

Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor General Overview

DESCRIPTION:

The Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor is a land of great natural beauty, which for tourists means many opportunities for adventure. Estill, Powell, Wolfe, Lee, Owsley and Magoffin counties make up this region in the center of eastern Kentucky. Much of the Corridor lies on the Cumberland Plateau, a large, uplifted region marked by steep hills, deep hollows (pronounced “hollers”) and scenic vistas. To the west is the Red River Gorge with its rocky outcroppings, natural amphitheaters and stone arches (the largest concentration anywhere in the U.S. outside of Arches National Monument in Utah). It cuts through the edge of the Plateau on its way to the Kentucky River and thence onward to the Ohio River. In Estill County to the southwest, the Plateau falls off into The Knobs, a picturesque area dotted by steep hills that ring the Bluegrass Region – “Where the mountains kiss the Bluegrass”. For sightseers and outdoor enthusiasts, the splendor of the land is obvious, but after over 200 years of settlement, the area also has rich historical and cultural traditions.

After the discovery of the Cumberland Gap, settlers from Virginia and North Carolina came into the region in the late 1700s and early 1800s, looking for a better life. These pioneers were mainly from hardy immigrant stock, and they forged their new lives through hard work, determination and simple values. Their legacy can be seen, of course, in the many farms and towns that were established in the region, but with current residents, the pioneer spirit of their forefathers. Add this to their easy-going manners, quick smiles and helpful ways, and visitors can sense something else that can be summed up in one word: Welcome.

The old days are not forgotten in these hills. Historical sites and museums dedicated to what once was dot the region. These include the Pioneer Village in Salyersville, Three Forks Historical Center in Beattyville, Puncheon Civil War Battle Site in Magoffin County, Red River Historical Museum in Clay City, the Estill County Historical & Genealogical Society in downtown Irvine, and the Wolfe County Historical Museum. The skillful ways of the past are also present in the many arts and crafts studios, galleries and outlets that can be found across the Corridor, including cooperatives such as Swift Creek Arts and Crafts Gallery in Campton, Artrageous in Irvine, Morris Fork Craft Center in Booneville, and Appalachian Fireside Crafts in Vincent.

If food is a good indicator of a region’s character, the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor is a little bit country. Because of their tasty, home-cooked style meals, nobody goes away hungry at local favorites such as Dooley’s Place in Booneville, The Purple Cow in Beattyville, Mark’s Mountain Barbeque in Torrent Falls, Cedar Village Restaurant in Irvine, The Old Saloon Diner in Clay City and the Hemlock Lodge at Natural Bridge State Resort Park. Vegetarians won’t miss out on enjoying delicious samplings of this

region's cuisine because Miguel's Pizza in Slade is well known for its vegetarian pizza. In addition, the Snug Hollow Farm & Country Inn, a 300-acre working organic farm and bed & breakfast in Irvine, serves its guests delicious gourmet vegetarian breakfasts, with similarly prepared lunches, dinners and even picnic baskets upon request.

By its very name, it is a given that the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor basks in mountainous beauty. The magnificent Daniel Boone National Forest is a significant part of this region, and there is much more to its scenic beauty. For pure pastoral pleasures, a trip through the wooded hills of the Red Lick Valley in The Knobs is a treat. The Red River Gorge, cutting through the edge of the Cumberland Plateau, which borders the Knobs on the east, offers stunning vistas and the chance for adventurers to test their skills at canoeing, hiking and rock climbing. Natural Bridge State Resort Park, located within the National Forest in Powell County, has 2200 acres for fishing, camping and hiking excursions and the most magnificent of all the rock arches in this region, which has more natural bridges than anywhere else in the U.S. except Arches National Monument.

Getting to the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor is easy, as there are many roads that lead into the region. The Bert T. Combs Mountain Parkway is a picturesque thoroughfare that bisects the northern portion of the Corridor from east to west. Coming from the south, State Highway 594 winds through The Knobs and the Red Lick Valley, one of Kentucky's prettiest valleys. Highway 11, the main north-south thoroughfare through Owsley, Lee, Wolfe and Powell counties, runs along the western edge of the Cumberland Plateau and into a particularly scenic section of The Knobs south of Slade.

North of the small town of Zachariah, Highway 11 becomes the Red River Gorge National Scenic Byway, signaling a change in scenery. And indeed it is. Through Wolfe and Powell counties, this 46-mile route (with many overlooks) guides travelers into the Red River Gorge Geological Area, which has some of the most stunning scenery in the Daniel Boone National Forest. Travelers along the Byway see a land of awesome, rugged beauty that brims with chiseled cliffs, rocky ravines, waterfalls and over 100 natural stone arches (sculpted by 70 million years of erosion by wind and water) as well as the Red River, of which a 19.2-mile section was designated Kentucky's first and only National Wild and Scenic River.

Indeed, it is easy to drive into the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor, but the many unique cultural and historical experiences as well as breathtaking scenery in the area make leaving the hardest part of any trip.

COUNTIES:

Estill

Estill County was founded in 1808, and the county seat is Irvine. Because most of the county is in the Daniel Boone National Forest, its natural beauty is easy to imagine. In addition, sightseers will find a drive through the Red Lick Valley portion of The Knobs Region to be especially pleasing. Shoppers hunting for unique items won't be disappointed either, as there are many artisans' studios and galleries throughout the

county. History buffs will be interested in the Fitchburg Furnace, which was built in 1869, and was, at the time, the largest charcoal-burning furnace in the world.

Powell

Located in the northwest corner on the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor Powell County was established in 1852, and Stanton was made its county seat. Like Estill County, Powell is embraced by the Daniel Boone National Forest. The Natural Bridge State Resort Park is also in the National Forest, and it features a 65-foot-high natural sandstone arch. The Red River Gorge National Scenic Byway runs through the center of the county from east to west, providing sightseers and outdoor adventurers access to the rocky splendor of the Red River Gorge. More eye-catching scenery is in store at Pilot Knob Nature Preserve, which has one of the tallest knobs on the Cumberland Plateau.

Lee

Named in honor of Robert E. Lee, this county was formed in 1870, with Beattyville becoming its county seat. The western half of the county resides in the splendor that is the Daniel Boone National Forest. More beauty naturally flows into the county from the three forks of the Kentucky River, all of which meet in Beattyville. The Three Forks Historical Center in Beattyville pays homage to the mighty Kentucky River, but it is also dedicated to preserving the county's early Indian and pioneer cultures as well as its oil, logging and railroad boom days.

Owsley

Founded in 1843, Owsley's county seat is Booneville, which was formerly known as Boones Station. Both names come from the fact that Daniel Boone used to camp in the area. Boone usually paddled up the South Fork of the Kentucky River, a waterway that still provides opportunities to present-day outdoorsmen in the form of fishing and boating. Located in this scenic county is Linda's Victorian Rose Bed & Breakfast. Constructed in 1915 by the Presbyterian Church as a church and school, this historic building is now a bed and breakfast offering great food with a wonderful atmosphere.

Wolfe

Wolfe county was established in 1860, and Campton was named as its seat. That the Red River Gorge National Scenic Byway winds through the northwest corner of the county while the Bert T. Combs Mountain Parkway runs down the middle of it from east to west only underlines the fact that this is a ruggedly beautiful area. For real outdoor enthusiasts, the Torrent Falls Climbing Adventure Park offers plenty of challenge with the first Via Ferrata climbing system in the United States. Intrigue is also a fun part of this part of Kentucky, as the tale of a lost silver mine has the county celebrating the legend each year with a Labor Day weekend festival on the streets of downtown Campton.

Magoffin

Located at the eastern end of the Mountain Parkway Trails Corridor, Magoffin was formed in 1860, and Salyersville was established as the county seat. As in Wolfe County, the scenic Bert T. Combs Mountain Parkway divides the county from east to west, giving visitors a hint of the all-natural beauty that can be found in this region. The frontier past is remembered at the Pioneer Village in Salyersville, which features the replica of an early

wilderness settlement. For racecar enthusiasts, there is the chance to see a little bit of modern history being made every Saturday night in the summer at the Half Mountain Speedway, a 4/10-mile dirt oval track.

TIME ZONE:

Eastern

CONSUMER CONTACT INFORMATION:

Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association
2292 South Highway 27
Somerset, KY 42501
1-877-TOURSEKY
www.tourseky.com

Estill Development Alliance
133 Main Street
Irvine, KY 40336
(606) 723-2450
www.estill.net

Lee County Tourism
P.O. Box 557
Beattyville, KY 41311
(606) 464-2888

Powell County Tourism Commission
P.O. Box 1028
Stanton, KY 40380
(606) 663-1161
www.powellcountytourism.com

Wolfe County Tourist Commission
341 Main Street
Campton, KY 41301
(606) 668-6475 or (606) 668-3574

Owsley County Tourism Commission
P.O. Box 997
Booneville, KY 41314
(606) 593-7296

Magoffin County Historical Society
191 South Church Street

Salyersville, KY 41465
(606) 349-1607
magoffin@foothills.net