

IDEA GUIDE



VISITLEX

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SO MANY MUSEUMS, SO LITTLE TIME!

*Collectively Speaking, There's a Lot to See in
Lexington and the Bluegrass Region*

There really isn't time to tarry over a long-winded introduction to the topic of museums in the Bluegrass. There are so many of them—displaying everything from traditional museum fare (fine art and fossils) to regional history and culture (pioneers, horses and Civil War) to the “believe-it-or-not” realm (a Victorian “body basket”?) that you'd better get started if you hope to see them all.

Here's an “A to Z” guide to historical, artistic and just plain interesting collections worth musing over. Museums within Lexington/Fayette County are marked with an *.

* **Airplanes.** Explore the history of flight, get an up-close view of an experimental fighter jet and climb into the “cockpit” of a flight simulator at the **Aviation Museum of Kentucky**. Airplanes from the 1920s to present day are on display, along with engines, propellers, and other exhibits. The museum is at Lexington's Blue Grass Airport, 4029 Airport Road off Man O' War, and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission charged. (859) 231-1219.

Bones. Mastodon, that is. Throughout history, the salt springs at **Blue Licks Battlefield State Park** have attracted prehistoric animals, Indians and pioneers including the legendary Daniel Boone. You'll find a wide range of items at the park's museum, off US 68, 38 miles north of Lexington. Exhibits range from saltpeter-making equipment used by Daniel Boone to Victoriana. The park is open year round. The museum's hours vary seasonally. Admission

charged. (800) 443-7008.

* **Civil War.** Kentuckians were deeply divided during the Civil War, and today Civil War artifacts are divided as well. Numerous museums in the area include at least a few Civil War items. The greatest concentration in Lexington is at the **Alexander T. Hunt Civil War Museum at The Hunt-Morgan House** (201 North Mill Street, 859-253-0362 or 859-233-3290). The house was the family home of Confederate General John Hunt Morgan, and the museum has a fascinating collection of uniforms, equipment, letters and other items relating to Morgan and his “Morgan's Raiders.” The museum is part of the general house tour, but they'll let you linger if you like. The house is closed Mondays and Tuesdays and mid-November through mid-March. Admission charged. The museum at **Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site** (859-332-8631), 40 miles southwest of Lexington, displays cannon, guns, swords, flags and other artifacts from Kentucky's bloodiest battle. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays, April through October. The museum has seasonal hours, so call ahead. Admission charged.

Deaf culture. The **Kentucky School for the Deaf** was founded in 1823, the first state-supported school for the instruction of deaf children in the United States. The school's museum contains photographs, letters, historical records, auditory trainers and hearing aid equipment and artifacts of vocational trades once taught to students, including shoemaking and upholstery. The school is located on South Second Street in Danville, 35 miles

southwest of Lexington. Open by appointment. \$5. (859) 239-7017.

* **Equines.** Learn about hundreds of breeds of horses and see antique carriages and horse racing trophies at the **International Museum of the Horse at the Kentucky Horse Park** (4089 Iron Works Pike; 859-259-4232 or 800-678-8813). It's open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays, November through March. Included with Park admission. In the same neighborhood, so to speak, (and also included in the Horse Park admission) is the **American Saddlebred Museum**, with photographs, a multimedia presentation and interactive exhibits about the American Saddlebred, Kentucky's only native breed of horse. Open year-round 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily Memorial Day to Labor Day, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily at other times. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays, November to mid-March. (859) 259-2746.

Flight to freedom. Many escaped slaves from the Deep South found freedom aided by the network of Underground Railroad Stations throughout Kentucky. **The National Underground Railroad Museum** in Maysville, the first of its kind, features artifacts and memorabilia related to escaped slaves and the people who aided them in their struggle for freedom. Maysville is about one hour north on US 68. Open on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and by appointment. Admission charged. (606) 564-4413.

Guns and more. Exhibits at the **Kentucky Military History Museum** in Frankfort trace weapons of Kentucky from pioneer to modern times. See uniforms, guns, cannons and swords and other battle memorabilia. The museum is located on East Main at Capital Avenue in an impressive building that was once the State Arsenal. Open on Tuesday through Saturday, mid-March through mid-December. Tours offered between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. The \$8 ticket also includes admission to the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History and the Old State Capitol. (502) 564-3265.

Historical Highlights. The capital of Kentucky, Frankfort, is home to a 167,000 square-foot

Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History. The Center includes a state-of-the-art museum and genealogy research library, and is geared toward preserving the memories of Kentuckians. Visitors can tour the Center's quality exhibits, participate in creative educational programs, study its vast storehouse of collections, or conduct research using its library and technological resources. Open Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission charged. (502) 564-1792.

Indian artifacts and antique instruments. The **Mansion Museum at Old Fort Harrod State Park** in Harrodsburg has all kinds of stuff relating to Kentucky history. Native American artifacts, Union and Confederate rooms, Lincolniana, antique musical

instruments, documents relating to George Rogers Clark and Daniel Boone, and other items fill two floors in a restored Greek Revival mansion. Open 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and Sunday noon to 5 p.m., April through October. Admission charged (includes a fort tour). Harrodsburg is 29 miles southwest of Lexington. (859) 734-3314.

* **Jewels.** The sparkling and somewhat eccentric artistic expressions of George W. Headley are the centerpiece of three buildings housing decorative arts at the **Headley-Whitney Museum** in Lexington. The museum began as Headley's private collection; until his death in 1985 he lived next door. The spectacular Jewel Room is home to dozens of Headley's creations from bejeweled sculptures to bibelots. There's also a Shell Grotto (where, even though the name suggests it, it's hard to believe that just about everything is covered with shells). The main building features changing exhibits of decorative arts. The museum is located at 4435 Old Frankfort Pike (it's a scenic drive through horse farm country). Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission charged. (859) 255-6653.

* **Kid stuff.** You'll find all kinds of hands-on fun at the **Explorium of Lexington**. Nine permanent galleries feature exhibits about nature, history, science and geography, with activities ranging from a "moon walk" to a bubble-making lab. Special

Bluegrass Note: Changing regional fine arts and Bourbon County history exhibits are found at the Hopewell Museum, 800 Pleasant Street in Paris, north of Lexington. The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 5 p.m., Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. and by appointment. Admission \$3. By the way, Hopewell was the original name of the town when it was established in 1789; it was later renamed Paris in appreciation of French aid during the Revolutionary War. (859) 987-7274.

exhibits and activities are also offered. The museum is located in The Square, at Main Street and Broadway in downtown Lexington. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Mondays except in summer. Admission charged. (859) 258-3253.

Locks. (And a lockup.) One of the largest private lock collections in the world, the **Harry C.**

Miller Lock Collection, is safely housed at the Lockmasters Security Institute at 2101 South Main Street in Nicholasville.

(859) 887-9633. The collection includes locks dating back to the 1300s and is usually open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.

to 5 p.m. (Hours may vary depending upon what's going on at the center, which trains locksmiths.) Admission is free. While you're in Nicholasville, you may also want to check out the **Old**

Jail, 200 South Main Street (859-

885-4500), where you can see the old cells, and pictures of the jailers. Open by appointment.

Nicholasville is 12 miles south of Lexington.

Mesmerizing miniatures. The Great American Dollhouse Museum showcases over 200 dollhouses, and even an entire town, furnished in remarkable detail and populated with tiny people at work and play. With a focus on America's social history this popular attraction holds the attention of adults and youngsters alike. Open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. 344 Swopes Drive in Danville. (859) 236-1883.

Natural wonders. Though it's not officially labeled a "museum," the **Salato Wildlife Education Center** in Franklin County has a variety of interesting and educational exhibits relating to Kentucky geography and wildlife. There are numerous mounted birds, as well as live deer, wild turkey, snakes and fish. It's located off US 60 near Frankfort. Open spring through fall, Tuesday through Saturday. \$5 adults/\$3 kids. (502) 564-7863.

*** Old Masters & other masterpieces.** You'll find them at **The Art Museum at the University of Kentucky** in Lexington. The museum's permanent collection of more than 4,500 works includes fine examples of European and American art, with works by Rembrandt, Durer, Goya, and Cassatt.

The collection also includes African and Pre-Columbian artifacts, sculpture and works by contemporary regional artists. About six loan exhibitions each year bring outstanding art from around the world. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, Fridays from 10 a.m. till 8 p.m. and noon to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. It's always free. (859) 257-5716. The museum is located in the

Singletary Center for the Arts at Rose and Euclid streets. There's limited parking in the center's circular drive. You also can park in university lots on Euclid Avenue or the faculty parking lot off Rose Street, at metered spots.

Phones. Antique crank phones, early switchboards, dead ringers - you'll find these and other telephone memorabilia at the **Bluegrass Heritage Museum**, 217 South Main Street, Winchester. (859) 745-1358. The contents of the Pioneer Telephone Museum formerly

housed in the Bell South maintenance building are on permanent display. Does it really surprise you that you should call first before visiting? Winchester is 22 miles east of Lexington.

*** Quackery?** You decide. The medical instruments, "philosophical apparatus" and other scientific and medical paraphernalia owned by Transylvania University were state-of-the-art in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, however, many look like something out of science fiction. These fascinating items are on display at the Monroe Moosnick Medical Museum, a room of the Cowgill Center, and in the lobby of the Brown Science Center (next to Old Morrison, the main administration building). Call for hours. (859) 233-8229.

Revival relics. The museum at the **Old Cane Ridge Meeting House** in Bourbon County displays items relating to the great 1801 revival at the meeting house (which attracted 20,000 to 30,000 people) and the subsequent 1804 founding of a new American denomination, the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. Open April through October, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. The meeting house is located on Ky. 537 east of Paris and 25 miles north of Lexington. (859) 987-5350.

Scott County stuff. Scott County, north of Lexington, boasts a long and fascinating history.

Bluegrass Note: Native Lexingtonian Isaac Scott Hathaway sculpted over 100 busts and masks of African-Americans in the early 1900s that are displayed in schools, museums and private collections throughout the country. Plans are underway to find a home for a museum to honor him and other significant Central Kentucky African-American figures. The museum currently occupies gallery space at Robert H. Williams Cultural Center. (859) 361-2613.

Bourbon may have been invented here, and industries have ranged from paper to penmaking. A wide range of exhibits on local history are found at the **Georgetown & Scott County Museum**, located in the old Post Office, 229 East Main Street. Open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (502) 863-6201.

Trains, big and little. Lionel model trains and other antique toys and railroad items are on display at **Nostalgia Station Toy Train Museum**, 279 Depot Street in Versailles (10 miles west of Lexington). The building is a former L & N station. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Admission charged. (859) 873-2497. Also in Versailles, at Woodford County Park, is the **Bluegrass Railroad Museum**, with a collection of life-size vintage engines and cars. There are weekend excursions May through October. Open Saturday and Sunday; call for times. 175 Beasley Road. (859) 873-2476.

Undertaker tools and other unusual things. **The Old Presbyterian Meeting House** in Stanford is a museum with a little bit of everything, but it's the wicker Victorian "body basket" and antique undertaker's table that usually stops touring school groups and others dead in their tracks, so to speak. 315 West Main Street in Stanford. Call (606) 365-2503 or (606) 365-1216 for hours. Free.

Vintage Versailles. Another collection of all kinds of things, the **Woodford County Historical Society Museum** features items ranging from an early Kentucky cupboard and historic photographs to Civil War and distillery relics. The museum is at 121 Rose Hill in Versailles. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Free. (859) 873-6786.


Walking sticks and more. About an hour's drive east of Lexington in Morehead is the **Kentucky Folk Art Center** with an outstanding museum of walking sticks, carvings and other works by Kentucky's unschooled artists. More than 150 works from the 740 item permanent collection are on display every day, and rotating exhibits are featured in the second floor gallery. Art from over 50 eastern Kentucky folk artists are offered for sale in the Museum Store, plus educational materials, books and videos. The Folk Art Center is at 102 West First Street in Morehead. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Admission is

Bluegrass Note: Many historic houses in Lexington and the Bluegrass display collections of historic artifacts and memorabilia. See the VisitLEX article **Historic Homes and Places**.

free. (606)783-2204.

"X-tra" Secret Recipe Museum. (Well, since nobody had an X-ray Museum, we had to cheat a little.) South of Lexington in Corbin is the **Harland Sanders Museum** (606-528-2163) at the restaurant where the Colonel first sold his "secret recipe" chicken. You can learn about the Colonel's life and see a reproduction of the kitchen where he concocted his special combination of herbs and spices. There are now more than 18,000 Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants worldwide.

You-name-it. Another local history museum with a little bit of everything is the **Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum**. Civil War items, Native American artifacts, vintage wedding dresses, photographs of local industry and a model of a long-gone covered bridge are among the historical treasures found at 112 South Walnut Street in Cynthiana. Open Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. (859) 234-7179. Cynthiana is 34 miles north of Lexington.

Zymology. That's the science of fermentation. Of course Bourbon making is as much an art as it is a science. Just ask the folks at **Woodford Reserve**, one of America's oldest operating Bourbon distilleries. The visitor's center is filled with exhibits, photos and artifacts celebrating the living history of Kentucky Bourbon. This distillery is a National Historic Landmark. 7855 McCracken Pike, Versailles. Open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Open Sundays March through December 12:30-4:30 p.m. \$15 includes your tour...and also a sample! (859) 879-1812. 

*Prices and times are subject to change.
Call before making your travel plans.*

**For more information
contact VisitLEX, the Lexington Convention
and Visitors Bureau, at (800) 845-3959.**

*By Teresa Day, a freelance travel writer based in Lexington, KY
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