

Kentucky is world renowned for bluegrass, beautiful scenery, thoroughbred horses, and the Kentucky Derby, but the Bluegrass State offers many more advantages than these. Other reasons to enjoy the good life in Kentucky include affordable housing, low cost of living, low crime, top-notch medical facilities, quality education, a thriving job market, and plentiful lifestyle amenities.

## **Educating Kentuckians Key to Greater Prosperity**

Few would argue that education is probably the primary ingredient to a higher standard of living and better quality of life for the citizens of Kentucky. Kentucky has proven its commitment to ensuring that all citizens are well educated with the far-reaching educational reforms of the 1990's, a national model for school reform.

### ***Indicators of high school success***

#### **Content-area scores for high schools:**

(All scores are on a 0-140 point scale and are from the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System – CATS).

- Since 2000, the overall reading score for Kentucky's public high school students has risen from 67.7 to 78 in 2006. The percentages of students scoring at the highest levels in reading have risen from 27.5% in 2000 to 40.4% in 2006.
- The overall math score for Kentucky's public high school students has risen from 57.2 in 2000 to 69.7 in 2006. The percentages of students scoring at the highest levels in math have risen from 33.2% in 2000 to 38.5% in 2006.

#### **Non-academic indicators (state averages):**

- The dropout rate for 2000 was 5.1% of high school students, compared to 3.31% in 2006.
- The graduation rate increased from 79.72% in 2001 to 83.26% in 2006.

### ***Kentucky ACT scores move up for fifth consecutive year***

- The average composite ACT score for Kentucky's year 2007 college-bound high school seniors gained slightly over the 2006 composite score. The 2007 composite is 20.7, compared to 2006's composite of 20.6. Nationally, the 2007 composite score was 21.2, a gain of 0.1 from 2006.
- In 2007, 30,929 (77 percent) Kentucky public and nonpublic high school graduates took the ACT, compared to 1990, when 24,942 Kentucky graduates (62 percent) did.

- ACT asks test-takers to report the courses they took in high school. Over the past 17 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of Kentucky students reporting that they are taking ACT's recommended core courses. The number of students who report taking ACT's core curriculum has increased by more than 10,000 students since 1990. In 2007, 58 percent of Kentucky high schoolers who took the ACT noted on surveys that they also took the recommended core courses. However, that percentage is likely higher due to differences in course names and non-completion of surveys.

Source: Kentucky Department of Education.

### ***Postsecondary Education***

The state is also on an ambitious path to build a nationally competitive postsecondary education system. Citizens and leaders alike are keenly aware that historically low levels of educational attainment are the central barrier to an improved quality of life and stronger economy for Kentuckians.

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education had good news to report in, *Brain Gain, Retaining Kentucky Graduates*. The Council found that the vast majority of people who earn degrees at Kentucky's public colleges and universities stay in Kentucky after graduation. Among the findings:

- 95% of native Kentuckians who go to an in-state public college or university remain in the Commonwealth (up from 83 percent).
- The proportion of out-of-state students who stay in Kentucky after graduation has increased by more than 50 percent. (37 percent in 2006 compared to 24 percent in 2000).
- The overall percent of graduates who stayed in Kentucky after college increased from 73 to 86 percent between 2000 and 2006.
- Nearly half (49 percent) of international students are choosing to remain in the state.
- The percent of students who earn doctorates and stay in Kentucky nearly doubled from 27 to 52 percent.

The state's ability to generate and retain an educated citizenry is an encouraging indicator for success in improving quality of life for all citizens. It is also vital that this trend continue for the state to achieve the year 2020 objective of reaching the national average in terms of the percentage of Kentuckians with a bachelor's degree or above.

Source: [Kentucky Council on Post-Secondary Education, Brain Gain, Retaining Kentucky Graduates](#).

Kentucky's system of public postsecondary education includes eight universities, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, and the Kentucky Virtual University. There are 20 independent or private colleges and universities.

**Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities:** <http://www.aikcu.org/>

**Kentucky Community and Technical College System:** <http://www.kctcs.edu/>

**Council on Post-Secondary Education** (Kentucky public colleges and universities):  
<http://cpe.ky.gov/committees/kpen/>

**Kentucky Virtual Campus:** <http://www.kyvu.org/>

### **Vibrant Communities Blend Rural Charm and Urban Lifestyle Amenities**

Kentucky boasts some of the finest communities anywhere and Kentucky's small-town atmosphere is even present in its larger cities. The superior quality of life that Kentucky's communities offer was recognized in *Expansion Management* magazine's 2007 Quality of Life Quotient. The Top 20 percent of all 362 metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) earn the "Five-Star Quality of Life Metro" rating while the next 20 percent are awarded a "Four-Star" designation.

#### **5-Star Quality of Life Metros in Kentucky**

- Lexington-Fayette, Ky MSA
- Owensboro, Ky

#### **4-Star Quality of Life Metros in Kentucky**

- Ashland-Huntington (Ky-Wv) MSA
- Bowling Green, Ky MSA
- Cincinnati-Middletown, Ohio-Ky-Ind MSA
- Evansville, Ind-Ky MSA
- Louisville, Ky-Ind MSA

Kentucky communities achieved high rankings in other categories of the 2007 Quality of Life Quotient including:

- Affordable Housing - #6 Owensboro
- Affordable Housing – (Metros with population over 1 million) - #3 Louisville, Ky-Ind  
#7 Cincinnati-Middletown, Oh-Ky-Ind.
- Labor Market – (Metros with population over 1 million) - #5 Louisville, Ky-Ind

- Traffic & Commuting – (metros with population over 1 million) - #10 Louisville, Ky-Ind
- Overall Quality of Life Metros - #4 Lexington, Fayette, Ky

### **Cost of Living**

Each of the Kentucky cities surveyed by C2ER in its ACCRA *Cost of Living Index* has a composite index of less than the national average of 100%. The index includes grocery items, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, and miscellaneous goods and services.

| <b>ACCRA Cost of Living Index</b> |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>City</b>                       | <b>100% Composite Index</b> |
| Bowling Green                     | 93.5                        |
| Covington                         | 92.3                        |
| Hopkinsville                      | 88.2                        |
| Lexington                         | 96.9                        |
| Louisville                        | 97.7                        |
| Paducah                           | 91.8                        |
| U.S.                              | 100.0                       |

Source: C2ER, ACCRA Cost of Living Index, Index Average 2006Q2-2007Q1.

### **Low Crime Rate**

Kentucky's violent crime rate is far below the national rate of 469.2 crimes per 100,000 inhabitants according to *Crime in the United States, 2005*, a Federal Bureau of Investigations publication. The state's violent crime rate of 266.8 per 100,000 inhabitants is also quite low when compared to its peer states.

Source: Crime in the United States, 2005. U.S. Department of Justice. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

### **Homeownership and Housing Costs**

Kentucky ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> in home ownership rate for 2005: 71.6%. The national average homeownership rate was 69%.

Source: Morgan Quitno State Rankings 2007, from U.S. Census Bureau, "Housing Vacancies and Homeownership, Annual Statistic: 2005."

Housing affordability is one of the many advantages of living in Kentucky. Residents of Kentucky's major metropolitan areas of Louisville, Lexington, and Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky benefit from housing costs significantly below the national average. In 2005 nationally, a median-

priced existing single family home cost \$219,000 compared to \$135,800 in Louisville, \$146,900 in Lexington, and \$145,900 in the Cincinnati, Ohio/Kentucky/Indiana metropolitan area.

Source: National Association of Realtors.

### **Nationally Ranked Hospitals and Medical Centers Delivering High Quality Care**

In *U. S. News and World Report's* national ranking of hospitals, only 173 made the list of 5,462 U.S. hospitals evaluated. Kentucky hospitals appearing in the report include:

- Three University of Kentucky (UK) Chandler Hospital programs: gynecology (27<sup>th</sup>), ear nose and throat (41<sup>st</sup>), and the cancer program ranked 46<sup>th</sup>.
- Jewish Hospital in Louisville's heart department (41<sup>st</sup>), its neurology and neurosurgery unit (44<sup>th</sup>), its treatment of respiratory disorders (45<sup>th</sup>), and it ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in endocrinology.
- St. Elizabeth Medical Center North in Covington was 30<sup>th</sup> in treating respiratory disorders and 35<sup>th</sup> in endocrinology. Additionally, St. Elizabeth Medical Center South in Edgewood was listed in [HealthGrades America's 50 Best Hospitals](#) in 2007. Recognition for the honor is based on outstanding clinical performance over a seven year period.

In addition to the high ranking of UK's Chandler Hospital by *U.S. News and World Report*, the medical center was also named as one of the nation's 100 Top Performance Improvement Leaders by Thomson Healthcare (formerly "Solucient"). For the second time in two years, UK was ranked by Thomson Healthcare among the top 15 academic medical centers in the nation for having faster and more consistent organization-wide improvement than most other teaching hospitals.

Source: [U. S. News & World Report](#).

### **New Construction at U of L In Health Sciences and Environmental Health Research**

Development of a 30-block health sciences area in downtown Louisville received a huge boost with the recent announcement of a \$2.5 billion capital investment in expansion, renovation and infrastructure over the next two decades in an area that includes the University of Louisville Health Sciences Center. The investment will support construction of research labs and other buildings; hiring of new faculty, and researchers and support staff at the University of Louisville; growth of new businesses to generate economic activity across Kentucky; and infrastructure for researchers and entrepreneurs to take health science technology to the marketplace.

Another recent development at the University of Louisville is the award of a \$4.4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish the **Center for Environmental Genomics and Integrative Biology**. The center, one of only 22 NIH-designated environmental

health centers nationwide, will study the interaction between genes and environmental factors that negatively impact human health, whether through disease or through developmental problems. U of L's center will be one of only four in the nation focusing on the links among genetic makeup, environmental interaction and disease.

### **Improving the Lives of Kentuckians Through Partnerships**

The University of Kentucky **Commonwealth Collaboratives** are initiatives aimed at improving the lives of Kentuckians by addressing issues relating to healthcare, economic development, education, environment, and quality of life. The Collaboratives are a partnership binding UK's researchers, K-12 educators, independent health care providers, entrepreneurs, industries, local government officials and private citizens.

An example of a collaborative project is the **Marty Driesler Cancer Project**. Congressman Hal Rogers and UK President Lee Todd announced a first-of-its-kind healthcare initiative to fight deadly cancers throughout the 29 counties of the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. Researchers at the UK Markey Cancer Center were enlisted to develop early-detection studies focused on lung, liver and esophageal cancers, and to work with regional and local physicians and hospitals. Susanne Arnold, an associate professor of medicine at UK says "local healthcare providers in this district are the key to the success of the Driesler project. We hope to reach more people in our state through the strong relationships they have with their primary care physicians."

Source: [Commonwealth Collaboratives](#)

### **Cultural and Historical Amenities**

Kentucky leads the nation in developing cultural tourism, based on the personal, authentic experience of a region's culture. U.S. Route 23 through the eastern Kentucky mountains is promoted as the **Country Music Highway** to celebrate the lives of dozens of famous country music stars that grew up along the route. Eastern Kentucky is rich with cultural and musical history and has produced performers such as Loretta Lynn, Wynonna & Naomi Judd, Billy Ray Cyrus, Ricky Skaggs, Tom T. Hall, and more. A historic landmark near the route is the **Paramount Arts Center** in Ashland, first opened as a movie theatre in 1931. It is now a performing arts theatre featuring an average of 120 performances per year.

Kentucky is home to many artisans creating both traditional and trend-setting folk arts and crafts. The Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen hosts one of the top rated national craft fairs in the fall and spring of each year in Berea. Kentucky's thriving arts community includes the Kentucky Artisan Center in Berea and the Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center in Hindman. Paducah is home to the Museum of American Quilter's Society which houses the largest collection of contemporary art quilts in the world.

Paducah is also home to the **Artist Relocation Program**, an internationally known program that has attracted artists from as far west as Hawaii and as far east as Germany. Lowertown, the oldest neighborhood in Paducah has witnessed a rebirth since its transformation to an arts district. Many historic homes and grocery stores have been restored and now house galleries and artists from across the country.

The Kentucky Museum on the campus of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green features the new permanent exhibit, "**Recommended by Duncan Hines**" (opened in August, 2007). The exhibit includes 11 sections featuring the life and work of the Bowling Green native. An extensive collection of artifacts are on hand including the outstanding collection from the Bowling Green Area Convention and Visitors' Bureau. The exhibit features these artifacts along with state-of-the-art media tools so visitors will learn about Hines' career as a writer on travel, dining and entertaining, as well as his transition to a "name brand" icon and pioneer in the world of packaged food. <http://www.wku.edu/library/kylm/exhibits/inhouse/changing/duncan-hines.html>.

The **Kentucky History Center** in Frankfort is a state-of-the-art museum and research library. The Speed Art Museum in Louisville is Kentucky's oldest and largest art museum with over 12,000 pieces in its permanent collection. The Headley Whitney Museum in Lexington is nationally unique in its focus on decorative arts. Other notable art collections and exhibitions may be found in Ashland, Bowling Green, Covington, Owensboro, Paducah, and Richmond.

Louisville supports a broad range of high quality performing arts groups. Actors Theatre of Louisville is host to the Humana Festival of New American Plays dubbed "the hottest ticket of the national art scene." Horse Cave Theatre has received national critical acclaim for its productions. The Lexington Children's Theatre, established in 1938, is one of the oldest continuously operating theatres for young people in America. Bowling Green, Lexington, Louisville, northern Kentucky, Owensboro and Paducah all have professional orchestras.

Northern Kentucky offers a wide array of attractions from theatre and museums to historic districts and Blue Licks Battlefield State Resort. The city of Newport in northern Kentucky is a revitalized community and home to the 10-acre Newport on the Levee and the **Newport Aquarium**. The aquarium is a state-of-the-art facility, highlighting its amazing animals with 200 feet of clear underwater tunnels, see-through floors, walk-around exhibits, a touch pool and one of the nation's largest open-air shark viewing exhibits.

Northern Kentucky's communities claim a rich historical and cultural legacy. Covington's MainStrasse Village is a historic district and community with unique shops and restaurants set in a neighborhood of parks and Victorian and Classic Italianate homes of the mid to late 1800's. Newport's Hofbrauhaus located at 3rd and Saratoga at the Levee, is America's first authentic German Hofbrauhaus featuring Bavarian cuisine and world famous beers of the Royal Brewery in Munich. Maysville, on the southern bank of the Ohio River is home to the Underground Railroad Museum.

The **Muhammad Ali Center** in Louisville serves as both a destination site and an international education and cultural center inspired by the ideals of its founder Muhammad Ali. The Ali Center's innovative and immersive visitor experience, public and educational programming, and global initiatives, including conflict resolution training and management, carry on Ali's legacy and continue his life's work. Two-and-a-half levels of interactive exhibits and captivating multi-media presentations present Ali's life story through the six core values of his life: *respect, confidence, conviction, dedication, giving, and spirituality*. Ultimately, the Ali Center strives to inspire you to pursue your potential and explore the greatness that lies within yourself. [www.alicenter.org](http://www.alicenter.org)

A two year long celebration of the **200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth** will begin February 12, 2008. Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809 in Hodgenville. The bicentennial is part of a national celebration created by Congress to inform the public about the impact Lincoln had on the development of our nation and to honor his accomplishments. In addition to his birthplace, childhood home, the childhood home of his wife, Mary Todd and the site of his parent's wedding, visitors may take part in events all over Kentucky. For more information: <http://www.nps.gov/abli/>.

### **Topography and Climate**

Kentucky is renowned for its varied geology, including expansive cave and karst systems. In fact, underground limestone caves create the gently rolling hills characteristic of much of the state. The state also has valuable coalfields, critical wetlands and lush forests. Kentucky's 90,000 miles of stream systems provide one of the most expansive and complex stream systems in the nation.

The state's geographical location produces a moderate climate. Annual mean temperatures vary from approximately 58°F in the southwest to approximately 52°F in the northeast. January is the coldest month with mean temperatures ranging from approximately 35°F in the south to approximately 29°F in the north. July is the warmest month with mean temperatures from 79°F to 74°F across the Commonwealth. The Kentucky Climate Center at Western Kentucky University is an excellent resource on the state's climate: <http://kyclim.wku.edu/>.

### **Preserving Natural Beauty and Diversity**

Preservation of Kentucky's landscape has been important to Kentucky citizens for many years. This is obvious in the large number of state parks, among the finest in the nation, and also in the vast acreage that is permanently set aside for wildlife habitats. The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission owns and/or manages a system of dedicated state nature preserves, state natural areas and conservation easements encompassing 23,379 total acres of ecological communities and natural habitat for rare species across the state. [www.naturepreserves.ky.gov](http://www.naturepreserves.ky.gov).

Stewardship of the land, air and water is an important legacy for future Kentuckians. To learn more about how Kentucky protects its abundant natural resources go to the Department for

Environmental Protection's website: <http://www.dep.ky.gov/>.

### **Recreation and Sports**

From the mountains of eastern Kentucky to the massive lakes of western Kentucky, the state's natural beauty lends itself to an abundance of outdoor activities. Boating, golf, fishing, hiking, white-water rafting, and water skiing are among the many recreational opportunities Kentuckians enjoy.

The Kentucky State Parks, with 53 resort, recreational and historic parks display the great diversity of Kentucky's landscape and offer a full range of recreational activities.

#### ***Kentucky State Parks News***

- During 2006, the parks added wireless internet service to the 17 resort parks and were working to improve cell phone reception at those parks.
- In 2007, the state parks department purchased 90 acres in Garrard County along the Kentucky River to be developed into a new state park.
- The parks department purchased a 96-acre tract of land in Boyle County known as "Sleettown" to add to the Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site. The land was once an African American community following the Civil War.

Mammoth Cave National Park is in south central Kentucky. It is the **world's longest known cave system**, with more than 365 miles explored. A visit to the park may include cave tours, surface hikes, canoeing on the Green River, a cruise on Miss Green River II, picnicking, horseback riding, bicycling, camping and more. The **Big South Fork River and Recreation Area** is in southeast Kentucky and Tennessee and protects the free-flowing Big South Fork of the Cumberland River and its tributaries. The area boasts miles of scenic gorges and sandstone bluffs, is rich with natural and historic features and has been developed to provide visitors with a wide range of outdoor recreational activities.

The **Red River Gorge Geological Area** in east central Kentucky consists of approximately 26,000 acres located within the Daniel Boone National Forest. There are scenic drives with overlooks, trails to hike, historic sites to see, picnic areas, and camping open all year. The Red River Gorge contains the most natural rock formations in one concentrated area east of the Rocky Mountains. The Gorge is also a very popular place for rock climbers with many unique routes for the beginner to the most experienced climber.

Western Kentucky is one of the nation's finest outdoor recreation areas. The state's two largest bodies of water are in western Kentucky: the 160,000-acre Kentucky Lake and 58,000-acre Lake

Barkley surround the 170,000-acre outdoor recreational area called the **Land Between the Lakes**.

In far southeastern Kentucky, the panoramic **Cumberland Gap National Historical Park** is the largest national historical park in the country with 20,305 mountainous acres. (Kentucky Great Getaway Guide). Go to [www.kytourism.com](http://www.kytourism.com) to find out more about Kentucky's many attractions.

Kentucky's scenic beauty makes it ideal for golf. Golf courses in the state are as varied as the topography in the state generally. Many courses have gently rolling terrain, courses in eastern Kentucky feature beautiful mountain views, and in western Kentucky golfers may enjoy playing by the vast lakes that characterize the area.

The **37<sup>th</sup> Ryder Cup** will be played from September 19-21, 2008 at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville. The Ryder Cup, which pairs 12 of the top American golfers against 12 of their European counterparts, is expected to be the highest-attended sporting event ever held in Kentucky. The international event could draw more than 210,000 spectators during its five days of practice rounds and competition.

College basketball is popular in Kentucky. The University of Kentucky Wildcats are seven-time NCAA national champions and the University of Louisville Cardinals are two-time NCAA national champions. Kentucky is home to triple-A and single-A baseball teams, the Louisville Bats and the Lexington Legends, respectively. Just minutes from Northern Kentucky, the Cincinnati Reds baseball and Cincinnati Bengals football teams provide major professional sports venues.

The **Kentucky Speedway** in Sparta, Kentucky hosts NASCAR, ARCA, Indy Racing League and many other racing series. Visit [www.kentuckyspeedway.com](http://www.kentuckyspeedway.com) for more information.

Kentucky is the heart of the thoroughbred horse industry. Central Kentucky holds the world's greatest concentration of thoroughbred breeding farms, many such as Calumet Farm are world-renowned. The **Kentucky Horse Park** near Lexington is the only park of its kind in the world. The park features two museums, twin theaters and 50 different breeds of horses. The Horse Park is also home to some of the world's champion horses. The most famous of Kentucky's racetracks are Keeneland in Lexington and Churchill Downs in Louisville. The premier thoroughbred racing event in the World is the **Kentucky Derby**, held annually the first Saturday in May at Churchill Downs. Find out more about the Kentucky Derby by visiting [www.kentuckyderby.com](http://www.kentuckyderby.com).

The **2010 World Equestrian Games** will be in Lexington at the Kentucky Horse Park. It will be the first time that the Games will be staged outside of Europe and also the first time that the Games are staged at a single venue as no other site in the world has comparable facilities to those available at the Kentucky Horse Park. The World Equestrian Games take place every four years and include world championships of seven equestrian sports – show jumping, dressage,

eventing, driving, reining, vaulting and endurance riding. The Games in Kentucky will represent the largest equestrian sporting event ever held in the United States.

### **Residential Utility Costs**

Both business and residential customers in Kentucky enjoy some of the lowest utility prices in the U.S. The state's abundant supply of coal means electricity is very affordable. Kentucky's residential electricity prices were the **fourth lowest in the nation** at 6.57 cents per Kwh. (Energy Information Administration) Kentucky's natural gas costs, in the industrial, residential and commercial sectors, are competitive, particularly within the Midwest and Southeast regions of the nation.

### **Telecommunications**

An integrated system of fiber optic technology, satellites and cellular and digital microwave technology provides a solid infrastructure for Kentucky. The Kentucky Information Highway is a statewide digital network with an access ramp in all of Kentucky's 120 counties. It provides for high speed, high capacity delivery of voice, data, and video transmission.

**ConnectKentucky** is the Commonwealth's strategic alliance of technology-minded companies, universities and government entities working to accelerate technology in Kentucky. ConnectKentucky works with policy-makers to support Kentucky's technology strategy and works statewide to grow the Commonwealth's technology infrastructure.

<http://www.connectkentucky.org/>.

Governor Fletcher's **Prescription for Innovation** is a comprehensive broadband deployment and adoption plan that will leverage state, federal and private investment to blanket Kentucky with high-speed Internet access. The initiative will encourage citizen use of computers and the Internet, and provide every Kentucky community with an online presence for improving citizen services and promoting economic development.

To learn more about the quality of life in Kentucky visit the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development's Quality of Life resources page at:

<http://www.thinkkentucky.com/kyedc/qualityoflife.asp>.

August, 2007