

## **MOUNTAIN PARKWAY TRAILS CORRIDOR**

### **Cultural Tourism**

The culture of a region mixes the past with the present. It is a living history of sorts that reflects the lifestyles and abilities of people. In the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor, it is easy to tell that the pioneer influence remains strong. Carving a living out of the wilderness made the early settlers in the area self-sufficient, thus in many ways, creative. This is a trait that is still expressed in abundance along the Corridor today.

Arts and crafts, of course, are prime examples of creative human expressions, and in this part of Kentucky, there is no shortage of such talent. In downtown Irvine, for example, shoppers can see samplings of the region's crafts in stores such as Artrageous and the Front Porch Gallery. Other cooperatives that bring together the best works from local artisans include Morris Fork Craft Center in Booneville, Swift Creek Arts and Crafts Gallery in Campton (open April through December) and Appalachian Fireside Crafts in Vincent. In addition, there is a shopper's cornucopia of galleries, studios and shops in the Corridor that specialize in pottery, basket weaving, jewelry, stained-glass, woodworking, original art and other forms of handmade creativity. Main Street in Stanton, the Gladie Cultural-Environmental Learning Center at Red River Gorge, and Tater Knob Pottery on the Estill County Line are just some of the many other desirable destinations to find Kentucky craftsmanship at its best in the region.

Songs are another indication of a creative culture, and in these hills, they are usually heard as the sweet sounds of bluegrass, the signature music of Kentucky and southern Appalachia. And in Meadowgreen Park Music Hall near Clay City, it is the only music visitors hear. Situated in a 100-acre park bordering the Red River, the Music Hall, which was built in 1986, is dedicated to the preservation of bluegrass music. And what better way to preserve bluegrass music than to play it? Live performances are held every Saturday night from May through October. Many local and regional bands grace the Hall with their talents, but its stage is no stranger to national acts such as the Osborne Brothers, the Lewis Family and the Goins Brothers.

That the automobile has become an intrinsic part of modern cultures is a given, and visitors will find fun places along the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor, where the car is, indeed, king, especially for those who have the need to see speed. At the Half Mountain Speedway in Magoffin County, races are held on the 4/10-mile, oval track every Saturday night in the summer. More days of thunder can be experienced at the Clay City Kart Speedway, a dirt oval track that hosts races from May through September. For fans who like their racing in a straight line, the Mountain Park Dragway is the place to be. The International Hot Rod Association sanctions this quarter-mile track, and races are held every Saturday from March to November.

Culture is a coat of many colors, and along the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor, it is a broad piece of cloth that covers diverse areas, including arts, crafts, music and piston-

popping racing. For visitors, however, such diversity only creates more opportunities to enjoy a wide range of cultural experiences in the beauty of the Kentucky mountains.

### **DESTINATIONS:**

- Artrageous, Irvine: (606) 723-8200.
- Front Porch Gallery, Irvine: (606) 723-0822.
- Appalachian Fireside Crafts, Vincent: 1-888-793-5280.
- Swift Creek Arts and Crafts Gallery, Campton: (606) 725-4860.
- Morris Fork Crafts Center, Booneville: (606) 398-2194.
- Gladie Cultural-Environmental Learning Center, (606) 663-2852.
- TaterKnob Pottery, (859) 986-2167.
- Meadowgreen Park Music Hall, Clay City: (606) 663-9008; [www.chapel1.com/kfobg](http://www.chapel1.com/kfobg).
- Half Mountain Speedway, Magoffin County: (606) 884-RACE; [www.halfmountainspeedway.com](http://www.halfmountainspeedway.com).
- Mountain Park Dragway, Clay City: (606) 663-2344; [www.mpdragway.com](http://www.mpdragway.com).
- Clay City Kart Speedway, Clay City: (606) 663-1203.

### **FESTIVALS AND EVENTS:**

- Mountain Mushroom Festival, Irvine, last week of April: Two days of fun featuring arts and crafts, bluegrass music, car show and mushroom market. (606) 723-1233.
- Woolly Worm Festival, Beattyville, third weekend in October: A popular three-day event that draws up to 50,000 visitors each year. (606) 464-2888.
- Kentucky Friends of Bluegrass Spring Festival, Clay City, May: Well-known bluegrass artists perform at Meadowgreen Park. (606) 633-9008; [www.chapel1.com/kfobg](http://www.chapel1.com/kfobg).
- Corn Festival, Stanton, first full weekend in August: An annual event that features hand-crafted items only, live music, craft demonstrations, a car show and more. (606) 663-2271.
- Morris Fork Annual Craft Fair, Booneville, fourth Saturday in September: Local artisan talent is showcased at the Morris Fork Craft Center. (606) 398-2194.
- Bluegrass Nationals, Clay City, July: Two days of Kart racing at the Clay City Kart Speedway. (606) 663-1203.
- Mountain Market Festival, Natural Bridge State Resort Park, third Saturday in August: A fun time that includes arts and crafts, live music, regional foods and on-site craft demonstrations. (606) 663-6405.
- Goins Brothers Bluegrass Festival, Clay City, weekend after Labor Day: This annual salute to Kentucky's favorite music is held at Meadowgreen Park. (606) 663-9008; [www.chapel1.com/kfobg](http://www.chapel1.com/kfobg).