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Date: January 2, 2019

Photos: [TravelKS.com/media/photo-gallery/](https://www.travelks.com/media/photo-gallery/)

**Check Out What’s New in Kansas This Year**

Make plans for a packed itinerary of Kansas adventures in 2019, highlighted by a trek to the unearthly badlands of Little Jerusalem state park. Fan out across the state to the updated Eisenhower Presidential Museum in Abilene, Wichita’s new shipping-container mall, sesquicentennial shindigs, and other road-trip-worthy celebrations and attractions.

Much-anticipated [Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park](https://www.travelks.com/little-jerusalem/) near Oakley is expected to open to the public by mid-year. The mile-long valley of 100-foot-tall spires and cliffs encompasses the state’s largest Niobrara Chalk formations, which previously had no public access. Trails cross the historic territory that once saw the likes of “Wild Bill” Hickok and “Buffalo Bill” Cody pass through, and today is home to wildlife and plants rarely found anywhere else in the world. Check [www.nature.org/littlejerusalem](http://www.nature.org/littlejerusalem) for updates.

One of Wichita’s many new additions, the shipping-container mall, [Revolutsia](https://revolutsia.com/), is home to trendy restaurants, salons and boutiques, centered around an outdoor gathering space and fire pit. Using an established building and now-in-vogue shipping containers converted to buildings, the open-air development recently opened in east Wichita.

This spring, paddle the waters of Wichita’s Arkansas River with canoe, kayak and paddleboat rentals from [Boats & Bikes](https://www.wichita.edu/athletics/rowing/boats_and_bikes.php). The new boathouse and public dock on downtown’s west river bank also serve as home to the Wichita State University rowing program. Watch for downtown’s under-construction Hilton Garden Inn, featuring a glass-bottom rooftop pool that juts out overtop Douglas Avenue, to open this spring.

A Wichita staple, the iconic [Nifty Nut House](https://www.niftynuthouse.com), recently completed its newly-expanded 10,000-square-foot store. And on the city’s north side, the Guinness World Record-holding [“largest mural painted by a single artist”](http://www.horizontes-project.com/) is coming to life on the side of a huge grain elevator along I-135. Depicting members of the Hispanic and African-American neighborhoods reaching out to each other, the mural is an effort to unite races and neighborhoods divided by I-135.

Currently under renovation, The Eisenhower Presidential Museum in Abilene will unveil its updated galleries and exhibits during the 75th anniversary D-Day Commemoration June 1-6 at the [Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum and Boyhood Home](https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/). The week-long activities include the Symphony at Sunset Annual D-Day Commemoration Concert by the Salina Symphony, symposiums, guest speakers, all-new exhibit opening and a remembrance ceremony.

In Topeka, the $28-million, 106-bed boutique [Cyrus Hotel](https://www.cyrushotel.com/) opens in the core of the capital city early this year. Work begins soon on Ottawa’s [Legacy Square](https://www.ottawaks.gov/single-post/2018/06/20/ONWARD-OTTAWA-PRESENTS-LEGACY-SQUARE) project, a downtown outdoor expanse with green space and a covered pavilion, located at the intersection of the Flint Hills Trail State Park and the Prairie Spirit Trail. The completion goal is fall 2019.

Ahead for car enthusiasts: the [Midwest Dream Car Collection](https://www.facebook.com/midwestdreamcarcollection/) in Manhattan and Decades of Wheels in Baxter Springs. Manhattan’s 55,000-square-foot Dream Car museum, opening by spring, features an eclectic mix of early roadsters, muscle cars and exotics. Cruise on down to Route 66 in the state’s far southeast corner to [Decades of Wheels](https://decadesofwheels.com/). When completed in spring, the downtown Baxter Springs complex will include the Café on the Route restaurant (now open), a Route 66-themed arcade, dessert bar, bed and breakfast inn, and the main attraction, the Decades of Wheels museum of collectible cars and motorcycles, from the early 1900s to the latest.

Travelers on Kansas’ 12 scenic or historic byways will see new or upgraded interpretive signs and kiosks at 39 locations, thanks to the recently-completed, $1.4 million [Kansas Byways](https://www.travelks.com/ksbyways/) project. “Our goal is to tell the story of Kansas through our byways, a collection of routes that highlight the beauty, history and heritage of Kansas.” says Byways Manager Sue Stringer. “The signs and kiosks give visitors a chance to pull off the roads and learn about the beauty and history that surround them.”

It’s a milestone year for Kansas towns turning 150 years old in 2019. [Lindsborg](https://www.lindsborg150th.com/#/) celebrates all year long with Swedish Sesquicentennial fun, highlighted by the July 4-6 “Celebrating the Legacy” party in Swensson Park. Art installation dedications throughout the year include a 10-foot-tall *Järnkors* (iron cross) in Swensson Park, a series of bronze relief panels depicting Lindsborg’s history at city hall and the addition of a Sesquicentennial Wild Dala to the town-wide herd of uniquely-painted Swedish dala horses.

For its 150th, [Coffeyville](https://www.coffeyville.com/528/Coffeyville-at-150) plans to “Party Like It’s 1869” at a downtown street party June 1, followed by the “150th Gala at the Mansion” in September at the historic Brown Mansion, among other events throughout the year. Abilene hails its roots with a throwback to its cattle-town heydays during Chisholm Trails Days on Labor Day weekend. Belleville packs its Sesquicentennial bash August 16-18 in city park with concerts, a street dance, cowboy church, parade, whole-hog barbecue and kids’ games.

Events and sites across Kansas mark milestones of their own. The [Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site](https://www.nps.gov/brvb/planyourvisit/calendar.htm) in Topeka commemorates the 65th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision with a talk by *New York Times* bestselling author Ta-Nehisi Coates on April 25 at Washburn University’s Lee Arena, along with special events throughout the year**.** [The Nature Conservancy](https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/kansas/) pays tribute to its 30years in Kansas with volunteer workdays, nature hikes, river clean-ups, a butterfly count, lectures and other conservation-minded experiences.

It’s the 50th anniversary for two festivals: [Chanute’s Artist Alley](https://www.chanutemainstreet.com/artist-alley/) on September 28 and the [Columbus Day Festival/Hot Air Balloon Regatta](http://www.columbusdayballoons.com/) in Columbus on October 11-13. Also in October, Wamego’s annual [Oztoberfest](http://www.visitwamego.com/events/oztoberfest) will salute the 80th anniversary of the *Wizard of Oz* movie**.**  In Abilene, the 2019-2020 line-up for the [Great Plains Theatre](https://www.greatplainstheatre.com/)‘s 25th season features the world premiere of *Empires Fall*, a play by Abilene native Marlin Fitzwater, the only press secretary in United States history to be appointed by two presidents. The six-show season opens June 14 with *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Also on the horizon this year:

--Lawrence hosts the World’s First All-Female [Busker Festival](http://www.lawrencebuskerfest.com/) May 24-26

--It’s the year to catch two events not offered annually. At the biennial [Wings and Wetlands Birding Festival](https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/volunteer-and-attend-events/find-local-events-and-opportunities/wings-and-wetlands-festival-2019/) May 3-4, guides lead field trips to Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge near Great Bend during peak shorebird migration. Visitors can sample the breads, attend demonstrations and watch finalists at work when Manhattan hosts the biennial [National Festival Breads](http://nationalfestivalofbreads.com/) June 8.

--The 2nd Annual [Big Kansas Road Trip](https://www.kansassampler.org/bigkansasroadtrip/) on May 2-5 explores to the counties of Cheyenne, Sherman and Wallace.

Beyond 2019:

--Salina expects to complete the major, $160-million renovation of its downtown in early 2020. The new open-space, art deco-inspired streetscape will feature outdoor seating, plantings, outdoor dining and entertainment spaces. A key part, the 68,000-square-foot Salina Fieldhouse indoor sports facility is open. Yet to come: The Alley bowling alley and family fun center, a vintage car museum in a repurposed warehouse, Homewood Suites Hotel and several restaurants.

--Dodge City broke ground on a 12,000-square-foot Boot Hill Museum exhibit hall, housing nine new exhibits, a gift shop, covered back patio and a temporary exhibit hall, with completion expected in spring 2020.

--Wichita has razed its 84-year-old Lawrence-Dumont Stadium and will replace it with a $75 million stadium that will host a AAA minor league baseball team. Also included in the project: $6 million for riverfront renovations, including a new pedestrian bridge over the Arkansas River. Proposed stadium completion date is March 2020.

--Work begins soon on downtown Topeka’s Evergy Plaza. The 45,000-square-foot gathering space, scheduled to open in March 2020, will feature a performance stage, digital screen and water features.

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