


Bourbon Country

Savor America's official native spirit in Kentucky

By Hope S. Philbrick

Photos courtesy of the Kentucky Distillers Association



Vanilla, caramel, oak and nut aromas waft from the sparkling glass. A twist of the wrist swirls the amber liquid inside. When tipped past lips, layers of sweet and spicy flavors slide across the palate. Pleasant notes linger, gaining momentum before softly fading into a fond memory. Each sip of bourbon awakens the senses and invites new discoveries. So, too, does each day spent touring Kentucky Bourbon Country.

With eight famed distilleries dotting the picturesque countryside plus nine celebrated bars energizing downtown Louisville, Kentucky Bourbon Country is an ideal getaway destination for novices as well as connoisseurs. It's where tradition and innovation mingle to create a distinctly American taste *and* experience.

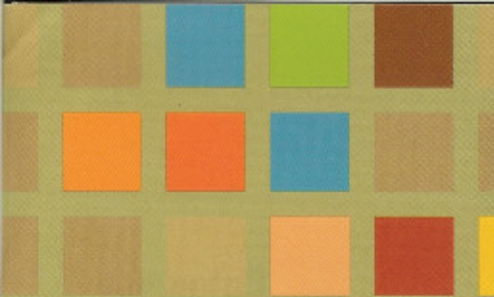
From Field to Bottle

Designated by Congress as the official native spirit of the United States in 1964, bourbon is a type of whiskey. And since more than 95 percent of the world's bourbon is made in Kentucky, "bourbon is very much a part of who we are," says Fred Mozenter, tour guide at Buffalo Trace distillery. It's no mere coincidence this region

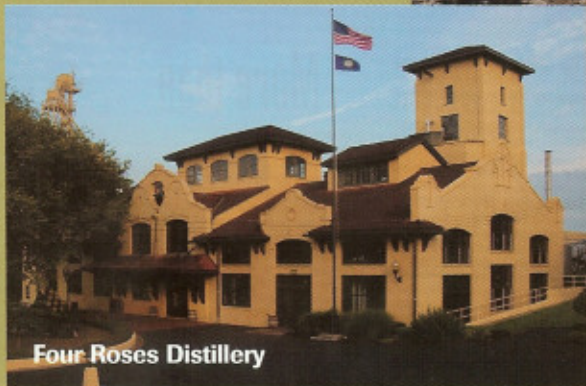
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The bourbon trail stretches for roughly 70 miles, from Lexington to Louisville and down to Bardstown, passing through spectacular horse country. Kentucky distilleries are clustered together, making it convenient to visit several during one trip. (Opposite) When filled, each barrel weighs about 525 pounds. (Above) Grounds and guest house at the Buffalo Trace Distillery. (Left) Inside the barrel warehouse at Buffalo Trace.



Toll Gate Cafe at
Maker's Mark



Four Roses Distillery

While bourbon is made much as it was 200 years ago, subtle differences among distillers' production processes yield distinct flavor profiles.



Bourbon History Center Museum



Copper Pot Stills at
Woodford Reserve

attracts distillers. "It's because of our limestone," says Steve Binegar, tour guide at Woodford Reserve. "The water here has no iron and that makes all the difference."

The fact that Kentucky distilleries are clustered together facilitates visiting several during one trip. The route stretches for roughly 70 miles, from Lexington to Louisville and down to Bardstown. (Since the distance from Augusta to Lexington is approximately 530 miles, we recommend allowing at least four days for a Bourbon Country road trip. The route passes through the spectacular horse country, so don't forget a camera!)

Eight distilleries currently welcome visitors: Buffalo Trace, the nation's oldest continuously operating distillery; Four Roses, listed on the National Register of Historic Places; Heaven Hill, the largest independent, family-owned bourbon producer; Jim Beam, the world's largest bourbon distiller; Maker's Mark, the nation's oldest working distillery on its original site and a National Historic Landmark; Tom Moore, founded in 1879 and home of the world's largest bourbon barrel; Wild Turkey, founded in 1855; and Woodford Reserve, Kentucky's oldest and smallest distillery, a National Landmark and maker of the "Official Bourbon of the Kentucky Derby." Most distilleries participate in the "Bourbon Trail," which encourages visitors to collect stamps in a free passport that can be redeemed for a free T-shirt.

Although bourbon recipes are closely guarded secrets, tours and exhibits at each distillery demonstrate how field grains are transformed and bottled as bourbon. "Wine has good and bad seasons," says Jimmy Russell, master distiller of Wild Turkey. Bourbon is less finicky: "We strive to be consistent." While bourbon is made much as it was 200 years ago, subtle differences among distillers' production processes yield distinct flavor profiles. Allow at least an hour for each tour, which will typically conclude with an opportunity to sip small samples.

By law bourbon must be at least 51 percent corn, stored in new charred American white oak barrels for at least two years and have no additives other than pure water. Within these boundaries, producers achieve unique tastes by manipulating vari-

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If You Go:

Where:

Bourbon Country Distilleries

Buffalo Trace: 502-696-5926;
buffalotrace.com

Four Roses: 502-839-3436; fourroses.us

Heaven Hill: 502-337-1000;
bourbonheritagecenter.com

Jim Beam: 502-543-9877; jimbeam.com

Maker's Mark: 270-865-2881;
makersmark.com

Tom Moore: 502-348-3774; 1792bourbon.com

Wild Turkey: 502-839-4544;
wildturkeybourbon.com

Woodford Reserve: 859-879-1812;
woodfordreserve.com

Urban Bourbon Trail

The Bar at Blu: 502-627-5045; blugrille.com

Baxter Station Bar & Grill: 502-584-1635;
baxterstation.com

Bourbons Bistro: 502-894-8838; bourbons-
bistro.com

The Brown Hotel Bar: 502-324-1389; brown-
hotel.com

Jockey Silks Bourbon Bar: 502-589-5200;
galthouse.com

Maker's Mark Bourbon House & Lounge:
502-568-9009; makerslounge.com

The Old Seelbach Bar: 502-585-3200; seel-
bachhilton.com

Proof on Main: 502-217-6360;
proofonmain.com

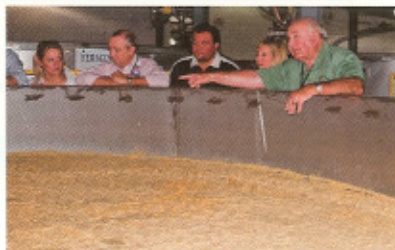
Z's Fusion: 502-855-8000; zsfusion.com

Cooperages

Brown-Forman Cooperage: Mint Julep Tours,
502-583-1433; mintjuleptours.com

Kentucky Cooperage Tours: 270-692-4518;
independentstavecompany.com

Please call ahead or check the Web site for
visitor details including address, hours of opera-
tion, tour costs and reservation requirements.



Accommodations:

21c Museum Hotel

700 W. Main St., Louisville
502-217-6300
21chotel.com

*Boutique upscale hotel and contemporary
art museum*

Beaumont Inn

638 Beaumont Inn Dr., Harrodsburg
859-734-3381
beaumontinn.com

*Kentucky's oldest family-operated
country B&B Inn*

Beautiful Dreamer B&B

440 E. Stephen Foster Ave., Bardstown
502-348-4004
bdreamerbb.com

*Modern construction styled to evoke
the early 1800s*

Rose Hill Inn B&B

233 Rose Hill Ave., Versailles
859-873-5957
rosehillinn.com

*Built in 1823, this home served as a hospital
during the Civil War and has been a
B&B for 20 years*

More Info:

**Bardstown-Nelson County Tourist &
Convention Commission;** visitbardstown.com

**Harrodsburg/Mercer County Tourist
Commission;** harrodsburgky.com

Kentucky Tourism / Bourbon Country; justad-
dbourbon.com

Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau;
gotolouisville.com

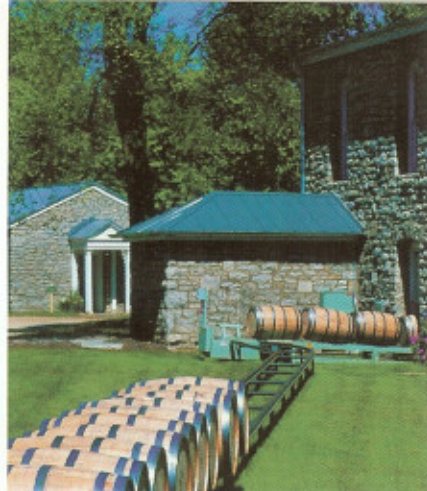
Woodford County Tourist Commission; wood-
fordcountyinfo.com

ables such as the other grains (like malted barley, rye, wheat and oats) selected for their recipes, yeast strain, cooking temperature, distillation method, and storage climate. But one essential ingredient is more elusive: "The one thing you cannot buy is age," says Greg Davis, master distiller at Tom Moore. Per regulation, any age listed on a bourbon label must represent the youngest in the blend. A blend of spirits distilled in 1826, 1962, 1982 and 2002 would be an eight-year bourbon. Rickhouses (or warehouses) storing filled barrels boast a mouth-watering aroma and walking through is, well, heavenly. Over time a percentage of each barrel is lost to evaporation; it's referred to as the "angel's share."

Each tour provides unique hands-on experiences including opportunities to taste fermenting mash, seal your own bottle, hammer a bung into a barrel, see pre-Prohibition tools, pick up a bottle autographed by a master distiller, create your own blend and learn how to taste bourbon like an expert.

Urban Bourbon

In 1780 Evan Williams sold his first bourbon in Louisville. Until the 1920s, as many as 50 distilleries were located along a stretch of Main Street that became known as "Whiskey Row." At the nine bars that today define Louisville's "Urban Bourbon Trail," the challenge isn't whether to savor bourbon straight up or mixed into creative cocktails. It's which of the bourbons to choose, since each establishment stocks at least 50 and up to 150 different bourbon labels. Ranging from historic hotel properties to hip trend-setting bars, the drinks served along the Urban Bourbon Trail run the gamut from retro mixes like the Old-Fashioned and Manhattan to creative twists on current sensations such as the Cosmopolitan and Mojito. Fortunately, trained staffers can help navigate the nuances of diverse options from Jim Beam to Woodford Reserve Master's Collection Seasoned-Oak Finish. Maker's Mark to Blanton's Single Barrel and more. Perhaps sample a few different bourbons side-by-




side in a special flight. Or try a mint julep, the official drink of the Kentucky Derby.

Beyond the Bottle

Lodge at a family-owned bed and breakfast or inn in Bourbon Country and you'll get more than a comfy place to lay your head. Odds are, you'll make a lasting friendship. In Louisville, there's arguably no swankier place to tap into the city's vibrancy than at the 21c Museum Hotel, where the artwork (predominantly portraits) on display was all created in the 21st Century.


Even if you (gasp!) lack an interest in bourbon, the region has much to offer. This is horse country, and industry attractions include the Kentucky Horse Park and Keeneland (a thoroughbred racing and sales company). Dozens of Civil War sites and museums recognize the 453 military actions that took place in the state. Both Abraham Lincoln and Confederate President Jefferson Davis were born in Kentucky, and they are memorialized with historic sites and museums. The Kentucky Artisan Center celebrates traditional and modern artists. Federal Hill in Bardstow inspired Stephen Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home," and a musical is staged during summer months. The Kentucky Railway Museum records the days when train tracks were super-highways. The Native American Museum preserves four habitats used during different time periods.

Bourbon Country's diverse offerings range from quaint to edgy, historic to contemporary, pasture to skyscraper, relaxed to energetic — ensuring that an itinerary can be customized to suit your mood. 

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