

“NO VISIT TO THE BLUEGRASS WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE FOUR-LEGGED CITIZENRY.”



WELCOME TO LEXINGTON

Whether you have a few days or just a few hours to spend in Lexington, this helpful guide can put you on the path to a memorable experience here in Kentucky's beautiful Bluegrass region. Designed to be followed at your own pace, this self-guided tour can be adapted to your own schedule and interests. So take your time and have fun! If you want to explore more of the Bluegrass, use the SIDE TRIP symbols to expand your adventure to surrounding communities and attractions.


Lexington Visitors Center

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(859) 233-7299 (800) 845-3959

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VISIT LEX

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Revised April 2021

LEXINGTON, KY

Parks and Paddocks BLUEGRASS COUNTRY DRIVING TOUR



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INSIGHTS

THE BLUEGRASS. The grass isn't really blue in Kentucky's Bluegrass region, but it really is "bluegrass." The variety of grass by that name produces a small blue flower in early spring, so a field of flowering bluegrass might appear to be bluish-green. In general, bluegrass is green like other grasses, and it turns brown in the winter.

The Bluegrass region's rich soil, partly a result of high phosphorus content from the decomposing limestone beneath it, sets the stage for bluegrass and other grasses to flourish, providing lush pasturage for grazing livestock. The region is renowned as the world's largest equine "nursery," where hundreds of horse farms surround Lexington, giving this modern city a park-like setting.

BARNs of the Bluegrass have their own distinctive architectural beauty. Reflecting the importance of the horse in the hearts of Central Kentuckians, special care has always been given to the design and construction of horse barns. Cupolas, spires, arches, and stall windows distinguish horse barns in the Bluegrass. Some are built of brick or stone; wooden barns are often painted in the farm's "colors." Inside, some are finished with fine woods and brass accents—even chandeliers! Plainer barns usually include a series of side vents that can be opened to enhance drying.

VLEX-9196-01 Driving Tour Maps-Part 2.indd 1

right gate fold

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Front

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PARKS AND PADDOCKS

Allow at least a morning or an afternoon to take in the spectacular countryside surrounding Lexington. The world’s original and largest park dedicated to the horse is found on this segment of the tour which passes some of the most beautiful horse farms in the world and begins downtown at Main St. and Broadway. Drive west on Main St.

1. TRIANGLE PARK. With its impressive rushing fountains and tree-lined promenades, Triangle Park is a favorite gathering place for all ages. The park was built with \$1 million in private donations and designed by internationally-known landscape architect Robert Zion.

2. MARY TODD LINCOLN HOUSE. Mary Todd, who became First Lady as wife of 16th President Abraham Lincoln, was born in Lexington in 1818. Her father and stepmother moved the family to this 16-room house on your left in 1832. It’s said that during visits to the Todd home, Lincoln loved to spend time reading in his father-in-law’s extensive library. Seasonal hours, admission charged. (859) 233-9999
Turn left onto Oliver Lewis Way from Main St.

3. OLIVER LEWIS WAY. This new road extension opened in 2017 and is named in honor of African American Jockey, Oliver Lewis. Lewis won the inaugural Kentucky Derby atop colt Aristides on May 17, 1875. The sculptures by Christopher Weed on either side of the bridge are meant to echo the firing of bourbon barrels to char the interiors.
Turn right onto Manchester St. (US 1681)

4. LEXINGTON DISTILLERY DISTRICT. The hub of bourbon distillation in Lexington once occupied both sides of the road prior to prohibition. Today what remains of the former distilleries has been transformed into one of Lexington’s most popular entertainment areas. Stop in for bourbon tours, local ice cream and eateries, breweries and shops.

5. MCCONNELL SPRINGS. William McConnell and a band of frontiersmen set up camp here in 1775. After learning about the first battle of the Revolutionary War, the group named their encampment Lexington in honor of Lexington, MA. Now a city park the site is open dawn till dusk for hiking, picnics and exploration.
At the “Secretariat” traffic circle take the second right and continue west on US 1681.

6. SECRETARIAT STATUE. Installed in October 2019, this bronze statue depicts Secretariat in full stride, his weight on two legs only, the way he looked when racing home as the Derby winner in 1973, the first leg of his Triple Crown journey. Sculptor Jocelyn Russell used a red patina over the statue to replicate Secretariat’s chestnut color and give a nod to his nickname “Big Red.”

7. OLD BRADLEY PLACE. This 658-acre farm on the right used to be the Thoroughbred division of King Ranch of Texas. For a while Texas Santa Getrudis cattle were also raised here. The farm is now a division of Three Chimneys Farm.

8. DARBY DAN FARM. Built by the late Ohio real estate magnate and onetime Pittsburgh Pirates owner John Galbreath, this 750-acre farm on the right has been the home of Thoroughbred champions such as Kentucky Derby winners Chateaugay and Proud Clarion and Epsom Derby winner Roberto. The farm is now owned by John Phillips.
Turn right on Yarnallton Rd. Continue straight across Leestown Rd.

9. HILL ‘N’ DALE. A premier full-service Thoroughbred operation with a global reputation, this farm is also the final resting place for the legendary stallion and Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew.

10. DON ALBERTO. The western boundary of this commercial breeding facility runs about two miles along this narrow, stone fence-lined road. Located at the old North Ridge Farm property (which received a national landscape award in the 1980s), Don Alberto’s state-of-the-art breeding facility includes a 20-stall stallion complex.

11. KENTUCKIANA FARM. Just past the Fayette-Scott County line is this 600-acre Standardbred farm. Established in 1976, it both breeds and races. Over the past 30 years Kentuckiana has bred, raised, or sold champions earning more than 35 million dollars.
Turn right at the T-intersection. You are on Iron Works Pike (Hwy. 1973).

12. IRON WORKS PIKE. This road was part of an early 1800’s transport route from 19th-century Slate Creek ironworks near Owingsville (about 40 miles east of Lexington) to the Kentucky River at Frankfort. War materials from the ironworks were shipped to Andrew Jackson in New Orleans during the War of 1812.
Turn right at US 25 (Georgetown Road). After just three-tenths of a mile, turn left to continue on 1973 at the traffic light.

(For a SIDE TRIP to Georgetown, turn left at US 25.)

13. CANE RUN BAPTIST CHURCH. The small church on the right was built in 1806, five years after the congregation organized. The door now used as the main entrance was once the door to the pulpit and was flanked by two other doors leading to the pews so tardy arrivals would have to sit up front.

14. KENTUCKY HORSE PARK. A bronze statue of the great racehorse Man o’ War greets visitors to this 1,200-acre park and working farm that celebrates all aspects of the equine world. Plan to come back and spend a full day taking in all the attractions - films, two museums, racing trophies exhibit, The Parade of Breeds, Hall of Champions, farrier and harness shops and horse drawn tours. Many special equestrian events are held throughout the year, including the Land Rover Three-Day event in April. Polo matches are held every Sunday through the summer. Park open year-round; days and hours vary seasonally. On winter evenings you can see one of the South’s most spectacular holiday light displays. Admission charged. (859) 233-4303
Return to Iron Works Pike and turn left.

15. SPINDELTOP HALL. The fabulous mansion at the end of the drive on your right was built in the mid-1930’s by Pansy Yount, widow of the discoverer of the famous Spindletop oil field in Texas. The property is now a private club for the University of Kentucky faculty and alumni.
Continue straight on Iron Works across Newtown Pike (Hwy. 922).

16. HEMP HOUSE. The small brick building to your right at the corner of Iron Works and Newtown was used for hemp processing. Hemp, grown for rope and other uses, was Kentucky’s largest cash crop in the early 1800’s.

17. MT. HOREB PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. One of early Kentucky’s most prominent families, the Breckenridge family, was involved in the founding of this church in 1827. This building dates to 1926.

18. CASTLETON FARM. Throughout its long and rich history, this farm has produced Thoroughbreds, Standardbreds and Saddlebreds. The farm traces its origin to Cabell’s Dale Farm, founded by John Breckinridge (Attorney General under Thomas Jefferson) in 1793; his daughter married a Castleman, and the farm was renamed Castleton in the 1840’s.

19. JOT ‘EM DOWN STORE. The small country store at the corner of Iron Works and Russell Cave roads takes its name from the fictitious Arkansas store featured in the “Lum and Abner” radio program of the 1930s and ‘40s Chester Lauck, who played Lum, supposedly stopped in this store during a visit to the Bluegrass and gave his official permission to use the name. “Jot ‘em down” refers to the practice of extending credit.
Continue straight across Russell Cave Rd. (KY 353)

20. SPENDTHRIFT FARM*. This 2,000-acre farm, founded by Leslie Combs II, was at one time one of the most famous stallion operations of the Bluegrass. In addition to the unusual U-shaped stud barn, you’ll also see the graves of famous Spendthrift stallions, Nashua, Gallant Man, and Raise a Native. The 1969 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Majestic Prince was bred by Spendthrift.
Turn left onto Kenny Lane

21. DIXIANA FARM. Dating back to 1877, this farm is named for the mare Dixie, who produced many outstanding racehorses in the 1870s. It is the birthplace of the great turf horse and Hall of Fame Inductee Domino.

22. GREEN LANTERN FARM. Most of the Thoroughbreds born on the 700-acre farm on the left raced in England and France. The farm was at one time part of Elmendorf, and includes a 38-stall oval barn with courtyard and training track.
Turn right on Hughes Rd. Continue on Hughes Rd. to Paris Pike (US 27/US 68)

23. NORMANDY FARM. One of the most unusual barns in the Bluegrass is located on this 262-acre Thoroughbred farm. The 12-stall L-shaped barn was built in 1927 by then-owner Joe Widener. Patterned after a barn in Normandy, France, the barn includes a clock tower, slate roof and roof ornaments in the forms of bird, cats and other creatures. Also on the farm is a full-size statue of Man o’ War’s sire, Fair Play, who, along with Man o’ War’s dam Mahubah, is buried here. The farm can be seen from Hughes Rd. and from Paris Pike.
Turn right onto Paris Pike.

24. ELMENDORF FARM. Under James Ben Ali Haggin, who bought the farm in 1887, Elmendorf grew to 10,000 acres, and included a model dairy, greenhouses full of exotic plants and a lavish \$300,000 mansion, Green Hills. The house was torn down in 1929 by a later owner who considered taxes on the unoccupied home excessive; only the marble columns remain standing. The farm has since been divided into several farms.

25. GAINESWAY.* On the left, this 1,500-acre breeding farm was built by John Gaines (son of Gaines feed company founder); his original Gainesway Farm is now a subdivision in south Lexington. Gaines was a founder of the Breeders’ Cup championships. He sold the farm in 1989. Numerous top stallions make their home in the unusual A-frame barns.

26. WALMAC INTERNATIONAL. An international roster of horses stand at the stallion operation and breeding farm on the right and is home to champion runner and leading sire, Nureyev.

27. THE THOROUGHBRED CENTER. Built in 1969, and now owned by Keeneland, this training center provides the equipment, care and facilities for trainers to teach their horses the skills they need to become winners. The complex includes 1,100 stalls, two training tracks where “schooling races” are run and a 940-seat sales pavilion. Guided tours are given year round. Reservations are recommended—call (859) 293-1853. Admission charged.
Start your return to downtown Lexington driving south on US 27/US 68.

28. WHITAKER BANK BALLPARK. Built in 2001 for Lexington’s first Class A baseball team, the Lexington Legends, this stadium holds nearly 7,000 people for games and more for concerts or other events. Originally affiliated with the Houston Astros, later with the Kansas City Royals, the team most recently joined the Atlantic League of Professional Baseball (ALPB).

29. TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY. “Transy,” established in 1780, is the oldest college west of the Allegheny Mountains. Among its graduates have been 50 U.S. Senators, 101 Representatives, three Speakers of the House, 36 governors, and 34 ambassadors. Famous alumni include Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, and Texas settler Stephen Austin. Campus tours are given by appointment; call (859) 233-8120.

SIDE TRIPS

GEORGETOWN. (North of Lexington via I-75 or US 25.) Several large antique malls, historic antebellum mansion Ward Hall and the Toyota Motor Manufacturing plant (with plant tours available by appointment Mon. through Fri.), are some of the attractions.



PARIS. (Located north of Lexington via US 27-68.) Attractions include historic Duncan Tavern and Anne Duncan House, and Cane Ridge Shrine, a 1791 log meeting house. Famous Claiborne Farm is nearby on Winchester Rd.

