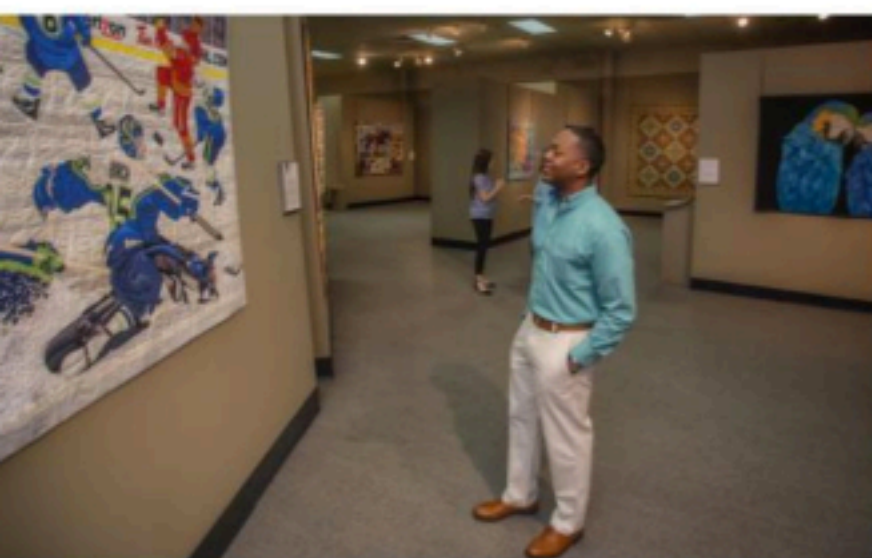


Patchwork Paducah

By Katherine Tandy Brown



PADUCAH KENTUCKY

LOCATION

Western Kentucky, at the confluence of the Tennessee and Ohio rivers

ACCESS

Interstate 24, Barkley Regional Airport

MAJOR MEETING SPACES

Paducah McCracken County Convention and Expo Center

HOTEL ROOMS

2,400

OFF-SITE VENUES

Carson Four Rivers Center for Performing Arts, Walker Hall Events Center, River Discovery Center, National Quilt Museum

CONTACT INFO

Paducah Convention and Visitors Bureau
800-723-8224
www.paducah.travel



Top: Floodwall murals showcase Paducah's history and artistic culture.

Left: The National Quilt Museum is Paducah's most-visited attraction.

Paducah, Kentucky, is all about creativity, a common thread that draws folks from around the world to this UNESCO Creative City. Home to the National Quilt Museum and a flourishing fiber arts community, Paducah has built an entire economic sector around its arts.

Beginning in 2000, an artist relocation program brought in artists from across the country to live and work in turn-of-the-20th-century homes in Paducah's oldest residential neighborhood. Now more than 20 artists offer handcrafted treasures from fine art to jewelry and lawn-size sculpture in the LowerTown Arts District. The program has become a national model.

In addition, an artist-in-residence initiative brings in artists from diverse backgrounds for two to four weeks to share their skills.

At the confluence of the Tennessee and Ohio rivers, Paducah, in response to a devastating 1937 flood, constructed a 12.5-foot-tall floodwall. Now the "Wall-to-Wall" floodwall mural stretches three city blocks as a riverside art-and-history gallery, with 50-plus hand-painted panels that depict important events through the years.

Also a national model, a \$100,000 Main Street revitalization during the past 20 years has transformed the city's downtown into a vibrant destination teeming with locally owned restaurants – such as fifth-generation-run Kirchoff's Bakery and Deli – eclectic shops, attractions and meetings venues. With brick-paved streets and vintage 19th-century architecture, Paducah is a planner's dream.

Recently expanded, the 110,000-square-foot Paducah-McCracken County Convention and Expo Center sits on the Ohio River. It features a 20,000-square-foot

ballroom that seats 1,900 theater style, plus 40,000 square feet of expo space.

Next door, the new Holiday Inn Paducah Riverfront has 125 rooms, 10 of them suites, and terrific river views.

Off-site venues include the gorgeous 1,806-seat Luther F. Carson Four Rivers Center, home to the Paducah Symphony Orchestra, with river-view meeting, dinner and reception capabilities. A downtown arts hub, the Paducah School of Art and Design has meeting space. So do freshly revamped Walker Hall, with a 3,000-square-foot dance floor and 300-person capacity, and Market House Theatre, with several areas for small and large gatherings.

"Everyone out there has a convention center and hotels, but they don't have the heart that Paducah has," said Lynda Peters-Jones, director of convention sales for the Paducah McCracken County Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Our key is our culture. Our locals are open and friendly. They're the pulse of the city. That's what separates us from everyone else."

Stitch a Masterpiece

The 27,000-square-foot National Quilt Museum is an elite art museum where gorgeous, contemporary and historic quilt creations hang side by side. Its extensive collection numbers more than 600 of the world's finest works of quilt and fiber art.

Small to midsize groups can take guided gallery tours, then join forces to make a quilt block from scratch. Once complete, the quilt is framed to keep.

"Everyone's been successful," said Frank Bennett, the museum's CEO. "We've had 80-year-old men who've never used a sewing machine complete a block."

Roll on the Rivers

Because the city lies at the confluence of the Tennessee and Ohio rivers and close to the Mississippi and Cumberland rivers, Paducah is home to the River Discovery Center. Here groups can choose to pilot a towboat, speedboat or Coast Guard vessel on a state-of-the-art boat simulator. Visitors learn about waterways and river traffic.

"The river provides the safest, most environmentally friendly, efficient, economical method of moving goods," said Julie Harris, executive director.

Beautifully restored, the mid-1800s building accommodates 60 in its Founders Room, which overlooks the rivers, or 100 in the classic Maiden Alley Theatre nearby.

Discover Paducah's Heart

Meetings participants and their guests can get to know Paducah through its Signature Experiences. Perfect for team building or after-meeting entertainment, this new program sparks creative thinking by immersion in local culture and experiential tours. In addition to quilt-block-making at the National Quilt Museum and manning the River Discovery Center's boat simulator, attendees can discover Paducah's African-American heritage at the 1908 Hotel Metropolitan, once one of the only available hostels for entertainers such as Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong and B.B. King.

Beer and Wine Stops

After their meetings, groups can kick back at the Dry Ground Brewing Company, the city's first craft brewery. When 1937 floodwaters swamped Paducah's Coca-Cola plant, its owner, rescued out a second-story window, swore he'd rebuild on the first dry ground he reached. He did. The brewery, with 28 beers on tap – 10 in-house – sits on that location.

For wine aficionados, the award-winning Purple Toad Winery, opened in 2009, is the state's largest. Owner Allen Dossey was named Winemaker of the Year at the 2017 Indy International Wine Competition, where his wines won 16 awards. The winery offers tours and tastings.