



Southern & Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association

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YEAR-ROUND EVENTS CELEBRATE KENTUCKY HERITAGE

From the first tiny crocus of spring until winter snowflakes blanket the mountains, the people of the Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky find a wealth of reasons to celebrate. Each season has its own beauty with unique festivals inviting folks to rejoice in the wonder of the moment.

The strong backbone of Appalachia is built on hospitality and neighborliness. Independent and self-reliant by nature, Kentuckians, nonetheless, enjoy getting together to renew a sense of community, share what they have, tell a tale, crack a joke, praise the Lord, bless their country and families, and celebrate America at its finest.

At old-timey county fairs, rickety machines wheeze and cough to grind corn into cornmeal, blacksmiths send sparks flying as their powerful arms pound out trivets, and farriers demonstrate how to shoe patient horses.

Sitting in a circle, a ladies quilting bee pieces together a quilt, much as their ancestors did generations ago. A lamb is shorn of its winter coat; the wool is then carded and spun into graceful shawls. Horse pulls test the amazing strength of the animals that work the fields, as do tractor pulls with more modern, mechanized machinery kicking up swirls of dust while the vehicles compete to see which is strongest.

Over it all floats the sound of music – the heartbeat of Kentucky. Hear bluegrass with its mandolins and fiddles or folk tunes on hand-made mountain dulcimers backed by haunting harmonicas. Listen to country songs with foot-stomping merriment and heart-breaking sorrow.

Travel along the Country Music Highway (US 23), where a wealth of performers, both famous and yet to be discovered, call the area home. Entertainers who grew up here include Billy Ray Cyrus, Naomi and Wynonna Judd, Ricky Skaggs, Crystal Gayle, Loretta Lynn, Hylo Brown, Dwight Yoakam, Patty Loveless and Gary Stewart. Some of the area's aspiring talent can be seen at the Mountain Arts Center in Prestonsburg on the first Tuesday of each month – or at any local festival or gathering.

Kentucky's own are honored at a myriad of musical fests, such as the String Bean Festival each June in Jackson County. David "String Bean" Akemon played the banjo on the popular TV show *Hee-Haw*. Come August, there's the Osborne Brothers Hometown Festival in Hyden, and September brings Lillie Mae Ledford Day in the Red River Gorge commemorating the legendary figure in folk and bluegrass music. Festivals in Morehead, Whitesburg, Renfro Valley and other communities attract world-class musicians, as well as budding beginners.

Kentucky crafts are appreciated the world over for their heritage, originality and beauty. Shoppers never know what they might discover at some off-the-beaten-path festival. Quilt patterns passed down through families, baskets handcrafted with rare museum quality, pottery both utilitarian and unusually beautiful, rag rugs braided by skillful hands, whimsical critters constructed of scrap metal, watercolors so vibrant they seem to spring to life, glass beads fashioned individually with loving care ... the vast array of artists and their creations is infinite.

At Kentucky events, visitors often get a chance to meet the makers and watch their talents turn such everyday materials as wood into fine furniture, heirloom boxes and even delicate flowers; yarn into beautiful sweaters, unusual hats and other wearable art; clay into functional stoneware or festive coffee mugs; gourds into bird houses and roly-poly Santas; reeds into sturdy baskets and fancy chair seats; tree bark into birdhouses and straight-back chairs. Kentucky craftspeople learned a long time ago to work with what was at hand to fashion outstanding heirlooms.

Shoppers come from miles around for Williamsburg's Old-Fashioned Trading Days, the Poor Folk Arts and Crafts spring and fall festivals in Benham, the Kingdom Come Swappin' Meetin' at Cumberland's Southeast Community College, and the Kentucky Hills Weekend at Cumberland Falls State Resort Park. Morehead is host to three annual festivals showcasing traditional arts and crafts, including the Appalachian Festival in June, the Rowan County Harvest Festival in September, and the Christmas Appalachian Arts & Crafts Market in early December.

Food is an integral part of any Kentucky gathering, and festivals seem to bring out some of the best country cooking. Old-fashioned slow-cooked barbecue tempts the taste buds as does deep fried chicken, roasted corn on the cob, hoe cakes, creamy fudge and pulled candy, smoked ham, plump biscuits, sausage gravy, sweet potato fries, candied apples, smooth chocolate cake, fresh churned peach ice cream, and tangy lemon meringue pie. Sample the homemade cucumber pickles, corn relish, blackberry preserves and rhubarb sauce, and you may never want to go back to store bought again.

June brings the Poke Sallet Festival & Homecoming in Harlan with delicious servings of poke sallet, a wild edible weed that resembles mustard greens. Rooted in old folk remedy, mountain people believed that a good helping of poke sallet each spring would cure ills accumulated over the winter.

When election day rolls around, voters head to the polls and to the Gingerbread Festival in Hindman celebrating a mountain tradition of "encouraging" citizens to vote for a particular candidate by giving away gingerbread. In Breathitt County, the September air is filled with the tantalizing aroma of a baking contest at the Honey Festival.

Festivals also honor the pioneer spirits of the region: Daniel Boone, who led hardy early settlers over the Cumberland Gap; John Lair, who preserved the folk music of the

area and built the Renfro Valley country music center that attracts music-lovers today; Harland Sanders, who parlayed his recipe of 11 secret herbs and spices for Kentucky Fried Chicken into worldwide fame and fortune; and Mary Breckenridge, founder of Frontier Nursing Service, who rode horseback to bring health services to remote areas of the rugged Appalachian mountains.

History comes alive at the Civil War Living History Weekend in April at Camp Nelson Heritage Park. Daily camp life, training exercises, trail and house tours, period music, and a parade of units turn back the hands of time at this historic site. In October, the Battle of Camp Wildcat Civil War Re-Enactment in London takes place adjacent to the original battlefield where re-enactors set up camp, ready their weapons and pass the time with tales of life back then. Also in October, the Laurel County Fairgrounds hosts the American Indian Festival with story telling, tepees and dancers in full regalia.

The holidays are a special time in the Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky. For starters, there's the Easter Eggs-travaganza in Barbourville and the old-fashioned Fourth of July Celebration in Williamsburg. Autumn leaves bring Middlesborough's Pumpkin Alley with over 1,200 carved pumpkins and the Halloween Train for a spooky ride in Stearns. Colder weather means Christmas on Main in downtown London and the month-long Christmas in the Valley between Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve in Renfro Valley with Old Saint Nick, his clogging elves and strolling carolers. At the Mountain Arts Center the Kentucky Opry presents its annual Christmas special, and the Mountain Home Place puts on an old-fashioned celebration that recalls the Christmases of early settlers in the hills of Kentucky. The holidays seem to bring out the delighted youngster in everyone.

Reunions and homecomings in communities throughout the Highlands and Waterways Region are an important custom for folks to maintain a sense of place in a fast moving world. Newcomers are welcome as are familiar faces of former residents who moved away but can't forget their roots. Tradition plays an important role in these events – whether it is an annual contest for the best homemade apple pie or a fiddlin' competition or the retelling of local history through an outdoor drama. These festivities offer a special way to connect with the past while drawing energy to enjoy the present and inspiration to look forward to the future.

Whatever the season or the reason, celebrations are a way of life in the Highlands and Waterways of Kentucky. Where else can you glimpse a moonbow, wonder at woolly worms, seek out salamanders, listen to sweet mountain harmony, pay homage to black gold (coal), eat fried chicken cooked in the world's largest stainless steel skillet, taste the world's biggest gingerbread man, play marbles, see buffalo roam, catch a greased pig, and learn how to make moonshine and lye soap?

With a long-time tradition of Southern hospitality, Kentuckians welcome guests to discover and savor the pure joy of true hometown Americana.

A sampling of annual events includes:

JANUARY

~ See the unusual moonbow at beautiful Cumberland Falls, Cumberland Falls State Resort Park.

FEBRUARY

~ Bluegrass Music Weekend at Natural Bridge State Resort Park has plenty of Kentucky's famed music.

MARCH

~ At Cumberland Falls State Resort Park in Corbin, the Kentucky Hills Native American Weekend celebrates the Native Americans of Kentucky.

~ Writers Workshop at Pine Mountain State Resort Park in Pineville is for aspiring writers of all types.

~ Gospel Talent Search in Renfro Valley draws some of the finest amateur groups from Kentucky and surrounding states as they compete for top prizes. The Bluegrass Series features performances of top bluegrass acts.

~ Mountain Showcase features Appalachian heritage with workshops, exhibits and demonstrations at Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park in Hazard.

~ Spring Fishing Unlimited Tournament at Lake Cumberland State Resort Park in Jamestown has displays from factory representatives, evening seminars and trophies awarded in five categories.

APRIL

~ Mountain Mushroom Festival in Irvine, includes a parade, crafts, 5K Fungus Footrace, entertainment and mushroom hunting contest.

~ Wildflower Weekend celebrates the awakening of spring with wildflower hikes, medicinal plant lectures, field trips and a folk dance at Pine Mountain Settlement School.

~ Hillbilly Days Festival at Pikeville raises money for Shriners Children's Hospitals and Burn Centers. About 60,000 people from around the nation attend the event each year.

~ The Kentucky Klassic Traditional Archery Festival is held in Nancy.

~ Folklore of the Old West in Columbia is a celebration of the history, heritage and folklore of the community. The festival includes events detailing the Long Hunters, Jesse James and Mark Twain.

MAY

~ Jackson County "Rondayvoo" at McKee includes a road race, car show, mountain men, music, clogging and old-fashioned games like checkers, marbles, sack races, raw egg toss and frog jumping.

~ Ride the Cyprus, a three-day horseback trail ride on the Cyprus/Amaz Wildlife Management Area in Knott County, offers a chance to see free-roaming elk, Canadian geese and other wildlife.

~ Kentucky Ducky Derby with prizes, games, car show, food and more in Barbourville is a spin-off of the famed Running of the Roses.

- ~ Derby Tractor and Truck Pull draws guests to Edmonton.
- ~ Cornbread Festival features arts and crafts, soup beans and cornbread at Mill Spring Park in Monticello.
- ~ Mill Springs Memorial Ceremony is held in Mill Springs National Cemetery in Nancy.

JUNE

- ~ Stringbean Memorial Bluegrass Festival in McKee, honors David "Stringbean" Akemon and bluegrass music.
- ~ Bluegrass 'n More: A Celebration of Appalachian Heritage, presented by the Kentucky Center for Traditional Music at Morehead State University, showcases traditional Appalachian music.
- ~ Appalachian Celebration in Morehead highlights the traditional music and crafts of eastern Kentucky.
- ~ Seedtime on the Cumberland in Whitesburg celebrates the cultural heritage of Appalachia with live music, parade, films, theater, crafts and food.
- ~ Lee County Saddle Club Horse Show features top-notch equestrians.
- ~ Fishing Derby at Red River Gorge area for children ages 5-15 has prizes in three different age groups.
- ~ Rockcastle River Lazy Daze Flotilla in Livingston offers education about conservation while having the time of your life.
- ~ Appalachian Family Folk Weekend features fascinating cultural Appalachia with music, dance, crafts and storytelling at Hindman Settlement School.
- ~ All Day Gospel Singing shares a hospitable dinner at Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park in London.
- ~ Big Sandy Elk Days at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park celebrates the relocation of the elk population in Eastern Kentucky.
- ~ Yellow Banks Dulcimer Festival offers two days of music, workshops and crafts at English Park in Owensboro.
- ~ Tri-Cities Grand Reunion Festival has a variety of events in appreciation of the Appalachian heritage of Cumberland, Benham and Lynch.
- ~ Morgan County Agricultural Horse Show at the county fairgrounds in West Liberty.
- ~ Wayne County Fair at Monticello-Wayne County Memorial Park in Monticello.

JULY

- ~ The Elk Festival in Hazard spotlights the amazing creatures.
- ~ Daniel Boone Days in Booneville brings a weekend of dancing in the street, contests, gospel singing, a horse race and period costumes.
- ~ Lincoln County Fair and Horse Show is in Stanford.
- ~ Russell County Fair, one of the largest and most widely attended county fairs in the state, has a rodeo, demolition derby, truck and tractor pulls, horse racing, carnival and pageants.
- ~ Wildlife Day in Hyden features coon-on-log competitions, greased pig contest, terrapin races, food, music and fireworks.
- ~ Old Joe Clark Bluegrass Festival offers arts, crafts and some of the best Bluegrass pickers in the United States at Renfro Valley Entertainment Center.

- ~ Yatesville Lake Family Jubilee is at Yatesville Lake State Park in Louisa.
- ~ Laurel County Fair is held at the fairgrounds in London.
- ~ Master Musicians Festival in Somerset fills the air with music.
- ~ Pulaski County Jaycees Fair draws folks to the fairgrounds in Somerset.
- ~ Jessamine County Fair in Nicholasville features activities, food and music galore.
- ~ Festival of the Fourth in Wilmore has a colorful parade, crafts show, musical events and outdoor drama.

AUGUST

- ~ Stanton Corn Festival has a car show, music, crafts, and, of course, roasted corn on the cob.
- ~ Jackson County Fair & Homecoming showcases livestock and horse shows, garden and canning exhibits, musical entertainment, clogging and a parade.
- ~ Little World's Fair lets visitors enjoy the fun of an old-fashioned carnival at Brodhead.
- ~ The Nibroc Festival in Corbin brings some puzzled looks from first-time visitors not sure whether a Nibroc is a fast food, an extraterrestrial or a fancy form of granite. (Hint – spell the name of Corbin backward for the answer.)
- ~ Harlan County Shriner's Horse Show and Fair is in Harlan. Harlan's Heritage Days celebrates the area's unique history.
- ~ Osborne Brothers Hometown Festival kicks off three days of Bluegrass music at the Nixon Center in Hyden.

SEPTEMBER

- ~ Railroad Days in Somerset honors the role the railroad has played in Pulaski County's history, featuring the world's largest model train exhibit.
- ~ Autumn Bike Tour, a self-guided tour of the Red River Gorge, provides participants with a brochure that maps routes and numbered stops.
- ~ Breathitt County Honey Festival includes bed races, arcade, 10K run, crafts and food.
- ~ Wolfe County Homecoming Festival offers a fish fry, gospel singing, parade, crafts and a car show.
- ~ Swift Silver Mine Festival in Campton brings out the miner in everyone.
- ~ Mountain Heritage Festival in Whitesburg has moonshine- and lye-soap-making demonstrations, crafts, music and food.
- ~ Pumpkin Festival spotlights pumpkins, gourds, food demonstrations and more at Frakes.
- ~ Black Gold Festival in Hazard honors the area's coal heritage.
- ~ Great American Dulcimer Convention features some of the finest dulcimer players in the country with workshops, lessons and concerts at Pine Mountain State Resort Park.
- ~ Celebration of the Arts includes demonstrations, story telling, theater, musical performances and more in Columbia.
- ~ Sorghum Festival at West Liberty showcases a mule-drawn cane mill, gristmill, juried craft booths, blacksmithing, broom making and music.

- ~ Monroe County Watermelon Festival has contests related to watermelons, live entertainment, parade, races, marble tournament and antique car and tractor show at Tompkinsville.
- ~ Yatesville Gospelfest rings out at Yatesville Lake State Park in Louisa.
- ~ Lawrence County Septemberfest has bluegrass music, antique car show and parade, plus food and arts and crafts in Louisa.
- ~ Cow Days provide a "moo-ving" experience for everyone at this small town festival in Greensburg.
- ~ Buffalo Night Festival has a festive buffet and activities on buffalo and frontier life, held at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park in Prestonsburg.
- ~ World Chicken Festival brings more than 200,000 visitors for the four-day event with over 200 booths, world's largest known stainless steel skillet, contests, live entertainment and plenty of fried chicken in London.
- ~ Morgan County Sorghum Festival has a country store, mule-drawn cane mill, sorghum, traditional food and gristmill in West Liberty.
- ~ Poppy Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Morehead is the largest traditional bluegrass festival in the U.S.
- ~ Rowan County Harvest Festival celebrates harvest time with a carnival, local musicians, traditional foods, and arts and crafts.
- ~ Cave Run Storytelling Festival at the Twin Knobs Campground on Cave Run Lake in the Daniel Bone National Forest offers a weekend of traditional Appalachian storytelling for young and old alike.

OCTOBER

- ~ Woolly Worm Festival in Beattyville honors a tried-and-true predictor of the coming winter: the official Lee County Woolly Worm Survey, with results furnished to the National Weather Service. Celebration includes woolly worm races.
- ~ Festival of Buckhorns celebrates the white tail deer with wildlife exhibits, seminars, crafts and more at Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park.
- ~ Harvest time at the Mountain HomePlace means sorghum made the old-fashioned way with a turning wheel pulled by mule. Apple butter and other delectable goods also are made and sold.
- ~ Daniel Boone Festival in Barbourville includes a parade and visits from the Cherokee Indians of North Carolina.
- ~ Kentucky Apple Festival showcases clogging, square dancing, flea market, parade and apple delicacies in Paintsville.
- ~ Mary Breckinridge Festival for the founder of Frontier Nursing Service, offers crafts, music, food and a parade in Hyden.
- ~ McCreary Fest has entertainment, food and fun in Whitley City.
- ~ Cumberland Heritage Days in Stearns emphasize Native American crafts and the heritage of Southern Kentucky.
- ~ Camp Wildcat Re-enactment offers living history camps at the Battle of London and Wildcat with a barn dance in period dress and cannon firing after the dance.
- ~ Halloween Train Rides chugs from Stearns into Barthell Mining Camp.
- ~ Fiddlers Festival in Renfro Valley has beginning-to-professional fiddlers from across the nation.

~ Masquerade Weekend at Buckhorn State Resort Park in Hazard has costume contest, entertainment and haunted house.

NOVEMBER

~ Festival of the Mountain Master celebrates the area's mountain heritage with entertainment, craft demonstrations and food in Harlan.

~ Christmas Island, beginning in mid-November and continuing through the end of December on General Burnside Island State Park, invites visitors to experience a 3.5-mi. drive through over 300 displays illuminated by one million twinkling bulbs.

DECEMBER

~ Harlan Christmas Parade is one of Southeastern Kentucky's oldest and biggest holiday parades.

~ Festival of Trees welcomes the holidays at the Kentucky Coal Mining Museum in Benham.

~ Christmas in the Park uses thousands of Christmas lights to transform the Barbourville water park into a winter wonderland.

~ Nativity Play is the annual celebration of the Christmas story performed in a Bledsoe native stone chapel adorned with nature's foliage.

~ Pioneer Christmas Candlelight Tour lights the William Whitley House in Stanford.

~ Mountain Home Christmas at the Mountain HomePlace near Paintsville recreates a traditional Christmas celebration in such a settlement.

~ Christmas Appalachian Arts & Crafts Market ushers in the Christmas season in Morehead.

~ Christmas Island at General Burnside Island State Park, a 3.5 mile drive through an extravaganza of light displays.

CONSUMER INQUIRIES:

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