

Kentucky Cultural Activations

Media Pitch Backgrounder | Kentucky Tourism

Kentucky's cultural landscape is best experienced in motion: along heritage trails, neighborhood walks, immersive digital encounters, historic corridors and living cultural districts. Across the Commonwealth, visitors can follow stories of African American achievement, freedom seeking, civil rights leadership, military service, music, craftsmanship and food-and-drink traditions—then connect those stories to the people and places carrying them forward today.

This collection of story-ready activations is designed for media seeking meaningful, place-based Kentucky coverage. It offers strong angles for history, culture, road trips, technology, community-led travel, multigenerational trips and responsible heritage tourism.

Kentucky African American Heritage Trail

A statewide journey through courage, culture and contribution. Kentucky's African American Heritage Trail brings together more than 60 museums, historic homes, monuments, neighborhoods, schools, churches, freedom sites and cultural attractions across the Commonwealth. First introduced in 2025 and expanded in 2026, the trail makes it possible to build flexible itineraries across cities and regions rather than requiring visitors to travel a fixed route.

Story hooks include the Muhammad Ali Center and Louisville Downtown Civil Rights Trail; Camp Nelson National Monument; the National Underground Railroad Museum in Maysville; Hotel Metropolitan in Paducah; the SEEK Museum in Russellville; the Lyric Theatre in Lexington; and Black history landmarks spanning the Bluegrass, western Kentucky and beyond. Ten sites were added in 2026, including the Charles Young Center

in Lexington, Covington Black History Tour, Elisha Green Memorial in Maysville, Hometown Community Interpretive Park in Versailles, Isaac Burns Murphy Memorial Art Garden in Lexington, Lexington Freedom Train Monument, Moneta Sleet Jr. Park in Owensboro, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill and South Union Shaker Village.

Media angle: A statewide road trip that uses cultural travel to connect well-known names with lesser-known local stories—and shows how Kentucky is continuing to expand the record of its Black history.

Kentucky Black Trailblazers

Black history, brought to life through augmented reality. Kentucky Black Trailblazers is an immersive, mobile-first experience that brings influential Black Kentuckians into the present through QR-code-triggered augmented-reality scenes. At participating locations, visitors use a phone to scan a code and encounter stories told in an interactive format.

The experience features 19 characters across six Kentucky communities, including Bardstown, Elizabethtown, Louisville, Bullitt County, Shelby County and Oldham County. It is designed as a gateway rather than a complete catalog of Black history sites, encouraging travelers to continue their exploration through local museums, neighborhoods, historic places and Black-owned businesses.

Media angle: How Kentucky is pairing heritage tourism with accessible technology—and inviting younger and digitally engaged travelers to meet history on location.

Kentucky Sites on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail

A national civil rights story with Kentucky chapters. Kentucky's U.S. Civil Rights Trail sites put Louisville and Russellville into a larger, multi-state journey through the places

that shaped the modern Civil Rights Movement. The Louisville Downtown Civil Rights Trail includes 22 marked stops that interpret the city's struggle against segregation and the people who advanced change. The Muhammad Ali Center explores the Louisville-born global icon's humanitarian legacy, conviction and civil-rights voice.

In Russellville, the SEEK Museum—formerly the West Kentucky African American Museum—is another Kentucky site on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. Together, these experiences offer reporters a way to examine civil rights history at different scales: major urban action, a globally recognized Louisville figure and community preservation in western Kentucky.

Media angle: Louisville and Russellville as essential, often underreported Kentucky chapters of a nationally recognized civil rights itinerary.

Brigadier General Charles Young Memorial Historical Corridor

A 100-mile drive through the legacy of a groundbreaking Kentuckian. The Brigadier General Charles Young Memorial Historical Corridor honors Charles Young: West Point graduate, educator, diplomat, civil rights leader, first African American national park superintendent and the first Black American recognized with the rank of brigadier general after his posthumous promotion.

The approximately 100-mile corridor begins at Camp Nelson National Monument, a landmark associated with the recruitment and emancipation of U.S. Colored Troops and the refuge sought by formerly enslaved people. It connects travelers with sites tied to Young's life and legacy, including the Brigadier General Charles Young Birthplace Cabin in Mays Lick and the Charles Young Center in Lexington.

Media angle: A historically grounded scenic drive that links military history, national parks, civil rights, freedom and a Kentucky-born leader whose contributions are newly receiving broader recognition.

African American Forgotten Landmarks Driving Tour

Danville's deep history, rediscovered from the road. In Danville and Boyle County, the African American Forgotten Landmarks Driving Tour guides visitors to more than 50 surviving landmarks connected to the area's Black history and culture. The self-guided experience offers a powerful counterpoint to standard historic-district coverage by centering places that have too often been overlooked.

The tour creates an adaptable reporting opportunity: media can focus on preservation, genealogy, architecture, local memory, Black entrepreneurship, faith communities or the evolution of a Kentucky town's historical narrative. Visitors can obtain tour information through local visitor resources in downtown Danville.

Media angle: The work of recovering "forgotten" places—and how a self-guided driving tour turns archival history into a contemporary visitor experience.

ShakeRag Historic District Tour

Walking through Bowling Green's first National Register district recognized for African American history. ShakeRag Historic District, located at the north end of State Street in Bowling Green, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. The neighborhood's walking-tour experience highlights a community shaped by Black educators, physicians, entrepreneurs, musicians and civic leaders.

The district can be explored through self-guided materials, while seasonal guided Shake Rag tours presented through the Historic RailPark & Train Museum have offered visitors a deeper look at the people and institutions that shaped the neighborhood. Historic sites include the Brunton Home, built around 1925 as the home and office of Dr. Isaac B. Brunton.

Media angle: A walkable neighborhood story about preservation, Black community building and the people whose influence helped shape modern Bowling Green.

Underground Railroad and Freedom Stories

From the Ohio River to freedom's routes and safe havens. Kentucky's role as a border state makes it an essential setting for reporting on the Underground Railroad, emancipation and the long struggle for freedom. In Maysville, the National Underground Railroad Museum occupies the documented Bierbower House safe house in the city's downtown historic district. In Oldham County, the Oldham County History Center is associated with National Park Service Network to Freedom designations, including the Bibb Escapes/Gatewood Plantation site and the J. C. Barnett Library & Archives facility.

The story continues at Camp Nelson National Monument, which interprets the experiences of U.S. Colored Troops and formerly enslaved refugees, and through Louisville's "The Journey," a walkable and drivable audio tour that traces Underground Railroad connections on both sides of the Ohio River.

Media angle: Kentucky as a gateway to stories of escape, resistance, abolition and the unfinished work of preserving freedom history.

Louisville: Ali, Civil Rights and Black Cultural Legacy

A city-scale cultural itinerary anchored by a global figure. Louisville offers one of Kentucky's most concentrated cultural storylines. The Muhammad Ali Center interprets the life and legacy of "The Greatest" as a boxer, humanitarian and advocate, while the Louisville Downtown Civil Rights Trail offers 22 interpretive stops. Roots 101 African American Museum, the Kentucky Center for African American Heritage, Simmons College of Kentucky, the Western Branch of the Louisville Free Public Library and the Frazier

History Museum expand opportunities for coverage of art, education, archives, entrepreneurship, civic activism and bourbon history.

Louisville also supports cross-cutting itineraries that pair heritage reporting with food, music, museums and the Ohio River waterfront—an appealing framework for destination, culture and lifestyle outlets.

Media angle: Beyond Muhammad Ali: a layered Louisville itinerary where sports legacy, civil rights, education, art and bourbon history meet.

Black Equestrian Heritage

Reframing the Kentucky horse story. Kentucky's horse culture has deep African American roots, particularly through the pioneering Black jockeys, trainers, grooms and horsemen whose expertise helped build Thoroughbred racing. The Kentucky Derby Museum and Churchill Downs, the Kentucky Horse Park, the Isaac Burns Murphy Memorial Art Garden in Lexington and the African American Heritage Trail provide entry points for telling this story.

Isaac Burns Murphy, one of racing's most accomplished jockeys, offers a compelling human lens for coverage of excellence, erasure and recognition in American sport. These experiences can be paired with Lexington's African American heritage sites and the broader Bluegrass horse-country landscape.

Media angle: The Black horsemen and jockeys behind Kentucky's signature sport—and the sites preserving their legacy today.

Bourbon, Music and Appalachian Culture

Heritage that visitors can taste, hear and make. Kentucky's cultural story extends from African American heritage and freedom history to the living traditions of bourbon,

bluegrass and Appalachian craft. The Kentucky Bourbon Trail provides a ready-made lens on the state's signature spirit, distillery communities and craftsmanship; the Frazier History Museum in Louisville serves as the official starting point for the trail through its Kentucky Bourbon Trail Welcome Center.

In eastern Kentucky, destinations such as Hindman Settlement School and the Appalachian Artisan Center connect visitors to folk traditions, storytelling, handmade arts and regional music. Bluegrass and old-time music can be experienced in venues, festivals and community gatherings statewide, creating opportunities for stories focused on makers, musicians and intergenerational tradition.

Media angle: A sensory Kentucky itinerary—bourbon, music and craft—that treats culture as a living practice rather than a museum piece.

Pitch Framing Ideas

- **Kentucky's new cultural road trips:** A statewide itinerary that moves from Louisville civil-rights landmarks to Camp Nelson, Danville, Maysville, Lexington, Bowling Green and western Kentucky.
- **History meets AR:** How Kentucky Black Trailblazers is using augmented reality to make local Black history more immediate for visitors.
- **The stories beyond the marquee attractions:** Under-the-radar heritage sites and community tours reshaping what travelers think they know about Kentucky.
- **Kentucky's Black equestrian legacy:** The people and places that reveal the African American foundations of the state's horse culture.
- **From freedom routes to civil rights:** A Kentucky journey through Underground Railroad history, U.S. Colored Troops, community activism and contemporary preservation.

- **Culture with a sense of place:** Pair heritage coverage with distilleries, live music, regional food, arts communities and walkable downtowns for a broader destination story.

Planning Notes for Media

- The Kentucky African American Heritage Trail is flexible and can be explored in any sequence, allowing press itineraries to be tailored by region, audience and available time.
- Several experiences are self-guided and mobile-friendly, including Kentucky Black Trailblazers and heritage driving or walking tours; guided-tour dates and site hours should be confirmed before publication or travel.
- For cultural heritage tourism program information and media planning support, Kentucky Tourism can help identify regional partners, appropriate spokespeople and itinerary combinations.

Information should be reconfirmed with individual sites before travel, especially seasonal tour schedules, hours, ticketing and accessibility details.