

Kentucky's Elk Country

GENERAL OVERVIEW

LOCATION:

The Elk Country Corridor, located in southeastern Kentucky's Cumberland Plateau, consists of the counties of Breathitt, Clay, Knott, Leslie, Letcher and Perry. A portion of the corridor borders on Virginia. Major routes through the region include US Highways 119 and 421 and KY Highways 15 and 80 (Hal Rogers/Daniel Boone Parkway). The landscape, featuring some of the Kentucky's most remote and unspoiled areas, includes rounded mountains, rolling hills, valleys and hollers. Elevations vary from 3,273 feet in the mountains to 675 feet in the valleys.

DESCRIPTION:

The six counties in Elk Country Corridor have a combined population of 129,100. Major towns include the county seats of Hazard, Hindman, Hyden, Manchester, Jackson and Whitesburg. Small towns dot the landscape. Red Fox, Buckhorn, Bearville and Wildcat attest to the importance of the region's abundant game to the early settlers. Goose Rock, Shoulderblade, Sizerock, Topmost, Fall Rock and Grays Knob bring forth images of the rugged terrain that challenged the pioneers. Once the mountains were conquered, waterways became the main source of transportation within the region. The settler's attitude toward the unpredictable waters is evidenced in names including Troublesome Creek, Quicksand, Cut-Shin Creek and Hell-Fer-Sartin Creek. The region, known for its fantastic array of natural environments, is home to two national forests, two state parks, four wildlife management areas and a nature preserve. The small towns, scenic parks, rugged terrain and plentiful wildlife play an important role in the character of Elk Country Corridor, but the largest factor remains the people. They are dedicated to their mountain heritage and are willing to share it with visitors. Throughout the corridor, there are opportunities to hear their music, view their architecture, study their history and experience their craft-making traditions.

HISTORY:

In the mid 1700s, there were no permanent inhabitants in the Elk Country Corridor region. Shawnee, Cherokee and Iroquois tribes claimed ownership of the land and hunted in the dense forests. During that period, colonists in Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina heard rumors about the sparkling streams and plentiful wildlife on the other side

of the mountains, but the forbidding terrain kept them from entering the region. Dr. Thomas Walker, who followed an Indian War Trail to the area in 1748, is believed to be the first person to provide a written account of the region. Outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1754 delayed further exploration for over a decade. After Daniel Boone marked the Wilderness Road in 1775, settlers soon began crossing through Cumberland Gap. Kentucky became the 17th state to join the Union in 1792, but the population in the southeastern portion remained small until after the Civil War when northern companies initiated their grand plan for the area. They bought lumber and mineral rights to much of the land. After harvesting the lumber, they began building railroad and small towns to support their coal mining ventures. By the early 1900s, coal had taken over the local economy. Today, tourism is one of the major industries in the area. The scenic beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities along with the system of state parks and new highways beckons visitors to the Elk Country Corridor.

TRANSPORTATION:

Airports

Lexington Blue Grass Airport (859-425-3114) is served by ATA Connection, Continental Express, Delta, Northwest AirlinK, United Express, and US Airways Express. The airport is located approximately 70 miles from Manchester, 100 miles from Hyden, 110 miles from Hazard, 125 miles from Hindman and 140 miles from Whitesburg. From Lexington, the Elk Country Corridor is accessible by driving Interstate 75 South to Kentucky Highway 80 (Hal Rogers/Daniel Boone Parkway) East.

Major car rental companies are located at Lexington Blue Grass Airport.

Wendell H. Ford Airport (606-439-5140), located on KY Highway 15, ten miles northwest of Hazard, is open to general aviation on 3,200 foot and 5,000 foot runways.

TIME ZONE:

Eastern Standard Time

THINGS TO DO:

Heritage sites and museums

Elk Country Corridor's history is preserved at its museums and historical sites. Please refer to the heritage offerings feature for more information on:

Dillon-Asher Cabin
Bobby Davis Museum and Park
Knott County Historical and Genealogical Society
The Pioneer Village
C.B. Caudill Store & History Center
David A. Zegeer Coal Railroad Museum
Hindman Settlement School
Frontier Nursing Service
Breathitt County Museum

Cultural Venues

The region offers many opportunities to experience its rich cultural heritage. Please refer to the culture offerings sheet for more information on:

Red Bird Mission Crafts
Morris Fork Crafts
Marie Stewart Crafts
Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center
Kentucky School of Craft
Appalshop Center
The Cozy Corner
Seco Company Store & Highlands Winery/Bed & Breakfast
Pine Mountain/Letcher County Craft Co-op
Valley of the Winds

Recreational Activities and Areas

Elk Country Corridor offers a wide variety of outdoor activities including boating, fishing, golfing, hiking, mountain biking and wildlife viewing. Please refer to the outdoor recreation sheet for more information on:

Daniel Boone National Forest
Jefferson National Forest
Carr Creek State Park
Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park
Starfire Wildlife Management
Beech Creek Wildlife Management Area
Redbird Crest Wildlife Management Area
Pine Mountain Wildlife Management Area
Bad Branch State Nature Preserve
Lilley Cornett Woods
Robinson Forest

Other Attractions

Ancient Rock Writings (606-598-1754), believed by some to be the oldest known Christian inscriptions on the North American Continent, made by an Irish Monk. Others believe the markings on the stones reflect on the Indian bone tool-making industry. The writings were discovered in 1994 when a huge piece of rock fell from a sandstone cliff onto State Road 66 near Manchester. The huge stones can be viewed daily at Rawlings & Stinson Park in Manchester.

Yoder's Bulk Foods (606-785-3344), located on the Hindman Bypass, offers an opportunity to step back in time. The store offers specialty cheeses and food items unique to the Mennonite community, baked goods, deli items, bulk cooking supplies and craft items.

Challenger Learning Center of Kentucky (606-436-5721), located in downtown Hazard, features a Children's Interactive Science Center and a simulated space mission to study a comet or the planet Mars. At the gift shop, visitors can purchase freeze dried ice cream and other freeze dried specialties that astronauts take into space. Reservations are required.

Festivals & Events

There's something for everyone at Elk Country Corridor's many festivals and special events. The offerings include, but are not limited to:

Mountain Showcase, first weekend in April, Buckhorn State Park
Seedtime on the Cumberland, second weekend in June, Appalshop, Whitesburg
Mountain Arts Festival, third Saturday in June, Valley of the Winds Gallery, Eolia
Elk Festival, held during July, Hazard
Wildlife Day, first Saturday in July, Hyden Fish & Game Club
Family Folk Week, last week in July, Hindman Settlement School
Knott County Gingerbread Festival, the weekend after Labor Day in downtown Hindman
Osborne Brothers Hometown Festival, first weekend in August, Hyden
Writer's Workshop, first week in August, Hindman Settlement School
Ride the Cyprus, Labor Day Weekend, Addington Wildlife Management Area
Knott County Gingerbread Festival, weekend after Labor Day, downtown Hindman
Black Gold Festival, third weekend in September, Hazard
Mountain Heritage Festival, last weekend in September, Whitesburg
Buckhorn Lake Elk Watch, first weekend in October, Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park
Mary Breckinridge Festival, second full week in October, Hyden
Our Appalachia Day, second Saturday in October, Alice Lloyd College, Pippa Passes
Honey Festival in Jackson, first weekend in September.

SHOPPING:

Many treasures can be found in the shops of Elk Country Corridor. Shopping adventures can include discovering a great antique at Oven Fork Mercantile in Eolia, a rare recording at Appalshop in Whitesburg or a special bottle of local wine at Highland Winery in Seco. Co-ops, such as Pioneer Village in Red Fox, Morris Fork Crafts in Breathitt Co. and Pine Mountain/Letcher County Crafts Co-op in Whitesburg, allow shoppers to view the work of many artisans at one stop. Fine works of art can be found at Valley of the Winds in Eolia, Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center in Hindman, and Marie Stewart Craft Shop in Hindman. Along with offering a wide selection of expertly crafted items, several shops are housed in historic structures. Examples include Red Bird Mission Crafts in Beverly, Pioneer Village in Red Fox, J.D. Maggard's Cash Store in Whitesburg, Oven Fork Mercantile in Eolia and The Cozy Corner in Whitesburg offers one of the finest selections of Appalachian music and books in the area, as well as a selection of the finest quilts and other crafts.

LODGING:

Visitors to Kentucky's Elk Country Corridor will find a variety of accommodations offering Southern hospitality. Options include historic bed and breakfast inns, independently owned motels, familiar chain lodgings and a family-friendly state resort park with a lodge and cottages.

DINING:

The aroma of fried cornbread hovers over the valley and mingles with the crisp mountain air. Pull up a chair. Lunch is on the table at Wendover Big House. The popular bed & breakfast inn, located on the campus of Frontier Nursing Service in Hyden, serves family-style lunches in its 1925 log building. Favorite Southern entrees are usually accompanied by fresh-baked biscuits and cornbread, along with plenty of sweet tea.

Country-style cooking can be found throughout the Elk Country Corridor. Every town has restaurants serving up their own variation of treasured Southern recipes. Sample the offerings of the region at Patty's Place in Manchester, Family Diner in Jackson, Linda's Country Kitchen in Hindman or Frances's Diner in Hazard.

A combination of Southern fare and gourmet offerings can be enjoyed at the Courthouse Café, housed in an historic 1911-era building in Whitesburg.

The spectacular mountain scenery rivals the food in the area. Enjoy both at the Dining Room at Buckhorn State Resort Park or at Pine Mountain Grill in Whitesburg.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ELK COUNTRY CORRIDOR:

Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association
2292 South Highway 27
Somerset, KY 42501
(606) 677-6000 (phone)
(606) 677-6059 (fax)
www.tourseky.com

Manchester/Clay County Tourism Commission
212 Main St., Manchester, KY 40962
(606) 598-1754.

Leslie County Tourism Commission
PO Box 948, Hyden, KY 41749
(606) 672-2154.

Perry County Tourism Commission
601 Main St., Suite 3, Hazard, KY 41701
(606) 439-2659.

Knott County Tourism Commission, 90 May St., PO Box 508
Hindman, KY 41822
(606)-785-4095 or (606)785-5881.
Letcher County Tourism & Convention Office
229 Main St., Whitesburg, KY 41858
(606) 632-1200 or (606) 633-9637.

Breathitt County Judge Executive's Office
1137 Main St., Jackson, KY 41339
(606)666-3800