

By Rose Muenker • Photography by David Muenker

A cousins' reunion set the course of our RV journey eastward to Paducah, a western Kentucky town midway between Monkey's Eyebrow and Possum Trot. (No kidding!) We arrived in time for the four-day Barbecue on the River Festival, held annually in late September.

Tantalizing aromas of barbecued pork and chicken wafted above downtown. Riverside streets were converted into a maze of vendor stands dishing out their style of barbecue, with all the profits going to charities. Not sure which barbecue to choose, we ordered ribs at the stand in front of us. The tender, fall-off-the-bone meat was finger-licking good! We discovered that Kentuckians also adore fried foods. Fried Twinkies, fried brownies, fried dill pickles...think of it and they probably fry it.

The Paducah we saw after the festival was a quiet river town where people go about business like anyplace else. Yet we found plenty to do, from touring the National Quilt Museum to watching tug boats guide massive barges down the Ohio River, dining

*Across the state, we found Kentuckians to be friendly, helpful and more than willing to decipher our accent anytime we struck up a conversation. By the way, it's the hue of the seeds on the tips of the blades of grass that makes Kentucky's grass "blue."*

# THAT OLD



Left page: The stables of Manchester Farm sit on a knoll overlooking the horse paddocks. **1** Maker's Mark and nine other distilleries on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail offer free tours and tasting in and around Bardstown, Kentucky. **2** The Draper classroom building Building at Berea College was designed to resemble Independence Hall and houses the largest carillon in Kentucky. **3** A Berea College student makes a traditional Appalachian broom as part of the school's work-study program.

# KENTUCKY HOME

in great restaurants and visiting artist studios and galleries in LowerTown. We ended up spending a week there, exhilarated by the festival and then sinking into Paducah's calm pace.

## OLE KENTUCKY COUNTRYSIDE

Since we were already 1,000 miles east of Denver, we decided to continue our journey eastward through Kentucky and then into the Southeast. Along the way, we saw several different Kentucky lifestyles. We spent a weekend on Lake Barkley visiting former Denverites who built an exquisite home there, seeing their adopted state from their perspective. They toured us down narrow, winding country roads past weathered tobacco-curing barns to a small-town harvest festival in Kuttawa, complete with apple pie-eating contests and sack races, and to the Black Oak Vineyard to taste delectable Chardonnay and Chambourcin wines.

In Bardstown, the world's bourbon capital, we set aside our preference for Scotch whiskey long enough to tour the Maker's Mark and Heaven Hills Distilleries. All those multi-story rectangular buildings on the hillsides that look like prisons or public housing turned out to be rick houses where they age barrels

of bourbon. When the informative, entertaining tours ended with samples of smooth, premium bourbons, we almost got converted to the corn-based liquor.

## HORSE COUNTRY

The iconic beauty of Kentucky's horse country drew us to Lexington where the Kentucky Horse Park Campground became our home for three days. All was a stir with preparations for the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games 2010, being held for the first time in the United States next September, with the Kentucky Horse Park as the host facility. Temporary canvas stalls were being erected within yards of our RV for a test run of the Game's 100-mile cross country race. (Every event must be test run a year in advance.) We would have enjoyed staying to watch the test run in our "backyard," but all RV sites were booked (as they are for the 2010 games).

The Kentucky Horse Park proved well worth visiting. The daily entry fee gave us access to the museum, competitions, all the programs and horse-drawn wagon tours of the grounds. My favorite program was the Hall of Champions Show. Racehorses now in re-

INFORMATION Bardstown Tourism: [visitbardstown.com](http://visitbardstown.com), Kentucky Horse Park: [kyhorsepark.com](http://kyhorsepark.com), Kentucky Tourism: [Kentuckytourism.com](http://Kentuckytourism.com), Paducah Tourism: [Paducah.travel](http://Paducah.travel)



The Sanders Cafe and Museum in Corbin, Kentucky, sits on the location where Harland Sanders first served his now world-famous Kentucky fried chicken..

tirement at the park made an appearance while a narrator and video clips described their stellar careers. The park seemed to grab the interest of everyone, from kids bursting with excitement over riding a pony to older adults moved by the horses' sheer strength and beauty.

Expansive horse farms stretch across the rolling hills surrounding Lexington. An informative morning tour of the area oriented us to horse breeding, racing, history and lifestyle. Later, we drove along designated scenic routes down country lanes that led to beautiful, memorable sights. Weanlings frolicked. Solitary stallions strutted. Horse barns as elegant as mansions sat on hill-tops overlooking white-fenced paddocks.

From this equestrian-focused world, we drove into Appalachia where lakes and forests provide a recreational wonderland for hikers and anglers, and where Colonel Harland Sanders began his famous Kentucky fried chicken. It's also the area to find traditional Appalachian handicrafts. Berea College fosters its survival through a unique tuition-free educational program. One of our highlights was interacting with students as they made brooms and wove cane chairs using traditional methods.

Life in eastern Kentucky appeared harder and leaner, but that didn't interfere with the locals' hearty enjoyment of weekend festivals or family outings to Cumberland Falls and other beautiful natural locations, even on gray days.

#### **See ya On The Road!**

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