

By Patti Nickell



You're planning a trip to the Commonwealth of Kentucky in the near future and you're wondering how many of the state's iconic attractions you can squeeze in. Of course, you want to see majestic thoroughbreds and learn what makes the Bluegrass Region the "Horse Capital of the World." You'll probably also want to nose a glass of aged bourbon (95 percent of the world's bourbon is produced in Kentucky) or sip a goblet of wine from the state where America's grape-growing industry began. Naturally, you have to shop for one-of-a-kind arts and crafts, inspired by the folk tradition of the Appalachians, or listen to some bluegrass music, defined and shaped by the area which gave birth to it.

Then there's Daniel Boone's fort, Abraham Lincoln's log cabin, Federal Hill, the inspiration for Stephen Foster's *My Old Kentucky Home*, Henry Clay's mansion, Muhammad Ali's Center and Colonel Sanders' original restaurant. Not to mention, the only park in the world dedicated to the horse, the world's only Corvette Museum, Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields, the largest restored Shaker community in the United States, and the twin spires of Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby.



Of course, you really must see Mammoth Cave, the largest mapped cave system in the world; Breaks Interstate Park, often referred to as "the Grand Canyon of the South;" the Land Between the Lakes, the largest inland peninsula in the United States; Cumberland Falls, one of only two locations in the world where you can see a rare moonbow, and other natural wonders such as Cumberland Gap, Red River Gorge and the Daniel Boone National Forest.

By now, you're surely shaking your head in frustration, wondering how you could possibly pack all of this into ONE vacation. What if I told you that you could experience it all - and a whole lot more - in one day and at a single location. Well, you can - at **The Kentucky Experience**.



In 2010, the world will be coming to Kentucky to take part in the pageantry and splendor of the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, a 16-day competition (September 25 to October 10) which will culminate in the crowning of champions in eight equestrian sports. Well okay, the whole world won't be coming, but 800 athletes and 900 horses from 60 countries will, bringing with them thousands of visitors, all of them eager to experience the sights, sounds, tastes and feel of Kentucky.

The Kentucky Experience

Visitors to the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington during this time will get not only a generous dose of horsemanship at the Games, but a generous dose of the state's unbridled spirit and Southern hospitality at the Kentucky Experience, a massive interactive facility on the grounds of the Horse Park. A Bluegrass version of Disneyworld's Epcot Center, the 25,000-square-foot space will utilize five distinctive areas - connected by a promenade - to give visitors a tutorial on all things Kentucky.

"We want to overload your senses with all the best sights and sounds every region of our state has to offer," says Mike Cooper, Kentucky's Commissioner of Tourism.





Visitors will begin their Kentucky odyssey at the Visitor's Center, where in addition to friendly smiles and warm welcomes, they'll get a list of daily events and information on regions and products in the Kentucky spotlight. They'll also be able to get assistance on tours throughout the state and can pick up literature on each of its nine regions.

They will then move on to a large open-air courtyard with access to three pavilions. Connecting the metal and glass pavilions will be the courtyard garden, designed by Kentucky native and master gardener Jon Carloftis, who has designed gardens for celebrities such as actor Edward Norton, comedian Mike Myers, and TV producer Jerry Bruckheimer. Carloftis will make use of native Kentucky foliage and plantings to soften the effect of the futuristic pavilions and to create a peaceful oasis.

The Three Pavilions

The main focus of the Kentucky Experience will be three areas showcasing the best of the commonwealth - the Exhibit, Product and Entertainment Pavilions. The Exhibit Pavilion offers a trip through all nine of the state's regions, focusing on the attractions and natural wonders of each. For example in the Caves, Lakes and Corvettes Region, a shiny Corvette, straight off the assembly line in Bowling Green, will vie for the spotlight with a replica, complete with spectacular formations, of Mammoth Cave, a National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Bluegrass, Blues and Barbecue Region in the western part of the state will use the pavilion to highlight its name music and food. Western Waterlands will showcase its prominence in the arts, with Paducah's nationally recognized Lowertown Arts District, and as a water wonderland, with both the Mississippi River and Land Between the Lakes.

If water is important to the Western Waterlands Region, it positively defines the Northern Kentucky River Region, bordered as it is by the Ohio River. The region's presence in the Exhibit Pavilion will showcase such water-related features as its iconic covered bridges, romantic riverboats and award-winning Newport Aquarium.

Each of the other five regions will have an equal chance to shine in the pavilion, showcasing everything from history and heritage to Agritourism and African-American culture.

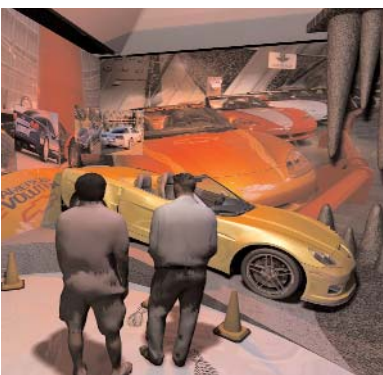
"The Kentucky Experience is a terrific idea," says the Northern Kentucky Region's Tom Caradonio. "The fact that we'll be able to show our region to hundreds of thousands of world travelers is amazing."

Fred James of the Kentucky Appalachian Region agrees. "Travelers worldwide have heard about Churchill Downs and Mammoth Cave," he says. "With the Kentucky Experience, they'll be able to see what's unique about those places, as well as dozens more of Kentucky's special places."

At the Product Pavilion, visitors will get a chance to find out for themselves what "Kentucky Proud" really means. It's mouth-watering barbecue from the Western part of the state and sizzling Hot Browns from Louisville's Brown Hotel where the dish was invented. It's country ham; hearty burgoo, the Bluegrass version of gumbo; Benedictine, a staple at every Derby party; fried chicken the way the Colonel would have liked it, and melt-in-your-mouth spoonbread from Berea's Boone Tavern.

For the over-21 visitor, it's a chance to sample bourbon from one of Kentucky's eight distilleries or a vintage wine from one of its 52 wineries, and to learn the history and heritage of these "unbridled spirits" while you are sampling.

Kentucky Proud doesn't just refer to the agricultural heritage of the state, but also to a proud folk art heritage that goes back several hundred years. The state's Appalachian Region, known internationally for its weaving, textiles and quality hand-crafted furniture, may be the epicenter of the folk arts and crafts tradition, but it's far from the only area of the state with a unique aesthetic flavor. Whether it's elaborate quilts at Paducah's





National Quilt Museum, specialty equine art in Lexington's shops and galleries, or one-of-a-kind pottery from Louisville Stoneware or Bybee Pottery in Madison County, the state's various art forms are well known to discriminating collectors. The Pavilion will have both a service desk for those wanting to ship Kentucky products home and a large retail store for those wishing to purchase products to take with them.

Anyone who has ever taken a drive down Route 23, better known as the Kentucky Music Highway, knows that stars such as Loretta Lynn, Patty Loveless, Ricky Skaggs, Dwight Yoakum and the Judds have turned their Kentucky roots into Platinum-selling, award-winning songs. Representation of music by these country superstars, however, are only part of the spectacle awaiting visitors to the Entertainment Pavilion where large screens and live performances will bring the best of not only country, but also blues and ballet, rock and opera, and, of course, the commonwealth's own musical specialty, blue-grass. With a multitude of artists representing each region, it will be a non-stop hand-clapping, toe-tapping good time for any music lover.



So, there you have it - a trip through Kentucky's nine distinctive regions - and the opportunity to taste its food, hear its music and buy its products - without having to leave the Kentucky Horse Park.

The commonwealth's First Lady, Jane Beshear, is among those eagerly awaiting their own Kentucky Experience.

"We are assembling - in one spot - the best of Kentucky for the world to see," says Mrs. Beshear. "In essence, it's a mini-World's Fair focusing entirely on all things Kentucky. Please come and see all we have to offer."

For more information on The Kentucky Experience, contact Cheryl Hatcher at Cheryl.Hatcher@ky.gov or visit the website www.TheKentuckyExperience.com.



September 26-October 10, 2010

World championships will be awarded in eight equestrian disciplines on the grounds of the Kentucky Horse Park



Driving



Dressage



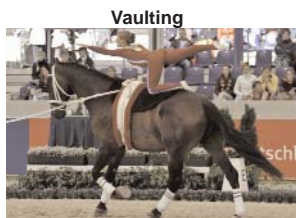
Endurance



Eventing



Jumping



Vaulting



ParaEquestrian



Reining