



What's New in Kentucky

Arts & Culture

New sites added to the Kentucky African American Heritage Trail - Ten new stops have been added to the Kentucky African American Heritage Trail, expanding the statewide driving route to more than 60 historic locations. Initially launched in June 2025 to honor Black contributions to the commonwealth's history, the trail's 2026 expansion includes the Covington Black History Tour, the Elisha Green Memorial in Maysville, Hunteartown Community Interpretive Park in Versailles, Moneta Sleet Jr. Park in Owensboro, and the Shaker Villages at Pleasant Hill and South Union. Lexington also gained four new dedicated sites: the Charles Young Center, LexHistory, the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden, and the Freedom Train Monument. <https://www.lanereport.com/187030/2026/04/10-new-sites-along-the-kentucky-african-american-heritage-trail/>

Louisville Orchestra to extend statewide tour - The Louisville Orchestra received \$3.2 million from the Kentucky General Assembly to extend its statewide In Harmony Tour through 2028. This new funding brings total state support to \$11.8 million, making the legislature the orchestra's largest donor. Since 2022, the tour has reached over 57,000 people across 50 counties with free community performances. Music Director Teddy Abrams confirmed the upcoming programming will feature a special 2027 engagement with world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/arts/music/2026/04/16/louisville-orchestra-receives-3-2-million-to-continue-in-harmony-tour/89627630007/>

Josephine Sculpture Park launches Wellness in the Wild events- Josephine Sculpture Park in Frankfort is launching Wellness in the Wild, an intentional community health initiative supported by grants from the Kentucky Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. The interactive programming connects physical and mental health with the outdoors through bi-weekly yoga classes, a monthly "Sculpture Trail Club" walking and running group, and nature-based art programs. Additionally, the park is introducing a dedicated community space for grief and healing centered around a newly commissioned, hand-carved "Wind Phone" sculpture by artist Mollie Rabiner, which allows visitors to speak messages to lost loved ones. <https://www.wave3.com/2026/04/21/josephine-sculpture-park-plans-wellness-wild/>

Louisville Ballet prepares to for its 75th season - The Louisville Ballet announced its 75th anniversary season for 2026–2027. The diverse lineup includes Frankenstein, a 1970s Las Vegas-themed Carmen, the new Bourbon & Ballet series, and a contemporary finale, Momentum. Following post-pandemic financial recovery aided by \$3 million in community donations, the thriving organization is also launching a dance degree program with Bellarmine University and historical exhibits with the Filson Historical Society. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/arts/dance/2026/03/18/louisville-ballet-2026-season-schedule-nutcracker-carmen/88660419007/>

Sadieville debuts geotrail that celebrates its legacy hub for trading hub - The "Historic Sadieville Geotrail: Legacy of the Mules" is a geocaching tour that commemorates the town's past as the nation's largest shipping market for yearling mules and colts. Launched in April 2026, the real-world treasure hunt features ten distinct geocache locations. The trail guides participants past key landmarks, including the historic train depot, a restored 1955 caboose, local cemeteries, and a preserved Rosenwald School. Travelers who locate the caches and complete their passport earn a commemorative coin.

<https://www.americantimesreporter.com/article/899844237-new-geocaching-tour-launches-historic-sadieville-geotrail-legacy-of-the-mules-recalls-community-s-past>

Replica of Garden of Gethsemane debuts in Maysville - A multimillion-dollar, six-acre spiritual attraction opened in March 2026. A replica of the Garden of Gethsemane was built as an addition to St. Patrick's Cemetery and it also features life-sized Italian bronze statues depicting the Stations of the Cross, and a 70-foot cross. It is designed to be a peaceful space for visitors of all denominations to reflect and pray. <https://fox56news.com/news/spirit-of-bluegrass/maysville-unveils-multimillion-dollar-religious-garden/>

Owensboro prepares for Sasquatch-themed festival - The inaugural Blue Bridge Squatch Fest is set to bring a massive Bigfoot and paranormal celebration to Owensboro on September 26. Hosted at the Kentucky Sound Stage on Frederica Street, the family-friendly charity event will benefit local causes, including Alzheimer's awareness. The festival features expert cryptid speakers, localized sighting footage, Bigfoot calling contests, and themed costume competitions. Attendees can also enjoy live music, local food trucks, and unique photo opportunities with the resident Sasquatch. <https://wbkr.com/ixp/72/p/sasquatch-festivals-ky-il-2026/>

Four Louisville museums debut major installations - Louisville's museums are debuting major installations this season. The Speed Art Museum is headlining *Abstract Expressionists: The Women*, highlighting female trailblazers of the mid-century movement alongside *Abstraction, Continued* and *Your "Boy," Jack*. Meanwhile, KMAC Contemporary Art Museum presents *The Visionary Art of Minnie Evans* and Stan Squirewell's *Threads of Influence*. Finally, the Frazier Kentucky History Museum is running the interactive *Pursuit of Happiness* exhibition, exploring early American philosophies through 13 historical figures. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/arts/2026/05/23/new-exhibits-to-see-at-louisville-kentucky-museums/90232647007/>

Kentucky Opera releases schedule for 2026-2027 - Kentucky Opera's 2026-27 season marks an early homecoming to the Brown Theatre with a lineup centered on family and community. The season features Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and the powerful contemporary work *Cotton*. Closing in May, a collaborative semi-staged production of *Salome* features the Louisville Orchestra. CEO Ben Robinson emphasizes that these four mainstage productions reflect Louisville's spirit through timeless classics and poignant modern narratives. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/theater/2026/02/26/kentucky-opera-reveals-2026-27-season-what-to-see/88881065007>

Shakespeare Festival returns to Louisville - Kentucky Shakespeare has unveiled the schedule for its 66th summer season in Louisville's Central Park, running May 27 through August 9. The professional mainstage features *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Julius Caesar*. The festival also includes a community production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the Globe Players' *King Lear*, and late-night comedy. With 60 performances across 11 weeks, it remains the oldest free Shakespeare festival in the United States. <https://www.broadwayworld.com/louisville/article/Kentucky-Shakespeare-Announces-66th-Season-of-Free-Kentucky-Shakespeare-Festival-in-Central-Park-20260208>

Frazier Museum in Louisville announces America250 lineup for 2026 - The Frazier Kentucky History Museum is celebrating America's semiquincentennial throughout 2026 with the "Frazier250" initiative. The museum will feature America250-themed exhibitions, gallery updates, guided tours, programs, family and homeschool days, pop-up camps, podcasts, and more. The intent is for these diverse stories reflect Kentucky's substantial impact on United States history. <https://adairvoice.com/stories/frazier-kentucky-history-museum-to-celebrate-america250,65964>

Ashland to build conference facility near historic Paramount Arts Center - Ashland officials recently reviewed designs for a new 52,000-square-foot conference center neighboring the Paramount Arts Center. Developers emphasized that the theater's historic interior, including its famous murals, will remain untouched. The project features flexible meeting rooms, a ballroom, and a commercial kitchen. Strategic firewalls will protect the Paramount, avoiding invasive sprinkler installations. Construction begins soon with adjacent demolition, targeting a November 2027 completion while ensuring the theater remains operational and preserved throughout. <https://www.herald-dispatch.com/news/project-aims-to->

[complement-paramount-arts-center-without-altering-historic-interior/article_74128147-2baf-4a64-a598-089d9026d151.html](https://www.fox56news.com/news/local/lexington/historic-downtown-lexington-church-confirmed-as-underground-railroad-site/)

Historic Lexington Church added to National Park Service's Underground Railroad list - First African Baptist Church in Lexington has been officially recognized as an Underground Railroad site by the National Park Service's Network to Freedom. Founded in 1790 by Peter Durrett, the historic congregation played a vital role in aiding enslaved individuals seeking freedom. This designation honors the church's courageous legacy and secures its place in the national narrative of resistance, highlighting Lexington's significant contributions to the abolitionist movement and African American history in Kentucky. <https://fox56news.com/news/local/lexington/historic-downtown-lexington-church-confirmed-as-underground-railroad-site/>

Louisville selected as the new site of youth drama festival - The International Thespian Festival (ITF), an annual gathering for middle and high school theatre students, will move to Louisville, Kentucky, beginning in 2027. The Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) relocated the event from Indiana due to outgrowing its former venue. Louisville was chosen for its downtown walkability, cultural richness, hospitality, and capacity for growth. The move will allow the eight-day festival to potentially double its programming, utilizing venues like the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts. https://www.kentuckytoday.com/news/international-thespian-festival-moving-to-louisville/article_a3655ee6-70b6-43ab-a688-7922c41cf4c9.html

Restoration of historic Louisville clock tower complete - The restoration of the historic Cave Hill Cemetery Clock Tower and Bell in Louisville is officially complete, announced by the Cave Hill Heritage Foundation. The project, funded by private donors and preservation partners, returned the clock and its bell to full working order after decades of disrepair. This restoration ensures the landmark, which has "marked time for generations of Louisville families," will continue to ring out, safeguarding a critical piece of the city's local and cultural heritage. <https://www.wave3.com/2025/11/04/restoration-cave-hill-cemeterys-clock-tower-is-complete/>

Military history museum in Kentucky capital reopens after renovation - The Kentucky Military History Museum in Frankfort officially reopened its doors on Veterans Day 2025, following a year of major renovation and restoration. The project, which included the addition of a new HVAC system, ensures the preservation of Kentucky's military treasures within the historic State Arsenal building. The redesigned exhibits focus on personalizing history by highlighting the individual stories and sacrifices of Kentuckians who have served the Commonwealth and the nation. The museum is now open Tuesday through Saturday. <https://fox56news.com/news/local/kentucky-military-history-museum-reopens-its-doors-on-veterans-day/>

Ouita Michel added to Kentucky State Capitol's "Kentucky Women Remembered" exhibit – Gov. Andy Beshear and Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman helped announced Chef Ouita Michel has been added to the "Kentucky Women Remembered Exhibit in the Capitol. Michel is a six-time James Beard Foundation Award nominee, including nominations for Outstanding Restaurateur and Best Chef Southeast. Michel and her restaurants are regularly featured in local and national media. The exhibition features portraits honoring inspiring women who have significantly contributed to the Commonwealth's history and development. <https://www.whas11.com/video/news/local/kentuckys-women-remembered-exhibit-has-a-new-inductee/417-cd037b64-ee49-414e-97ed-ead9b5758688>

Attractions

Fully inclusive and accessible museum slated to open in October in Louisville - The Dot Experience, a \$22 million, 28,000-square-foot museum and educational space at the American Printing House for the Blind is scheduled to open to the public in October 2026. The fully accessible facility features comprehensive exhibits on living with blindness, a dedicated section on the life of Helen Keller, and factory tours showing how Braille books are made. The world-class attraction will open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. <https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/c/destination-louisville-2026/43749/destination-louisville-dot-experience-to-open-in-fall-2026.html>

Wilderness Road Event Center reopens in Laurel County - The Wilderness Road Event Center at the Laurel County Fairgrounds has officially opened, one year after a deadly tornado devastated the original site. Overcoming major construction setbacks, the community completed a \$5 million rebuild. The brand-new, 45,000-square-foot open-air pavilion and event center is designed to host large-scale regional events, including rodeos, horse shows, tractor pulls, and major archery tournaments expected to drive millions of dollars into the local economy. <https://www.wkyt.com/2026/05/26/wilderness-road-event-center-open-after-deadly-tornado-setback-construction/>

Aviation museum celebrates women aviators from Kentucky with new exhibit - The Aviation Museum of Kentucky has unveiled its new "Kentucky Women in Aviation" exhibit in Lexington. The permanent installation showcases artifacts and stories of fifteen trailblazing women, including Tuskegee Airmen trainer Willa Brown Chappell, combat pilot Lt. Col. Amy McGrath, and aviation educator Dr. Wilma Walker-Thompson. Concurrently, the museum is advancing a capital campaign for a new, state-of-the-art educational facility at Blue Grass Airport to strengthen the state's aerospace workforce pipeline. <https://spectrumnews1.com/ky/louisville/news/2026/05/23/women-pilots-celebrated-at-state-museum>

Midway's former firehouse repurposed as golf simulator and bar – After a year of renovations, the Bruen Bunker, a historic firehouse turned bar is open for business in Midway. The family-friendly community venue features 10 draft beers, craft cocktails, Kentucky bourbons, and two Trackman golf simulators. While the owners plan to add a kitchen later, the bar currently hosts local food trucks and offers delivery from nearby restaurant The Goose and Gander. <https://www.kentucky.com/lexgoeat/bourbon/article315468853.html>

Cave City gets funding for new expo center - Barren County will receive \$20 million in federal funding for the upcoming Cave City Area Agriculture Exposition Center. The 110,000-square-foot, 3,000-seat venue will be built next to the Cave Area Conference Center near Interstate 65. Designed to host year-round events like rodeos, cattle shows, and concerts, the project aims to boost tourism and create permanent, full-time jobs. Groundbreaking is slated for spring 2027. <https://www.wbko.com/2026/04/04/barren-county-secures-20-million-agricultural-expo-center-cave-city/>

New exhibit at National Corvette museums showcases rare automotive artifacts - The National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, has opened a unique exhibit focusing on rare, non-vehicle artifacts that shaped the car's legacy. Open through January 2027, this collection features iconic memorabilia like pioneer racer Dick Guldstrand's vintage Le Mans racing suit, former GM CEO Ed Cole's office desk, design studio paint "frogs," classic Corvette pinball machines, pedal cars, and autographed motorsports apparel, highlighting the human side of the brand's history. <https://www.caranddriver.com/news/a71054718/national-corvette-museum-new-exhibit/>

Indoor theme park debuts in Owensboro - Maui's Indoor Theme Park has officially opened to the public inside the former Towne Square Mall on Frederica Street. The \$18.3 million family entertainment venue celebrated its official grand opening in May 2026. The massive flagship facility offers an array of resort-style attractions, including the Twist-N-Shout spinning roller coaster, a giant go-kart track, mini-golf, duckpin bowling, laser tag, and an expansive arcade center. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/tripideas/maui-s-indoor-theme-park-in-owensboro-opens/ar-AA22JTg9>

Sons of the American Revolution to open museum in Louisville - On July 4, the Sons of the American Revolution Education Center will debut a \$30 million immersive Revolutionary War experience. The museum will feature digital displays and large-scale multimedia productions, as well as exhibits from the extensive SAR archival collection. <https://www.pridejourneys.com/post/louisville-s-new-lgbtq-welcoming-attractions-in-2026-the-dot-experience-sar-education-center-fly>

Downtown Louisville welcomes new Cigar shop, bar - Havana Jack's Cigar Factory recently opened as Kentucky's only venue producing hand-rolled cigars on-site. The Whiskey Row destination features a walk-in humidor, live music, and a full bar specializing in spirit pairings. Benefitting from Louisville's updated indoor smoking laws, guests can watch artisans roll cigars while enjoying cocktails. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/life/food/spirits/2026/02/12/havana-jacks-cigar-factory-bar-downtown-louisville-location-opening/88219358007/>

Combination bookstore and wine bar to go in NuLu Marketplace North - NuLu Marketplace North, a \$15 million expansion of NuLu Marketplace, will feature Yer Mom's Bookstore & Wine Café on its ground floor. The store will have a curated book collection alongside approachable wines and small bites. The second floor will provide 4,500 square feet of high-end coworking offices. The mixed-use development is expected to open in 2026. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/02/04/yer-moms-bookstore-wine-bar-and-cafe-opening-in-nulu-in-louisville/88412293007/>

Kentucky Kingdom theme park opens new roller coaster - Kentucky Kingdom has debuted "Flying Fox" as of May 2026. This is the park's first new roller coaster since 2019. The family-friendly suspended coaster features riders hanging beneath the track, reaching speeds of 37 mph and heights of 65 feet. Part of a \$33 million park investment, the \$14 million ride celebrates Kentucky's agricultural roots with a crop-dusting theme and a red barn-inspired queue. With a 38-inch height requirement, it is designed to be accessible for younger thrill-seekers. <https://parade.com/news/louisville-theme-park-fans-may-2026>

Savannah Bananas scheduled to play in Lexington - The Savannah Bananas are bringing their Banana Ball World Tour to Lexington's Legends Field for a weekend series from September 11-13, 2026. The tour will feature the league's two newest teams, the Indianapolis Clowns and the Loco Beach Coconuts, who will play in the Bluegrass. Due to high demand, tickets will be allocated via a lottery system, though Lexington Legends season ticket holders will receive priority access to purchase seats. <https://fox56news.com/news/local/lexington/banana-ball-to-make-first-ever-stop-in-lexington-during-2026-world-tour/>

Newport's waterfront development adds new bar - The Northern Kentucky megaproject Ovation, a large-scale, mixed-use waterfront development in Newport, has celebrated the opening of Market Bar. The opening is a key milestone, and it coincides with the launch of the project's Entertainment Destination Center, a common consumption area that allows patrons to carry drinks within designated zones. Market Bar, which joins the rooftop bar High Note, offers handcrafted cocktails and features a flexible indoor/outdoor seating area near the MegaCorp Pavilion, furthering Ovation's goal of becoming a dynamic riverfront destination. <https://www.lanereport.com/184164/2025/10/nky-megaproject-ovation-adds-market-bar-to-launch-entertainment-destination-center/>

National Corvette Museum announces expansion - The National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Kentucky, announced a major expansion with a new 66,000-square-foot Collections facility, set to open in Fall 2026. This facility will significantly increase capacity for preserving historic vehicles and artifacts, like the 1967 Corvette Sting Ray once owned by Neil Armstrong. Starting in early 2027, the building will offer behind-the-scenes guided tours, effectively doubling the number of Corvettes accessible to the public. www.gmauthority.com/blog/2025/10/national-corvette-museum-expanding-with-new-collections-facility/

Bourbon

*See the separate document, [What's New in Kentucky Bourbon](#), for a list of new and expanded bourbon experiences.

Culinary

Kentucky debuts new Historic Dining Guide – In May 2026, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear announced the creation of the Historic Dining Guide. The guide highlights 18 locally owned restaurants that operate in historic buildings across the commonwealth. Designed to boost culinary tourism and support local businesses, the inaugural guide features destinations ranging from fine dining to coffee shops, including

Holly Hill Inn and The Old Talbott Tavern. The Kentucky Heritage Council plans to update the guide annually. Eligible restaurants must be on the National Register of Historic Places and open for at least 18 months. <https://www.kentucky.com/lexgoeat/restaurants/article315676829.html>

Northern Kentucky based Chef named James Beard Award finalist - Chef David Willocks of The Baker's Table in Newport, Kentucky, has been named a finalist for the 2026 James Beard Award for *Best Chef: Southeast*. Representing Northern Kentucky on the national culinary stage, Willocks is recognized for his restaurant's ingredient-driven, monthly rotating six-course farm-to-table tasting menu. The final winner will be announced at the official awards ceremony on June 15, in Chicago. <https://www.wlwt.com/article/3-chefs-cincinnati-northern-kentucky-james-beard-finalists/70896261>

Lexington adds new restaurants to its culinary scene - Lexington's dining scene is expanding with major new openings. Carson's Back Porch launched at 321 E. Vine St. following extensive renovations to bring its signature upscale steaks and seafood to the former Gus's location. Meanwhile, local caterer DaRae Marcum is transforming a historic auto shop into DaRae and Friends at The Commons, a breakfast and lunch spot on West Main. Additionally, Graeter's Ice Cream opened its third local storefront in the Palomar Springs center. <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/articles/lexington-restaurants-see-open-now-090000706.html>

New pizzeria opens in downtown Louisville - A new pizza parlor opened near Louisville Slugger Field in December 2025. Classico Pizzeria, located on East Main Street, offers European-style pies, including the popular Argentinian Fugazzeta. Owner Tommie Mudd, who also owns Classico Empanadas on Preston Street, aims to contribute to downtown Louisville's growth as the NuLu district expands westward. While the empanada shop remains a weekday staple, the pizzeria serves the stadium crowd Wednesday through Saturday. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/dining/restaurant/2026/01/23/owner-of-classico-empanadas-opens-pizzeria-in-downtown-louisville/88089029007/>

New Coffee Trail launches across Kentucky - Launched in late 2025, the Kentucky Coffee Trail highlights 32 local shops, from Louisville's Fante's Coffee to the rural Kangaroo Ridge Farms. Inspired by the Bourbon Trail, founders Jenni Kaus and Mike Johnson created the initiative to draw travelers "off the beaten path" to discover Kentucky's unique coffee culture. A dedicated mobile app is currently in development to help enthusiasts navigate the trail and support small businesses across the commonwealth. <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/articles/looking-way-explore-state-meet-100319802.html>

Ramen restaurant opens in new location in Louisville - After eight years in Mid City Mall, Louisville's Ramen House has relocated to a larger, permanent home at on Spring Street in September 2025. Previously the restaurant had been located in the Mid City Mall. The new space features a bar, patio, and private parking. https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2025/10/02/ramen-house-finds-new-home-after-challenges.html?utm_source=st&utm_medium=en&utm_campaign=BN&utm_content=LO&ana=e_LO_BN&j=43518393&senddate=2026-01-13

7 Brew opens new location in Northern Kentucky – Popular coffee chain, 7 Brew, has recently set up shop in Florence on Turfway Road. This is 7 Brew's second location in Northern Kentucky after opening one in Newport in 2025. Known for its high-energy, drive-thru-only model, 7 Brew lacks indoor seating or a full food menu. Instead, it focuses on rapid service and customizable drinks, including coffee, smoothies, and their signature "muffin tops." <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/viral-coffee-shop-dropped-yes-143147622.html>

Millstone casual fine dining restaurant opens in Lexington - A longtime Lexington location in Dudley Square, formerly Dudley's, has reopened as Millstone, a new casual upscale restaurant led by Executive

Chef Tyler Murray. Following a major renovation that included a new dining room and patio, Millstone offers a menu rooted in "Kentucky hospitality and modern flavor." The kitchen emphasizes high-quality, in-house dishes using local suppliers, with entrée highlights like braised short rib and seared salmon. The restaurant is currently open for dinner service every night.

<https://www.kentucky.com/lexgoeat/restaurants/article312979453.html>

New restaurant, Mill Iron opens in Louisville- The owners of popular Louisville restaurants North of Bourbon and MeeshMeesh are collaborating on a new venture called Mill Iron 4, which opened in early 2026 on Frankfort Avenue in the Clifton neighborhood. The project is a partnership between Noam Bilitzer (a James Beard Award chef finalist for MeeshMeesh) and Dustin Olsen, along with Stacy and Daniel Holyfield and Eric Jennings. The restaurant's concept is centered on whole-animal butchery, live-fire cooking, and hospitality, with its name referencing Olsen's family cattle ranch.

https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2025/10/22/meeshmeesh-north-bourbon-new-restaurant.html?utm_source=st&utm_medium=en&utm_campaign=BN&utm_content=LO&ana=e_LO_BN&j=42119825&senddate=2025-10-22

The Hen House Cafe re-opens with new theme - Chef David Danielson transformed his former restaurant space into The Hen House Cafe and Provisions, a casual, chef-driven brunch concept. The rethought eatery opened in early November on Brownsboro Road. The new cafe offers an extensive menu featuring fresh pastries, homemade biscuits, seasonal salads, sandwiches, cocktails, and Danielson's popular fried chicken. This new direction allows Danielson to pivot his business, keep his staff employed, and fulfill his goal of providing a high-quality breakfast and brunch option to the Louisville community.

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/dining/restaurant/2025/10/21/ata-restaurant-louisville-rebrands-hen-house-cafe-brunch/86805824007/>

Neighborhood bar and restaurant opens in Lexington - Southern Cookhouse & Bar opened a new neighborhood tavern in September 2025 in the BLVD Apartments clubhouse in Lexington. The spot features a menu of Southern comfort food and late hours for sports fans. Highlights include Kentucky Proud burgers made with Critchfield Meats beef, bourbon-glazed filet tips over cheddar grits, and pizzas. The full-service bar features eight beers on tap, six from local breweries, and is equipped with multiple large TVs for watching games.

https://www.kentucky.com/lexgoeat/restaurants/article312118434.html#campaignName=lexington_morning_newsletter

Esters Farm Cafe opens in Park City - Esters Farm Catering and Café recently found a new home in Park City, Kentucky, at 4900 Park City-Bon Ayr Rd. The café relocated from Bon Ayr after five years of operation, setting up in a larger space to help boost local tourism. The new restaurant features a menu of homemade "comfort food" classics like meatloaf and chicken and dumplings. The location provides seating for about 100 guests inside and on the patio and employs around 25 staff members.

<https://www.wcluradio.com/2025/10/06/esters-farm-cafe-finds-new-home-in-park-city/>

Local Italian restaurant opens new location in Northern Kentucky airport - VV The Italian Experience, a Cincinnati-based family restaurant, has opened a new location at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) near Gate B17 in Concourse B. The new dining concept features all-day Pugliese-style Italian cuisine, including piadinas and signature pastas like Bolognese and Genovese. Co-founder Andrea Stefano stated the expansion with SSP America shares their family's authentic culinary heritage with travelers passing through the international airport.

<https://www.wlwt.com/article/vv-italian-experience-cvg-airport/67958957>

Horses

Kentucky Derby Museum updates Winner's Circle exhibit - The Kentucky Derby Museum has unveiled a life-sized replica horse of the 2026 champion, Golden Tempo, in its iconic Winner's Circle exhibit. Hand-painted by Louisville artist Mike Prather using high-resolution imagery and intricate airbrushing techniques, the statue perfectly captures the thoroughbred's exact muscle definition, deep coat highlights, and unique hoof markings. The updated display celebrates the historic Churchill Downs victory, serving as a new focal point for the museum's 250,000 annual visitors.
<https://www.wlky.com/article/golden-tempo-statue-winners-circle-derby-museum/71363724>

Eastern Kentucky free-roaming horse facility opens to the public - A new multiuse outdoor tourism space in Cornettsville now serves as the permanent home for the Appalachian Horse Center, a nonprofit rescue organization dedicated to treating and rehabilitating Eastern Kentucky's free-roaming horse population. Located on a historic Perry County farm near Leatherwood, the facility provides essential care, socialization, and adoption services for the horses. The development aims to boost regional tourism by offering visitors direct human-animal interaction, with future site plans including an adjacent native animal zoo. https://www.weku.org/the-commonwealth/2026-05-18/new-multiuse-outdoor-tourism-space-opens-in-perry-county?_amp=true

Kentucky Horse Park erects a statue to honor Derby winner's legacy - A bronze statue honoring the legendary racehorse Funny Cide was dedicated at the Kentucky Horse Park in April 2026. The 2003 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner spent 15 years in retirement at the park's Hall of Champions before passing away in 2023. Sculpted by artist Shelley Hunter, the memorial stands as a permanent tribute to the beloved "people's horse" and the memorable Triple Crown run.
<https://www.lanereport.com/186734/2026/03/funny-cide/>

Prestigious thoroughbred farm now offers tours - Diamond A Farm in Versailles began offering daily guided tours of its world-class facility in April 2026. Visitors to the farm will learn about the process of breeding and raising young Thoroughbreds. The tour includes a closer look at the nurseries, clinics, feed mills, and historic stud farms. Tour can be booked in advance on the Visit Horse Country website.
<https://www.lanereport.com/186737/2026/03/experience-horse-country-behind-the-scenes-with-tours-beginning-in-april/>

Hallmark movie filmed at Churchill Downs debuted on Kentucky Derby Day - Churchill Downs is the setting for a new Hallmark movie, "Kentucky Roses," an original movie filmed on location which premiered May 2, the same day as the 152nd Kentucky Derby. Starring Andrew Walker and Odette Annable, the romance spans two timelines—1932 and the present day. The story follows a greenhouse worker dreaming of creating the iconic garland of roses and the man hired to repair the Twin Spires. It streams on Hallmark+.
<https://www.wlky.com/article/hallmark-kentucky-derby-movie-churchill-downs/70173213>

Keeneland debuts new paddock - Keeneland Race Course debuted its \$100 million Paddock Building in time for the Spring 2026 meet. It is the largest capital project in over 90 years. The three-story expansion adds over 1,000 new public dining tickets. Featured spaces include the "1936 Room," the high-end Sycamore Room, and a rooftop bar. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/sports/horses/horse-racing/2026/01/28/keeneland-to-debut-new-paddock-dining-areas-at-2026-spring-meet/88379349007/>

Calvert City welcomes new horse racing venue - A new historical horse racing venue has opened for business in Calvert City. Marshall Yards Racing & Gaming debuted February 2026 and is a subsidiary of Churchill Downs Inc. This \$43 million facility is the company's eighth historical horse racing venue in Kentucky. The 23,000-square-foot site features 225 racing machines, a sportsbook, and simulcast wagering. Operating as an annex of Oak Grove Racing, Gaming & Hotel, Marshall Yards is designed to boost regional tourism and support purse funding for Southwestern Kentucky's horse racing industry.
<https://www.gamingintelligence.com/sectors/land-based-gaming/225169-churchill-downs-readies-opening-of-8th-historical-racing-venue-in-kentucky/>

Churchill Downs secures \$1.2 billion in incentives for upgrades to track - Churchill Downs is set to begin a \$1.2 billion renovation project, named "Victory Run." The project includes the construction of a

four-story premium hospitality venue, located on the first turn, replacing older seating with private suites, indoor/outdoor dining, and covered box seats. Construction will begin after the 2026 Kentucky Derby and is scheduled for completion by the 2028 Derby, expanding capacity in that section from 6,400 to approximately 7,800 guests. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/2025/12/03/churchill-downs-louisville-deal-would-keep-pilot-payments-with-jcps/87083928007/>

Kentucky Horse Park unveils new statue - The monument, "The Bond: Two Hearts - One Spirit," was dedicated at the Kentucky Horse Park, in Lexington, to honor the extraordinary relationship between racehorse Cody's Wish and teenager Cody Dorman. The centerpiece is a life-size bronze statue of Cody's Wish, created by Jocelyn Russell, intentionally leaving space for visitors to pose where Cody Dorman would have been in his wheelchair. <https://www.wuky.org/wuky-news/2025-10-15/monument-dedicated-to-codys-wish-cody-dorman-and-their-special-bond>

Keeneland Library opens exhibit highlighting Latino horse racing community - The Keeneland Library unveiled "Raíces: The Making of Latino Legacies in Racing," a landmark bilingual exhibit highlighting the impact of 100 Latino trailblazers in Thoroughbred racing and breeding from the late 1800s to the present. The free showcase features biographical vignettes, rare images, and artifacts, celebrating industry professionals across the Americas, including jockeys, grooms, and veterinarians. The exhibit is presented in English with a Spanish audio guide and was developed through a multinational collaboration. Raíces can be seen at the Library, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. <https://paulickreport.com/news/the-biz/keeneland-library-unveils-exhibit-highlighting-the-latino-communitys-impact-on-horse-racing>

Hotels & Lodging

Hotel Distil partnered with Peerless Distilling on custom suite - Hotel Distil on Whiskey Row partnered with Kentucky Peerless Distilling Co. to design a custom eighth-floor suite. Curated with Olive Branch Design, the \$615-a-night Autograph Collection room features distillery artifacts, including a unique whiskey-thief coffee table. Guests enjoy exclusive perks like barrel-aged Stave & Bean coffee, two signature cocktails at the hotel's Repeal steakhouse, and a guided tour and tasting at the nearby Peerless distillery. <https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2026/05/22/peerless-distilling-suite-featured-at-hotel-distil.html>

Marriott to open extended stay hotel in NuLu - A new \$12 million Marriott Towneplace Suites is coming to Louisville's NuLu district on E. Jefferson Street. This new development will be a four-story, 128-room extended-stay hotel designed to feature comfortable suites. Slated for completion in mid- to late-2027, the project joins a rapidly growing lineup of modern hospitality and lodging options expanding throughout the vibrant neighborhood. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/02/21/marriott-towneplace-suites-to-break-ground-in-nulu-in-2026/88795509007/>

Paris boutique hotel centered around horse racing now open - Hotel Thoroughbred, a new 19-room boutique hotel, is open for business in downtown Paris. Housed in a historic 1891 furniture factory, the hotel celebrates the region's rich equine history. It features restored original floors and tin ceilings, a guest bar, and a 150-person event center. Inside, guests will find horse-racing art, Derby winner tributes, and a historic Churchill Downs 16th pole, honoring local Thoroughbred farms. <https://www.kentucky.com/news/business/article313099666.html>

Everhome Suites opens in Bowling Green - Choice Hotels has expanded its midscale extended-stay footprint with a new Everhome Suites in Bowling Green, Kentucky. This property features apartment-style suites equipped with full kitchens and customizable "Me Spaces." The location caters to long-term travelers by offering modern amenities like a 24-hour fitness center and onsite laundry. <https://www.hotelmanagement-network.com/news/choice-hotels-everhome-suites-additions/?cf-view>

Louisville to convert Humana tower to 1,000 room hotel, conference center - Louisville is transforming its skyline with a \$600–\$700 million project to convert the iconic Humana Tower into a 1,000-room convention headquarters hotel. Slated to open by 2030, the dual-tower complex will feature over 100,000 square feet of meeting space and a 40,000-square-foot ballroom. This landmark development aims to attract major national conventions, positioning Louisville as a top-tier destination for large-scale events while boosting tourism and downtown economic growth.

<https://meetings.skift.com/2026/02/05/louisville-to-get-1000-room-convention-hotel-to-attract-bigger-meetings/>

JW Marriott to occupy Firth Third tower in Louisville - A new JW Marriott is coming to downtown Louisville, occupying the former Fifth Third building at 4th and Liberty Streets. The luxury hotel will feature approximately 250 rooms, a rooftop bar, and high-end dining options. This project is part of a larger revitalization of the historic tower, which has been a skyline staple since 1982. Construction is expected to begin later this year, further expanding the city's upscale hospitality offerings near Fourth Street Live. The hotel is slated to be complete in 2027. <https://www.wlky.com/article/new-hotel-louisville-downtown-marriott-jw-fifth-third-building/70193166>

Renovations underway at Barren River Lake State Resort Park - Barren River Lake State Resort Park is receiving \$9.5 million in upgrades. The project includes \$6 million for renovating lodge rooms with new finishes, flooring, and bathrooms, alongside updates to the restaurant and lobby. An additional \$3.5 million will fund critical HVAC and mechanical improvements. To accommodate construction, the lodge closed in February 2026 and is expected to reopen with modernized amenities in the fall.

<https://www.wnky.com/barren-river-lake-state-resort-park-to-receive-9-5-in-upgrades-to-promote-tourism/>

Renovations underway at Lake Barkley State Resort Park - Lake Barkley State Resort Park has entered the final phase of a \$24 million renovation. Expected to conclude by early 2027, the project includes lodge repairs, pool renovations, and interior updates like new flooring and decor. Upcoming improvements will target the fitness center, guest accommodations, and the golf course irrigation system. The modern upgrades will preserve the site's beloved authentic atmosphere.

https://www.timesleader.net/news/lake-barkley-state-resort-park-enters-final-phase-of-renovations/article_af2c0c88-b55c-55c4-9b42-bbc152139652.html

Hilton Lexington Downtown to undergo renovations - The Hilton Lexington Downtown is planning a \$20.9 million renovation starting in 2027. Located at Vine and Broadway near Rupp Arena, the 360-room hotel recently received preliminary state approval for up to \$5.2 million in tourism tax incentives. The project involves remodeling guest rooms and meeting spaces to modernize the 1982 property.

<https://www.kentucky.com/news/state/kentucky/article313754225.html>

Aldenberg Hotel and steakhouse open in downtown Versailles - The \$10.7 million Aldenberg Hotel is now open in the historic 1852 Woodford Bank and Trust building in downtown Versailles, Kentucky. Named after a local architect, the luxury boutique features 29 rooms and operates as Kentucky's first hotel/distillery. It houses the upscale Silk's Steakhouse, which offers white-tablecloth service, prime dry-aged steaks, fresh seafood, and classic cocktails. The hotel also features Aldenberg Distillery, which produces Keyholder's Reserve bourbon, with a new rooftop bar that opened in Spring 2026.

<https://www.kentucky.com/lexgoeat/restaurants/article312599936.html>

Lake Cumberland to begin multi-million renovation project - Lake Cumberland State Resort Park is slated to receive \$7.4 million in upgrades to enhance the visitor experience. The project is expected to finish by late 2026 and it includes modernizing finishes and furniture in the lodge and guest rooms, as well as upgrading the conference center's systems. During renovations, the lodge, indoor pool, bar, and main dining room will close, but cabins, campgrounds, and trails will remain open to guests.

<https://lakercountry.com/2025/10/lake-cumberland-state-resort-park-to-receive-7-4m-in-upgrades/>

Carter Caves State Park will soon unveil campground renovation - Carter Caves State Resort Park will soon unveil its \$3.8 million campground renovation this June. The project, funded by a \$40 million allocation for state parks, will enhance the visitor experience by adding a new store, bathhouse, and

upgraded utilities. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/carter-caves-campground-undergoing-3-221800985.html?guccounter=1>

Jenny Wiley State Park undergoing renovations - Jenny Wiley State Resort Park's lodge is undergoing renovations. Work started in September with a \$5.5 million state investment for improvements to dining and meeting rooms. Expected reopening is summer 2026. Additionally, a new \$1.45 million archery center broke ground in fall 2025. While the lodge, cottages, and campground are temporarily closed, the park will continue to offer outdoor activities like hiking, biking, and fishing. <https://nkytribune.com/2025/06/jenny-wiley-state-resort-parks-lodge-to-undergo-renovations-add-archery-center/>

Hyatt Regency in downtown Lexington to undergo renovations – The Kentucky Tourism Development Finance Agency approved tax incentives for the Hyatt Regency Lexington. Built in 1975, the full-service hotel is adjacent to Rupp Arena and the convention center. The bulk of the \$58.5 million renovation project is set to begin Summer 2026 and will be completed in September. This major investment is deemed crucial to modernize the property and enhance the experience for the city's large conventions and major events. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/lexington-hyatt-58-5-million-100000654.html>

Music

Quarterly Jazz Series returns to the Kentucky Center for African American Heritage - The quarterly "Destination Smooth Jazz Series" features Grammy-winning or Grammy-nominated performers, along with wine and spirits tastings, art exhibits, cigar bars, and cuisine prepared by local African American chefs. Upcoming editions of the series are scheduled for June, September and December 2026. Organizers say the series has become a standout event in Louisville's music scene by blending live jazz with community and culture. <https://www.wlky.com/article/destination-smooth-jazz-music-louisville/71377249>

Seasonal concert series comes back to Louisville's Waterfront Park - The popular, free "Waterfront Wednesday" concert series has returned to Louisville's Big Four Lawn for its 24th season. Presented by 91.9 WFPK and Waterfront Park, this year's events feature a major format change: headliners will take the stage earlier in the evening and perform longer, 90-minute sets. The six-show season runs monthly through September, offering live music from nationally and regionally touring acts such as Old 97's, Over the Rhine and Houseplant. <https://www.wave3.com/2026/03/25/concert-series-waterfront-park-returns-2026/>

Louder Than Life hard rock festival announces 2026 lineup - America's Loudest Rock & Metal Festival returns to Kentucky, September 17-20, with its largest lineup ever! Joining headliners My Chemical Romance and Iron Maiden are Pantera, Megadeth, Tool, and Limp Bizkit. The 2026 festival features nearly 200 acts, including Alice Cooper and Sublime, across seven stages. Organizer Danny Wimmer promises a four-day playground of legendary music, bourbon, and roller coasters. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/music/2026/02/23/louder-than-life-2026-lineup-dates-tickets/88831244007/>

Lineup for Bourbon and Beyond music and culture festival released - Bourbon & Beyond returns to the Kentucky Exposition Center September 24–27, 2026, featuring over 100 artists across five stages. Headliners include Chris Stapleton, Foo Fighters, and Kacey Musgraves. This eighth edition shifts to the weekend after Louder Than Life, blending rock, Americana, and bluegrass with elite culinary experiences. Highlighting the "Fork & Flask" village, organizer Danny Wimmer promises an immersive "vacation inside a vacation" complete with bourbon tastings, local food, and Kentucky Kingdom coasters. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/music/2026/02/18/bourbon-and-beyond-2026-lineup-bands-tickets-prices-dates/88529636007/>

New music venue opens in Louisville - A new music venue has opened in Louisville's Paristown Pointe neighborhood. Gig Louisville opened its doors in May 2026, in the former Amp Louisville building, will

have a 250-capacity music venue and bar. Located at 1017 E. Broadway, the 2,200-square-foot space that will be both accessible and versatile versatility and accessibility. The venue will showcase diverse genres from local and touring acts. Operating Tuesday through Sunday, the club features an adaptable layout, snacks, and a jukebox-equipped bar area.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2026/02/03/new-music-venue-gig-louisville-to-open-by-march.html?>

Beaver Dam announces new music festival set for October 2026 - The inaugural Stomp and Holler Roots Music Festival debuts October 2–3, 2026, at Beaver Dam Amphitheater. This destination-style weekend features Americana, folk, and country rock alongside Kentucky bourbon, local food, and on-site camping. Proceeds support regional youth programs and community projects through the Cliff Hagan Boys & Girls Clubs and the Beaver Dam Foundation. The event aims to blend high-quality musical performances with local culture to create a lasting community impact.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/stomp-holler-festival-coming-beaver-101800986.html>

Romp Bluegrass Festival Announces 2026 lineup - The 2026 ROMP Bluegrass Festival, hosted by the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum, returns to Yellow Creek Park in Owensboro, Kentucky, from June 24–27. This year's star-studded lineup features headliners I'm With Her, Punch Brothers, and Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives. <https://wbkr.com/romp-2026-lineup/>

Outdoors

Eight Kentucky state parks awarded funding for education and historic preservation - The America250KY initiative awarded \$75,000 for historic preservation and educational upgrades across eight Kentucky state parks to prepare for the nation's birthday. Administered by the Kentucky Historical Society, the grant program funded localized improvements, including replica fossils, archery equipment, and artifact conservation, at Big Bone Lick, Blue Licks Battlefield, Dr. Thomas Walker, Fort Boonesborough, Isaac Shelby Cemetery, John James Audubon, Old Mulkey Meetinghouse, and Wickliffe Mounds state parks and historic sites. <https://nkytribune.com/2026/04/big-bone-lick-among-eight-kentucky-parks-receive-improvements-under-america250ky-initiative-funding/>

Shooting range opens to the public north of Georgetown - The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources is opening a new, \$4.7 million public shooting range at Veterans Memorial WMA in Scott County. Primarily federally funded, the year-round, ADA-accessible facility features 20 covered lanes for up to 100 yards, a safety officer, and an education building. To use the range, shooters must obtain a permit, which is free for annual Kentucky hunting or fishing license holders, or available for purchase starting at \$5.29. <https://z93country.com/archives/527968/outdoors/>

New campground opens in Eastern Kentucky - The newly opened Elk View Campground represents a massive \$4.5 million investment aimed at boosting nature-based tourism in Eastern Kentucky. Located in Knott County, the premier outdoor destination features dozens of full-hookup RV sites, primitive tent camping areas, and modern amenities including a bathhouse, Wi-Fi, and a community pavilion. Strategically positioned near existing trail systems, the campground serves as a primary hub for outdoor enthusiasts looking to view the region's famous wild elk herds, hike, and ride ATVs. <https://www.wymt.com/2026/04/13/elk-view-campground-opens-with-45m-investment-eastern-kentucky-tourism/>

Boone's Ridge wildlife attraction to open next summer - The construction of Boone's Ridge wildlife tourism destination is underway. The 12,000-acre Bell County facility is expected to cost \$160 million, and it aims to establish eastern Kentucky as a national outdoor destination, projecting up to one million annual visitors. Funded through private donations, state tax abatements, and bond formatting, the eco-tourism

preserve features the 81,000-square-foot Trailblazer's Hall, an internal zoo, a four-mile aerial gondola, and free-ranging elk habitats. The project is expected to be open for business in July 2027.

<https://www.wymt.com/2026/05/05/boones-ridge-visitor-center-aims-make-eastern-kentucky-national-outdoor-destination/>

Wildlife Management Area expanded in Lee and Estill Counties - The Ross Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA), located along the Kentucky River primarily in Lee County with a portion in Estill County, has expanded to nearly 1,300 acres following a 361-acre addition. Funded by the Kentucky Wetland and Stream Mitigation Program, the 1,296-acre area features restored streams, new wetlands, and hardwood forests. It is open for year-round statewide hunting and angling, though spring turkey harvests are limited to one per WMA. <https://www.weku.org/text/2026-04-14/eastern-kentuckys-ross-creek-wildlife-management-area-expands>

Permits required at Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Facilities - A new regulation requires a permit to use firearms or archery equipment at Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife-managed, leased, or affiliated shooting ranges. However, this permit does not apply universally. It is required at eight specific state-managed properties, while commercial and private facilities maintain their own independent rules. The permit is free for annual state hunting or fishing license holders—though they must manually add it to their online profile—and costs roughly \$26 annually or \$5 daily for others.

<https://www.wkyt.com/2026/03/25/good-question-does-new-permit-required-fish-wildlife-shooting-ranges-work-every-range/>

Kentucky Parks launches new mobile app - Governor Andy Beshear announced the launch of OuterSpatial, the Kentucky Department of Parks' new mobile app, designed to make exploring the state's 44 parks easier and safer. The app offers key features like up-to-date information on closings, event schedules, and detailed offline trail maps. To celebrate the launch, the department introduced the Kentucky Passport Challenge, which encourages users to visit all 44 state parks and earn a unique check-in badge for each one. The app is freely available on both iOS and Android.

<https://www.wlky.com/article/kentucky-parks-mobile-app-outdoors-explore-louisville/68998572>

First Frontier Appalachian Trail System grows - The First Frontier Appalachian Trails (FFAT) is a successful and growing multi-county ATV/UTV trail system in Eastern Kentucky. Operating under the Kentucky Mountain Regional Recreation Authority, the network aims to redefine the region's post-coal economy by driving tourism and supporting small businesses. The system is rapidly expanding, seeking to connect up to 36 counties. Officials note its success is demonstrated by the sale of permits and the recent groundbreaking for a new headquarters, positioning FFAT as a major regional economic engine.

https://www.paintsvilleherald.com/news/officials-first-frontier-atv-trail-system-successful-growing/article_beeef6b1-d1cc-4bca-9c18-4dfc5c2c0615.html

Hodgenville earns Kentucky Trail Town designation - Hodgenville recently achieved the Kentucky Trail Town designation, a result of years of collaborative effort by local officials, volunteers, and sponsors. This tourism and economic development program provides the community with a strategic plan to capitalize on its recreational assets. By sharing their outdoor opportunities, culture, and history, Hodgenville aims to attract adventure seekers and boost its downtown area by establishing new destinations like shops, restaurants, and event venues.

https://www.pmg-ky2.com/larue/news/hodgenville-certified-as-ky-trail-town/article_48438bb1-3e0e-5950-a3b9-24d96406700e.html

AJ Jolly Park undergoing \$10 million restoration - The camping and lake access at AJ Jolly Park will be closed through the 2026 season for a major \$10 million restoration project to ensure the long-term safety of the park's main assets. The project will address the aging 1960 dam by performing necessary repairs and improvements to its concrete and foundation. Crucially, the plan involves significantly lowering the lake to safely dredge accumulated sediment and replace an old culvert with a new bridge, aiming to restore the lake's depth and water quality for future enjoyment. Campers will be able to make

site reservations in February 2027. <https://linknky.com/news/2025/09/23/aj-jolly-lake-camping-to-close-through-2026-for-10-million-project/>

New climbing area developed in Red River Gorge - The Venue is a new crag at the Red River Gorge, developed following a 2025 land acquisition by the Red River Gorge Climbers Coalition. Located in the Cave Fork Recreational Preserve, this roughly 120-foot, steep, amphitheater-like cave is hailed as America's biggest and steepest new sport climbing area. It offers a wide range of routes, though it is primarily celebrated for its dynamic and challenging 5.13 and 5.14 lines, providing a new premier destination for high-end climbers. <https://gripped.com/news/the-venue-is-an-amazing-new-crag-at-red-river-gorge/>

Lake Cumberland State Park renovation underway- Lake Cumberland State Resort Park is undergoing a \$7.4 million upgrade to enhance the visitor experience. The project is expected to finish by late 2026 and it includes modernizing finishes and furniture in the lodge and guest rooms, as well as upgrading the conference center's systems. During renovations, the lodge, indoor pool, bar, and main dining room will close, but cabins, campgrounds, and trails will remain open to guests. <https://lakercountry.com/2025/10/lake-cumberland-state-resort-park-to-receive-7-4m-in-upgrades/>

Other

Louisville section of I-65 shutdown for bridge improvement project - A large section of Interstate 65 in central Louisville has shut down for at least two months for the I-65 Central Corridor Improvement Project. Funded by the state and the 2021 Infrastructure Act, crews are replacing three aging bridges over Kentucky/Brook streets, Hill Street/Burnett Avenue, and Bradley Avenue to extend their lifespan by 75 years. Officials expect one southbound lane to reopen July 1. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/News/local/louisville/2026/06/01/live-traffic-updates-louisville-i-65-closure--live/90275668007/>

Louisville to host Gymnastic Olympic Trials - The KFC Yum! Center in Louisville will host the 2028 USA Gymnastics Olympic Trials from June 16–19, 2028, marking the city's first time hosting the event since 1960. The meet will be the final test for American gymnasts of all disciplines as they compete to make the U.S. Olympic squad. The high-profile event is expected to drive massive sports tourism and a significant economic impact, following recent major city hosts like the PGA Championship and the Kentucky Derby. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/sports/2026/04/14/louisville-host-2028-usa-gymnastics-olympic-trials-at-kfc-yum-center/87621979007/>

Bowling Green Tourism cuts ribbon on new visitor's center - The Bowling Green Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) has officially opened its new Visitor Information Center at 720 Ewing Way, right off Interstate 65 at Exit 26. The \$1.8 million facility, which is roughly 2,000 square feet larger than the previous bureau offices. Constructed by Sunbelt Construction, the modern space is designed to offer travelers a safer, more accessible stop for regional recommendations while better reflecting the community's identity and ongoing growth. <https://www.wbko.com/2026/05/01/bowling-green-tourism-leaders-cut-ribbon-new-visitor-center/>

Kentucky municipal parks to receive state funding for playgrounds and picnic areas - Gov. Andy Beshear announced over \$1.3 million in funding to recycle waste tires into playground surfaces and landscaping across 30 counties. Northwestern Kentucky received a portion of these grants to upgrade regional recreational spaces. The seven local parks receiving funding for new picnic tables, benches, or poured-in-place playgrounds include Henderson's Community Park and Corydon-Crawford Park; Clay Jones Memorial Park in Muhlenberg County; Waverly City Park in Union County; and Webster County's Clay City Park, Baker Park, and Sebree Springs Park. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/several-western-kentucky-parks-funding-192721588.html>

British Airways increases transatlantic flights to Northern Kentucky - British Airways is expanding its nonstop transatlantic service between Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) and London Heathrow. Driven by surging demand and a 35% spike in UK visitor spending in early 2026, the airline increased its flight frequency from five to six days a week. Additionally, British Airways upgraded the route to a larger Boeing 777-200 aircraft, a move that boosts overall passenger and cargo capacity by roughly 55 to 60 percent. <https://www.breakingtravelnews.com/news/article/british-airways-increases-flights-to-surging-cincy-in-2026/>

Airport in Northern Kentucky named Best Regional Airport in the country - The Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) has been named the Best Regional Airport in North America at the 2026 World Airport Awards. The prestigious accolade, determined by global passenger satisfaction surveys conducted by Skytrax, highlights CVG's ongoing commitment to customer service, cleanliness, and operational efficiency. <https://www.lanereport.com/186710/2026/03/cvg-named-best-regional-airport-in-north-america-4/>

Paducah cuts ribbon on newly renovated park - Paducah's newly upgraded Lone Oak playground is now open to the public. Located on Denver Avenue, the renovated community park facility features brand-new, modern play structures, a fully updated padded safety floor, and secure perimeter fencing to ensure children can play safely. While the space also welcomed a historic sescentennial tree dedication during its debut, the project primary focus remains on providing accessible outdoor recreation for local families. https://www.wpsdlocal6.com/news/mccracken-county-opens-lone-oak-playground-commemorates-america-s-250th-birthday/article_5b0aae73-6ea0-490a-af4c-84b0b0a3b88f.html

Green River Ferry operational one year after sustaining flood damage - The Green River Ferry in Mammoth Cave National Park has reopened and resumed daily service after completing major infrastructure repairs. The ferry was closed following historic flooding in April 2025, which severely damaged its navigational cables, support towers, and a 15.5-ton concrete anchor. During the extended closure, crews replaced the cables and anchors, stabilized the support towers, and upgraded the vessel with a new engine and generator to meet Coast Guard inspection standards. <https://www.wnky.com/green-river-ferry-reopens-after-sustaining-damage-in-2025-flooding/>

Kentucky Exposition Center renovation to be complete by late 2026 - The first phase of the Kentucky Exposition Center expansion reached a milestone as of February 2026. The new 350,000-square-foot facility, featuring the venue's largest Class A exhibit hall, is set for completion by year-end. Part of a \$470 million modernization, this project will elevate the center to the nation's fifth-largest convention space. While events begin in 2027, a \$213 million second phase will soon follow to upgrade the West Wing and food operations. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/02/20/kentucky-expo-center-180m-expansion-on-track-for-2026-completion/88767414007/>

Viking river cruise to make stops in Henderson, Louisville and Owensboro - Starting in 2027, Viking River Cruises will expand its Ohio River itineraries to include Henderson, Owensboro, and Louisville. Featured on voyages like the "Mississippi & Ohio River Explorer," travelers will experience Henderson's downtown area, Owensboro's Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame, and Louisville's historic waterfront. This expansion follows successful unscheduled stops in 2025. Local officials anticipate a significant boost to regional tourism and cultural preservation efforts. <https://spectrumnews1.com/ky/louisville/news/2026/02/20/viking-cruises-coming-to-owensboro>

Northern Kentucky's airport to expand non-stop flights - Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport is significantly expanding its nonstop reach in 2026. British Airways increased London service to six times weekly as of March 2026, while Southwest debuts twice-daily flights to Nashville. This summer, Allegiant will launch a new route to Orange County and restarted Portland service as of May 2026. The expanded flight schedule is a result of the airport heavily incentivizing both domestic and international routes to boost the airport's competitiveness within the market. <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/travel/2026/02/09/cincinnati-airport-allegiant-american-airlines-british->

[airways-new-flights-cvg/88548559007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=true&gca-epti=z1189xxp000350c000350e1189xxv003597d--56--&gca-ft=199&gca-ds=sophi](https://www.fox61.com/article/travel/breeze-to-launch-nonstop-flights-bdl-louisville-in-may/520-7eebaadb-42fa-420b-9323-040cac4cd8ed)

Breeze Airlines announces non-stop flights from Connecticut to Louisville – Breeze Airways has launched summer seasonal nonstop flights between Windsor Locks, Conn. and Louisville. Operating Monday through Friday on an Airbus A220-300 aircraft, the route aims to provide easy access to attractions like the Louisville Slugger and Kentucky Derby Museums. <https://www.fox61.com/article/travel/breeze-to-launch-nonstop-flights-bdl-louisville-in-may/520-7eebaadb-42fa-420b-9323-040cac4cd8ed>

Tourism Projects across Kentucky bring \$118 million in investments - Kentucky officials have announced five tourism projects totaling \$118 million in 2025 investment. Key developments include renovations at the Hyatt Regency Lexington and Crowne Plaza, plus expansions at Kentucky Kingdom and Malibu Jack's. These projects, along with four preliminary approvals like Boone's Ridge, are expected to create nearly 500 jobs. The Tourism Development Act allows these developers to recover costs via onsite sales tax. <https://www.lanereport.com/185621/2026/01/5-new-tourism-development-projects-118-million-invested-in-2025/>

Iconic and Historic Meeting House completes accessibility upgrades - The Red River Meeting House in Adairville, birthplace of the Second Great Awakening, has installed a handicap-accessibility ramp. Funded by the Kentucky Heritage Council and America250 Commission, the project ensures the frontier landmark remains inclusive for its 2026 semiquincentennial. Designed to match the site's rustic aesthetic, the ramp allows all visitors to experience the historic 1800 revival site. This upgrade preserves Kentucky's religious heritage while meeting modern standards for community worship and reenactments. https://www.franklinfavorite.com/russellville/news/article_4b4d0990-eafa-536f-905c-c126103df405.html

Louisville based hemp production facility debuts tourism experience - Cornbread Hemp has launched a new production facility and hemp tourism experience in Louisville, honoring Kentucky's long history in the hemp industry. This state-of-the-art facility offers visitors guided, educational tours that provide an immersive, behind-the-scenes look at how premium CBD and THC products are grown, processed, and tested from Kentucky-grown hemp flowers. The new destination provides a tranquil, wellness-focused stop, blending tradition with modern innovation, and includes a retail shop with a wide selection of their organic products. Tours are available Monday through Saturday. <https://www.lanereport.com/184806/2025/11/cornbread-hemp-launches-hemp-tourism-experience-in-louisville/>

LPGA selects Valhalla Golf Club as site for 2028 Solheim Cup - The LPGA announced that the 2028 Solheim Cup will take place from September 8-10 at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville. The Solheim is a biennial tournament between teams of the best golfers from the United States and Europe. Valhalla will become one of the few venues to host both a Solheim Cup and a Ryder Cup, marking the LPGA Tour's return to Kentucky after more than 50 years. Fans can anticipate ticket and volunteer information after the 2026 Solheim Cup. <https://www.golfdaily.com/official-dates-unveiled-for-2028-solheim-cup/>

Red River Gorge Visitor Center installs solar panels and EV charger station - Red River Gorge Visitor Center unveiled its brand-new solar initiative in September 2025. The center, which is located in Slade, installed new solar panels and two EV chargers. The event marked the 100th solar project for the Mountain Association and recognized the Powell County Tourism Commission for becoming the state's first tourism commission to achieve net-zero energy consumption. This monumental achievement showcases a significant commitment to sustainability and eco-friendly tourism in the Red River Gorge region. <https://www.wkyt.com/2025/09/10/special-ribbon-cutting-ceremony-held-newly-named-red-river-gorge-visitors-center/>

Elizabethtown Airport plans 200-acre expansion - Elizabethtown is embarking on a multi-million-dollar expansion of Addington Field to accommodate surging corporate and military demand. The project involves constructing a new, longer runway shifted 1,000 feet west to improve safety and support larger aircraft. Officials have already acquired 220 acres for the expansion, which will also include new hangars and terminal upgrades. This infrastructure boost aims to strengthen the regional economy and better

serve nearby Fort Knox operations. Renovations are expected to be completed by 2027.

<https://www.wave3.com/2025/10/20/elizabethtown-plans-build-new-airport-runway-meet-growing-demand/>

Allegiant Air announces non-stop flights from California to Northern Kentucky - Allegiant Air has announced a new non-stop route connecting Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport to Orange County, California's John Wayne Airport. As of May 2026 the budget carrier offers flights twice weekly, operating on Thursdays and Sundays. This new service provides Southern California-area travelers with a convenient and affordable link to Northern Kentucky's popular leisure destinations, including world-class bourbon distilleries and attractions like the Ark Encounter, with introductory one-way fares starting from \$79. <https://local12.com/news/local/airline-unveils-new-west-coast-route-cvg-cincinnati-airport-allegiant-air-flight-orange-county-california>

SkyWest Airlines begins daily flights from Paducah to Chicago and Houston – Paducah's Barkley Regional Airport (PAH) now offers one daily roundtrip flight to both Chicago O'Hare (ORD) and Houston Intercontinental (IAH). SkyWest Airlines, operating as United Express, is providing the new service on 50-seat CRJ-550 aircraft, replacing the current flights to Charlotte. This move was finalized after SkyWest agreed to maintain the dual-destination schedule at the original subsidy rate approved by the DOT for a Chicago-only route. <https://www.wkms.org/business-economy/2025-10-28/flights-from-paducah-to-chicago-houston-to-start-in-february>

First phase of road improvement project in west Kentucky almost completed - The I-69 Ohio River Crossing (ORX) Section 1 in Henderson, Kentucky, is nearing substantial completion, with a nearly 2.5-mile new roadway (KY 3690) opening to traffic. This \$158 million phase, which broke ground in 2022, includes a six-plus-mile extension of I-69, nine new bridges, and reconstructed interchanges at U.S. 41 and U.S. 60. This new connection greatly improves travel times and safety, marking a key step toward the future I-69 bridge connecting Kentucky and Indiana, which is currently projected for completion in 2031. <https://fox56news.com/news/kentucky/new-kentucky-roadway-to-open-as-part-of-i-69-projects-first-phase-nears-completion/>

Murray Tourism celebrates 40 years - The Murray Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is celebrating 40 years of promoting tourism, starting as the Murray Tourism Commission in January 1985. Initially a part-time role, the CVB grew into a dedicated office with full-time staff and eventually settled in a renovated visitors center in downtown Murray in 2017. Over four decades, the organization has worked to share Murray's charm, history, and community events, playing a key role in the growth of tourism for the city. https://www.murrayledger.com/news/murray-convention-and-visitors-bureau-celebrates-40-years/article_398c5279-a7b3-4f64-8190-6ee810e1b3a7.html

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