Tourism, a department of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT). He replaces Jim Dailey, who retired at the end of 2019. Napper will oversee the ADPHT's Tourism Division in its mission to improve the economy of Arkansas by generating travel and enhancing the image of the state, according to a statement from ADPHT Secretary Stacy Hurst. He will begin work on April 1 at a salary of \$112,000. (Feb. 21)

## **Advertising icon Wayne Cranford dies**

Advertising legend Wayne Cranford has died at the age of 87, Talk Business & Politics has confirmed. The Little Rock businessman built a nationally-renowned advertising agency in the capital city and was a 2012 inductee of the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame. Cranford/Johnson, as it was long known before evolving into today's CJRW, was a powerhouse ad agency started with his friend and colleague Jim Johnson in the 1960s. It later added public relations to its offerings with the hiring of a former intern named Ron Robinson. Cranford Johnson Robinson later merged with the Woods Brothers Agency, leading to the moniker Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods, or CJRW. (Feb. 15)

## **Walton Family Foundation donates \$20 million to Delta trail**

Arkansas State Parks and the Walton Family Foundation are collaborating on a \$40 million project to complete an 84.5-mile trail in the Delta region of Southeast Arkansas. Gov. Asa Hutchinson announced Jan. 30 the Walton Family Foundation awarded Arkansas State Parks with a \$20 million matching grant to complete the Delta Heritage Trail over the next five years. Hutchinson also cited a 2019 economic impact study showing that the trail would provide an additional \$9 million in health benefits along with the \$7.7 million in economic benefits. The state will apply for federal grants to offset its half of the Walton Family Foundation's 50/50 matching grant. (Jan. 30) **TBP**



# Arkansas' tourism tax up 7.2% in 2019; average monthly job growth up 4.4%

Arkansas' 2% tourism tax revenue in 2019 was up 7.2% compared with the same period in 2018. June and July were the first two months the collection was above \$1.8 million, and each month in 2019 set a new record for collections in that month.

The tax generated \$17.608 million for the year, above the \$16.428 million in 2018, and up an impressive 53.2% from a decade ago in 2010.

Hospitality tax collections among 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker were up 5.2% in 2019 compared with 2018. The 2019 figures are up against broad gains in 2018. Collections of Arkansas' 2% tourism set a new record in 2018 and hospitality tax collections among 17 Arkansas cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism ticker topped the \$50 million mark in 2018. 2019 marks the fifth consecutive year of growth as measured by the Arkansas Tourism Ticker.

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 2019 Tourism Ticker report



**5.2% increase**

Hospitality tax revenue among 17 Arkansas cities reviewed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker compared with 2018.



**7.2% increase**

Collections of Arkansas' 2% statewide tourism tax in 2019 compared with 2018.



**4.4% increase**

Increase in monthly average of Arkansas' tourism industry jobs in 2019 compared with 2018.

# Hospitality tax revenue up in 15 of 17 cities surveyed

The combined hospitality tax collections in the 17 cities totaled \$53.49 million in 2019, up 5.2% compared with the \$50.487 million in 2018, and up 2.36% compared with the \$49.319 million in 2017.

Restaurant (prepared food tax) tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$39.274 million in 2019, up 4.7% compared with the \$37.498 million in 2018. Hotel tax collections among the 17 cities totaled \$14.216 million in 2019, up 6.5% compared with the \$13.349 million in 2018.

Of the 17 cities surveyed for the Arkansas Tourism Ticker, only two posted hospitality tax collection declines for the first six months (Pine Bluff, down 2.5%; and Russellville, down 1.8%). Of the 15 cities with gains, the range was a 12.1% gain in El Dorado and a 1.13% gain in Eureka Springs.

Five cities posted hospitality tax collection declines in 2018 (Texarkana, down 5.03%; Russellville, down 1.63%, Fort Smith, down 1.49%; Springdale, down 1.45%; and Jonesboro, down 0.59%). Of the 12 cities with gains during 2018, the range was a 17.61% gain in El Dorado and a 2.3% gain in Harrison.

Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in 2019, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with 2018. **TBP**











## Following are the past 10 years of 2% tax collections

|                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>2019:</b> \$17.608 million | <b>2014:</b> \$13.677 million |
| <b>2018:</b> \$16.428 million | <b>2013:</b> \$12.716 million |
| <b>2017:</b> \$15.897 million | <b>2012:</b> \$12.405 million |
| <b>2016:</b> \$15.461 million | <b>2011:</b> \$12.025 million |
| <b>2015:</b> \$14.815 million | <b>2010:</b> \$11.492 million |

## Tourism tax collections by county



Following are the top 10 counties in terms of 2% tourism tax collections in 2019, and the percentage increase/decrease compared with 2018.

|                   |   |                             |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Pulaski</b>    |    | \$3.821 million<br>up 8.6%  |
| <b>Benton</b>     |    | \$2.461 million<br>up 8.8%  |
| <b>Garland</b>    |    | \$1.752 million<br>up 12.2% |
| <b>Washington</b> |    | \$1.531 million<br>up 11.3% |
| <b>Carroll</b>    |   | \$783,738<br>up 5.5%        |
| <b>Sebastian</b>  |  | \$659,310<br>up 10.9%       |
| <b>Crittenden</b> |  | \$485,980<br>up 16.5%       |
| <b>Baxter</b>     |  | \$426,463<br>up 2%          |
| <b>Faulkner</b>   |  | \$411,235<br>up 10.5%       |
| <b>Craighead</b>  |  | \$409,175<br>up 7.7%        |



# Arkansas travel and tourism job numbers up 4.4%

Monthly average tourism sector jobs in 2019 was 121,950, up 4.4% compared with 116,780 in 2018. The sector reached record monthly employment of 123,400 in September.

Of the eight metro areas in or connected to Arkansas, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides tourism employment data on five. Four of the five posted employment gains compared with 2018, with central Arkansas posting the largest percentage gain (3.4%). Following is the average monthly employment during 2019 for the metro regions. **TBP**

## Monthly employment averages

### Northwest Arkansas

2019: **26,010**

(down 3% compared with 2018)

2018: **26,800**

2017: **25,720**

2010: **18,150**

### Fort Smith

2019: **9,510** (up 0.5%)

2018: **9,460**

2017: **9,630**

2010: **8,450**

### Central Arkansas

(Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway)

2019: **35,560** (up 3.4%)

2018: **34,390**

2017: **33,090**

2010: **29,760**



### Memphis-West Memphis

(Arkansas-Tennessee-Mississippi)

2019: **71,720** (up 1.7%)

2018: **70,530**

2017: **68,150**

2010: **65,090**

### Texarkana

(Arkansas-Texas)

2019: **7,100** (up 2.6%)

2018: **6,920**

2017: **6,970**

2010: **5,750**



# Tourism Tax Collections (among 17 cities)

| CITY                     | 2019             | 2018             | % CHANGE         |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Bentonville</b>       | \$2.716 million  | \$2.502 million  | <b>up 8.5%</b>   |
| <b>Conway</b>            | \$4.481 million  | \$4.319 million  | <b>up 3.74%</b>  |
| <b>El Dorado</b>         | \$387,307        | \$345,472        | <b>up 12.1%</b>  |
| <b>Eureka Springs</b>    | \$1.53 million   | \$1.513 million  | <b>up 1.13%</b>  |
| <b>Fayetteville</b>      | \$7.114 million  | \$6.792 million  | <b>up 4.7%</b>   |
| <b>Fort Smith</b>        | \$920,247        | \$840,044        | <b>up 9.5%</b>   |
| <b>Harrison</b>          | \$720,222        | \$715,166        | <b>up 0.71%</b>  |
| <b>Hot Springs</b>       | \$6.961 million  | \$6.441 million  | <b>up 8.1%</b>   |
| <b>Jonesboro</b>         | \$699,438        | \$669,962        | <b>up 4.4%</b>   |
| <b>Little Rock</b>       | \$14.872 million | \$14.276 million | <b>up 4.2%</b>   |
| <b>North Little Rock</b> | \$7.506 million  | \$7.068 million  | <b>up 6.2%</b>   |
| <b>Pine Bluff</b>        | \$1.574 million  | \$1.615 million  | <b>down 2.5%</b> |
| <b>Rogers</b>            | \$1.457 million  | \$1.328 million  | <b>up 9.76%</b>  |
| <b>Russellville</b>      | \$408,738        | \$416,199        | <b>down 1.8%</b> |
| <b>Springdale</b>        | \$522,984        | \$468,066        | <b>up 11.7%</b>  |
| <b>Texarkana</b>         | \$1.245 million  | \$1.169 million  | <b>up 6.5%</b>   |
| <b>Van Buren</b>         | \$626,912        | \$605,748        | <b>up 3.5%</b>   |

sponsored by the  
Arkansas Hospitality Association





# Arkansas Tourism Ticker

Permission from Talk Business & Politics must be obtained for any use of this material.  
Contact Roby Brock at [robby@talkbusiness.net](mailto:robby@talkbusiness.net) for approval requests.

