

IDEA GUIDE



VISITLEX

Lexington Visitors Center
215 West Main Street
Lexington, KY 40507
(859) 233-7299 or (800) 845-3959
www.visitlex.com

DOWNTOWN LEXINGTON

*Enjoy Sightseeing, Dining, Shopping and
Entertainment in the “City in the Park”*

Unless otherwise noted, phone numbers are in the 859 area code.

Lexington has been called “the city in the park” because of its location at the center of hundreds of beautiful, park-like horse farms. But the nickname also seems an apt description of the cosmopolitan yet casual atmosphere of the downtown area.

Lexington offers a charming blend of big-city amenities and small-town friendliness. Before, after and between meeting sessions at the modern Lexington Center convention complex, you’ll find plenty to see and do. Beautiful historic office buildings, churches, and homes; many of Lexington’s finest restaurants, specialty shops and galleries; and major performance and sports arenas are within easy and safe walking distance.

A variety of excellent accommodations are convenient to the convention center and downtown attractions, including the **Hilton Lexington/Downtown** (369 W. Vine St., 231-9000) and **Hyatt Regency Lexington** (401 West High St., 253-1234); the elegant and historic **The Sire** (120 W. 2nd St., 231-1777); **The Lyndon House Bed & Breakfast** (507 N. Broadway, 420-2683); and the new **21c Museum Hotel** (167 W. Main St., 899-6800). A Marriott and a Residence Inn are slated to open in the City Center block within the year.

Attractions Old and New

Looking at downtown Lexington today, it’s hard to imagine a town of log blockhouses and cabins, or the sight of horses racing down Main Street, but both were part of the city’s early history. Lexington was Kentucky’s first big city — a bustling commercial, education and cultural center by 1800. Take a walk in the historic neighborhoods

near Lexington Center, or along Main Street, and you’ll find architecture spanning over 200 years. A few attractions of special note:

- **The Mary Todd Lincoln House**, adjacent to Lexington Center at 578 W. Main St. was a girlhood home of the First Lady, a member of a prominent early Lexington family. Guided tours are given Monday through Saturday, mid-March through November. Admission charged. 233-9999.
- **The Hunt-Morgan House**, northeast of the convention center complex at 201 North Mill St., was built in 1814 by Kentucky’s first millionaire, John Wesley Hunt. The house includes the Alexander T. Hunt Civil War Museum with items relating to Hunt’s grandson,

Confederate General John Morgan. Guided tours are available seasonally Wednesday through Sunday. Admission charged. 253-0362. While in the historic Gratz Park neighborhood you might also want to stroll the campus of the oldest college west of the Alleghenies, **Transylvania University**, Third and Broadway. At 176 N. Mill St. you’ll pass the 19th century law office of

Henry Clay, the famous U.S. Senator and one of early Lexington’s prominent citizens.

- If you brought your family along (or are just a kid at heart), a must-see attraction is the **Explorium of Lexington**, located in The Square, a complex of 16 restored 19th century commercial buildings at Main and Broadway. The 14,000-square foot museum features a variety of hands-on activities, from an “archaeological dig” to giant soap bubbles. Open Tuesday through Sunday all year. Admission charged. 258-3253.

Blue Note: Getting to and from downtown Lexington is easy. Blue Grass Airport is about a 10-minute drive away (as are those famous horse farms, golf courses and major attractions such as the Kentucky Horse Park).

• That 30-story glass office building towering over Main Street is **Lexington Financial Center** (“Big Blue” to locals) and the city’s tallest building.

For a self-guided downtown walking tour options contact the **Lexington Visitors Center**, 215 W. Main Street, 233-7299. Tours at 321-2466. Caroline Hackworth operates **Historic Downtown Walking Tours** with guided walking tours of downtown Lexington. Learn about the history of downtown as reflected in historic commercial buildings, churches and homes. Call 321-5897. New culinary walking tours are currently under development. Check with the Visitors Center for the latest information.

If you have a special interest in architecture, there is a free app for Android and iPhone that you’ll want to download before you arrive (search for “**LexArch**”). Enjoy photography, text and audio demonstrating many facets of the design, construction and purpose of thirteen buildings near, and including, Fayette County’s Old Courthouse. The courthouse has been renovated and is now home to the **Lexington Visitors Center**, business offices, **Zim’s Cafe** and **The Thirsty Fox**.

Shopping

Whether looking for decorative accessories, artwork, fine jewelry or distinctly -Lexington souvenirs, you’ll find a small selection of stores at **The Square** and **The Shops at Lexington Center**. Connected by covered ped-way, these

Blue Note: An interesting used book store is located in the basement of the Lexington Public Library, 140 E. Main St. The library also offers an art gallery, computers with Internet access and a good view of downtown from the upper floors. 231-5500.

two complexes make a great rainy (or sunny) day destination! You’ll find places to eat and drink as well. Most shops are open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Duck in to **Keeneland Mercantile** next to Starbucks in the new City Center complex. Their high-end merchandise reflects the cultured lifestyle of the Horse Capital of the World with a curated selection of beautifully-crafted goods from throughout the South,

If hunting for treasures from the past is your passion,

Bluegrass Note: Lexington is also a city *with* parks. Try these relaxing urban green spaces for an impromptu picnic or restful break: Just across Main Street from Lexington Center is **Triangle Park**, beautiful day and night with its stepped, lighted fountains. **Gratz Park**, 3rd at Mill, is located in a lovely historic residential neighborhood. Pause at **Cheapside Park**, historically the site of slave auctions, abolitionists’ speeches and “Court Days” trading. **Phoenix Park** is next to Lexington Public Library on Main Street. At the east end of downtown is **Thoroughbred Park**, where life-size bronze horses “race” and “graze.” (On a walking or jogging regimen? From Triangle Park to Thoroughbred Park and back along Main Street is about 1 1/2 miles.)

visit **Heritage Antiques** located in the big white church three blocks away. (154 N. Broadway 253-1035). Down Main Street, browse through **Ann Greely Interiors and**

Antiques (497 East Main Street; 367-0200).

If fashion is your passion, you won’t be disappointed at Lexington’s own **Bella Rose**. Locals have headed to the corner of Maxwell and Upper for over 30 years to find out what is hip and chic this season. 255-2565.

Dining Out

Downtown is home to many of Lexington’s most popular and creative restaurants: more than one hundred, in fact! In addition to the excellent hotel restaurants, **Triangle Grill** (Hilton), **BlueFire Bar & Grill** (Hyatt Regency), **Lockbox** (21c) or **Distilled at Gratz Park**, you can walk to a variety of delicious experiences, as fancy or informal as you desire. From the more than 100 places to eat in downtown Lexington, here are a few suggestions:

In **The Square**, **Tony’s** offers elegant fine dining, **Pies and Pints** offers tasty pizzas and lots of beer options, and the new lunch hot spot **Vinaigrette** is hugely popular for their salads. **Saul Good** occupies the corner space at Broadway and Short making it the perfect place to grab a cocktail or a meal before a show at the Lexington Opera House. **Hop Cats** is also located in The Square.

For hearty burgers and other “bar food,” try **Sawyer’s Bar and Grill** at the corner of Main and Broadway. The new City Center complex across from Lexington’s renovated Historic Courthouse boasts a **Jeff Ruby’s**. For sophisticated Italian dining with a California attitude, try **Portofino’s** (249 East Main; 253-9300). Sublime traditional, Sicilian and specialty pizzas are found at **Joe Bologna’s**, 120 W. Maxwell St. This local favorite also serves pasta and awesome breadsticks drenched in garlic butter.

A number of small bistros and fine dining establishments have opened across from

Lexington’s beautiful courthouses on North Limestone (no, you’re not seeing double!) Dine at the very, very French **Le Deauville**, just up the street. 246-0999. At 155

Bluegrass Note: Early riser? A variety of gourmet coffees and pastries are served at the downtown Starbucks on the corner of Main and Broadway. They are open at 6:00 a.m. every day.

North Limestone is **Oscar Diggs**, A popular spot, they feature a small but impressive seasonal menu. 523-8305.

At Short and Market is another top Lexington restaurant, **Dudley's**. Located in the historic Northern Bank Building built in 1889, this elegant spot features seafood and Continental specialties, with an excellent wine list and Sunday brunch. Also on Short: Lexington's gastro pub, the **Village Idiot**, as well as **Shakespeare and Co.**, a restaurant with great food and eccentric decor.

Bluegrass Note: Weather permitting, dine outdoors on the patios at Grey Goose or Ruddy Duck. Many downtown restaurants have sidewalk seating as well.

Jefferson Street is Lexington's newest burgeoning restaurant district. There you will find **Stella's Deli**, **Nick Ryan's**, **County Club**, **Smithtown Seafood**, **West 6th Brewing Company**, **Grey Goose**,

Blue Heron, and more!

Nightlife

Lexington's hottest nightspots are in the downtown area, offering a wide variety of entertainment and ambiance. Here are some current favorites. Some clubs close at 1 a.m.; others are open till 2:30 a.m. Legal drinking age is 21.

Ruddy Duck, at the corner of Mill Street and Short, offers great food in a casual atmosphere, inside or on the patio, and is the place to be at Happy Hour (254-0046). Make a night of it: stay on for the live music and party till the wee hours of the morning.

Around the corner, facing Cheapside Park, **Bluegrass Tavern** is a great place to find your favorite Bourbon from among 187 labels. 389-6664. On the top floor of the tall building to the left, you will find **Skybar**. 368-7900.

Parlay Social at the corner of Market and Short, is a speakeasy-style lounge offering cocktails and pub grub, plus live music. 244-1932. **Belle's Cocktail House**, with its elegant and intriguing decor, is run by the publishers of the *Bourbon Review*. 156 Market Street. Call first: 389-6777.

For a true Irish Pub go to **McCarthy's Irish Bar** (258-2181) at 117 S. Upper, or **Molly Brooke's** (420-5792) at 109 North Limestone.

For a unique way to experience downtown on a pub crawl, book one of Lexington's two party bikes. Tours last about two hours. You provide the "horse power" by pedaling the bike, which seats around 15 people. Contact the **Big Blue Pedaler**, 469-6929, or the **Thirsty Pedaler**, 619-4161.

Be sure to check out an exciting new area of development on the edge of downtown: the **Distillery District**. It is home to coffee shops, an ice cream lounge, artist studios, restaurants and bars, plus a brewery, a cidery, two distilleries and a music hall. Head out Manchester Street to explore this area blossoming around the site of the original James E. Pepper distillery.

For Sports Fans

Lexington's passion for basketball is legendary, and Rupp Arena in Lexington Center is home court to one of the top programs in college basketball, the **University of Kentucky Wildcats**. Tickets are difficult to obtain but you may call the UK ticket office at 257-1818 to check availability. Hard-core fans make a point to take a peek at Rupp Arena through a viewing window inside the Lexington Center offices. 233-4567.

Basketball isn't the only game in town though. The **Lexington Legends**, an affiliate of the Kansas City Royals, play at Lexington's state-of-the-art baseball stadium on North Broadway. Tickets are usually available at the box office on game day. 422-7867.

Cultural Attractions

Today, as historically, downtown is the center of cultural life in Lexington. Touring professional theater, ballet, Lexington Philharmonic concerts and other arts performances are on the bill at the restored 1887 **Lexington Opera House**, Broadway and Short streets; call 233-3535 for ticket information.

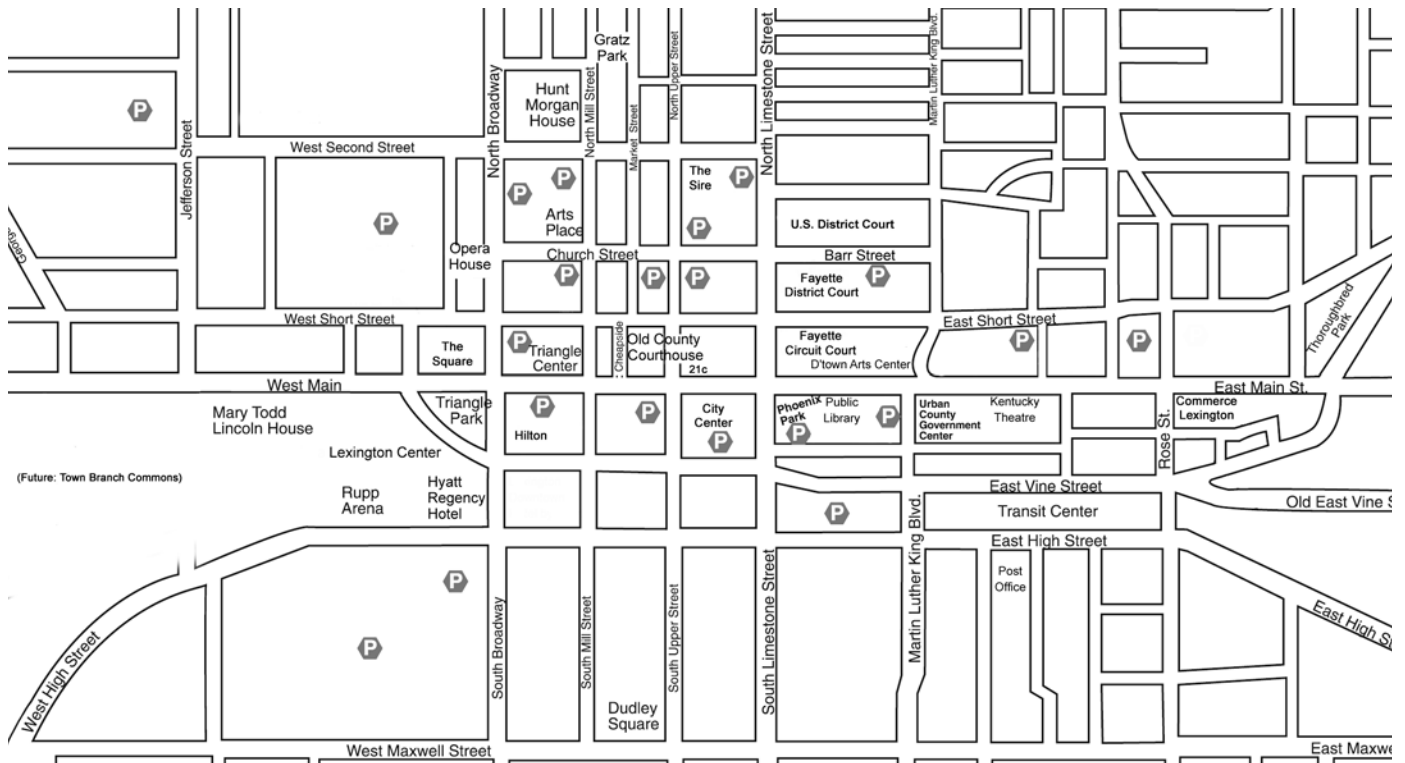
The **Kentucky Theatre** on Main Street is a lovingly restored 1920s movie house that shows classics, foreign and some first-run films, with occasional concerts. 231-7924. The renovated **Lyric Theatre**, historically the entertainment centerpiece for Lexington's African-American families, hosts a broad range of programming and is home to "WoodSongs Old Time Radio Hour," an internationally syndicated live radio show. 252-8888.

ArtsPlace, 161 N. Mill St., is headquarters to several Lexington arts groups. A gallery features changing exhibits and Red Barn Radio tapes live Bluegrass shows in the summer. 233-1469.

There are frequent musical and theatrical performances

Bluegrass Note: Spring through fall, local farmers sell vegetables, fruits, flowers and more at the **Farmers' Market** (Saturdays in Cheapside Park and Tuesdays and Thursdays on Maxwell at Broadway).

Bluegrass Note: Pamper yourself with deep tissue and other massages available at **The Massage Center**, 380 Mill in Dudley Square, 231-1782. If it's a workout you prefer, contact **Proof**, 230 W. Main St. The club has racquetball and squash courts, a running track, sauna and weight rooms, with special day rates for visitors. 559-0230.



at the **Downtown Arts Center** on Main Street. Local and regional theatre groups often perform in the Black Box Theatre on the first floor.

Throughout downtown you can discover more than 30 galleries and artist studios. There is a bi-monthly Gallery Hop that includes them all, as well as special art displays in non-traditional spaces. Contact **LexArts** for more information. 255-2951.

Places of Worship

Visitors to Lexington often remark on the many steeples in the downtown area. The beautiful sanctuaries in downtown house some of the area's oldest congregations. For example, **Historic Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church**, 540 W. Maxwell St., was founded in 1790 and is the fourth oldest African-American Baptist church in America. 254-7387. **Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**, 205 E. Short St., traces its roots to the first Christian church in America, founded at nearby Cane Ridge. 233-1551. The Episcopal **Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral** congregation, 166 Market St., dates to 1795; a plaque marks Henry Clay's pew.

Other churches in downtown Lexington include:

Calvary Baptist Church, 150 E. High St. 254-3491.

First Baptist Church, 548 W. Short St. (across from Lexington Center). 252-4808.

First Presbyterian Church, 171 Market St. 252-1919.

First United Methodist, 200 W. High St. 233-0545.

Historic St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal

Church, 251 N. Upper St. 255-7945.

St. Paul Catholic Church, 501 W. Short St. 252-0738.

Additional Information

Barber shop: Ginger's Barber Shop, 212 W Maxwell St. 254-4464.

Copies, printing, signs, banners: Fed Ex Office, 333 E. Main St. 253-1360.

Jewelry repair: Corbett-Frame Jeweler's at the Hilton, 254-1963.

Mini-market: Mill Street Mini-Mart, 112 N Mill St. 313-5037.

Nail repair: Glamour Nails, 401 W Main St. 233-0099

Hair dresser: Atea, 301 E Vine St. 687-0630.

Post Office: 210 E High St. 254-6156.

Racing forms: Fayette Cigar Store, 137 E. Main St. 252-6267.

Taxi services: Yellow Cab/Wildcat Taxi at 231-8294.

(Cabs must be phoned to schedule pickup; you cannot hail them on the street.) **Uber and Lyft** are also active in Lexington.

*Written by Teresa Day, Updated June 2019
Copyright: Lexington Convention and Visitors Bureau*