

Kentucky

By Tom Kirvan

BLUEGRASS STATE FILLED WITH HISTORY, HORSES, HILLS

Tucked into the heart of the American South and Midwest, Kentucky is a state defined by its rolling hills, spirited culture, and enduring traditions. With a population of around 4.5 million people, it blends Southern hospitality with Appalachian grit, bourbon with bluegrass, and history with natural beauty.

Kentucky is bordered by seven states – Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, and Missouri – making it a true crossroads of regional cultures. Its geography ranges from the rugged Appalachian Mountains in the east to the fertile plains of the Bluegrass Region in the north-central area and the expansive lakes and forests of the Western Waterlands.

The capital city, Frankfort, lies along the Kentucky River and is one of the smallest state capitals in the U.S. Despite its size, it holds historical and political significance. The city boasts elegant architecture, including the Kentucky State Capitol, and offers a quieter, more relaxed pace than the larger cities of Louisville and Lexington.

Located near the Virginia border in Harlan County, Black Mountain is Kentucky's highest natural point, standing at 4,145 feet above sea level. Though less well-known than other Appalachian peaks, Black Mountain is part of the Cumberland Mountains and offers striking views of the surrounding forested ridges and valleys. It's a rewarding destination for outdoor enthusiasts looking to experience the state's wilder side.

Kentucky's history is as layered as its landscape. Once home to various Native American tribes, including the Shawnee, it became a vital frontier during the westward expansion of the 18th century. Daniel Boone, a legendary explorer, helped blaze the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap, opening the region to settlers.

Kentucky was officially admitted to the Union in 1792 as the 15th state. During the Civil War, it was a border state, remaining in the Union but with deep ties to both sides. Interestingly, both Abraham Lincoln (Union president) and Jefferson Davis (Confederate president) were born in Kentucky – symbolic of the state's divided loyalties.

Post-war, Kentucky gained fame for its thoroughbred horse racing, bourbon distilling, and bluegrass music. Today, it remains proud of these traditions while embracing innovation in sectors like aerospace and health care.



Fast Facts

Capital: Frankfort

Population: 4.5 million

Highest Point: Black Mountain (4,145 feet)

Economic engines: Auto manufacturing, agriculture, and bourbon production

Primerus Member: Eddins Domine Law Group, PLLC

Eddins Domine Law Group, PLLC, a Louisville-based law firm specializing in family law, estate planning, and business and corporate law.



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A long, dimly lit wooden barrel room, likely a distillery. Rows of wooden barrels are stacked on metal racks on the right side of the frame. One barrel lies on the wooden plank floor in the foreground. The room is illuminated by a single overhead light fixture, creating a warm, golden glow. The perspective leads the eye down the length of the room.

Five Must-See Destinations

- **Mammoth Cave National Park:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site and the world's longest known cave system, Mammoth Cave stretches over 420 miles of mapped underground passages. Visitors can take guided tours through vast chambers, squeeze through tight tunnels, or explore above ground via hiking, biking, and canoeing trails along the Green River. It's a natural wonder of epic proportions.
- **Kentucky Bourbon Trail:** For fans of America's native spirit, the Kentucky Bourbon Trail is a rite of passage. The trail includes legendary distilleries like Maker's Mark, Woodford Reserve, and Buffalo Trace, offering behind-the-scenes looks at the bourbon-making process and, of course, tastings. From the grain silos to the charred oak barrels, every stop tells the story of craftsmanship and heritage.
- **Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby:** No mention of Kentucky is complete without the Kentucky Derby, the "most exciting two minutes in sports." Held annually at Churchill Downs in Louisville, the Derby is a spectacle of fashion, mint juleps, and elite horse racing. Visitors can explore the Kentucky Derby Museum year-round to learn about the event's storied past.
- **Red River Gorge (Daniel Boone National Forest):** A paradise for rock climbers, hikers, and photographers, Red River Gorge features dramatic sandstone cliffs, natural arches, and dense forests. With over 100 natural sandstone arches and miles of trails, it's one of the Southeast's most stunning natural playgrounds. The Nada Tunnel, a single-lane passageway through solid rock, is a quirky and memorable entry point.
- **Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill:** This beautifully restored 19th-century settlement near Harrodsburg offers a peaceful and immersive dive into the lives of the Shakers, a religious sect known for simplicity, craftsmanship, and communal living. The village features original buildings, working farms, trails, and demonstrations of traditional skills like broom making and weaving.