KENTUCKY

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL PLANNER



WELCOME TO KENTUCKY

Mention Kentucky and you might picture an amber-hued bourbon, verdant pastures dotted with grazing thoroughbreds, or even fried chicken. But there is far more to the Bluegrass State, with stories that often surprise.

It is home to the world's longest-known cave system, and the birthplace of figures as varied as Abraham Lincoln, Muhammad Ali, and sisters Mildred and Patty Hill, who wrote the melody that became 'Happy Birthday to You'.

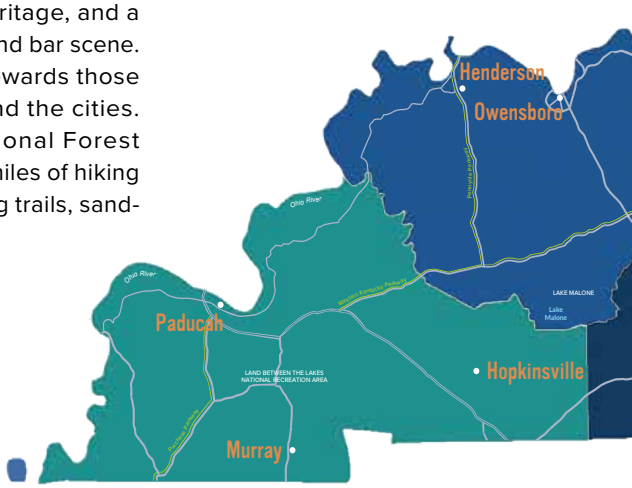
Though landlocked, Kentucky is shaped by water, with the Ohio, Mississippi and Big Sandy rivers forming much of its borders, while the Tennessee River runs through western Kentucky. Head east and the landscape shifts again as the state rises into the Appalachian Mountains. Here, the terrain becomes more rugged, defining one of America's most distinct natural landscapes.

Kentucky's two main cities, Louisville and Lexington, are increasingly drawing visitors on their own merits; Louisville for its attraction lined Museum Row, acclaimed restaurants, live music venues, and a creative neighbourhood scene anchored by NuLu, and Lexington for its walkable downtown, craft cocktail bars, world famous horse farms, and a food culture rooted in local ingredients and Southern tradition.

Smaller towns such as Bardstown and Covington each tell their own story. Numerously voted one of America's most beautiful small towns, Bardstown is the Bourbon Capital of the World, offering an unhurried base for exploring the state's bourbon heartland, with distilleries like Heaven Hill and Willett within easy reach of a walkable historic downtown. Covington, just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, surprises visitors with its 19th-century Italianate architecture, German heritage, and a thriving restaurant and bar scene.

Rural Kentucky rewards those who venture beyond the cities. Daniel Boone National Forest offers hundreds of miles of hiking and horseback riding trails, sandstone arches and some of the most dramatic cliff-top views in the eastern United States. Further south, the small towns along the BBQ Belt serve slow-smoked mutton and pork cooked over hickory for hours, while food across the state defines the region just as much as the landscape, from western Kentucky barbecue to the Hot Brown, an open-faced turkey sandwich that has remained a point of pride since the 1920s.

Then there's bourbon. Known as America's native spirit, around 95 percent of the world's supply is produced here. The Kentucky Bourbon Trail®, one of many ways to explore the state, connects distilleries across Kentucky, offering a closer look at the craft and culture behind it.



TEAM KENTUCKY
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

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BEST TIME TO VISIT

MARCH – MAY and SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER

If you prefer milder weather, plan to visit during the spring or fall months. Spring is peak season with the Kentucky Derby, while fall brings festivals and changing foliage across the state.

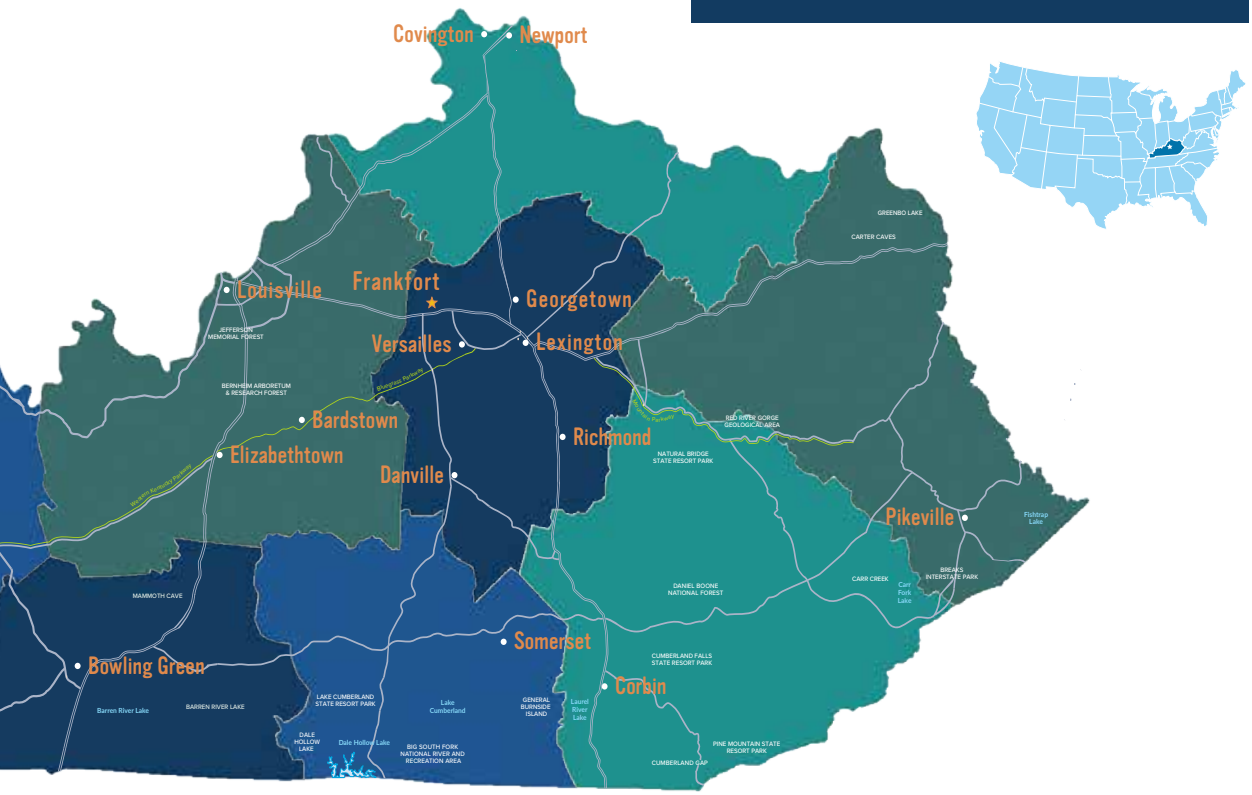
PLAN AHEAD

It is recommended to book ahead, especially if you are planning to travel during the peak seasons. Distillery tours often require reservations, especially on weekends. Rental cars are recommended for exploring beyond the cities.

GETTING AROUND

Kentucky is best experienced on the road. Major interstates like I-65 and I-75 allow access from neighbouring states like Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee and connect key regions, while scenic byways lead to smaller towns, parks and distilleries.

FRONT COVER: The Unified Race Mural, Louisville
BACK COVER: Darby Dan Horse Farm, Lexington
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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

In a few hours' drive across Kentucky, the landscape changes dramatically. What starts as rolling bluegrass horse country around Lexington soon gives way to spectacular waterfalls, forested mountains, and an extensive network of caves that stretch for hundreds of miles beneath the surface.

The most distinct introduction to Kentucky's outdoors is the horse country surrounding Lexington, best explored along the 25 km **Old Frankfort Pike**, where white fences line rolling pastures and thoroughbreds graze alongside the road. Further south, near the town of Corbin, **Cumberland Falls State Resort Park** is home to one of the most striking waterfalls in the eastern United States. At 38 metres wide and roughly 21 metres tall, it is one of only two places in the world known to consistently produce a moonbow, a rainbow cast by moonlight.

Daniel Boone National Forest covers more than 700,000 acres of eastern Kentucky and offers some of the region's most varied outdoor experiences, from hiking and rock climbing to kayaking and horseback riding. Within the forest, **Red River Gorge** is the standout destination, featuring Class II to III+ whitewater paddling, ziplining, 9 holes of golf, and a dramatic landscape of sandstone cliffs, more than 100 natural arches, and hiking trails that range from easy walks to technical climbs. Nearby **Natural Bridge State Resort Park** centres on a striking 24-metre sandstone arch reachable by trail or sky lift. For those looking to cover more ground, the **Sheltowee Trace National Recreation Trail** runs 552 km through the forest. Further south, one of Kentucky's first state parks, **Pine Mountain State Resort Park** sits at elevations above 610 metres and offers 19 km of hiking trails through forest, with views across the Cumberland Plateau.

"Kentucky has so much natural beauty in our historic caves, rivers and forests. Let's make sure KY is beautiful for generations to come," — Silas House, Appalachian writer and environmental activist.



Cumberland Falls State Resort Park


Natural Bridge State Resort Park

For something entirely unique, **Louisville Mega Cavern** offers the world's only fully underground zipline course, running near the streets of downtown Louisville through a vast 100-acre cavern.

Mammoth Cave National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the world's longest known cave system, with more than 685 km of explored passages. Guided tours range from easy introductory walks to more demanding routes deeper into the cave, with options suited to most accessibility levels. Above ground, the park's 52,800 acres include Green River frontage, horseback riding, and around 112 km of back-country trails.

Lake Cumberland is a destination in its own right with more than 60,000 acres of water ringed by 1,971 km of shoreline. Explore those waterways using rental paddleboards, kayaks, pontoons, or even a houseboat. Find great fishing in quieter waters at nearby **Dale Hollow Lake, Cave Run Lake** and **Lake Beshear**.

Along the southwest border, the **Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area** sits between two large reservoirs, Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley, and offers some of the best wildlife viewing in the region. Bison, deer, elk, and bald eagles are regularly spotted, and the area's **Woodlands Trace National Scenic Byway**, a 69 km road flanked by water and forest, is one of the most scenic drives in the state. The **Elk & Bison Prairie**, a restored native grassland within the recreation area, offers a rare chance to see free-roaming bison and elk herds up close.


Dale Hollow Lake State Resort Park


Mammoth Cave National Park

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES


Hike to
Yahoo Falls


Pitch a tent at
Land Between the Lakes


Find the underground waterfall in **Carter Caves**


Go stargazing at
Golden Pond Planetarium



HORSE HEAVEN

Kentucky's deep equine history has a practical foundation. Its nutrient-rich bluegrass is said to produce stronger bones in horses, and its gently rolling terrain and climate made it a natural hub for breeding and training high-performance thoroughbreds from the 18th century onward.

Horses are an integral part of the landscape here, from roadside paddocks to large-scale breeding operations that have shaped global racing. Louisville's **Churchill Downs** is home to the world- famous **Kentucky Derby**; Lexington is the "Horse Capital of the World"; Shelbyville is the "American Saddlebred Capital of the World"; and there are some 450 working horse farms across the state.

At the centre sits Churchill Downs, a 19th-century track in Louisville that remains one of the most recognizable sporting venues in the world. The Kentucky Derby is held here every first Saturday in May, and while the race itself lasts just two minutes, the build-up stretches across weeks in the form of the **Kentucky Derby Festival**. The Derby regularly draws more than 150,000 spectators, with racing sitting alongside ritual, dress, and social theatre.

The adjacent **Kentucky Derby Museum** carries the wider story year-round. Its collection spans more than 20,000 artifacts, and an exclusive 360-degree film immerses visitors in the sights and sounds of race day itself. Two floors of interactive exhibits take visitors through every stage of a Thoroughbred's life, from birth to the first Saturday in May, tracing the history of the race from its inaugural running in 1875 to the present day.

A dedicated exhibit explores the Black jockeys and horsemen who dominated the sport in its early years and shaped the future of Thoroughbred racing, while an immersive AR/VR experience puts visitors in the saddle for a simulated race down the homestretch. General admission includes a guided walking tour of Churchill Downs itself, giving visitors access to the track irrespective of racing season.

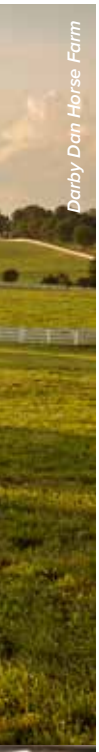


Kentucky Derby Museum



Ellis Park Racing & Gaming

"The Kentucky Derby is the Super Bowl and Mardi Gras all rolled into one." – Magic Johnson



Darby Dan Horse Farm





Horse culture runs deep in Lexington, reflected in its title as the "Horse Capital of the World". Drive a few miles from the city centre and the landscape shifts immediately to white-painted fences, rolling bluegrass pastures and thoroughbreds grazing alongside quiet country roads, with working farms that have shaped global racing for generations. **Keeneland Racecourse** sits at the heart of it, a track respected worldwide not just for its spring and fall race meets but for its thoroughbred auctions.

Keeneland is also on the circuit for **Breeders' Cup**, thoroughbred racing's world championship, which brings together the best horses and riders from across the globe for one of the sport's most prestigious weekends.

Just north and spread across 1,200 acres, **Kentucky Horse Park** offers daily breed demonstrations, horse-drawn trolley tours, equine experiences, and access to the world's largest equestrian museum, the **International Museum of the Horse.** Here you can follow equine history from ancient civilizations through to the modern sport, making it one of the most comprehensive collections of its kind anywhere in the world. Together, these destinations offer a genuine understanding of why this stretch of Kentucky became the centre of the thoroughbred world.

The surrounding countryside is where Kentucky's horse identity becomes most visible. **Calumet Farm** has produced more Derby and Triple Crown winners than any other operation. **Claiborne Farm** is tied to Triple Crown winner Secretariat while **Ashford Stud** in Versailles represents different stages of the horse life cycle, from breeding to retirement. Most remain working farms and can only be accessed through guided visits or prior appointments. **Horse Country Inc.** coordinates access to more than 30 working farms and equine facilities across the region, offering guided visits that would otherwise be difficult to arrange independently.



International Museum of the Horse

EQUINE EXCURSIONS



Visit retired champions at **Old Friends Thoroughbred Retirement Farm**. Meet former racehorses in a serene setting and learn how they are cared for after their careers on the track.



Watch an **Icelandic horse show** in Shelbyville, where this elegant and sure-footed breed is showcased through demonstrations that highlight its unique gaits and calm temperament.



Take a horse-drawn carriage ride through **Kentucky Horse Park**, where tours pass working barns, museums and retired champions across the grounds.



CULTURE & CREATIVITY

Kentucky's way of life resists easy definition. Sitting at the intersection of the American South, the Midwest, and the Appalachian highlands, it has absorbed many influences and the result is a state whose identity runs deeper than most visitors expect. To spend time in Kentucky is to encounter a place still actively building on its own history, and is all the more interesting for it.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Eastern Kentucky's Appalachian heritage has produced a distinct craft tradition in the form of glassblowing, woodworking, weaving, and pottery, passed down through generations. Just south of Lexington, the small community of **Berea** sits at the Appalachian foothills and is the single best place to experience this tradition. The **Kentucky Artisan Center** serves as a practical introduction, offering a broad overview of the state's crafting and the chance to witness it being created firsthand.

Meanwhile, at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in Western Kentucky sits **Paducah**, a **UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art**, one of only a few in the whole country. Paducah is home to the **National Quilt Museum,** the largest museum dedicated to quilting in the world, pushing the boundaries of what one can create in a quilt. Each April, the city hosts **Quilt Week**, attracting artists and visitors from around the world to appreciate and observe this craft.

APPALACHIAN

The Appalachian region of eastern Kentucky has long shaped the state's identity through music, storytelling and community traditions. Early Scottish and Irish settlers brought folk ballads, fiddle music and craft practices that evolved into distinctly Appalachian forms and later influenced **bluegrass**, **country** and **folk music** across the United States.

Today, these traditions remain deeply woven into everyday life, from front porch jam sessions and local festivals to craft workshops and mountain communities that continue to preserve and reinterpret Appalachian culture.

"If these United States can be called a body, then Kentucky can be called its heart." – Jesse Stuart (Kentucky poet, teacher, and advocate for education)



Kentucky Artisan Center



Frankfort's Old State Capitol


National Quilt Museum

AFRICAN AMERICAN

Black Kentuckians have shaped the Commonwealth through music, literature, sport, entrepreneurship, civil rights leadership and community life. From figures such as Muhammad Ali, Alice Allison Dunnigan and Garrett Morgan to the contributions of Black educators, coal miners, artisans and business owners, African American history is central to Kentucky's story.

The world-famous **Kentucky Derby,** held annually at **Churchill Downs,** is one of the most iconic sporting events in the world and a true Kentucky tradition. A little-known fact is that **Black jockeys** were the stars of the Derby's early years, winning 15 of the first 28 races and helping establish the event's legendary status.

The **Kentucky African American Heritage Trail** and the **U.S. Civil Rights Trail** connect many of these stories across the state through museums, churches, schools and historic landmarks. In **Louisville**, the **Muhammad Ali Center** explores the boxer's life and global legacy through exhibitions, personal artefacts and multimedia installations. **The Kentucky Center for African American Heritage** further highlights the voices and histories that shaped the state, while the **Downtown Civil Rights Trail** traces key moments in Louisville's segregation and protest history.

ARCHITECTURE & HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Kentucky's architecture reflects its layered history, from grand estates and preserved theatres to riverfront districts shaped by immigration and industry. **Louisville's Old Louisville neighbourhood** contains one of the largest collections of Victorian homes in the United States, while **Lexington's 1886 Opera House** remains a cultural landmark in the city centre.

In Lexington, the **Henry Clay Estate** offers insight into the life of the influential statesman through its Italianate mansion and formal gardens. **Frankfort's Old State Capitol**, built in Greek Revival style in the 1830s, remains one of the state's most important historic buildings.

Further north, **Covington's Main Strasse Village** reflects the city's German heritage through its preserved 19th-century buildings, independent businesses and traditional neighbourhood layout along the Ohio River.

Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, also located in Covington, is an awe-inspiring Catholic cathedral famous for its stunning French Gothic architecture and the largest stained-glass window in the Western Hemisphere and the second largest in the world.


Muhammad Ali Center

CULTURAL CAPERS



Explore **Roots 101 African American Museum** in Louisville which focuses on Black history in Kentucky. Alongside striking Benin Bronzes, founder Lamont Collins presents stories of Black ownership, cultural memory, and how history is interpreted today.

Book a guided **Newport Gangster Tour** which explores its Prohibition-era past, when gambling halls and illicit clubs drew organized crime figures and later entertainers such as Frank Sinatra.



Bowling Green is home to the **National Corvette Museum**, where interactive exhibits, rare models and the adjacent assembly plant trace the history of America's iconic sports car.



Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Museum

MAGICAL MUSIC

Across Kentucky, music runs through festivals, distilleries and backroad gatherings, forming a living experience and a part of everyday life. From Appalachian string bands and bluegrass pioneers to blues legends and modern festival headliners, Kentucky's musical identity stretches across generations and genres.

THE HOME OF BLUEGRASS

Kentucky is widely regarded as the birthplace of bluegrass music, a genre shaped by Appalachian traditions, fiddle tunes and close harmonies. **Bill Monroe**, born in Rosine, is credited with creating the sound that would become bluegrass, blending influences from folk, gospel and string music into something distinctly American.

Owensboro, along the Ohio River, is home to the **Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum** and the annual **ROMP Festival**. The museum traces the genre from its Appalachian roots through to its modern forms, with instruments, recordings and live performances. Visitors can even join informal jam sessions, reflecting Kentucky's long-standing tradition of communal music-making.

Nearby **Rosine** remains closely tied to Monroe's legacy, with **Uncle Pen's Cabin** and local **Friday night jam sessions** continuing the area's musical traditions. **Renfro Valley Entertainment Center**, often called "Kentucky's Country Music Capital," has also hosted live country and bluegrass performances for generations.

THE BLUES

Western Kentucky played an important role in the development of blues music, particularly through its connection **to W. C. Handy**, often referred to as the "Father of the Blues."

In **Paducah**, the former **Hotel Metropolitan** became an important stop for African American performers during segregation, hosting musicians such as Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Fats Domino, Little Richard and Ike and Tina Turner. The region's musical heritage continues today through blues festivals, barbecue gatherings and live performances across western Kentucky.



Bill Monroe Homeplace

"They taught us that country and bluegrass could grow without losing their roots — that music could be both faithful and fearless. They gave the world songs that will ring out across the hills and hollers forever." — Kentucky Music Hall of Fame on The Osborne Brothers.



ROOTS & APPALACHIAN TRADITIONS

Eastern Kentucky's Appalachian communities helped shape the storytelling traditions that later influenced country, folk and bluegrass music across the United States.

Butcher Hollow, where Loretta Lynn grew up in a coal mining family, offers insight into the experiences that shaped her songwriting and career. The nearby **US 23 Country Music Highway** celebrates artists connected to the region, including Loretta Lynn, The Judds, Billy Ray Cyrus and Ricky Skaggs.

Kentucky also inspired composer Stephen Foster to write **My Old Kentucky Home**, which later became the state song. The influence of early Kentucky music can still be felt today through local festivals, front porch gatherings and community performances across the Appalachian region.

MODERN INFLUENCES

Kentucky's contemporary music scene continues to evolve through major festivals, independent venues and artists who blend traditional influences with modern sounds.

Louisville's festivals, including **Louder Than Life** and **Bourbon & Beyond**, attract international audiences with line-ups spanning rock, country and alternative music. Lexington's **Railbird Festival** combines live music with bourbon and local food, while venues such as **Headliners Music Hall, The Manchester** and **Mercury Ballroom** keep live music active year-round.

For a more intimate encounter with Kentucky's blues heritage, spend an evening at **Tee Dee's Lounge**, where living legend Tee Dee Young has been a fixture of the local music scene for more than 50 years, known for his commanding stage presence and a sound that blends traditional blues with gospel.

Modern Kentucky artists including Chris Stapleton, My Morning Jacket, Jack Harlow, and Tyler Childers continue to draw on the state's musical roots while pushing into new genres and audiences.



Kentucky Music Hall of Fame & Museum

MUSICAL MOMENTS



Browse through the collection of musical memorabilia at **Renfro Valley Entertainment Center**.



Stop at the Paintsville Visitors Center in the **US 23 Country Music Highway** Museum to explore exhibits on Kentucky's country stars before driving the highway that connects their hometowns.



Catch a live performance at **Tee Dee's Lounge** in Lexington, a beloved local venue known for showcasing live blues, soul and R&B music.

FABULOUS FOOD

When it comes to food, Kentucky may be best known for fried chicken globally but don't say that to a local as there's much, much more on offer, not just in the major cities but also in the small towns and rural areas across the state.

A fine example is the **Hot Brown** sandwich created in 1926 at Louisville's historic Brown Hotel. Typically, it is made with toasted bread topped with layers of turkey, bacon and sliced tomatoes, all drenched in an indulgent Mornay sauce.

Then there is western Kentucky's BBQ Belt, where dozens of establishments serve up meat slow-cooked over hickory logs for hours and finished with a variety of sauces ranging from sharp vinegar to molasses-infusions. And if you're heading along the Ohio River to the north-west, make sure to try out Owensboro's legendary **mutton barbecue** where smoked sheep meat is slow-cooked until tender and often served with burgoo and traditional sides.

In the winter months, tuck into a hearty portion of **Burgoo** stew, served so thick that a spoon will stand up in it. This is a flavourful combo of chicken, pork and mutton accompanied by vegetables such as lima beans, corn, okra, potatoes and cabbage. No two burgoos are the same as each restaurant has its own version.

"According to Kentuckians, 'If it walked, crawled, or flew, it goes in burgoo". – old adage among burgoo-masters.



Beer Cheese


Hotel Bourré Bonne

You may be surprised to spot **Beer Cheese** on menus, and if you're intrigued, go ahead and order it. This thick, cheesy and spicy blend of sharp cheddar, beer, garlic and spices, is traditionally served as a dip with celery sticks or saltine crackers but is equally delicious with other crunchy treats such as potato crisps and pretzels. Winchester, considered the birthplace of Beer Cheese, celebrates it each year with the Beer Cheese Festival.

Ale-8-One, produced in Winchester since 1926, is Kentucky's oldest soft drink and remains a local favourite. The factory offers tours where visitors can learn more about the citrusy ginger-flavoured soda and its history in the state. In Northern Kentucky, goetta remains a regional staple. Made from pork, beef and oats, this sausage-like dish reflects the area's German heritage and is celebrated each summer during Goettafest.

Spoonbread is not bread as we know it, but a creamy, soft, and slightly sweet cornmeal soufflé which is not only a specialty at Boone Tavern on South Main Street in Berea but the star of the city's annual September Spoonbread Festival.

Sweet things sit comfortably alongside the stronger spirits here too, from **bourbon balls**, chocolate treats made with bourbon whiskey and pecans, and **Kern's Derby Pie**®, a beloved Kentucky dessert filled with chocolate and walnuts, to Derby-day favourites like **Modjeskas**, soft marshmallows dipped in caramel.


Spoonbread


Bourbon Balls

HOW TO MAKE A TRADITIONAL HOT BROWN



Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 1/2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 1/2 tablespoons salted butter
1/4 cup Pecorino Romano cheese, plus extra for garnish
14 oz. sliced roasted turkey breast (sliced thick)
2 Roma tomatoes, sliced in half
4 slices of bacon
4 slices of Texas toast (crusts trimmed)
Paprika
Parsley
Pinch of ground nutmeg
Salt and pepper

Method:

In a two-quart saucepan, melt butter and slowly whisk in flour until combined to form a thick paste or roux. Continue to cook roux for 2 minutes over medium-low heat, stirring frequently. Whisk heavy cream into the roux and cook over medium heat until the cream begins to simmer, about 2-3 minutes. Remove sauce from heat and slowly whisk in Pecorino-Romano cheese until the Mornay sauce is smooth. Add nutmeg, salt and pepper to taste.

For each Hot Brown, place one slice of toast in an oven-safe dish and cover with 7 oz. turkey. Take the two halves of Roma tomato and two toast points and set them alongside the base of turkey and toast. Pour half of the sauce over the dish, completely covering it. Sprinkle with additional cheese. Place the entire dish under a broiler until the cheese begins to brown and bubble. Remove and cross two pieces of crispy bacon on top. Sprinkle it with paprika and parsley and serve immediately.

*Recipe provided by The Brown Hotel



BOUNTIFUL BOURBON

All over Kentucky, its residents are proud of their bourbon heritage and will happily share their own connection with the spirit, from tales during Prohibition to mixologists today bringing their creative take on an old-fashioned.

As bourbon is such a key part of the state's economy, it also plays a recurring role in the state's cuisine. You'll stumble upon bourbon in many restaurants in all the good things – sauces, ice cream and even in coffee.

There are strict rules, and you quickly learn what defines bourbon. It must be produced in the United States, with a mash bill of at least 51 percent corn, and aged in new charred oak barrels. It is distilled to no more than 160 proof, enters the barrel at no more than 125 proof and is bottled at a minimum of 80 proof. By law, it cannot contain added flavourings or colourings. These rules help establish Bourbon as America's Native Spirit.

Today, there are **more than 100 distilleries across Kentucky**, so plan to spend at least three days exploring a handful of them, as each offers its own perspective, from production tours to guided tastings.

Louisville's Urban Bourbon Trail adds another layer to the city's whiskey culture, linking acclaimed bourbon bars and restaurants where expert pours, inventive cocktails and thoughtful food pairings carry the story beyond the distilleries.

In Northern Kentucky, the **B-Line** offers another way to explore the state's bourbon heritage, connecting distilleries, bourbon bars and bourbon-inspired experiences across the region.



Kentucky Cooperage tours

"Too much of anything is bad, but too much good whiskey is barely enough." – Mark Twain


Hermitage Farm

You could begin your journey in Louisville at **Evan Williams Bourbon Experience,** named for Evan Williams, who founded Kentucky's first commercial distillery in 1783. Then head south for Bardstown, the "Bourbon Capital of the World®", once voted the Most Beautiful Small Town in America. It's home to the **Oscar Getz Museum of Bourbon History**, encompassing exhibitions including authentic moonshine stills, unique advertising art and novelty whiskey containers, and also home to 11 distillery experiences within 16 miles of downtown such as **Willett**, **Bardstown Bourbon Company** and legends such as **Jim Beam** and **Maker's Mark**. **James B. Beam Distilling Company**, established in 1795 and run by eight generations of the Beam family.

At **Maker's Mark**, you can dip your own bottle into the distillery's signature red wax, a small ritual that has become part of the experience. From there, visit **Four Roses**, with its Spanish Mission-style distillery in Lawrenceburg, and its warehouse and bottling facility in nearby Cox's Creek, before continuing on to **Wild Turkey**.

The state capital, **Frankfort**, between Louisville and Lexington, is home to **Buffalo Trace**, America's oldest continuously operating distillery, and nearby Versailles is home to **Woodford Reserve** which offers hourly tours of this historic distillery.


Lux Row Distillers


Bulleit Distillery

BOOZY BITS



Explore the striking architecture and landscaped grounds at **Castle & Key Distillery** in Frankfort, set within a restored historic property once known as the Old Taylor Distillery.

To find truly unique whiskies or spirits from distilleries past, head to the **Revival Vintage Bottle Shop**, located in the heart of Covington, for a tasting and listen to tales from its co-founder Brad Bonds.

Try barrel thieving at **Whiskey Thief Distilling Co.**, where visitors can sample bourbon straight from the barrel while learning about the aging process.

Visit **Bourbon Barrel Foods** in Louisville to discover its **"Eat Your Bourbon"** range, where bourbon barrel-aged soy sauce, smoked spices and other small-batch products showcase bourbon's influence beyond the glass.





BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY

Belle's Cocktail House, Lexington

LEXINGTON

Often introduced as the “Horse Capital of the World,” Lexington combines horse country traditions with a compact downtown, independent restaurants and lively neighbourhoods shaped by music, bourbon and local businesses.

CHEVY CHASE

Chevy Chase is one of Lexington’s most walkable neighbourhoods, known for tree-lined streets, boutiques and relaxed cafés. Kentucky Native Café is a local favourite for open-air dining, while nearby Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, combines landscaped grounds with the former home of the influential statesman.

DISTILLERY DISTRICT

The Distillery District has become one of Lexington’s most energetic areas, filled with distilleries, breweries, restaurants and live music venues. James E. Pepper Distillery and Barrel House Distilling Co. both operate here, while Lost Palm at The Manchester offers rooftop cocktails overlooking the city skyline.

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Lexington combines historic buildings with independent shops, bourbon bars and contemporary public art. Bites of the Bluegrass runs guided food tours through the city, while the Lexington Mural Challenge has transformed walls and alleyways with more than 50 large-scale public artworks.

SPORTS DISTRICT

Emerging as a sports city, Lexington SC (Lexington Sporting Club) is a professional soccer organization based in Lexington. The club features both men's and women's professional teams that compete at a high level on the national stage.

SOUTHLAND

Often referred to as Lexington’s “Music Row,” Southland mixes independent shops, restaurants and seasonal live music events. The Lexington Farmers’ Market on Southland Drive runs from April through October and focuses on local produce and handmade goods.

WAREHOUSE BLOCK

Once an industrial warehouse district, this area now houses independent restaurants, creative businesses and artisan workshops. Trifecta Glass Art Lounge combines a cocktail bar with live glassblowing demonstrations and hands-on workshops.

LOUISVILLE

Kentucky's largest city blends Victorian streets, bourbon heritage, live music, sport and distinctive neighbourhoods, each with its own atmosphere and character.

DOWNTOWN, WHISKEY ROW & MUSEUM ROW

Whiskey Row and Museum Row combine bourbon culture with historic architecture, including one of the country's largest collections of cast-iron façades. The Frazier History Museum, a Smithsonian affiliate, also serves as the official starting point of the Kentucky Bourbon Trail®.

NULU (EAST MARET DISTRICT)

NuLu has grown into one of Louisville's most creative neighbourhoods. Murals, galleries, independent boutiques and acclaimed restaurants line the streets, while hidden speakeasies such as The Stave and Jimmy Can't Dance add to the district's nightlife appeal.

OLD LOUISVILLE

Old Louisville boasts an impressive array of restored Victorian homes. The neighbourhood's tree-lined streets are best explored on foot, particularly through guided walking tours focused on its late 19th-century architecture. Dine at 610 Magnolia, led by James Beard Award-winning chef Edward Lee.

SHELBY PARK & SMOKETOWN

Once shaped by the brick kilns that gave Smoketown its name, this historic neighbourhood has developed into one of Louisville's growing creative districts. The Café at Paristown combines Southern-inspired food with the neighbouring Stoneware & Co. pottery studio.

THE HIGHLANDS

Known as Louisville's original "restaurant row," The Highlands mixes independent shops, nightlife and long-established local restaurants. Nearby Cherokee Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, spans more than 400 acres with walking, cycling and hiking trails. Historic restaurant Jack Fry's remains one of the city's best dining institutions, serving classic Southern-inspired cuisine.

WEST LOUISVILLE

Bordering the Ohio River, West Louisville holds deep historical and cultural significance, particularly through its African American heritage landmarks. Visitors can stop by Muhammad Ali's childhood home before heading to Shawnee Park, which features riverfront walking and cycling paths alongside an 18-hole golf course.



Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory

CITY PICKS



LOUISVILLE

Step back in time at **Hell or High Water**, a 1920s-style speakeasy between Whiskey Row and the Ohio River known for its elaborate cocktails and Prohibition-era atmosphere.

Be a slugger for a day and test your batting skills at the **Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory**.

Visit **The Last Refuge**, the Louisville home of Bob Dylan's **Heaven's Door Whiskey**, housed inside a restored former church dating to circa 1870.



LEXINGTON

Book a guided tour with **Bites of the Bluegrass** offering a mix of tastings and local insight with good-humoured local guides.

Find **Constitution Speakeasy**, a hidden cocktail bar disguised as a bookstore serving classic drinks in an intimate setting.

Catch live music at **The Burl**, an entertainment complex known for regional artists, outdoor performances and its retro arcade bar.



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Charming towns define much of Kentucky's daily life, where front porches still see daily use and conversations are easy, and you're likely to find yourself saying "y'all" too. Spend time here and you'll find places shaped as much by people as history.

BARDSTOWN

Often called the "Bourbon Capital of the World®," Bardstown sits in the heart of Kentucky and blends deep-rooted bourbon heritage with a strong sense of community and history.

Its walkable downtown is lined with Federal-style buildings, independent shops selling all sorts of vintage paraphernalia, and local restaurants. The **Old Talbott Tavern**, dating back to the late 1700s, has hosted figures from Jesse James to Abraham Lincoln, and still serves guests today. Distilleries such as **Heaven Hill**, **Bardstown Bourbon Company**, and **Maker's Mark** (a short drive away) offer tastings and tours that go beyond the basics.

The Stephen Foster Story, an outdoor musical held at **My Old Kentucky Home State Park**, brings the state's musical heritage to life during the summer months.

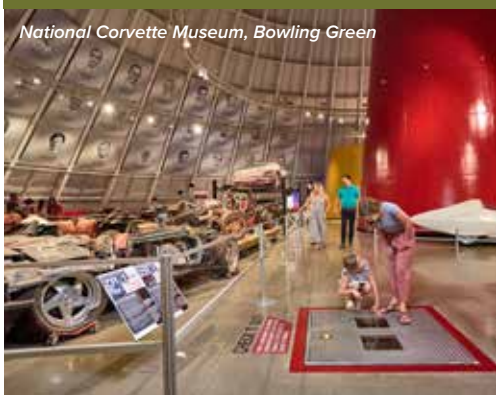
BOWLING GREEN

Bowling Green combines outdoor adventure with Americana. It is home to the **National Corvette Museum** and **NCM Motorsports Park**, while nearby **Lost River Cave** offers underground boat tours through a limestone cave system. **Mammoth Cave National Park** is also within easy reach. Elsewhere, **Chaney's Dairy Barn** and **The Reindeer Farm** add a more playful, family-friendly side to the city.

CORBIN

In southern Kentucky, Corbin is closely tied to the legacy of **Colonel Harland Sanders**, with the **Harland Sanders Café and Museum** preserving the early story of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Nearby **Cumberland Falls State Resort Park** is known for its dramatic waterfall and rare moonbow phenomenon, while **Laurel River Lake** draws visitors for boating and fishing. Downtown Corbin mixes local shops, murals and restaurants with small-town Appalachian character.

Small Towns with Big Stories



National Corvette Museum, Bowling Green



MainStrasse Village, Covington



My Old Kentucky Dinner Train, Bardstown

COVINGTON

Just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Covington has its own identity, shaped by its past and architecture. Founded in 1815, the city still carries much of its 19th-century character. Streets are lined with Italianate buildings, historic churches, and independent businesses.

With its German heritage, **Main-Strasse Village** offers a mix of restaurants, bars, and small shops, along with a clock tower that has become a local landmark. It's the kind of place where you can spend an entire evening moving between spots without much planning. During Prohibition, nearby **Newport** became known for its underground economy of speakeasies and gambling halls. That easy-going Northern Kentucky vibe extends to local breweries like **Braxton Brewing Company**.

OWENSBORO

Owensboro sits along the Ohio River in western Kentucky and is best known for two things: bluegrass music and barbecue. The **Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum** is the city's cultural anchor. It traces the history of the genre through interactive exhibits, live performances, and a strong focus on its Kentucky roots.

This town is also where **mutton barbecue** is still widely served, slow-cooked over hickory wood and paired with burgoo, a thick, hearty stew. That food culture comes into sharper focus during **BBQ & Barrels**, when barbecue competitions, live music and bourbon bring extra energy to the riverfront. Restaurants here tend to be unpretentious, focusing more on flavour and tradition rather than presentation. The riverfront has been revitalized in recent years, with parks and event spaces.



BBQ mutton and burgoo



Smothers Park, Owensboro







Harland Sanders Café and Museum, Corbin



REGIONAL ROAD TRIPS

Kentucky is a state best experienced on the road. Within an hour of setting out from either **Louisville or Covington**, you will start to notice small towns with rustic country homes, where diners serve meals that haven't changed much in years.

Two major interstates, I-65 and I-75, form the backbone of many journeys through the state. I-65 runs north to south, connecting **Louisville** to **Bowling Green** and **Mammoth Cave National Park**, while I-75 cuts through the eastern side, linking **Lexington** with nearby towns such as **Richmond** and **Corbin**, gateway to **Cumberland Falls State Resort Park** and home to the original **Harland Sanders Café**.

I-64 connects **Louisville** and **Lexington** to **Frankfort**, **Shelbyville** and the rolling horse country beyond, with easy detours to the **Kentucky Bourbon Trail®** and small-town historic sites along the way.

One of the most scenic detours is **Old Frankfort Pike**, a 25 km stretch between **Lexington** and **Frankfort**. It cuts through the heart of horse country, where white fences line rolling pastures and thoroughbreds graze close to the road. Historic homes and working farms sit along the route, offering a clear sense of the region's heritage. In autumn, the landscape shifts to deep shades of gold and rust, while in spring the fields feel almost impossibly green.

"Welcome to Kentucky. We don't drive like this because we're in a hurry. We drive like this because bourbon, horses and music are up ahead." – local road sign.



Nine Pines Retreats



Dome Town Treehouse Rentals

Further east, the **Red River Gorge Scenic Byway** shifts the pace. The terrain turns more rugged, with forested hills, sandstone cliffs and natural arches that appear without much warning. There are plenty of pull-offs, and it is worth using them. Early mornings here can be particularly striking, with mist sitting low between the trees and the occasional hiker already setting out on the trails. It is also a favourite with motorcyclists, drawn by the winding roads and varied terrain.

In western Kentucky, the **Woodlands Trace National Scenic Byway** runs through **Land Between the Lakes**, bordered by Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley. This 69 km route has long stretches flanked by water and forest. Wildlife sightings are common, from deer crossing the road to bison grazing further inland. It is the kind of drive where you keep the windows down and often make stops to take photos.

For a sense of history, follow the **Wilderness Road** towards **Cumberland Gap National Historical Park.** This was once a key route for early settlers moving westward in the late eighteenth century. Driving it today, you are tracing a path that shaped the movement of people into the Kentucky frontier.



London–Laurel County



Mammoth Cave Horseback Riding

ROADSIDE ROUTES



Follow the **Red River Gorge Scenic Byway** for winding roads, sandstone cliffs, natural arches and easy access to trailheads and viewpoints.

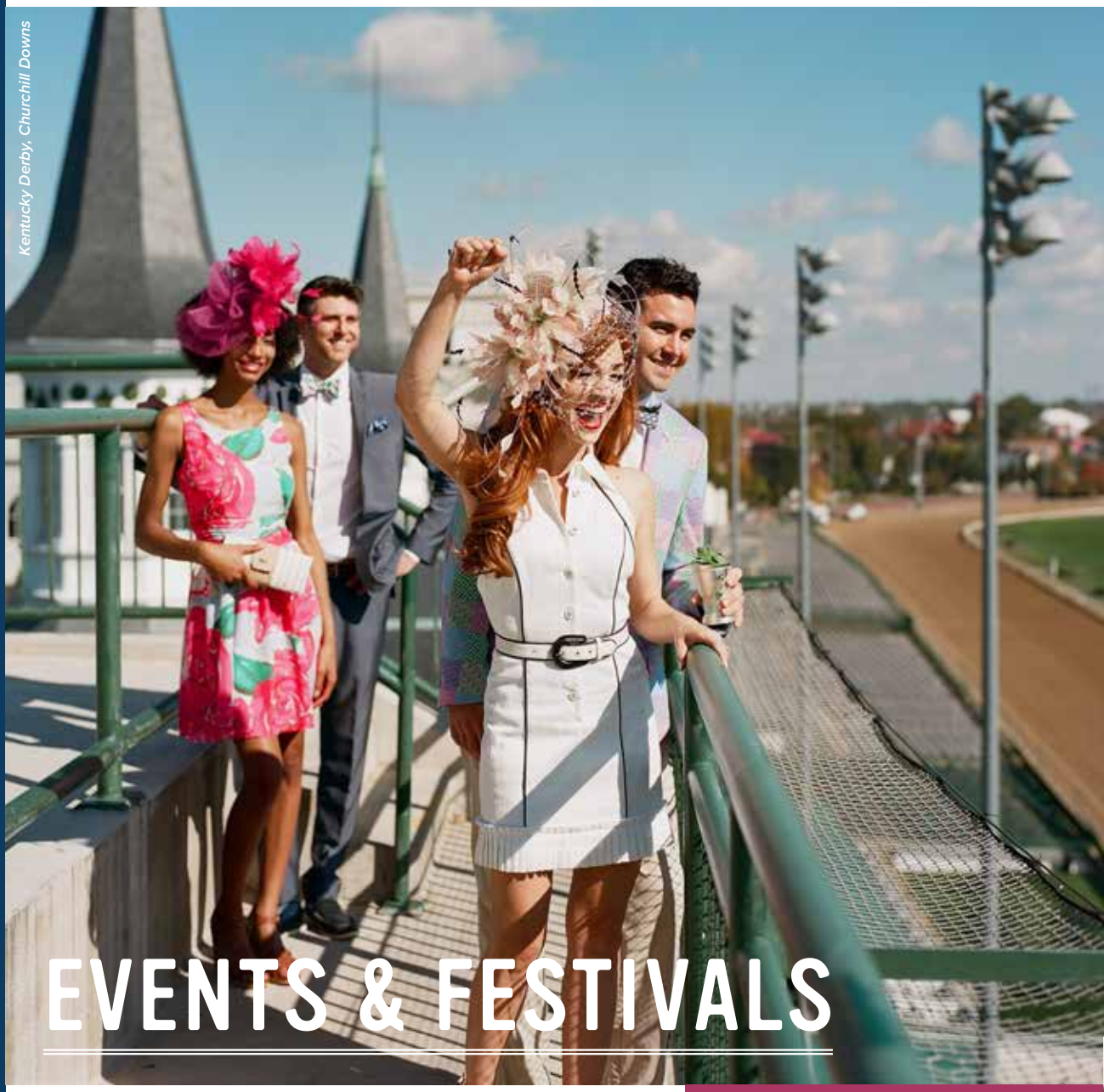
Drive **Old Frankfort Pike** between Lexington and Frankfort for classic horse country views with white fences, historic farms and rolling pastures.

Take the **Woodlands Trace National Scenic Byway** through Land Between the Lakes for lakeside views, forest stretches and wildlife including deer and bison.

Trace the **Abraham Lincoln Heritage Highway** through central Kentucky, linking historic sites such as Lincoln's birthplace, Knob Creek and Civil War landmarks around Bardstown and Perryville.

Travel the **Country Music Highway** through eastern Kentucky, passing through Appalachian landscapes tied to generations of country, bluegrass and folk artists.

Explore the **Pine Mountain corridor** for one of the state's most dramatic ridge drives, with forested peaks, overlooks and access to major state parks and nature preserves.



Kentucky Derby, Churchill Downs

EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Kentucky's event calendar is packed with more than horse racing. You might find yourself at a bourbon festival, where events like barrel rolling are followed by a bluegrass jam. From spring race meets and open-air music gatherings to autumn bourbon celebrations and small-town cultural fairs, each season brings its own rhythm.

In summer, outdoor stages fill with bluegrass, blues, and Americana acts, while fall shifts toward harvest festivals, distillery events, and major concert weekends. Even winter stays active with equine sales and indoor performances that keep the cultural calendar moving, making it a year-round programme of festivals and local events worth planning around.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Kentucky's Annual Festivals

JANUARY

- Keeneland Horses of All Ages Sales

APRIL

- Keeneland Spring Meet
- Thunder Over Louisville
- Kentucky Derby Festival
- Quilt Week

MAY

- Lower Town Arts & Music Festival
- The Great American Bluegrass Jam
- Chamber Music Festival of the Bluegrass
- Churchill Downs Spring Meet
- Kentucky Oaks
- Kentucky Derby
- BBQ & Barrels

JUNE

- Kentucky Blues Music Festival
- Railbird Festival
- Spirit in the Bluegrass Festival
- Laurel Cove Music Festival
- W.C. Handy Blues and Barbecue Festival
- ROMP Festival
- Great American Brass Band Festival
- National Bourbon Day

JULY

- Master Musicians Festival
- Goettafest

AUGUST

- Bluegrass in the Park Folklife Festival
- Berea Celtic Festival
- Chamber Music Festival of Lexington

SEPTEMBER

- Kentucky Bourbon Festival
- Jerusalem Ridge Bluegrass Festival
- Summer Salute
- Poppy Mountain Bluegrass Festival
- Louder Than Life
- Bourbon & Beyond
- Vine Grove Bluegrass Festival
- Fraley Festival of Traditional Music
- Orchard Music
- Churchill Downs September Meet
- Keeneland Yearling Sales
- World Chicken Festival

OCTOBER

- Keeneland Fall Meet
- Keeneland Championship Sales
- National Jug Band Jubilee
- Moonshiners Ball
- Garvin Gate Blues Festival
- BLINK, A Festival of Light & Art

NOVEMBER

- Churchill Downs Fall Meet
- Keeneland Breeding Stock Sales
- Keeneland Horses of All Ages Sales

DECEMBER

- Lights Under Louisville
- The Brown-Forman Nutcracker
- Buffalo Trace Distillery Holiday Lights



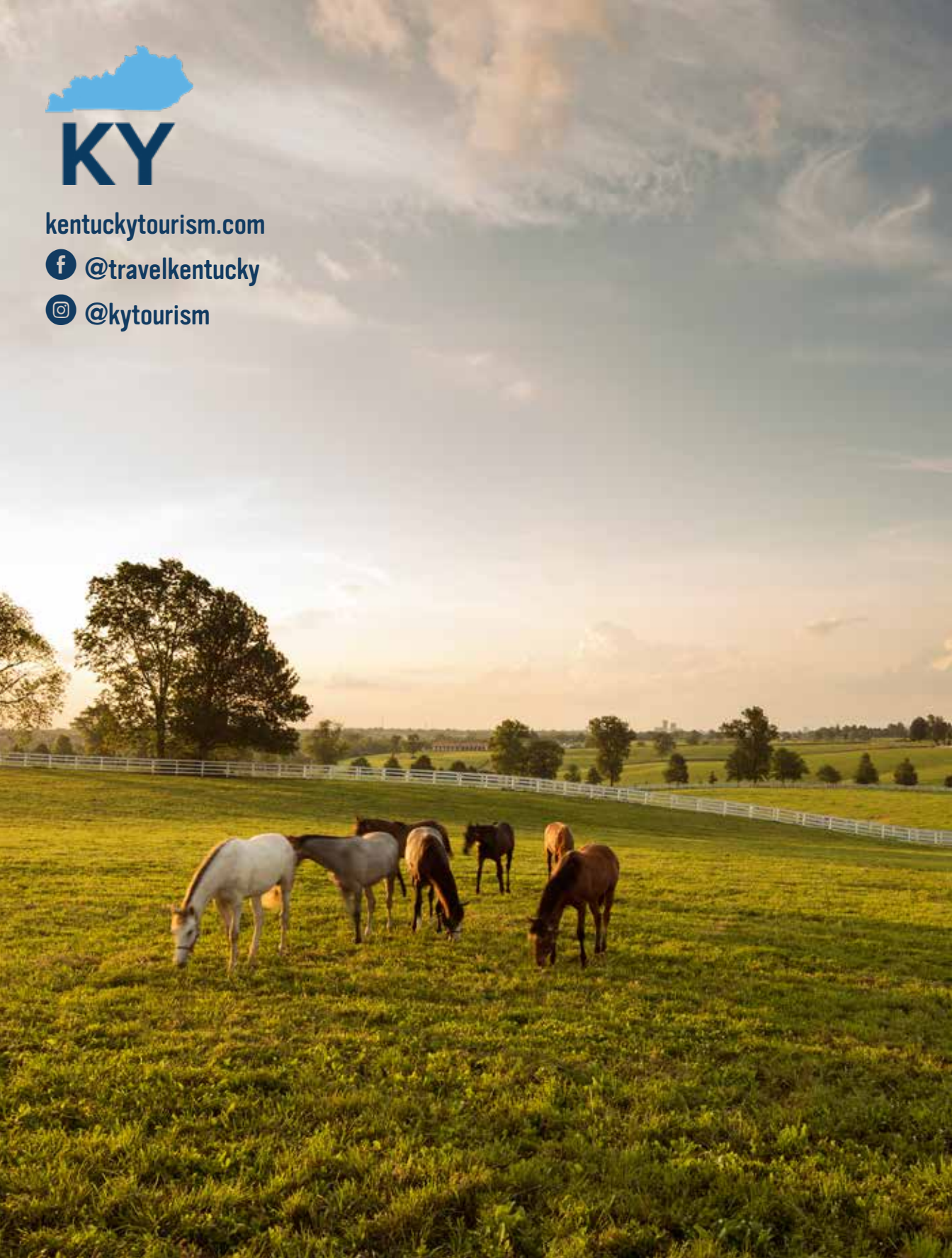








Clockwise from top left: *Railbird Festival; Churchill Downs; Louder Than Life; ROMP Festival; Keeneland Sale Barn*


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