

IDEA GUIDE



VISITLEX

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INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER

*Bluegrass Region a Beautiful Place to
Enjoy the Great Outdoors*

The Bluegrass region's natural beauty and bounty have been legendary since the first explorers arrived. *"It appeared that nature, in the profusion of her bounty, had spread a feast for all that lives,"* wrote Felix Walker of his arrival in Kentucky with Daniel Boone in 1775.

In those days, of course, outdoor activities such as camping, canoeing, hiking and fishing were matters of survival. Two centuries later, residents and visitors head into the great outdoors of the Bluegrass purely for enjoyment.

Whether on foot, by horseback, in a boat or canoe, or on a bicycle, modern-day Bluegrass "explorers" will find a region that lives up to its legendary beauty.

A Bonanza of Back Roads for Two-Wheeled Tourists

In Lexington and surrounding counties, there are over 1,000 miles of lightly traveled back roads excellent for bicycle touring. Along tree-shaded Bluegrass back roads you'll pedal past beautiful farms, lovely streams, historic homes and sites and old rock fences.

Good cycling routes are found in all directions; where you choose to ride will depend on whether you want to go five miles or 50, and upon your ability. The routes range from easy to strenuous. To get recommendations for the best routes, write the Bluegrass Cycling Club at P.O. Box 1397, Lexington, KY, 40588, or stop at an area bike shop: Bicycle Face, 331 East Short St (859) 888-2453; Pedal Power, 401 S. Upper St. (859) 255-6408; Crankworks, 439 Southland Dr. (859) 523-7433; or Scheller's at 1987 Harrodsburg Rd. (859) 276-1071.

Want someone to organize for you? Reach out to Easy Rider Cycling (859) 797-3724). Based in Lexington, they specialize in professional cycling tours with full support and mechanical assistance.

At the Marriott Griffin Gate Resort Golf Shop, visitors may rent a bike for a full or half day. From the Marriott, you have easy access

to the Legacy Trail, a scenic, paved 12 mile greenway that runs from downtown Lexington to the Kentucky Horse Park. Call (859) 288-6193. Bikes are due back by 6:00 p.m.

Many organized riding events are held in the area throughout the year. The Bluegrass Cycling Club's Horsey Hundred, held every Memorial Day weekend, attracts more than 2,000 bicyclists. It takes place over three days on rural roads in Scott County and has been an annual event for over thirty years. There's a Red River Rally in the Red River Gorge in early October. Shorter excursions are scheduled throughout the year. For more on special cycling events, consult www.bgcycling.net.

Prime Paddle-Ways

Whether you want to just glide along at a leisurely pace or take the challenge of mild rapids, you'll find

Bluegrass Note: The Kentucky Section of the TransAmerica Bike Trail is more than 600 miles long, running from mountainous Pike County in the east to rural Crittenden County, across the Ohio River from Illinois. Check out the route at www.adventurecycling.org.

great canoeing and kayaking in the Bluegrass area.

Elkhorn Creek, the historic “queen of Bluegrass streams,” meanders more than 100 scenic miles through several counties, through horse farm country, past old mills and historic buildings, and under one of Kentucky’s 13 remaining covered bridges. In addition to quiet waters, the Elkhorn includes a seven-mile whitewater gorge. Excursions also are offered on the Kentucky River.

Spring through fall, you can take a guided or unguided canoe excursion tailored to your experience and to your interests, be they picnicking, photography, history or fishing.

For information, contact an area outfitter:

- ❑ Canoe Kentucky, 7323 Peaks Mill Rd., Frankfort, KY (502) 227-4492
- ❑ Three Trees Canoe-Kayak Rental, 300 Athens-Boonesboro Rd, Winchester, KY (859) 749-3227.

Water Wonderland

With more inland waterways than any state except Alaska, Kentucky is a fishing and boating paradise.

Before casting, make sure you get a fishing license if you’re 16 or over. Licenses are available at local convenience stores and at many sporting goods and bait stores, or you can do it online: www.fw.ky.gov.

You don’t even have to leave Lexington to cast your line. The 47-acre lake at **Jacobson Park**, 4001 Athens-Boonesboro Rd., is open year-round. The lake is also a popular spot for sailing. Spring through fall, pedal-boat rentals are available.

Another excellent fishing spot is **Elkhorn Creek**, one of the best smallmouth bass streams in the South. It’s also good for largemouth bass and rock bass. Several good fishing spots with boat ramps along the Elkhorn are found in Scott County, at Oser Landing Park, US 460, east of downtown Georgetown; at Cardome Landing, US 25, north of downtown Georgetown, and at Great Crossing Park, US 227, northwest of Georgetown.

Herrington Lake, located off Ky. 152 between Harrodsburg and Danville, was Kentucky’s first major man-made lake. About 3,600 acres and 35 miles long, this lake was built in the 1920s primarily for the genera-

tion of hydroelectric power. The lake is known for largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, hybrid striped bass and white bass. A variety of marinas offer boat rentals, camping and supplies, including Royalties Fishing Camp, 940 Norman’s Camp Rd. (859-748-5459) and Chimney Rock Marina, off Ky. 152 (859-748-7625). For more information, call the Harrodsburg/Mercer County Tourist Commission at (800)355-9192.

Many sections of the **Kentucky River** between Boonesboro and Frankfort are popular for fishing and boating. The closest Kentucky River boat ramp to Lexington is at Clays Ferry, Exit 99 off I-75, south of Lexington.

Rainbow trout stocking of Kentucky waters began in 1946. Today, some of the best trout fishing in the state is found in 6,000-acre **Laurel River Lake**, near London, about 75 miles south of Lexington.

This scenic lake, surrounded by the steep bluffs of the Daniel Boone National Forest, is popular both for fishing and houseboating.

About 65 miles east of Lexington, near Morehead is **Cave Run Lake**. This 8,270-acre lake is surrounded by the northernmost part of Daniel Boone National Forest, and is especially popular for sailing and trophy muskie fishing.

Bluegrass Note: More than 200 native species of fish, of which 40 are considered game fish, are found in Kentucky’s waters. The spotted, or Kentucky bass is the state’s official game fish.

Bluegrass Note: Those seeking an unusual outdoor adventure might try winter canoeing. “Winter canoeing is a religious experience,” says Ed Council, owner of Canoe Kentucky. “All the leaves are gone, so you can see more of the countryside. The water is iridescent green. And after a fresh-fallen snow or ice storm, there’s an insulating effect on background noise. You can almost hear a chipmunk breathe.”

Hiking: High Places and Trails Less Traveled

In Lexington you’re just minutes from one of Kentucky’s most beautiful natural areas — the **Kentucky River Palisades**. The Palisades are majestic limestone cliffs that run along the Kentucky River between Frankfort and Clay’s Ferry, southwest of Lexington. These cliff lines harbor the largest concentration of forest in the “Inner Bluegrass,” as Lexington/Fayette County and its adjoining counties are known. The area is home to numerous indigenous species of trees and wildlife, some rare, and is a wonderful place for hiking, photography and bird-watching.

Raven Run Nature Sanctuary, 5888 Jacks Creek Pike in Fayette County, is a 734-acre sanctuary dedicated to the preservation of the natural beauty of the Palisades area. Here, just a 20-minute drive from downtown Lexington, you can wander through woods, across meadows, along creek beds and past a pioneer cemetery and other historic sites. At least 300 species of wildflowers bloom here and 200 species of birds can be spotted throughout the year. The sanctuary includes five hiking trails totaling 10 miles, along with a nature center. Raven Run is open daily year-round. Call (859-272-6105) for information.

The beauty of the Palisades area also can be enjoyed at **Jim Beam Nature Preserve**, off US 27 in Jessamine County, south of Lexington. Set on 100 pristine acres, the preserve includes a one-mile loop trail, Jacob Beam's Path. In summer, you might catch a glimpse of two endangered bat species, the gray bat and the Indiana bat, that make their homes in the caves of the Palisades area. (859) 259-9655.

Another exceptional hiking area is the **Red River Gorge**, part of Daniel Boone National Forest, about an hour's drive east from Lexington. This spectacular 25,600-acre area combines lush forest with more than 80 natural sandstone arches. The view is great even in winter, when you have a clearer view of the rock formations. **Natural Bridge State Resort Park**, on Ky. 11 near Slade, has information about hiking in the park and the surrounding area. To get there take I-64 east to the Mountain Parkway. (606) 663-2214.

Other Bluegrass-area getaways of interest to nature enthusiasts include:

❑ **Buckley Wildlife Sanctuary**, bordered by a Kentucky River gorge in Woodford County, includes loop trails from 0.25 to 2.5 miles in length. The sanctuary is located on Germany Rd., six miles off US 60 West between Versailles and Frankfort. (859) 873-3271.

❑ **Berea College Forest**, off Ky. 21, three miles east of Berea in Madison County, is well known as the location for the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen's craft fair. But it's also a scenic and quiet place for a day hike, with eight miles of trails of varying lengths.

❑ **Quiet Trails Nature Preserve**, near Sunrise, in Harrison County, includes five miles of walking trails among its 170 acres. Two trails lead to the riffle area of the main Licking River, where you'll see more than 20 species of freshwater mussels, over 100 different species of native trees and 95 species of birds. Take US 27 ten miles north of Cynthiana. Turn right onto 1284 to Sunrise. The preserve is one and a half miles on the right off Pugh's Ferry Road. (502) 573-2886.

❑ **Shaker Village**. On the 3,000 acre preserve at this national treasure, you can wander to your heart's content, or sign up for daily adventures including paddle boarding and canoeing, and even outdoor yoga. Head out Harrodsburg Road from Lexington. It's about a 45 minute drive. (859)734-5411 .

Saddle Up and Hit the Trail

Naturally, in the Horse Capital of the World, you might feel inspired to saddle up and do a little riding yourself. Trail rides are available at the **Kentucky Horse Park** (859-233-4303 or 800-678-8813), as well as at several area stables. The Horse Park rides are offered mid-March through the end of October. Private stables offer rides year-round, depending upon the weather. Call in advance for a reservation.

Big Red Riding Stables in Harrodsburg offers guided and trail rides over 150 scenic acres of Bluegrass countryside. It's located at 1605 Jackson Pike, off US 127, about five miles north of Harrodsburg. (502) 330-8798 or (502) 382-8494.

Deer Run Stables, in Madison County, south of Lexington, offers guided trail rides as well as pony rides

for ages two through seven. 2001 River Circle Dr., Richmond, KY 40475. Take I-75 South to exit 97, turn left and follow the signs. (615) 268-9960.

Come to **Whispering Woods** and find out why the West was fun! This unique riding adventure offers trail rides and pony rides. You can also bring your own horse. 265

Wright Lane, Georgetown, KY 40324 (502) 570-9663.

Experienced riders may want more than a trail ride. Enjoy jumping or dressage? Make an appointment at **Sunburst Horsemanship School**, 30 minutes from downtown Lexington at 1129 Durham Lane in

Bluegrass Note: Take a hike within the city limits at McConnell Springs. Once you step through the Visitor Center, you'll think you're in the wilderness. In May of 1775, a group of early explorers camping by the springs got word that the first battle of the American Revolution had been fought in Lexington, Massachusetts. They named their encampment "Lexington" in honor of the battle. Now a nature preserve with walking trails, there is barely a hint of the neighboring urban landscape. The park is open seven days a week, year-round. (859) 225-4073

Nicholasville. (859) 224-8480. Parents and grandparents can also arrange to introduce a child to the world of horsemanship. They'll get to pet and feed a horse, and take a short ride. Open year round.

Bicknell Racing Stables has a nice trail around the farm. Do a trail ride, take a lesson, or get a thorough introduction to thoroughbred racing. They are located in Lexington on scenic Paris Pike. (615) 418-9825.

Kenridge Farm, outside of Paris, offers guided Adventure Trail Rides for intermediate or experienced riders. You can enjoy the Bluegrass on horseback at Shaker Village, Cave Run Lake, Clay Wildlife Refuge and other locations. Horse, tack and transportation are provided. Call at least two weeks in advance: (859) 321-7783.

The **Life Adventure Center of the Bluegrass** is another option for horse lovers. Their Equine Center in Versailles has an outdoor and indoor arena, making riding lessons possible in all types of weather, and their well-trained school horses are appropriate for a variety of skill levels, from beginner through advanced. Their trails are also open to people who want to bring their own horse. (859) 873-3271.

Bringing your own horse? Lexington's newest park features equestrian trails. The Hisle Farm was deeded to Lexington in 1989 to become a park space. Development of the property is ongoing, but two trails are open to hikers and riders. **Hisle Park** is five miles northeast of downtown at 3551 Briar Hill Road. (859) 288-2900. Another great place to explore with your own horse is **Shaker Village**, 3501 Lexington Rd, Harrodsburg, (800) 734-5611. Enjoy 33 miles of trails meandering through beautiful rolling hills.

Nearby Campgrounds

Whether you like to "rough it" in a tent, or are looking for a well-equipped location in which to park your home on wheels, you'll find excellent camping facilities in the Lexington area.

Just four miles from downtown Lexington, campers can enjoy a horse-farm setting and many amenities at the **Kentucky Horse Park Campground**, 4089 Iron Works Pike (take exit 120 off I-75). The campground is open year-round, with 260 sites open spring through fall and 130 sites open Nov. 1 through April 1. Water and electrical hookups are available. An outdoor swimming

pool with two bathhouses, volleyball court, tennis courts and basketball courts are a few of the amenities. For reservations, call (888) 459-7275.

Here are some other campgrounds in the Bluegrass region. Some operate seasonally.

Berea

☐ Oh! Kentucky Campground, Ky. 21 W off I-75 Exit 76. (859) 986-1150.

☐ Walnut Meadow Campground, Ky. 21 W off I-75 Exit 76. (859) 986-6180.

Carlisle/Mount Olivet area

☐ Blue Licks Battlefield State Resort Park, US 68. (859) 289-5507.

Danville/Harrodsburg area

☐ Chimney Rock RV Park & Campground, Chimney Rock Road off Ky. 152 on Herrington Lake near Burgin. (859) 748-5252.

☐ Cummins Ferry Resort and

Campground. KY 1988 near Harrodsburg. (859) 865-2003

☐ Gwinn Island, Ky. 33 N on Herrington Lake. (859) 236-4286.

☐ Pioneer Playhouse, 840 Standford Rd. near Danville. (859) 236-2747.

Frankfort

☐ Elkhorn Campground, 165 N. Scruggs Lane, off US 460. (502) 695-9154.

☐ Kentucky River Campground, off US 127 N. at 1489 Steele Branch Rd. (502) 227-2465

☐ Still Waters Campground, 249 Strohmeier. (502) 223-8896.

Georgetown


☐ Whispering Hill RV Park, just off I 75. (502) 863-2552

Paris
☐ Paris Landing Glamping Resort, 385 Chamber Street. (859) 321-2293

Richmond

☐ Fort Boonesborough State Park, Ky. 627, near exit 95 off I-75 south. (859) 527-3454.

Winchester

☐ Three Trees R.V. Park, on the Kentucky River near Ft. Boonesboro. (859) 749-3227. 

Bluegrass Note: What better place to enjoy the outdoors than the Kentucky Horse Park. Every Monday evening, June through September, join the KHP Run Club to run (or walk at your own pace) through the park from 5 to 8 pm. Participation is free. Local beers and food trucks add to the fun.

For more information contact VisitLEX at (800) 845-3959.

By Teresa Day, a freelance travel writer based in Lexington, KY
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