

Cumberlands Corridor Outdoor Recreation

The Cumberlands Corridor offers sheer enchantment to those looking for outdoor activities in breathtaking natural surroundings. From its majestic mountains to its blue-green waters, the region has become one of the nation's top recreation destinations. The major features that define this area – Lake Cumberland, Dale Hollow Lake, Cumberland Falls and Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area – can turn any visit into a memorable adventure. Whether it's a relaxing cruise on a houseboat, a wild walleye wrangle, a glimpse of an awesome moonbow or a tough trek through a deep gorge, the choices for outdoor recreation seem endless.

At the foothills of the mighty Cumberland Mountains, Lake Cumberland is one of the largest man-made lakes in the nation. It has a peak surface area of more than 60,000 acres. The lake is home to Lake Cumberland State Resort Park featuring comfortable rooms, delicious dining, indoor and outdoor swimming pools and a myriad of activities. Edged with secluded coves, Lake Cumberland especially provides visitors with privacy, a little section of the lake all to themselves. Both Dale Hollow Lake and Lake Cumberland offer great powerboating, water skiing, and other high-energy sports like jet-skiing, as well as plenty of opportunities for quieter activities like fishing, canoeing, and houseboating.

One of the best ways to appreciate Lake Cumberland and its many wonders is through houseboating. The Cumberlands Corridor offers a huge roster of rental houseboats. In fact, more houseboats are built in Kentucky than anywhere else. Most of them are made within a few miles of Lake Cumberland's shores. One of the most distinctive features of the Cumberlands Corridor is the number of houseboating opportunities at places like Grider Hill Dock, Beaver Creek Resort, Conley Bottom Resort, Burnside Marina, Lee's Ford Marina, Jamestown Resort and Marina – all on Lake Cumberland. Other marina options are the State Dock, Buck Creek Marina and Indian Hills Resort and Marina.

Vacationers can chart their own course to fun, fishing and relaxation aboard a houseboat rented from one of these fine marinas. Houseboating offers all the convenience of a "home away from home" in a spectacular setting. Most rental houseboats come equipped with dishes, silverware, cooking utensils, kitchen appliances like toasters and coffee makers, carpet indoors and out, and full showers. Motorboats for water skiing and tubing also can be rented and towed along behind a houseboat, as can personal watercraft.

Versatile and accessible marinas are a good place to start planning a lake visit. Most marinas have convenient parking lots loading ramps and launching ramps. Pontoons, ski boats, fishing boats and houseboats can be rented at marinas. Lodging such as condo-style units, lakeview cottages, cabins and campgrounds make it easy to stay and play. Marina restaurants offer tasty meals – including country breakfasts with all the trimmings – and ships stores carry such items as bait and tackle, fishing licenses, snacks, ice, groceries and souvenirs. For an extra edge in fishing, try one of the wonderful guide services available through the marinas. Guides know all the nooks and crannies where great striper and bass lurk.

Lake Cumberland's waters are teeming with game fish such as largemouth and smallmouth bass, walleye, Kentucky and white bass, crappie and huge trophy striped bass. Lake Cumberland is the premier striper lake in the nation and the gem of the bass fisherman's world. In the frigid flow below the dam the water boasts state-record catches for brown, rainbow and lake trout. There's something magical about reeling in a mess of bass or stripers, grilling them on a houseboat and enjoying a leisurely meal while watching the sunset over the lake.

Dale Hollow Lake, formed by backing up the Obey River in 1943, has 620 miles of shoreline. Several excellent marinas, such as Wisdom Dock and Wolf River, feature rental houseboats and other recreation equipment. The lake has plenty of shoals, small tributaries and clean, clear water. It also holds the world record smallmouth bass catch of almost 12 pounds. Winding through mountains and valleys of the Cumberland foothills, Dale Hollow Lake covers 32,000 acres and straddles the Kentucky and Tennessee border. Special campsites for horse owners feature hitching posts and riding trails. Dale Hollow is also known to be an excellent lake for scuba diving because of its deep, clear water.

With some of the wildest and most dramatic scenery in the corridor, the Big South Fork National River and Recreational Area is a treasure trove of outdoor recreation. Deep jagged gorges are frequent surprises and the variation in the landscape - from cool woods to hot, high open-faced rocks - is fascinating.

Whitewater rafting, canoeing, hunting, camping, and hiking are exceptional in the Big South Fork. Floating the streams of Big South Fork gives entry to a land that time and events have passed by. The land today has a quality of wildness with limited access and sparse development. The Big South Fork and its main tributaries are excellent for a variety of whitewater paddling experiences. Some stretches are ideal for beginners, while only highly skilled paddlers using appropriate equipment should attempt others. A thrilling raft ride on the Big South Fork River can jolt the adrenaline. But beware: only the more skillful will want to follow the Big South Fork all the way to Devil's Jump where a boulder as big as a house bisects a cauldron of Class IV rapids.

Heading north, be sure to drive along KY 90, a State Scenic Byway, to Cumberland Falls State Resort Park and see Cumberland Falls – the Niagara of the South. The Falls form a 125-foot-wide curtain that plunges almost 70 feet into the boulder-strewn gorge below. The water strikes with such force that a perpetual mist hovers over the valley. Visit during a full moon and enjoy the famous moonbow, the only such moonbow in the Western Hemisphere. The stretch of river below Cumberland Falls is a popular run for whitewater rafting. Put-in is at the beach below the falls and take-out is at the mouth of the Laurel River 12 miles downstream.

Experienced help navigating the area's waters is available at Sheltoewe Trace Outfitters. They offer canoeing on sections of the Big South Fork and the Cumberland, especially above the falls. They also offer whitewater rafting on the Cumberland below the falls. For a tamer ride, relax on one of the Sheltoewe rafts for a trip to the bottom of the falls and marvel at how tall the falling water seems from below.

For folks who want to spend some time on dry land, the Natural Arch Scenic Area near Whitley City was once Cherokee country and is now a wonderful place to take a few short but rewarding day hikes. The natural arch for which the area is named is a majestic 50-by-90-foot span of sandstone that curves above the forest below. Short trails lead to staggering overlooks and fertile deep valleys. Early spring is a good time to go, when each week brings a different set of wildflowers including the rare Lady's Slipper. Another wonder to enjoy is the Creelsboro Natural Bridge, near Jamestown, also known as "The Rock House." Though there are many rock bridges in Kentucky, the 75-foot arch has been designated a National Natural Landmark because it is limestone rather than the more common sandstone. More than 300 million years old, the arch was carved by nature in the mountains on the banks of the Cumberland River.

The Sheltoewe Trace National Recreation Trail is a hiker's delight. The 269-mile multiple-use recreation trail traverses the length of the Daniel Boone National Forest. The trail is named in honor of Daniel Boone. Sheltoewe (meaning Big Turtle) was the name given Boone when he was adopted into the Shawnee tribe as the son of the great war-chief Blackfish. Trails meander along high, narrow ridges and cliffs and into deep gorges along small clear streams and whitewater rivers. For wildflower lovers and bird watchers, both abound on the Sheltoewe and in the Big South Fork. Wildflowers and migratory birds are at peak in late April and early May. Mid-October is usually the best of autumn's pageantry of color.

Golf is a popular pastime in the Cumberlands Corridor. To play on a bit of golfing history, the Stearns Golf Course is the second oldest course in Kentucky. On the north edge of Somerset is the Eagle's Nest County Club, a residential country club course open to the general public. Opened in 1978, Eagle's Nest was the first of its kind in southeastern Kentucky. Designers tried to use as much of the natural lay of the land as possible in developing Eagle's Nest. One of the toughest holes at the 18-hole course is hole number 1. With an eye-catching ravine, the hole requires two good shots right away.

In the small community of Bronston is Woodson Bend Golf Resort. The resort got its name because it is situated on a 455-acre peninsula overlooking a large bend in the Cumberland River, which surrounds the property on three sides. Opened in 1972, the 18-hole championship course was designed by Lee Trevino and Dave Bennett. Near Woodson Bend is the General Burnside Island Golf Course at General Burnside Island State Park, the only island park in Kentucky's state park system. Visitors to Woodson Bend and

Burnside Island have a wonderful opportunity to combine golfing with enjoyment of Lake Cumberland. And, the Vintage House at Woodson Bend offers gourmet dining.

One of the newest courses in the corridor, Mountain View Golf course, is located in Clinton Co. between Lake Cumberland and Dale Hollow Lake. The course, situated in a picturesque valley between two wooded mountains, offers an open air feeling with well groomed greens and manicured fairways.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area: 423/569-9778.

Lake Cumberland State Resort Park, Jamestown: 270/343-3111.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery: 270/343-3797.

Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, Corbin: 606/528-4121.

Sheltowee Trace Outfitters, Whitley City: 888/782-7171.

Natural Arch Scenic Area, Somerset: 606/679-2010.

Pulaski Co. Park, Somerset: 606/636-6450

Stearns Golf Course, Stearns: 606/376-2666.

Eagles Nest County Club, Somerset: 606/679-7754.

Woodson Bend Golf Resort, Bronston: 606/561-5311.

General Burnside Island Golf Course, Burnside: 606/561-4104.

Mountain View Golf Course, Albany: 606/387-0910