

Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor Heritage Tourism

History has its place in this land of forested ridges and deep valleys. In spite of the hilly terrain, Native Americans inhabited the area for centuries, but with the discovery of the Cumberland Gap in 1750, settlers mainly from North Carolina and Virginia began pouring into the region in the late 1700s and early 1800s. These pioneers forged a life for themselves in the wilderness, and as a result, also laid a foundation for the area's rich heritage.

This heritage isn't forgotten along the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor. Today, the past is not only remembered but it is also proudly displayed for visitors interested in understanding the history of the area. This is evident in the many museums and attractions dedicated to days gone by that can be found in the region.

The Pioneer Village and Museum in Salyersville is typical of the Corridor's dedication to earlier days. It is a replica of a frontier settlement that includes a furnished school, church, blacksmith shop, wash house, barn and gun smithing shop. Also onsite is the Magoffin County Historical Society. This is a very active organization that maintains a genealogy library, prints a quarterly journal and sponsors the county's annual Founder's Day Festival each Labor Day Weekend.

Another museum that focuses on pioneer life is the Wolfe County Historical Museum in Campton. It features frontier household items and farm equipment. As a salute to a more modern era, the Red River Historical Museum in Clay City displays a reconstructed school house, historic mill stone collection, and artifacts from the heydays of the county's logging, railroad and iron industries.

More monuments from Kentucky's 19th century iron age are the Fitchburg and Cottage Furnaces in Estill County. Both furnaces produced iron from native ore deposits in the area. The Fitchburg Furnace in Ravenna was built in 1869 by master masons from the sister city of Ravenna, Italy. When it was completed, this twin-stack, coal-burning furnace was the largest of its kind in the world. It is now a park registered as a National Historic Site.

Another popular destination that is a remnant of Kentucky's industrial past is the Nada Tunnel in Powell County. Started in 1910 and finished a year later, this 900-foot tunnel was built for a narrow-gauge railroad to haul logs to Clay City 15, miles away. Now a one-lane passage for automobiles, it is on the National Register of Historic Places and, as a part of the Red River Gorge National Scenic Byway, is also the western entrance to the Red River Gorge Geologic Area.

In the Red River Gorge is the Gladie Historic Site, a reconstructed log cabin that dates back to the late 1800s. This homestead, complete with a small herd of bison, helps keep

the past alive with an active calendar of events, many of which are based on the history of the region. Near the cabin, the Gladie Cultural-Environmental Learning Center provides more glimpses into the past of this ruggedly beautiful area with interpretive exhibits that explore the history as well as incredible geology of the Red River Gorge.

The Three Forks Historical Center spans the ages in Lee County. Named for the three forks of the Kentucky River, which converge together at Beattyville, this museum is dedicated to the cultures and industries that became parts of the county's history. The diverse collections feature exhibits on the rivers, ancient Native American cultures, frontier life, agriculture, the railroads, and the logging and oil boom days.

Visitors will find that history is an inherent part of the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor. In this beautiful part of Kentucky, the days gone by have never really left because what once was is still remembered in many interesting and fun ways.

DESTINATIONS:

- Red River Historical Museum, Clay City: 606/663-4000, (606) 663-2555.
- Three Forks Historical Center, Beattyville: (606) 464-2616, (606) 464-3935, (606) 464-2888.
- Pioneer Village and Museum, Salyersville: (606) 349-1353.
- Cottage and Fitchburg Furnaces, Estell County: (606) 723-2450.
- Wolfe County Historical Museum, Campton: (606) 668-3113.
- Nada Tunnel, (606) 663-2852.
- Gladie Historic Site, Red River Gorge: (606) 663-2852.
- Gladie Cultural-Environmental Learning Center, (606) 663-5088 or (606) 663-2852

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS:

- Archeology Weekend, Red River Gorge, September: Learn how Native Americans lived centuries ago at this event at the Gladie Historic Site that features Native crafts, foods and demonstrations. (606) 663-2852.
- Sorghum Festival, Red River Gorge, October: Demonstrations at the Gladie Historic Site on how sorghum was made in the old days from the sugar cane that grew in the Gorge. (606) 663-2852.
- Daniel Boone Days, Booneville, first weekend in July: A celebration of Owsley County's pioneer heritage. (606) 593-6800; www.owsleykyhist.org/DanielBooneDays.htm.
- Founders Festival, Salyersville, Labor Day weekend: Saluting the founding fathers of Magoffin County. ((606) 349-2313.
- Lee County Woolly Worm Festival, October: Come see how the little black and brown worm can predict the weather. (606) 464-2888
- Swift Silver Mine Festival, Campton, Labor Day weekend: The good old days return in this salute to a lost 18th century silver mine in Wolfe County. (606) 668-3040.

