

What's New in Kentucky

From new cultural offerings and culinary destinations to enhanced outdoor adventures, signature horse-country experiences, and innovative lodging, Kentucky is giving travelers even more reasons to visit, stay longer, and discover something new. Below is a summary of some “What’s New” highlights from around the state.

For a more detailed and robust list of What’s New in Kentucky, please see the two documents here which are updated quarterly:

<https://www.kentuckytourism.com/media/whats-new-in-kentucky>

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Arts & Culture

Kentucky’s cultural offerings are growing through new public art, historic preservation, museum exhibitions, and major performing-arts programming. **Chris Chappell’s downtown Georgetown mural** celebrates Scott County’s heritage, while 10 new stops have expanded the **Kentucky African American Heritage Trail** to more than 60 sites. Louisville institutions are featuring new exhibitions at the **Speed Art Museum**, **KMAC Contemporary Art Museum**, and **Frazier Kentucky History Museum**, while the **Louisville Orchestra’s** statewide **In Harmony Tour** has been extended through 2028. The **Louisville Ballet’s** 75th season, **Kentucky Opera’s** new 2026–27 lineup, and outdoor wellness programming at **Josephine Sculpture Park** add further reasons to explore the state’s arts and culture scene.

Attractions

New attractions range from family entertainment and immersive museums to expanded event venues and heritage experiences. Louisville is adding the fully accessible **Dot Experience** at the American Printing House for the Blind, the **Sons of the American Revolution Education Center**, and new dining and nightlife concepts including **Havana Jack’s Cigar Factory**. Bowling Green’s **National Corvette Museum** has opened a new collections facility and exhibit, while Owensboro’s **Maui’s Indoor Theme Park** and **Kentucky Kingdom’s** new **Flying Fox** coaster broaden family options. Communities are also investing in future venues such as Elizabethtown’s **Steelgrove amphitheater**, Cave City’s **agriculture expo center**, and Park City’s proposed **drive-in theater and amphitheater**.

Bourbon

Kentucky's bourbon tourism experience continues to expand with new distilleries, immersive visitor offerings, and trail additions across the commonwealth. Newly opened destinations include **Horse Soldier Farms** in Somerset, a 240-acre bourbon campus overlooking Lake Cumberland; **Ingram Distillery** in Columbus, home to the world's only floating barrelhouse operation; **Cave City Distilling Company** near Mammoth Cave National Park; and **Boundary Oak Distillery's Bardstown tasting room**. Major investments are also underway at **Heaven Hill Springs Distillery** in Bardstown, **Willett Distillery's** new Springfield production campus, and the forthcoming **Never Say Die** micro-distillery in downtown Lexington. The **Kentucky Bourbon Trail®** now spans more than 70 experiences across 34 counties, with new additions including **Cave City Distilling Company**, **Purple Toad Winery & Distillery**, **Pursuit Spirits**, and **Uncle Boogie's Distilling Co.** New experiences—from **Buffalo Trace's John G. Carlisle Cafe** and Louisville **Rickhouse Whiskey Co.'s** NuLu tasting room to the **Bourbon & Belonging** LGBTQ+-inclusive bourbon festival and the new **Build Your Own Bourbon Trail** trip-planning tool—give visitors even more ways to discover the people, places, and craftsmanship behind America's native spirit.

Culinary

Kentucky's food-and-drink scene continues to expand with new restaurants, national brands, and trail-based visitor experiences. Louisville welcomes **Magnolia Bakery**, **The Exchange NuLu**, and several chef-driven openings, including **Cipollini**, **TANA**, and **Mill Iron 4**, while **Yer Mom's Bookstore & Wine Café** will add a bookstore-and-wine-bar concept to NuLu. Lexington is gaining **Carson's Back Porch**, **DaRae and Friends at The Commons**, and a new Graeter's location, while **Mellow Mushroom** is preparing a return to the city. The new **Kentucky Historic Dining Guide** highlights 18 restaurants in historic buildings, and the **Kentucky Coffee Trail** connects visitors with 32 independent coffee shops statewide.

Horses

Kentucky's signature equine industry is celebrating major anniversaries, new facilities, and upgraded visitor experiences. **Keeneland** marks its 90th anniversary during the Fall Meet and will host the 2026 **Breeders' Cup**, supported by special flights into Blue Grass Airport; its new \$100 million **Paddock Building** adds dining and viewing options. **Churchill Downs** is advancing significant improvements, including the future **Victory Run** venue, while the **Kentucky Derby Museum** has refreshed its **Winner's Circle exhibit**. New additions include **Sandy Ridge Racetrack**, the state's first dedicated Quarter Horse facility, **Marshall**

Yards Racing & Gaming in Calvert City, and public tours at **Diamond A Farm** in Versailles. The **Kentucky Horse Park** has also restored its **Man o' War statue** and unveiled a new memorial honoring Funny Cide.

Hotels & Lodging

Kentucky's lodging sector is adding distinctive stays and investing heavily in renovations. Louisville's **Galt House** has introduced **The Legendary Collection** of themed luxury suites, while **Hotel Thoroughbred** has opened in downtown Paris inside a restored 1891 furniture factory. Planned Louisville projects include a **JW Marriott** conversion downtown, a **TownePlace Suites** in NuLu, and a proposed 1,000-room convention hotel. Lexington hotels, including the **Hyatt Regency** and **Hilton Lexington Downtown**, are undergoing or planning major upgrades, while state resort parks at **Barren River Lake**, **Lake Barkley**, **Lake Cumberland**, **Jenny Wiley**, and **Pine Mountain** are modernizing lodging and guest amenities. New outdoor lodging includes **Elk View Campground** in Knott County.

Music

Kentucky's music calendar includes major festivals, a new venue, and recurring programs that blend performances with local food and bourbon culture. **Louder Than Life** returns to Louisville September 17–20 with nearly 200 acts, followed by **Bourbon & Beyond** September 24–27 with more than 100 performers. Beaver Dam will debut the **Stomp and Holler Roots Music Festival**, and Louisville's new **Gig Louisville** venue brings a 250-capacity space for local and touring artists to **Paristown Pointe**. The **Kentucky Center for African American Heritage** will continue its **Destination Smooth Jazz Series** with fall performances and accompanying culinary and cultural experiences.

Outdoors

New trails, parks, wildlife attractions, and recreation facilities are strengthening Kentucky's outdoor appeal. Elizabethtown is building the six-mile **Trooper Lake bike trail**, while Bell County's planned **Boone's Ridge** wildlife attraction is expected to bring elk viewing, an aerial gondola, and large-scale visitor amenities to Eastern Kentucky. Kenton County is converting the former Fox Run Golf Course into a **225-acre public park**, and the state has opened the **Veterans Memorial WMA public shooting range** near Georgetown. Other highlights include the expansion of the **Ross Creek Wildlife Management Area**, new campground investments, and the return of **Major League Fishing** competition to **Kentucky Lake**.

Other

Kentucky is expanding tourism infrastructure, access, wellness programming, and its ability to host major events. VisitLEX's new **Bluegrass Bathing** initiative offers outdoor wellness experiences in horse country, while the restored **Purple People Bridge** has reopened between Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati. Louisville's **Kentucky Exposition Center** is nearing completion of a major new multipurpose facility, and the city will host the **2028 USA Gymnastics Olympic Trials**. Air service is expanding at **CVG** and Louisville, including new or enhanced routes to London, Nashville, Orange County, San Francisco, Portland, and Connecticut. **Viking** will also add **Ohio River cruise** stops in Henderson, Owensboro, and Louisville in 2027. **Kentucky tourism** generated a record \$14.6 billion in economic impact in 2025, supported 97,000 jobs, and welcomed 81.1 million visitors.