



Southern & Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association

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FANTASTIC FISHING AWAITS ANGLERS IN WATER WONDERLAND

Fishing tales in the Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky usually don't revolve around the "one that got away." Instead, anglers talk about the ones they caught today and the giants they will reel in tomorrow. No wonder. With more navigable miles of water than any other state in the union except Alaska, Kentucky has a veritable wonderland of lakes, creeks, ponds and rivers. And they all teem with fish waiting to be caught.

The stories are legend; many of them verified and recorded by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. Imagine what it was like on the cool, cloudy and windy morning of March 11, 1985. Two fishing buddies, Bob Patterson and Joel Wells, didn't start off on Laurel River Lake until almost 10 a.m. The previous fall, Wells had hooked a lunker that broke his line and the two men headed back to that same spot, not otherwise considered to be remarkable. But on this lucky morning, it proved remarkable indeed. Less than an hour out, Patterson felt a tug. Thinking it was probably a tree limb, Patterson decided to take a chance nonetheless and jerked hard. Up came a 9-½ pound lunker largemouth, one of the biggest bass ever taken from Laurel. Two hours later, about a mile up lake from the lunker hole, Patterson struck "green gold" again. He pulled in a 7-½ pounder.

Two huge lunkers within two hours would be a remarkable feat anywhere. But it was even more unusual at Laurel River Lake for two reasons – the lake is not known as a producer of big bass, and it is decidedly a night fishing lake because of its unusually clear waters.

The moral of this story? You never know what you're liable to pull in on a Kentucky fishing trip, or where you're apt to catch it. That's part of the thrill of a fishing foray in the Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky. That's what draws anglers back time and again. It's what sets them to dreaming, so even if they're not out doing it, many anglers are happily thinking about and planning for their next fishing adventure.

Stands to reason that a Kentucky man would be the father of bait-casting reels. George Snyder of Paris, a watchmaker and president of the Bourbon County Angling

Club, invented the multiplying fishing reel around 1810. His creation was the basis for all modern bait-casting reels. It's understandable why he was looking for a faster, better way to cast. Kentucky is fishing heaven with more water and more types of fish than almost anyplace else in the nation.

Fishing is a relaxing pastime for some people; a challenging sport and serious test for others. No matter how you look at it, Kentucky is second to none when it comes to the variety and quality of freshwater fishing opportunities. Something is always in season for anglers. Choose where you want to fish, the type of equipment you want to use, whether you'll need to rent a boat and how long you want to stay. Then just do it.

For an extra edge in fishing, try one of the wonderful guide services available in the Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky. It's like taking a joyous fishing trip with an old friend – who also happens to be one of the most experienced anglers in the area. Guides know all the nooks and crannies where you can find stripers on Lake Cumberland. With its blue-green water, Cumberland has become one of the nation's top striper lakes. Lake Cumberland has 63,000 surface acres and touches 1,225 miles of shoreline with an average depth of 90 feet. As local operations with people from the area, guide services use top-of-the-line electronics and well-maintained rods and reels on their charters. Along with a safe and comfortable boat and fully licensed guide, a charter service furnishes all bait and tackle. They'll also clean and package your catch at no extra charge.

Some of the services have guides that are in constant radio contact with one another to produce maximum catching. It's like having several guides working for you on your fishing trip. Anglers who haven't tried striper fishing are in for a treat. One guide describes stripers as having the swiftness of a salmon, strength of a tarpon and collective feeding habits of a piranha. On Lake Cumberland, striper fishing is highly successful year round. Southern Kentucky waters stay warm enough that stripers remain active even in the cold winter. The deep water of Lake Cumberland provides the oxygen and comfortable water temperatures that stripers favor during the summer months. Through years of experience, guide services have developed many different techniques to have great fishing success during all seasons. Whether stripers are surface feeding or chasing bait at depths up to 100 feet, guides know how to produce quality fish no matter the time of year. Just look at the statistics for the true story – the average size fish is 15 pounds and the average catch rate is six fish per day.

There is a romance associated with stream fishing, a strong sense of communing with nature. Kentucky is filled with fishing streams that run through undeveloped and remote areas. Stream fishing is a more delicate art because stream fish are leaner, more wary creatures since they don't have the luxury of deep hiding places. Landing a smallmouth bass in two feet of clear running water under a lacy canopy of sheltering leaves is a soul cleansing experience.

Laurel River Lake is the rainbow trout mecca in Kentucky. Currently, 40 percent of the fish taken at Laurel are rainbow trout. In addition to being deep, clean and sufficiently cold at depth, Laurel River Lake's relative lack of plant life gives an ample supply of oxygen at depth to support an excellent rainbow fishery even in the hottest months of the year. Four to six pound rainbow trout are not unusual, especially in the winter months of November through February.

Dale Hollow Lake, formed by backing up the Obey River in 1943, has 620 miles of shoreline. There are plenty of shoals, small tributaries and clean, clear water to encourage healthy fish growth.

Cave Run Lake near Morehead was completed in 1973 by damming the Licking River in northeastern Kentucky. It is 48 miles long and known as the best muskie fishing lake in the South.

After a satisfying day of fishing, come home to a state resort park, rental cabin, bed and breakfast, cottage, condominium or motel that doesn't cost an arm and a leg to enjoy. Grill the day's catch on the front deck and serve dinner to the performance of a spectacular sunset. Or rent a houseboat and spend the night on the water, feeling the gentle motion of the current carrying away the stresses of daily life. Experience the beauty of moonlight shimmering across the water while savoring the fresh clear air. The Highlands and Waterways Region of Kentucky offers some of the best prices for top-of-the-line accommodations – a true bargain in a recreation world growing ever more expensive.

Kentucky anglers are generous. They'll share some of the best fishing holes and even tell you what the fish are biting on. Just ask or look interested. You'll find out. You'll hear that lunkers are known to hang around a slough called Piney Hollow on Laurel River and that divers have seen big bass suspended around 30 feet deep off the steep sides of the island near the Grove boat ramp on Laurel River Lake. In the summer, a good method for catching large bluegills is to stay about 30 feet off the bank of Laurel River Lake, use meal worms and crickets, cast out and let free fall about 20 feet.

The Highlands and Waterways Region is chock full of fish, with an abundance of many species. Even so, everybody seems to know just where to find what species of fish. In the Cumberland River, it's brown trout, rainbow trout and striper. Dale Hollow is the destination for smallmouth bass. Lake Cumberland is renowned for striper and smallmouth but its true forte is walleye. Head to Laurel River Lake for rainbow trout and smallmouth bass. Wood Creek is the place for largemouth bass. Green River draws anglers for its muskie and smallmouth bass. Buckhorn Lake, Cave Run Lake, and Green River Lake are rich with muskie. And Paintsville has an abundance of smallmouth bass and walleye.

Just look at some of the fish waiting to be caught. A long list seems to grow even longer with the passing of decades as newer species are introduced into Kentucky waters. One reason why the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources decides to stock species such as hybrid striped bass is to provide extra angling opportunities. Hybrid striped bass are a cross between white bass and striped bass. The species has characteristics of growing a good deal larger than pure-white strain bass, as well as being able to tolerate warmer water temperatures than pure-strain striped bass. The hybrid allows the best of both parent species worlds. The combination is a very hard fighting, fast-growing fish that provides anglers with some superb challenges, as well as a chance to use a variety of different approaches to catch these fish.

Striper fishing has become one of the hottest sport fishing adventures in almost a century. The huge ocean fish has adapted itself to Kentucky's deep freshwater reservoirs like Lake Cumberland. And what a show they give. Imagine seeing the line strip from your reel like a runaway rollercoaster. Think of your rod tip bending closer and closer to the water. Feel the fighting power of a 20, 30, 40 and even 50-pound fish in this powerful

tug of war. After minutes of exhilarating battle, see the trophy fish pulled safely into your boat.

The largemouth bass is one of the principal sport fish in Kentucky. And for good reason. Considered king of the local waters, the largemouth bass is at home in most types of water – from a muddy farm pond to a clear deep lake. The fish is known to have a ferocious appetite, as well as a nasty temper. Even if it isn't hungry, the largemouth bass will strike out at any bait an angler is likely to throw its way.

The class act of the bass, the smallmouth bass isn't quite as contrary as its bigmouth cousin. Many anglers consider the smallmouth to be one of the greatest freshwater fighters of them all. Most smallmouth anglers generally estimate one-minute fight per pound of fish hooked. That adds up to a great amount of adventure for the angler lucky enough to tie into a six or seven pounder, not at all uncommon in Kentucky waters.

The spotted or Kentucky bass prefers colder, deeper, clearer water and is as comfortable in running streams as in lakes.

Muskie madness is an exercise in patience. Often called the fish of a thousand casts, muskellunge is North America's most elusive game fish. The toothy predator grows bigger than a man's leg and can test the stoutest tackle. Any muskie is a trophy. Once you've seen one of these green-eyed monsters come up boatside, devour your jerk bait with a few inches of line out from the tip of your rod and stare you straight in the eye, you'll understand the passion for muskie. Muskies have a strange habit of following bait back to the boat without really doing anything. It could be curiosity or territorial instincts. But you can often catch these nosy critters with a little creative angling. Dip the rod tip in the water and perform a "figure eight" with the lure. A muskie will decide the prey has become confused and is trying to escape. Then the muskie will strike and the angler can pull in a big one. Up to one-third of all muskies caught are hooked by this method. Kentucky has a big advantage over the more classic muskie waters in Wisconsin and Minnesota in that the fishing season lasts much longer because of the warmer climate. Muskie season usually lasts from March until the end of October. However, many trophies are caught in November and December when the big boys come out and feed.

The rainbow trout and its high leaping ways has been celebrated in writings by famed authors like Izaak Walton and Ernest Hemingway. A beautiful fish with a fanciful tailwalking ability, the rainbow trout can be a tough fighter. Seeing its silvery pink flashes is a sight to behold. Historically, Kentucky was never thought of as a trout fishing state and for good reason – most of its waters were generally too warm to support trout. But when the dam was built creating Lake Cumberland, all that changed. Because the lake is so deep, the water that is released from the dam is very cold and highly oxygenated - two important factors for trout survival. Trout were introduced to the river downstream shortly after the dam was created and the rest is history.

A fierce-looking predator, the walleye is excellent table fare that can grow up to 20 pounds or more. With a thrust-out lower jaw, the walleye is a wary fish that likes to stay in deeper water except during spawning runs and nighttime forays.

With a large following in the Bluegrass State, crappie is one of the favorite eating and catching fish. Whether you prefer fishing a cane pole with minnows, kicking back on the bank or casting jigs from the deck of a bass boat, chances are you can come up with a stringer full of crappie. Found mostly in schools around submerged trees or brush,

crappie can grow up to five pounds. Anglers know that when they catch one, most likely they have found a spot to catch many more.

A fighter, the rock bass got its name by liking to wedge itself under the edges of rocks along the bottom of a stream. There the fish will wait for some unsuspecting prey to come along. It also is nicknamed the red eye because of its large red eyes. The rock bass prefers cold clear streams and lakes, especially those with rocky bottoms.

In Kentucky, it is hard to be far away from good catfishing. Most every pond, lake and stream has its share of the whiskerfish clan. Catfish remain a good starting point for young anglers today because of its wide distribution and simple tackle requirements. Channel cats and flathead cats are usually easy fishing. Flatheads in excess of 50 pounds are regularly taken. The state records for the species weighed in at 97 pounds pulled from the Green River in June 1956.

When all is said and done, it's the fishing that folks remember more than the catching. There's something to be said for sitting still for a while, letting your mind roam free and your body relax while you peacefully keep an eye on a rod or pole. Fishing is a universal activity that can spawn friendships, bring families closer together, teach youngsters important values and be a soothing balm for stress-strewn daily lives.

Fishing knows no age or status boundaries. Watch a youngster delight as his little red and white bobber darts under from a bluegill. See a harried CEO lean back on a rental houseboat, content to grasp her fishing pole and let the world pass gently by. Glimpse a long-past-retirement fella lug his tackle box to river's edge, climb aboard a fishing boat and head out with a couple of buddies to commune with nature. They might not catch enough fish for a good mess, but they will bask in the spirit of fishing and the great outdoors and know that they are enjoying one of the true pleasures of life.

Favorite fishing holes include:

~ Buckhorn Lake is in the northern portion of the Redbird part of Daniel Boone National Forest. Covering 1,230 acres, the lake extends from Buckhorn to within 12 miles of Hyden. Completed in 1960, Buckhorn Dam on the Middle Fork of the Kentucky River is 1,020 feet long and 162 feet high. Fish include largemouth bass, Kentucky bass, white bass, bluegill, channel catfish, flathead catfish, crappie and muskie.

~ Lake Cumberland extends from Wolf Creek Dam south of Russell Springs and Jamestown into seven counties and upstream for over 100 miles east to the vicinity of Somerset and on to the area of Cumberland Falls. Shoreline covers over 1,200 miles. Wolf Creek Dam across the Cumberland River near Jamestown is 258 feet high and 5,736 feet long. Fish include five species of bass, walleye, crappie and trout.

~ Cave Run Lake, which covers 8720 acres in Bath, Menifee, Morgan, and Rowan counties, has gained the reputation as the premier muskie lake in the South. It is the first stop every spring on the annual pro muskie fishing tournament in the East. There's also good fishing for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, crappie, bluegill, and catfish.

~ Yatesville Lake at Yatesville State Park in Louisa covers 2,242 acres and is 20.6 mi. long. Includes Yatesville Dam on Blaine Creek, a tributary of the Big Sandy River. Fish include largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish.

~ Paintsville Lake in Paintsville State Park covers 1,139 acres and winds through the steep hills and narrow gorges of Johnson and Morgan counties. Fish include bass, crappie, redbreast sunfish, trout and walleye. The lake and Paintsville Dam were completed in 1984.

~ Dewey Lake at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park near Prestonsburg was completed in 1950. The lake covers 1,100 acres, extends 18 ½ miles and has 52 miles of shoreline. Fish include largemouth bass, catfish and crappie. The Dewey Lake Dam on Johns Creek is 913 feet long and 118 feet high. The lake has 22 shoreline picnic areas for public use with tables, grills and two shoreline camping areas with boat access only.

~ Martin County Lake outside Inez covers six acres and has largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish.

~ Martin County Curtis Crum Reservoir near Inez is 11 acres large and has largemouth bass and bluegill.

~ Milo Pond in Martin County covers three acres and has largemouth bass, bluegill and catfish.

~ Fishtrap Lake near Pikeville covers 1,131 acres and extends about 18 ½ miles. It was completed in 1968. Fishtrap Dam on the Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River is 1,100 feet long and 195 feet high. Fish include hybrid striped bass, crappie, largemouth bass and smallmouth bass.

~ Mill Creek Lake near Slade in Natural Bridge State Park was built in 1963 and covers 41 acres. Fish include largemouth bass, bluegill, white crappie, black crappie, rock bass, longear sunfish, rainbow trout, channel catfish and black bullhead.

~ Campton Lake near Campton covers 26 acres and has largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie and channel catfish.

~ Pan Bowl Lake near Jackson covers 98 acres and was built in 1963 on the North Fork of the Kentucky River. Fish include channel catfish, largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, redear and carp.

~ Cannon Creek Lake near Pineville covers 243 acres and was completed in 1972. Fish include rainbow trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, spotted bass, crappie, bluegill, warmouth and channel catfish.

~ Chenoa Lake in Ridge State Forest near Pineville was built in 1953 and covers 37 acres. Fish include largemouth bass, bluegill, white crappie, green sunfish, redear sunfish, channel catfish and brown bullhead.

~ Laurel River Lake in the Daniel Boone National Forest near Corbin covers 6,000 acres with 200 miles of shoreline. Forested hills and steep bluffs offer exceptional views. Laurel River Dam is 1,420 feet long and 282 feet high. Fish include trout, bass, crappie, walleye and bream.

~ Wood Creek Lake near London was completed in 1969 and covers 672 acres. The lake holds the state record for largemouth bass, 13 lb., 10 oz., caught on April 14, 1984. Fish include trout and largemouth bass.

~ Lake Linville near Mt. Vernon was completed in 1968 and covers 274 acres. Fish include largemouth bass, spotted bass, crappie, bluegill and channel catfish.

~ Bert T. Combs Lake near Manchester was built in 1963 and covers 36 acres. Fish include largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish and rainbow trout.

~ Beulah Lake near Tyner was built in 1969 and covers 87 acres. Fish include rainbow trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and bluegill.

~ Dale Hollow Lake near Burkesville covers 27,700 acres. Completed in 1943. Dale Hollow Lake is famous for the world record smallmouth bass catch of almost 12 pounds.

~ Green River Lake near Campbellsville covers 8,210 acres. Fish include crappie, bass and muskie. Completed in 1969, Green River Dam is 141 feet high and 2,350 feet long.

~ Herrington Lake near Lancaster was developed in 1925 and covers 3,600 acres. It is 35 miles long and has 325 miles of shoreline. Fish include white bass, black bass, crappie, bluegill and catfish.

~ Stanford Reservoir near Stanford was built in 1953 and covers 43 acres. Fish include largemouth bass, spotted bass, bluegill, longear sunfish, green sunfish and rainbow trout.

~ Cave Run Lake covers 8,270 acres in Menifee, Rowan and Morgan counties. Fish include muskellunge, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, crappie, bluegill and catfish.

~ Mill Creek Lake in Natural Bridge State Park near Slade covers 41 acres. Fish include rainbow trout, channel catfish, crappie, largemouth bass and rock bass.

~ Cranks Creek Lake near Harlan covers 219 acres. Fish include rainbow trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish.

~ Kingdom Come Lake near Harlan in Kingdom Come State Park covers three acres. Fish include rainbow trout, largemouth bass and bluegill. Boats are prohibited but lake has good bank access.

~ Fishpond Lake near Jenkins covers 32 acres. Fish include largemouth bass, rainbow trout, bluegill, channel catfish and crappie.

~ Barren River Lake near Glasgow covers 10,000 acres. Fish include largemouth bass, striped bass, smallmouth bass, Kentucky bass, channel catfish and crappie.

Marinas include:

~ Scott Creek Marina on Cave Run Lake near Morehead.

~ Longbow Marina on Cave Run Lake near Frenchburg.

~ Paintsville Lake Marina near Paintsville.

~ Fishtrap Marina near Pikeville.

~ Carr Creek Marina near Hindman.

~ Grove Marina on Laurel River Lake near Corbin.

~ Holly Bay Marina on Laurel River Lake near London.

~ Lee's Ford Marina Resort on Lake Cumberland.

~ Burnside Marina near General Burnside Island State Park in Burnside.

~ Lake Cumberland State Resort Park Marina near Somerset.

~ Jamestown Resort and Marina on Lake Cumberland near Jamestown.

~ Indian Hills Resort/Alligator II Marina and KOA on Lake Cumberland near Russell Springs.

~ Popplewell's Alligator Dock #1 on Lake Cumberland near Russell Springs.

~ Beaver Creek Resort on Lake Cumberland near Monticello.

~ Conley Bottom Resort on Lake Cumberland near Monticello.

~ Grider Hill Dock & Indian Creek Lodge on Lake Cumberland near Albany.

~ Wisdom Dock on Dale Hollow Lake near Albany.

~ Wolf River Resort on Dale Hollow Lake near Albany.

- ~ Hendricks Creek Resort & Marina on Dale Hollow Lake near Burkesville.
- ~ Sulphur Creek Resort Inc. on Dale Hollow Lake near Burkesville.
- ~ Traces On the Cumberland on the Cumberland River near Burkesville.
- ~ Emerald Isle Resort & Marina on Green River Lake near Campbellsville.
- ~ Green River Marina on Green River Lake near Campbellsville.
- ~ Holmes Bend Resort & Marina on Green River Lake near Columbia.
- ~ Riverview RV Park & Marina on Herrington Lake near Lancaster.
- ~ King's Mill Marina on Herrington Lake near Lancaster.
- ~ Sunset Marina on Herrington Lake near Lancaster.

Experienced fishing guides include:

- ~ Nancy Guide Service at Alligator II Marina on Lake Cumberland, 606/871-9555.
- ~ Striper Time Guide Service at Conley Bottom Resort on Lake Cumberland, 606/348-9927.
- ~ Striper Madness at Russell Springs on Lake Cumberland, 270/866-3660.
- ~ Bates Guide Service at Alligator II Marina on Lake Cumberland, 270/866-8703.
- ~ Fish Tales Professional Guide Service on the Cumberland River, 502/426-1839.
- ~ Double D Outfitters on Cumberland Tailwaters, 502/538-8919.
- ~ Rainbow Guide Service on the Cumberland River, 270/864-2248.
- ~ Striker Guide Service on Buckhorn Lake, 606/487-8033.
- ~ Buckhorn Guide Service on Buckhorn Lake, 606/436-6501.
- ~ Tommy Hall's Guide Service on Buckhorn Lake, 270/242-6712.
- ~ Bob Coan's Dale Hollow Lake Guide Service on Dale Hollow Lake, 931/243-3827.
- ~ Fish Tales Professional Guide Service on Dale Hollow Lake, 502/426-1839.
- ~ Trophy Guides Service on Dale Hollow Lake, 931/243-2142.

- ~ Eck's Guide Service on Dale Hollow Lake, 931/243-6349.
- ~ Kentucky Trophy Fishing on Lake Cumberland, 270/433-6333.
- ~ Dale Hollow Smallmouth Guide Service on Dale Hollow Lake, 931/243-4795.
- ~ AJ's Guide Service on Lake Cumberland, 270/866-6207.
- ~ Sea-Shift Charters on Lake Cumberland, 800/505-6447.
- ~ Bill Jarboe, Muskie Guide on Green River Lake, 270/465-3788.
- ~ Crash Mullins Professional Guide Service on Cave Run Lake, 606/780-4260
- ~ Gregg Thomas' Battle the Beast Guide Service on Cave Run Lake, 606/780-9223
- ~ Cave Run Muskie Guide Service, 606/768-2319

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