

SOUTHERN I-75 CORRIDOR KENTUCKY FACT SHEET

General Overview

DESCRIPTION:

The Southern I-75 Corridor of Kentucky is a bridge marking the transition from the Highlands of the Cumberland Plateau, to the east and the Cumberland River Valley, as well as Kentucky's popular Waterways District to the west. The Corridor has a south-north orientation that stretches from the Tennessee border in the south to the midlands of Kentucky. Jackson, Laurel, Rockcastle and Whitley counties as well as the city of Berea make up the Southern I-75 Corridor. It is a region steeped deep in history, rich in culture and brimming with opportunities for outdoor activities.

This is an area made famous by the explorations of early pioneers such as Daniel Boone through the Cumberland Gap. Behind the explorers came the settlers—over 300,000 ventured along the Wilderness Road through the Gap from the late 1700s into the early 1800s. They were, for the most part, people of strong Scots-Irish stock used to hard work and self-sufficiency. This rugged independence forged not only lives for the settlers but a lifestyle for the region. Skilled hands that provided the basic necessities for everyday life also became adept at creating arts and crafts as well as the sounds of sweet mountain music.

The old ways are not forgotten in this part of Kentucky—in fact today, they are main attractions for visitors. Quality arts and crafts can be found in Berea, London and other towns in the region where skilled artisans have taken these homegrown trades to a high level of excellence. Ol' time music still floats on the breeze in the hills, especially in the famous Renfro Valley where bluegrass, country, gospel and western music shows are performed every weekend from March through December.

The Southern I-75 Corridor is a region of great beauty with rolling hills, deep valleys and highways providing scenic vistas at almost every turn. The Daniel Boone National Forest, which covers much of the region, and the Cumberland River Valley, including Cumberland Falls, the "Niagara of the South," offer scenic driving, hiking and backpacking, fishing, boating, canoeing and many other recreational opportunities, both for families and outdoor enthusiasts.

In addition to I-75, which runs north-south, there are several east-west routes that offer access to the area as well as plenty of opportunities for scenic driving. The main route from the west is KY 80, which is part of the Cumberland Parkway. In addition, KY 90 and 92, both part of Kentucky's Scenic Byways, offer access Cumberland Falls and Daniel Boone National Forest. To the east, the Hal Rogers Parkway (formerly called the Daniel Boone Parkway) and US 25E, part of the Wilderness Road National Scenic Byway that runs to the Cumberland Gap, are major thoroughfares that are very scenic. More of the region's beauty can be seen along KY 229, which is also a part of the Wilderness Road National Scenic Byway. And for some of the best scenic driving through the Daniel Boone National Forest, KY 89 and US 421 are sure to please.

PRINCIPAL TOWNS:

There are many towns along the Southern I-75 Corridor worth visiting. Not only are they historically significant in that most were founded in the 1800s, but they also offer quality lodging and meals, thus make good "base camps" from which to explore all the vacation opportunities in the region.

Williamsburg

Founded in 1818, Williamsburg is the seat of Whitley County. Both the town and the county were named after William Whitley, a famous Kentucky pioneer in the late 1700s and early 1800s. The town is home to Cumberland College, Kentucky's largest private college. In 2000, its population was 5143. Williamsburg is nestled in the Daniel Boone National Forest and is flanked to the east by the scenic Cumberland River. Other nearby attractions include the Cumberland Museum, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Pine Mountain State Resort Park, Cumberland Falls, Kentucky Splash Waterpark and the Cumberland Gap National Park.

London

Begun as a settlement on the Wilderness Road running north from the Cumberland Gap, the town was founded in 1826 and named after London, England. Today, it is the seat of Laurel County. Its population in 2000 was 5692. With the Daniel Boone and Cumberland Parkways to the north and I-75 skirting the west side of town, London is known as "Kentucky's Crossroad for Vacation Adventure." Embraced by the Daniel Boone National Forest, London is also located close to Laurel River Lake, Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park, Wood Creek Lake and Wildcat Mountain, which is the site of a Civil War battle. In addition to the outdoor opportunities, savvy shoppers should note that there are stores and studios of many fine craftsmen in the area.

Corbin

Originally known as Lynn Camp when it was settled around 1800, Corbin grew into a town following the arrival of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in 1882. It was renamed in 1885 in honor of a local minister, Reverend James Corbin Floyd, and incorporated in 1905. With a population of 7742 (in 2000), it is the largest town in Whitley County. The scenic Cumberland Gap Parkway runs out of the city to the east, while Laurel River Lake, Daniel Boone National Forest and Cumberland Falls State Resort Park are west of town. To the north, Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park, Wood Creek Lake and Wildcat Mountain await. In town, Corbin is home to the Colonel Harland Sanders Original Restaurant and Museum.

Berea

This town on the southern border of Madison County with a population of 9851 (2000 census) was founded in 1854 by the abolitionist Reverend John Gregg Fee. Berea College was founded a year later in the town, and by 1890, this historic institution was already having an impact on the region by providing impetus to help preserve Appalachian traditions of folk arts and crafts—a reputation that is still fostered today. In fact, there are many studios located in and around the Berea area, making it one of the best arts and crafts destinations in the South.

McKee

McKee was founded in 1858, being named after the distinguished Kentucky judge George R. McKee. It is the current seat of Jackson County, and as of 2000, it had a population of 878. Half of the county lies within the Daniel Boone National Forest. State Scenic Byway 89 runs southwest to northeast through the town and the county. Also running to the north of McKee is the ruggedly beautiful Sheltoewee Trace National Recreational Trail, the premier hiking trail in Kentucky.

Renfro Valley/Mount Vernon

With a population of around 3500, Renfro Valley in Rockcastle County certainly isn't the biggest town along the Southern I-75 Corridor, but when it comes to country music, it certainly has the biggest impact. The town is home to Renfro Valley Entertainment Center and Museum, "Kentucky's Country Music Capital," which had its beginnings in 1939 when local resident John Lair started national radio broadcasts of the "Renfro Valley Barn Dance." The live shows that are performed each weekend from March through December make this a prime destination for visitors looking to enjoy country music the old-fashioned way. In 2002, the music legacy of the area took another leap with the opening of the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame and Museum. In addition, on site there is the Bittersweet Cabin Museum, a reproduction of an early pioneer village.

TIME ZONE:

Eastern

ACTIVITIES:

Golf
Fishing
Boating
Rafting
Kayaking
Canoeing
Biking
Hiking
Camping
Water-skiing
Swimming
Horseback riding
Backpacking
Museums
Arts and crafts
Festivals

CONSUMER CONTACT INFORMATION:**Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association**

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1-877-TOURSEKY
www.tourseky.com

Rockcastle County Tourist Commission

I-75 Exit 62
P.O. Box 1261
Mt. Vernon, KY 40456
1-800-252-6685
www.rockcastlecokytourism.com

Jackson County EZ Office

Macammon Ridge Road
P.O. Box 280
McKee, KY 40447
(606) 287-8395
www.mikrotec.com/jacksonco

London-Laurel County Tourist Commission

I-75 Exit 41
140 W. Daniel Boone Parkway
London, KY 40741
1-800-348-0095
www.laurelkytourism.com

Williamsburg Tourism Commission

I-75 Exit 11
P.O. Box 2
Williamsburg, KY 40769
1-800-552-0530
www.williamsburgky.com

Corbin Tourist and Convention Commission

101 N. Depot Street
Corbin, KY 40701
1-800-528-7123
www.corbinoed.com

Berea Tourist and Convention Commission

201 N. Broadway
Berea, KY 40403
1-800-598-5263
www.berea.com