



What's New in Kentucky

Arts & Culture

New mural completed in downtown Georgetown - Located along the Broadway Street corridor in Historic Downtown Georgetown, Chris Chappell's completed mural of roses transforms a prominent exterior wall into a vibrant visual anchor for the city center. The large-scale artwork celebrates Scott County's rich heritage by blending custom typography with Chappell's signature spray-paint realism. Its design weaves together detailed architectural nods, sweeping motifs of the surrounding Bluegrass landscape, and symbolic elements honoring the region's deep equestrian and agricultural roots. https://www.news-graphic.com/news/chappell-begins-new-mural-downtown/article_8db2b4ec-3a61-4476-ac4b-493d2697e10b.html

Children's Museum in west Louisville expected to open in 2027 - Phase one of the Adventure House of You (AHOY) Museum will open in early 2027 at the Portland Museum in West Louisville. The \$2.75 million, 4,800-square-foot children's museum focuses on "risky play"—encouraging kids aged four to 10 to climb, jump, and build decision-making skills. Leaders Katy Delahanty and Danny Seim designed the intergenerational space to promote play, celebrate West End heritage, and help bridge Louisville's historic Ninth Street socioeconomic divide. <http://courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/03/11/ahoy-childrens-museum-to-open-in-louisville-in-portland-in-2027/88898429007/>

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

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, Hometown 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 Slugger Museum celebrates 30th anniversary with 90s themed exhibit - The Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory is celebrating its 30th anniversary by taking visitors back to its 1996 opening. To mark three decades in downtown Louisville, the museum unveiled nostalgic exhibits, including "Sticks of '96" and "All That and a Bag of '96," which highlight baseball history alongside pop culture, music, and movies from 1996. The celebration honors the iconic downtown venue and its famous, towering 120-foot "World's Largest Baseball Bat." <https://www.wlky.com/article/louisville-slugger-museum-1996-exhibits-30th-anniversary/71414373>

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 for 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 Commemorates Mule-Shipping History with Launch of Historic Geotrail - 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.american-times-reporter.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/>

Multiple 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>

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

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/>

Attractions

National Corvette Museum debuts new wing - The National Corvette Museum has officially opened its new 66,000-square-foot Collections Facility on its campus in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Unveiled with a ribbon-cutting ceremony during the museum's 32nd Anniversary Celebration, the state-of-the-art building provides dedicated space for storing, conserving, and preserving historic Corvettes, documents, and artifacts. Public access and guided behind-the-scenes tours of the expanded space are set to begin in early 2027 following final preparations, allowing the museum to showcase Corvette history more comprehensively than ever before. <https://www.magnetomagazine.com/articles/national-corvette-museum-prepares-to-open-major-new-collections-and-preservation-facility/>

Martin County opens outdoor exhibit honoring coal miners and railroad workers - The Martin County Fiscal Court and the City of Warfield officially opened the "Himmler Heritage Exhibit — Tracks Through Time." Funded by the Kentucky Heritage Council and America250KY Grant Program, the outdoor exhibit honors local coal miners, railroad workers, and the history of Himmlerville. Features include a restored historic caboose, replica coal cart, interpretive signs, and historical memorabilia. Local officials emphasized the project's role in preserving community legacy while driving regional tourism and education. <https://mountain-topmedia.com/martin-county-opens-himmler-heritage-exhibit-in-warfield/>

Louisville to host pickleball festival - Louisville will host "PickleY'all: The Louisville Pickleball Festival" downtown on Oct. 16–17, Mayor Craig Greenberg announced. Taking place alongside the 2026 APP Humana Louisville Open, the new festival features interactive play, pro-am exhibitions, local food trucks, wellness screenings, downtown beautification efforts, and a free live concert. Sponsored by major local partners including Humana and Churchill Downs, the event aims to bring residents together, boost health, and strengthen downtown activity. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/News/local/louisville/2026/07/22/louisville-pickleball-festival-craig-greenberg/91001981007/>

New amphitheater in Elizabethtown set for spring opening - Opening in spring 2027, Steelgrove will become Central Kentucky's largest outdoor entertainment venue. The \$47 million, 10,000-capacity amphitheater sits on a 55-acre site off I-65 near the Bluegrass Parkway in Elizabethtown. Strategically located between Louisville and Nashville, the seasonal venue features a distinctive stage design, custom acoustics, and landscape design built to attract major summer touring artists across various music genres, comedy, and large regional events. <https://news.pollstar.com/2026/06/18/elizabethtown-names-new-amphitheater-and-gm/>

Cutting edge spa set to open in Northern Kentucky in 2027 - Blank State Spa is bringing Covington's first modern bathhouse to downtown Northern Kentucky in early 2027. Located inside the historic Eilerman Building, the nearly 7,500-square-foot, two-level destination features a comprehensive hydrotherapy circuit with saunas, steam rooms, cold plunges, and a mineral pool. Beyond traditional spa treatments like massages and facials, the retreat will also house a bar café offering functional beverages, organic wines, and craft cocktails for total rejuvenation. <https://local12.com/news/local/covington-first-modern-bathhouse-blank-state-spa>

Park City prepares to build drive-in theater - A proposed drive-in theater and amphitheater complex in Park City is moving closer to construction, targeting fall to solicit bids. Located on 15 acres near Interstate 65, the \$3.5–\$4 million project features a 3,000-seat outdoor venue for community events and regional performances, alongside a 200-space single-screen drive-in. Spearheaded by local leadership and Deco Architects, the new tourism attraction aims to boost regional travel amenities while actively searching for private investment partners. <https://www.wbko.com/2026/07/14/barren-county-drive-in-theater-amphitheater-project-moves-toward-construction-bids-private-investor-search/>

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 on October 30. 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>

Glasgow begins multi-million-dollar theater renovation - Glasgow's 30-year-old Marquee Cinemas on Happy Valley Road is undergoing a multi-million-dollar renovation to reopen as a Crowne Pointe Theatre complex by mid-spring 2027. Led by local developer Larry Glass and the owners of Elizabethtown's Crowne Pointe Theatre, the project will modernize the facility with luxury recliner seating, upgraded digital projection, reserved ticketing, self-service concessions, and infrastructure improvements. The theater will continue operating through summer 2026 before closing briefly for renovations. <https://www.wbko.com/2026/07/18/glasgow-movie-theater-undergo-full-renovation-reopen-crowne-pointe-theatre/>

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>

Ark Encounter celebrates 10th anniversary - Grant County's Ark Encounter celebrated its 10th anniversary in July. Featuring a 510-foot wooden Noah's Ark replica, the Grant County tourist attraction has drawn over 10 million visitors since opening in 2016. The site has generated significant economic impact through tourism taxes and local job creation, while continuing to expand its campus with multi-million dollar additions like the Truth Traveler VR experience.

<https://www.lanereport.com/188338/2026/07/ark-encounter-is-celebrating-its-10th-anniversary/>

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 museum 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 opening museum in Louisville - On July 4, the Sons of the American Revolution Education Center soft debuted a \$30 million immersive Revolutionary War experience. The facility is slated to be fully opened in early 2027. 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" in May. 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>

Bourbon

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

Culinary

Country Boy Brewing to open distillery in Sadieville – Country Boy Brewing is launching Country Boy Distilling at in Sadieville in Fall 2026. Housed in the former Hi-View Meats location, it marks Scott County's first production distillery since Prohibition's repeal. The 1,300 squarefoot facility will feature a custom 100-gallon Vendome still, as well as a tasting bar. The plan is to initially produce vodka, gin, and apple brandy. Spirits will be available on-site and at Country Boy taprooms, with eventual plans for bourbon and statewide distribution. <https://www.kentucky.com/lexgoeat/bourbon/article316248171.html>

Ale-8-One soda celebrates 100th anniversary - Celebrated as a Kentucky staple, Ale-8-One marks its 100th anniversary in 2026. To celebrate this milestone, the iconic ginger-citrus soda opened its Winchester bottling factory to fans. Visitors can enjoy free guided tours that share the brand's history and offer an inside look at the production line. However, tourists won't learn everything: the drink's original 1926 recipe remains a closely guarded secret hidden from the public eye. <https://www.tastingtable.com/2204158/classic-kentucky-soda-ale-8-one-100-years-old-2026/>

New York-based Magnolia Bakery now open Louisville - Located on Market Street, inside The Zen luxury apartments, the shop was brought to the city by Louisville native Alex Nesselthaler, making it only the second domestic franchise in the country. Renowned for its world-famous banana pudding, red velvet cupcakes, and appearances on "Sex and the City," the iconic bakery expands its footprint beyond major global metropolises. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/entertainment/dining/restaurant/2026/08/06/magnolia-bakery-opening-date-set-for-louisville-nulu-location/91204482007/>

New restaurant opens inside Louisville's Hotel Genevieve - The Exchange NuLu has officially opened inside Louisville's Hotel Genevieve, bringing the established Southern Indiana dining concept across the river. Taking over the renovated space formerly occupied by Byrdie's, the neighborhood restaurant serves signature staples from its original New Albany location—including Goat Cheese Fritters and Steak Frites—alongside small plates highlighting seasonal, local produce. The concept also features a full-service bar stocked with regional bourbons, local craft beers, and handcrafted cocktails. https://www.wdrb.com/wdrb-in-the-morning/an-established-new-albany-restaurant-brings-their-concept-to-louisvilles-nulu/article_760a1b01-1e9d-4621-b79f-8c15d2579fcf.html

House of Marigold set to open second location in Norton Commons - House of Marigold announced plans to open a second location in the NuLu neighborhood, scheduled for autumn 2026. The expansion into a nearly 13,000-square-foot space at on Market Street marked a major milestone for the restaurant. The upscale venue was designed to feature a greenhouse dining area, rooftop bar, and private mezzanine. Unlike their original Shelbyville Road spot, this location planned to offer full dinner service

alongside brunch. <https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2026/06/25/house-of-marigold-to-open-norton-commons.html>

Purple Toad Winery & Distillery opens new facility in Bowling Green – A Paducah based winery celebrated the grand opening of its new Bowling Green location with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in July. The 20,000-square-foot facility on Cemetery Road is five times larger than the original Paducah location, featuring a full bar, two party rooms, and a 300-person hall. Shortly after opening, the site was officially added to the Kentucky Bourbon Trail. Kentucky's top-selling winery offers 54 wine varieties and 20 spirits, with plans to cultivate grapes on the ten-acre property. <https://bgdailynews.com/2026/07/02/slide-show-purple-toad-cuts-ribbon-on-new-bowling-green-location/>

Louisville welcomes several new fine dining restaurants - Louisville's dining scene is gaining momentum with five new chef-driven restaurants across the Highlands, Germantown, and Clifton. Debuts include James Beard-nominee Dallas McGarity's contemporary Italian Cipollini, Lawrence Weeks' Murray's Creole Pub, and Prado 264, the city's first Italian-Cuban concept. In Germantown, Chef Ming Pu offers Taiwanese New American at TANA, while Clifton's Mill Iron 4 delivers live-fire cooking from James Beard-nominated Noam Bilitzer. Together, these openings highlight Louisville's growing culinary landscape. <https://www.gotolouisville.com/media/news-stories/5-new-chef-driven-restaurants-showcase-louisvilles-culinary-momentum/>

Kentucky debuts new Historic Dining Guide – In May, 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, was 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. <https://www.wlwt.com/article/3-chefs-cincinnati-northern-kentucky-james-beard-finalists/70896261>

Louisville steakhouse celebrates 20th anniversary - Jeff Ruby's Steakhouse in downtown Louisville is celebrating its 20th anniversary as a staple of the city's fine dining scene. The Ruby family hosted a celebration commemorating two decades since opening at 325 W. Main Street in 2006—the brand's first venture outside Cincinnati. Known for its prime steaks, sushi, and Art Deco atmosphere, founder Jeff Ruby credited dedicated employees, local community support, and strong ties to regional horse racing for the steakhouse's lasting success. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/foodanddrink/foodnews/jeff-ruby-s-steakhouse-marks-20-years-as-institution-in-louisville/ar-AA28gUCL>

Mellow Mushroom Pizza to reopen in Lexington - Popular pizza chain Mellow Mushroom is returning to Lexington after its previous locations closed following the pandemic. Franchisees John and Whitney Bowling plan to open a new restaurant in the Hamburg area by late 2026, targeting locals and travelers. Known for hand-tossed stone-baked pizzas and a 1970s psychedelic vibe, the brand also plans to expand across Kentucky with future locations slated for Richmond, London, and a second Lexington spot. <https://www.kentucky.com/lexgoeat/restaurants/article316503465.html>

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>

Horses

Keeneland celebrates 90th anniversary during fall meet - Keeneland will celebrate its 90th anniversary during its 17-day Fall Meet from October 2–24, featuring 22 stakes worth a total of \$10.7 million. Ahead of hosting its fourth Breeders' Cup World Championships, the track kicks off action with Fall Stars Weekend, offering 11 stakes worth \$6.35 million. Eight of those signature events belong to the Breeders' Cup Challenge Series, awarding winners automatic entry into the prestigious late-October World Championships. <https://paulickreport.com/news/the-biz/keeneland-celebrates-90th-birthday-with-22-fall-meet-stakes-worth-10-7-million>

Lexington Airport to add flights for 2026 Breeder's Cup at Keeneland - Blue Grass Airport (LEX) has partnered with American Airlines to add special non-stop flights for the 2026 Breeders' Cup World Championships, held October 30–31 at nearby Keeneland Race Course. American Airlines will offer limited round-trip service connecting Lexington directly to Boston, New York (JFK), Los Angeles, Miami, and Phoenix. Flights arrive October 29 and depart November 1. These temporary routes supplement American's existing daily flights to Charlotte, Chicago O'Hare, and Dallas-Fort Worth. <https://www.lanereport.com/188779/2026/08/blue-grass-airport-lex-adds-flights-from-american-airlines-for-2026-breeders-cup-world-championships/>

Quarter horse racetrack holds grand opening in eastern Kentucky - Boyd County celebrated the grand opening of Sandy Ridge Racetrack in August, marking the launch of Kentucky's first dedicated Quarter Horse racing facility. The facility is adjacent to Sandy's Racing & Gaming in Ashland, the new track brought premier Quarter Horse meets to Eastern Kentucky. The venue features millions in purse money, drawing thousands of fans while bolstering local tourism, job creation, and the regional equine economy. <https://fox56news.com/news/kentucky/boyd-county-celebrates-quarter-horse-track-grand-opening/>

Huge renovations underway at Churchill Downs - Churchill Downs Inc. has begun a trio of major track upgrades ahead of upcoming Kentucky Derbies. The centerpiece is Victory Run, a \$280 million–\$300 million, four-story first-turn venue opening for Derby 154 in 2028 with premium dining and seating for

7,800 guests. Additionally, a \$9.75 million Homestretch Club expansion will finish by Derby 153 in 2027, alongside infield upgrades introducing turfside cabanas, 1,400 temporary seats, and spaces for entertainment. <https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2026/07/30/churchill-downs-upgrades-progress.html>

Kentucky Horse Park completes statue restoration - A statue immortalizing the legendary racehorse Man o' War was successfully restored at the Kentucky Horse Park. Located near the entrance at his final resting place, the famous bronze sculpture honors one of the most celebrated Thoroughbreds in racing history. The restoration project preserved the historic monument, ensuring park visitors can continue to pay tribute to the iconic stallion and his enduring legacy in Central Kentucky. <https://fox56news.com/news/local/lexington/statue-of-iconic-racehorse-man-o-war-restored-at-kentucky-horse-park/>

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/>

Hotels & Lodging

The Galt House in Downtown Louisville debuts new luxury suites - The Galt House Hotel in downtown Louisville has unveiled "The Legendary Collection," featuring six luxury 2,000-square-foot themed suites. Overlooking the Ohio River, the units celebrate University of Louisville football and basketball alongside Kentucky's thoroughbred racing heritage through curated memorabilia, historic photography, and custom murals. Starting at \$650–\$800 nightly, these immersive residential-style accommodations offer unique regional experiences for sports fans and travelers, with future suites honoring Muhammad Ali and Four Roses Bourbon. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/07/30/see-the-galt-house-hotel-new-luxury-uofl-themed-suites-in-louisville-kentucky/91025230007/>

Lexington Embassy Suites completes multi-million-dollar renovation - The Embassy Suites by Hilton Lexington/UK Coldstream has unveiled a multi-million-dollar transformation. Located near downtown Lexington and the University of Kentucky, the 230-suite property now features fully refreshed two-room guest accommodations, modernized public spaces, and a redesigned lobby and atrium. The upgrade also refreshed the hotel's on-site dining and revamped its meeting and event venues with enhanced audiovisual technology and versatile seating configured for work, socializing, and leisure. <https://www.hotelmanagement.net/renovations/embassy-suites-lexingtonuk-coldstream-completes-renovation>

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 be added to Louisville skyscraper - A JW Marriott hotel is coming to downtown Louisville, transforming the 26-story tower at 401 S. 4th St. into a 418-room luxury destination. Developed by Indianapolis-based Ghoman Group and set to open in 2027, the conversion marks the city's first office-to-hotel reuse project. The hotel—which will feature 15,000 square feet of event space, five restaurants, and a rooftop bar—will become Greater Louisville's sixth-largest hotel, delivering a major boost to downtown tourism. <https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2026/01/28/jw-marriott-planned-for-downtown-tower.html>

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

Fort Boonesborough State Park campgrounds undergoing repairs - Fort Boonesborough State Park campgrounds are expected to reopen by spring to mid-2027. The delayed reopening comes as the park undergoes extensive flood recovery following catastrophic spring flooding that submerged major facilities. High waters severely damaged the park's electrical grid and wastewater infrastructure. Due to the scale of required repairs, official restoration and utility upgrades will take time, keeping the campground closed for the entire 2026 season before welcoming visitors back next year. <https://www.wkyt.com/2026/08/07/good-question-why-doesnt-fort-boonesborough-reopen-its-beach-swimming/>

Pine Mountain State Resort Park to undergo extensive renovations - Pine Mountain State Resort Park, in southeastern Kentucky, will receive \$6.9 million in hospitality upgrades to enhance visitor experiences and boost regional tourism. Beginning in April 2027, renovations will modernize lodge rooms with updated bathrooms, new finishes, flooring, and mini-fridges. The park's restaurant, lobby, and convention center will also be refreshed. Cottages, hiking trails, the golf course, pool, and other outdoor amenities will remain open to guests throughout construction.

<https://www.lanereport.com/188794/2026/08/pine-mountain-state-resort-park-to-receive-6-9-million-in-upgrades/>

Nolin Lake State Park reopens after floods - Nolin Lake State Park has reopened more than a year after the park suffered severe flood damage. Currently, the primitive camp sites are open, with the full-service campground to follow once electrical service, bathhouses, and wastewater infrastructure are restored. Additional cleanup and renovations continue across the park's beach, playgrounds, and public areas. <https://www.k105.com/2026/08/05/nolin-lake-state-park-to-reopen-after-flooding/>

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>

Lake Cumberland State Resort Park undergoing multi-million-dollar renovation- 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 in 2027 and 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/>

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/>

Carter Caves State Park reopens campground after massive renovation - Carter Caves State Resort Park has completed \$3.8 million campground renovation. The project, which was completed in June, was funded by a \$40 million allocation for state parks. The updates 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 2025 with a \$5.5 million state investment for improvements to dining and meeting rooms. It is expected to reopen in Spring 2027. 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 be completed by Fall 2026. 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. The remaining editions of the series are scheduled for 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>

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 lineup for upcoming festival - 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. Headliners for the festival include Blackberry Smoke, Ian Munsick and Pricilla Block. Additionally, there will be Kentucky bourbon tastings, local food trucks, and on-site camping. Proceeds support regional youth programs and community projects. The event aims to blend high-quality musical performances with local culture to create a lasting community impact. <https://www.owensborotimes.com/features/2026/06/blackberry-smoke-to-headline-inaugural-stomp-and-holler-festival-in-beaver-dam-more-acts-also-announced/>

Outdoors

Elizabethtown to build six-mile bike trail - A new multi-use trail is being built around Trooper Lake, expanding Elizabethtown, Kentucky's growing network of outdoor recreation. Developed in collaboration with cycling organizations like NICA, IMBA, and PeopleForBikes, the six-mile singletrack system is designed with beginner riders in mind to serve as a national model for accessible mountain biking. The project further solidifies Elizabethtown's official designation as Kentucky's very first Urban Trail Town, connecting urban spaces directly to surrounding nature.. <https://www.singletracks.com/mtb-trails/elizabethtown-kentucky-is-the-states-first-urban-trail-town/>

Major League Fishing includes Kentucky Lake in tournament series - Major League Fishing announced its 2026 Toyota Series schedule, featuring a Central Division stop at Kentucky Lake in Gilbertsville from April 9–11, 2026. Hosted by the Kentucky Lake CVB, the three-day event allows regional anglers to compete for top payouts and qualify for the entry-fee-free championship. The season also introduces new tech rules capping live sonar usage to three hours daily, balancing modern electronics with traditional bass fishing strategies to protect fairness across the circuit.

<https://majorleaguefishing.com/press-releases/major-league-fishing-reveals-2026-toyota-series-schedule/>

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

Northern Kentucky county to turn golf course into public park - Kenton County is converting the former 225-acre Fox Run Golf Course into a new public park. Plans will prioritize accessible green space alongside unique amenities, including bike paths and a planned ropes course, aiming to create an outdoor destination distinct within Northern Kentucky. <https://linknky.com/arts-culture/2026/07/06/how-the-new-kenton-county-park-project-going/>

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/>

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/>

Other

Lexington Tourism Office launches holistic wellness initiative – VisitLEX, has launched "Bluegrass Bathing," a new wellness initiative that invites visitors to experience guided outdoor activities across Lexington's iconic countryside. Inspired by the practice of grounding—connecting directly with the Earth's surface—the campaign offers Pilates, sound baths, and guided meditations at local horse farms and public parks. Developed with creative agency Cornett, the program combines Lexington's rich limestone-nourished landscape with relaxing wellness practices, offering travelers a uniquely Kentucky reset.

<https://marketingreport.one/creation/visitlex-roots-wellness-in-the-bluegrass.html>

Iconic Pedestrian Bridge in Northern Kentucky reopens after renovation - The City of Newport celebrated the early reopening of the historic Purple People Bridge with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Completed ahead of schedule in June 2026, permanent structural repairs restored full pedestrian access for nearly one million annual visitors. As a major tourism driver connecting Northern Kentucky directly to Cincinnati, the pedestrian-only bridge features dynamic LED lighting at night that changes depending on season and events. <https://nkytribune.com/2026/06/city-of-newport-hosts-ribbon-cutting-to-reopen-purple-people-bridge-five-days-ahead-of-schedule/>

Interstate 65 in Louisville officially reopened – After closing a section of Interstate 65 in Louisville for infrastructure upgrades, road crews reopened the artery in both directions in late July. The initial \$150 million phase replaced three aging 1950s bridges as part of the broader \$370 million I-65 Central Corridor Project. While work replacing six additional bridges continues through March 2027 under reduced lane capacity, state officials confirmed no further full closures of the interstate are planned for the project.

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/07/29/i-65-construction-in-louisville-two-lanes-reopen-in-each-direction-on-july-29/91088086007/>

Kentucky Expo Center to complete construction by 2027 - The Kentucky Exposition Center is nearing completion on its new \$180 million multi-purpose facility, scheduled to wrap up by December 31 ahead of its 2027 debut. Spanning 350,000 square feet east of Broadbent Arena, the structure features limestone entrances, extensive new piping, and refreshed parking. Designed for livestock, equine events, sports tournaments, and trade shows, this building anchors a broader \$460 million renovation aimed at making the venue the nation's fifth-largest convention center. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/08/17/new-kentucky-expo-center-facility-nears-completion/91148547007/>

United Airlines announces new non-stop flights between Northern Kentucky and San Francisco - United Airlines will launch daily nonstop service between Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) and San Francisco starting October 25, 2026. This is United's sixth direct destination from CVG, connecting tri-state travelers to a major West Coast tech hub and key transpacific routes into Asia. <https://nkytribune.com/2026/08/united-airlines-to-offer-nonstop-service-from-cvg-to-san-francisco-starting-in-october/>

Kentucky Tourism sets economic impact records four years in a row - Kentucky achieved a fourth consecutive record-breaking year for tourism in 2025, generating \$14.6 billion in total economic impact. The state welcomed 81.1 million visitors who spent \$10.4 billion across food, lodging, transportation, retail, and entertainment. Gov. Andy Beshear celebrated the milestone, noting that the thriving industry supported nearly 97,000 jobs. Popular draws like bourbon distilleries, horse racing venues, and state parks continue to drive the commonwealth's economic growth.

<https://www.lanereport.com/188102/2026/06/kentucky-tourism-is-breaking-records/>

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/>

Plans released for new interstate bridge connecting Northern Kentucky to Cincinnati - The upcoming Ohio-Kentucky bridge west of the Brent Spence will be the world's first double-decker, cable-stayed bridge designed without internal trusses. Engineered for a 100-year lifespan, the novel structure recently passed rigorous wind-tunnel testing alongside surrounding landmarks. Expected to open in 2031, the bridge will carry Interstate 71/75 through-traffic between Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, transforming regional transit by shifting local traffic to the existing Brent Spence Bridge and modernizing one of the nation's busiest interstate corridors. <https://www.kentucky.com/news/state/kentucky/article316798273.html>

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>

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/>

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/>

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-epi=z1189xxp000350c000350e1189xxv003597d--56--&gca-ft=199&gca-ds=sophi>

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/>

Hopkinsville receives federal grant for surveys and preservation of historic properties - The City of Hopkinsville has received a \$22,500 federal grant to update its historic property surveys, securing funds allocated through Kentucky's Certified Local Government program. Jointly administered by the Kentucky Heritage Council and the National Park Service, the grant will support the city's Community and Development Services department in re-surveying historic structures. The updated documentation will help preserve local architectural heritage, identify candidate sites for national historic registries, and support future downtown revitalizations. <https://www.whvoradio.com/2026/07/17/hopkinsville-awarded-22500-federal-grant-to-update-historic-property-surveys/news-edge/>

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 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>

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