

A Winter Vacation In Kentucky

The crackle of crisp air that carries the breath of sorghum cooking and aromatic tobacco leaves ready for the auction, a blaze of unmatched color to cap the lingering days of fall, a land of scenic vistas at every turn, of thoroughbred race horses and the lush farms they live on, basketball at its best and hospitality at its warmest...that's winter time in Kentucky.

For those who like the accent on leisure in their vacation time, the Bluegrass State of Kentucky (the nation's fastest growing summer playground) offers the November-to-March visitor an equally wide range of touring delights.

Four of Kentucky's state resort parks remain open year round. Each would make an excellent base for a several-day or several-week exploration trip through your favorite part of Kentucky. In the west there is Kentucky Dam Village State Park, located on the shore of man-made Kentucky Lake. Cumberland Falls State Park is situated in the beautiful foothills of the Daniel Boone National Forest in the southeastern part of the state. To the north, overlooking the Ohio River midway between Louisville and Cincinnati, is General Butler State Park. And the unmatched beauty of the eastern mountains surrounds Jenny Wiley State Park near Prestonsburg.

If the rivers and lakes and gently rolling plains of Western Kentucky strike your fancy, Kentucky Dam Village State Park will be the perfect starting point. Located at Gilbertsville, 21 miles east of Paducah, the park is on the northern end of Kentucky Lake near Kentucky Dam. A scant quarter of a mile to the east, through an navigable channel, are the new 1,000-acre and 170,000-acre Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.

Kentucky Dam Village State Park is Kentucky's most visited park, with 2.5 million guests annually. Complete facilities are available to the winter vacationer, including the resort dining room, coffee shop, two-and three-bedroom cottages, tent and trailer camp sites with electricity and central sewage disposal.

boats and launching ramps, boat rental and golf course.

The year-round lure of the water is strong here in the Western Waterland, with the two giant lakes, many rivers and smaller lakes, the Ohio River to the north and the mighty Mississippi to the west. Boating is at its best, whether your choice is under sail, in a fishing dinghy, a racing launch or a speedy runabout.

Winter fishermen can find plenty of game in Kentucky waters; jig fishing and casting for black bass on the big lakes from January through April, good bass and bream fishing in some streams in February and March, rainbow trout year round, and the famed sauger run below Kentucky Dam in October and November.

If exploring is your bent, there's plenty to see. Paducah, home of humorist Irvin S. Cobb and Vice President Andrew Johnson, offers a well-marked Red Line tour of its points of interest. Welchite on the Mississippi affords a panoramic view of the meeting of that great river with the Ohio, and the Ancient Battlefield nearby contains relics from prehistoric times. Fifty miles south of Paducah, Columbus-Beilmont fatherville State Park features Civil War fortifications. A six-ton anchor and part of a mile-long chain, used by the Confederates to block river traffic, are prominently displayed.

Touching Kentucky's western corner is legendary Redfoot Lake, created by and early-1800 cartilage that also changed the course of the Mississippi.

Cumberland Falls State Park near Corbin affords an excellent base for

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exploring the scenic Cumberland Mountains and Cumberland Gap area where Daniel Boone and other pioneers first entered Kentucky.

Winter facilities at Cumberland Falls include one-and two-bedroom cottages, tent and trailer camp sites with electricity and central service building, nature trails and a year-around recreation director who specializes in square-dance instruction. The main attraction at the park, of course, is beautiful Cumberland Falls, known as "The Niagara of the South." Here the Cumberland River spills over a rocky ledge into a boulder-studded gorge 68 feet below. With a breadth of some 150 feet, it is the largest waterfall east of the Rockies and south of Niagara.

A permanent mist hovers over the valley below the falls, and the full moon reflecting in this water creates a mirage, the nighttime equivalent of a rainbow. Such a phenomenon occurs at only one place in the world -- Victoria Falls, south of Africa.

General Butler State Park near Carrollton affords a choice of contrasts for your diversion. The mountain theater seasons in Louisville and Lexington, racing at Louisville's Churchill Downs and Latonia Race Course at Florence, top football and basketball with the University of Louisville, or the University of Kentucky (at Lexington), exciting thoroughbred sales at Lexington and colorful tobacco auctions throughout the bluegrass--all are within easy driving time of the park.

Or if you're looking for peace and quiet, try spending a few days at General Butler just lying around the 200-acre park. Besides the swimming lodge and dining room, there's a nine-hole golf course, efficiency, one- and three-bedroom cottages; tent and trailer camp sites with electricity and central service building; and a 25-acre lake with boating and fishing. A magnificent sweep of the Ohio River is just outside the park.

Harrodsburg or Constitution Square at Danville. The Perryville Battlefield museum and the Revolutionary War Memorial at Blue Licks Battlefield State Park near Mayfield are open on weekends through the winter. Your mountain sanctuary at Jenny Wiley State Park, near Prestonsburg, is an exciting step into a land of unparalleled beauty and simplicity. Sharp, timbered ridges frame the narrow hollows and swift-running creeks on all sides of the Daniel Boone National Forest from the west.

Along the beautiful gorge of the Red River valley you will find a land of natural bridges--geological marvels created by wind and water carving through soft under-strata of the mountain ridges. Sky bridge, Natural bridge (75 feet wide at the base), Balanced Rock, Devil's Gate and Chimney Rock are just a few of the natural formations you will find in this area.

Jenny Wiley State Park includes a resort lodge and dining room, one- and two-bedroom cottages, a nine-hole golf course and 1100-acre mountain lake famed for its bass fishing. Sportmen may also be interested in the primitive weapons hunting area on an 8,000-acre preserve within the Daniel Boone National Forest where only longbows, crossbows and muzzle-loading rifles or shotguns are allowed.

So take your choice--north, south, east or west--and Kentucky offers you a vacation as varied and diverse as the points of the compass.

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