

Louisville (Lou-uh-vul)

Named for King Louis XVI of France, Louisville was founded by General George Rogers Clark and its city charter was signed by Thomas Jefferson, then the governor of Virginia, on May 1, 1780.

Louisville is most famous for the Kentucky Derby horse race held the first Saturday of each May at Churchill Downs racetrack. The Kentucky Derby is the oldest continuously held horse race in the country. 2007 marked the 133rd "Run For The Roses." A week of Derby Festival events is preceded by Thunder Over Louisville, the world's largest fireworks display.

Louisville is host to many annual events and festivals around Kentuckiana. Crafts are a big part of Kentucky and, during the fall, you will find many weekends dedicated to arts and crafts festivals. The State Fair is held annually at the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center. Right next door to the Center is Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom which has the area's best thrill rides and roller coasters and all the fun and excitement you can handle in an amusement park.

Louisville has several museums, a symphony orchestra, ballet and opera companies, the Kentucky Center for the Arts which shows Broadway plays, the well-known Actors Theater of Louisville, and the new Muhammad Ali Center which exhibits the life of Louisville's boxing champ. The Hillerich & Bradsby Bat Manufacturing Plant and Museum is located downtown.

Across the river in Clarksville, Indiana, is the Derby Dinner Playhouse where stage actors perform many types of plays. The Falls of the Ohio State Park contains 350 million-year-old fossil beds which are among the largest naturally exposed Devonian fossil beds in the world.

In 2003 Kentuckiana celebrated the 200th anniversary of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's famous expedition to the West. On October 26, 1803, Lewis & Clark led an entourage of men on an adventure involving the greatest expedition ever undertaken in the history of this country -- to explore the country between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and Clark's journey began when they put their keelboat and pirogues in the Ohio River at the Falls of the Ohio in Clarksville, Indiana.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky

Kentucky is located in the central United States. Originally part of Virginia, the land that is now Kentucky was formed into Kentucky county, Virginia, in 1776. Four years later it was divided into the Fayette, Jefferson, and Lincoln counties of Virginia. The name Kentucky is from the Iroquois Indian word "Ken-tah-ten," which means "land of tomorrow." The name Kentucky referred originally to the Kentucky River and from that came the name of the region.

Kentucky is one of four states to call itself a "commonwealth." In 1792 when Kentucky became the 15th state -- the first on the western frontier -- both "commonwealth" and "state" were used. Commonwealth, meaning government based on the common consent of the people, dates to the time of Oliver Cromwell's England in the mid-1600s. Kentucky chose to remain a commonwealth when it separated from Virginia.

Kentucky is bordered by Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Virginia. Kentucky's largest cities are Louisville, Lexington, Owensboro, Covington, and Bowling Green. The state capitol is located in Frankfort.

Kentucky is known for its horse breeding. The Lexington area has produced many Kentucky Derby hopefuls. Bourbon whiskey is a popular industry in Kentucky with distilleries in Bardstown, Clermont, Frankfort, Lawrenceburg, Loretto and Versailles. Near historic Bardstown is where Stephen Foster wrote Kentucky's state song, "My Old Kentucky Home." More than \$6 billion worth of gold bars are stored at Fort Knox. Mammoth Cave, located in Horse Cave, Kentucky, is the world's longest cave. Georgetown has a Toyota plant, and Bowling Green is where the Corvette automobiles are assembled. Louisville has a major General Electric appliances factory and two Ford Motor Company truck plants. Papa John's Pizza and KFC corporate offices are headquartered in Louisville.

Kentucky's other major industries are agriculture (tobacco, corn, peanuts, wheat), coal mining, and chemical manufacturing.

Kentucky is very much into college sports. The University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky in Lexington are big rivals in this area.

Kentucky Symbols and Facts



Kentucky State Flag: two friends shaking hands, a pioneer and a statesman, represent all the people. They are acting out the meaning of Kentucky's motto. Sprays of the state flower extend in a half circle around the picture.



Kentucky Seal: The official insignia was authorized by 1792, six months after Kentucky became a state. The motto, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," is believed to be from "The Liberty Song," popular during the American Revolution and a favorite of Isaac Shelby, Kentucky's first governor.

Kentucky State Capitol: Frankfort.



Kentucky State Bird: native redbird, commonly known as the Kentucky cardinal.

Kentucky State Flower: the goldenrod (more than 30 varieties are native to Kentucky and two, Short's and the white-haired, occur only in Kentucky).



Kentucky State Nickname: "Bluegrass State" because of the bluish-purple buds that, when seen in large fields in the spring, give a rich blue cast to the grass.

Kentucky State Song: "My Old Kentucky Home," Stephen Collins Foster - 1853.

Kentucky Bluegrass Song: "Blue Moon of Kentucky," Bill Monroe - (c) 1947.

Kentucky Trivia

- The Kentucky Derby is the oldest continuously held horse race in the country. Started in 1875 the race is held at Churchill Downs in Louisville on the first Saturday in May.
- Thunder Over Louisville is the opening ceremony for the Kentucky Derby Festival and is the world's largest fireworks display.
- Bluegrass Country around Lexington is home to some of the world's finest race horses.
- In 1774 Harrodstown (now Harrodsburg) was the first permanent settlement in the Kentucky region. Named after James Harrod who led a team of surveyors.
- Cheeseburgers were first served in 1934 at Kaelin's Restaurant in Louisville.
- Derby Pie, a concoction of walnuts, chocolate chips, sugar, and a few other special ingredients, is so special it is registered by trademark
- The first Miss America from Kentucky is Heather Renee French. Crowned September 18, 1999, she is the wife of Kentucky's former Lieutenant Governor, Steve Henry.
- The first Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant (1952) owned and operated by Colonel Sanders is located in Corbin.
- Abraham Lincoln, President of the Union was born February 12, 1809 at Nolin Creek, three miles (5 km) South of Hodgenville.
- Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, was also born June 3, 1808 on a farm in Christian County, Kentucky
- Teacher Mary S. Wilson held the first observance of Mother's Day in Henderson in 1887. It was made a national holiday in 1916.
- The public saw an electric light for the first time in Louisville. Thomas Edison introduced his incandescent light bulb to crowds at the Southern Exposition in 1883.
- The radio was invented by Kentuckian Nathan B. Stubblefield of Murray in 1892.
- The world's largest free-swinging bell, cast in 1999 and weighing 66,000 pounds known as the World Peace Bell is on permanent display in Newport.
- 1816 - Mammoth Cave, with 336+ miles of mapped passages, is the world's longest cave. It is 379 feet deep and contains at least 5 levels of passages. It's second only to Niagara Falls as the most popular tourist attraction in the US. It became a National Park on July 1, 1941.
- 1792 - Kentucky was the first state on the western frontier to join the Union.
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- 1893 - "Happy Birthday to You" - probably the most sung song in the world - was written by two Louisville sisters: Mildred and Patricia Hill.
- Post-It Notes are manufactured exclusively in Cynthiana.
- Late 19th century - Bibb lettuce was first cultivated - by Jack Bibb in Frankfort, KY
- 1896 - The first (known) set of all male quintuplets was born in Paducah.
- 1937 - The first Wigwam Village Motel, with units in the shape of a "teepee" was built by Frank A. Redford in Cave City.
- The world's largest baseball bat, a full one hundred twenty (120) feet tall and weighing 68,000 pounds, can be seen at the Louisville Slugger Museum. (Jefferson Co.).
- Chevrolet Corvettes are manufactured only in Bowling Green.
- Covington (St. Mary's Cathedral-Basilica of the Assumption) is home to the world's largest hand blown stained glass window in existence. It measures an astounding 24 feet by 67 feet and contains 117 different figures.
- The world's largest crucifix, standing at sixty (60) feet tall, is in Bardstown.
- Fort Knox holds more than \$6 billion worth of gold - the largest amount stored anywhere in the world.
- The JIF plant in Lexington is the world's largest peanut butter producing facility.
- Kentucky has more resort parks than any other state in the nation.
- Middlesboro is the only United States city built inside a meteor crater.
- Newport is home to The World Peace Bell, the world's largest free-swinging bell.
- Pike County is the world's largest producer of coal.
- Pikeville annually leads the nation (per capita) in consumption of Pepsi-Cola.
- Shaker Village (Pleasant Hill) is the largest historic community of its kind in the US.
- Christian County is 'wet', while Bourbon County is 'dry'. Barren County has the most fertile land in the state.
- Lake Cumberland has more miles of shoreline than the state of Florida.

Famous Born Kentuckians

- James Bowie (1796-1836) Texas Ranger, designed the Bowie knife
- Kit Carson (1809-1868) Indian agent, trapper scout
- Alben W. Barkley (1877-1956) U.S. Vice President under Harry Truman, 1949-53
- John Cabell Breckinridge (1872-1920) U.S. Vice President under James Buchanan, 1857-61
- Martha Layne Collins (1936-) First female Kentucky governor, 1983-87
- Jefferson Davis (1808-1889) Only President of the Confederate States of America, 1861-65
- Richard M. Johnson (1780-1850) U.S. VP under Martin Van Buren, 1837-41
- John “Casey” Jones (1864-1900) Railroad engineer
- Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) 16th U.S. President, 1861-65
- Mary Todd Lincoln (1818-1882) Wife of Abraham Lincoln
- Bobbie Ann Mason, Novelist
- Marsha Norman, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright
- Diane Sawyer, TV Commentator
- Franklin R. Sousley, PFC (1925-1945) Helped raise the U.S. Flag at Iwo Jima; immortalized in the most famous war photograph in history
- Adlai Stevenson (1835-1914) U.S. Vice President under Grover Cleveland, 1893-97
- Entertainers: **Actors** Ned Beatty, George Clooney, Nick Clooney, William Conrad, Johnny Depp, Irene Dunn, Rebecca Gayheart, Lillian Gish, Ashley Judd, Lee Majors, Patricia Neal, Annie Potts; **Comedian** Foster Brooks; **Singers** Steven Curtis Chapman, Rosemary Clooney, Billy Ray Cyrus, Jackie De Shannon, Don & Phil Everly, Crystal Gayle, Tom T. Hall, Naomi Judd, Wyonna Judd, Loretta Lynn, John Michael Montgomery, Ricky Skaggs, Dwight Yoakum; **Musicians** Lionel Hampton, Boots Randolph; **Producer/Director** John Carpenter
- Sports Personalities: Muhammad Ali, **Boxing**; Steve Cauthen, **Jockey**; A.B. “Happy” Chandler, Pee Wee Reese, **Baseball**; Darrell Griffith, Wes Unseld, **Basketball**; Paul Hornung, **Football**; Jeremy Mayfield, Danny Sullivan, Darrell & Michael Waltrip, **Auto Racing**; Mary T. Meagher, **Swimming**