

Kentucky Great River Road

A Dramatic River Confluence



4 Days/3 Nights

Gateway City: Paducah, Kentucky



When the Mississippi River begins in Minnesota, it is quiet, calm, and not much more than an everyday brook. Quickly beginning its journey southward, the river gains strength as it loses elevation, reaching Kentucky at a dramatic confluence with the Ohio. Transformed into the Mighty Mississippi, the river slices through the country, dividing east from west, at the geographic boundaries of the river towns that dot its course. Yet, the river's influence runs deeper than mere lines on a map. To be an American river town on this route is to maintain a link to the country's most influential events. These ties can be seen at every turn along the Kentucky Great River Road, a picturesque route that parallels the Mississippi River as it flows nearly 50 miles against the western border of Kentucky. From their perch along the jagged river bluffs, this collection of small but vital towns have witnessed some of the most important moments in American history, from 13th century Mississippian archeological sites to crucial battlegrounds of the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Great rivers tell great stories, and no tale is more intriguing than the one told along the Kentucky Great River Road.



Touring the Byway

We recommend starting your journey in Paducah, a historic river town that sits at the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers. Take a stroll along a mural decorated riverfront flood wall, visit one of the world's top quilt displays at the National Quilt Museum, and experience the Paducah of the past at the William Clark Market House Museum before spending the evening in a 19th century redbrick hotel.

On Day Two, see how many birds you can spot at the Ballard and Boatwright Wildlife Management Areas before heading to Wickliffe where you can explore the fascinating Wickliffe Mounds excavation site and Fort Jefferson, a Revolutionary War garrison. Continue to Columbus, where a quiet lodge overlooking the Mississippi will be your night's accommodations. The epic Mississippi River views continue on Day Three as you traverse the grounds of Columbus-Belmont State Park and marvel at the architecture of the Carnegie Library Museum and Fulton County Courthouse. After riding the Dorena Hickman Toll Ferry, travel to Fulton, the southernmost point of your drive, for a relaxing evening in a historic hotel.

Enjoy a leisurely drive back to Paducah on Day Four and pause in Clinton to admire the historic Hickman County Courthouse. Stay on KY-51 and KY-62 to complete your loop on Kentucky's Great River Road.

From there, we wish you a safe passage if you're continuing your journey on the Great River Road or another Kentucky Scenic Byway, or a safe and pleasant journey home.



DAY ONE



Paducah

Founded in 1827 by William Clark of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition, he changed the town's name from Pekin to Paducah after the Comanche people of the western plains. By the mid-1800's, it was an important hub for the Illinois Central Railroad and later, the site of the Battle of Paducah, a crucial moment of the Civil War. With more historical markers per capita than any other Kentucky town and as the point where the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers join in confluence, Paducah's ties to the river and its history are on display throughout.

The National Quilt Museum

A major destination for quilting and fiber art enthusiasts, this unique museum showcases one of the world's top quilt displays. Exhibits include a rotating selection from their permanent collection of over 600 quilts and other pieces of quilt and fiber art. Also available are workshops, youth challenges, and other educational programs that celebrate and advance the work of today's quilters by bringing it to audiences that have previously not experienced the art form.

215 Jefferson St, Paducah, KY 42001, 270-442-8856 Annually M-Sa 10AM-5PM, Sundays March-Nov 1PM-5PM, Adults \$12.



Paducah Riverfront and Wall to Wall Murals

Sitting at the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers, Paducah's historic flood wall is so beautifully decorated with 20 murals depicting the city's rich and colorful history that it earned the designation of a UNESCO Creative City. Painted by the renowned Dafford Mural Team, the murals are set in chronological order beginning with early Native heritage to present-day river activities.

The mural walk runs along Water Street, from Broadway south to Kentucky Avenue.

William Clark Market House Museum

Experience the Paducah of the past at this historic 1905 market house museum. Exhibits on display include the ornate gingerbread woodwork interior of the 1877 Paducah List Drug Store, a life-sized state of American statesman Henry Clay, an Interactive Timeline that looks at Paducah's history from the settlers to the first American Quilter's Association show, and digital scans from the museum's Historical Archives Photo Gallery.

121 Market House Square, Paducah, KY 42001, 270-443-7759 March-Dec 15 Th-Sa 10AM-4PM.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

The 1857 Hotel 210 Kentucky Ave, Paducah, KY 42001, 270-933-1857 This boutique property in a 19th century redbrick building blends modern design and historic architecture and offers free Wi-Fi, an on-site bar, and regularly scheduled entertainment.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Max's Brick Oven Cafe 112 Market House Square, Paducah, KY 42001, 270-575-3473 Enjoy casual dining with an accent! A large menu includes wood-fired pizzas, pastas, and steaks.

the freight house 330 S 3rd St # 102, Paducah, KY 42003, 270-908-0006 Seasonal New American cuisine in a historic railroad depot served alongside local spirits and craft beer.

Destination Distinctive Retail

Troutt Old Time General Store and Market 433 N 4th St, Paducah, KY 42001, 270-443-0858 Quaint market with handcrafted and locally made collectibles, a large selection of antique and vintage pieces, and a delicious onsite bakery and deli.

The Farmhouse 1939 Kentucky Ave, Paducah, KY 42003, 270-415-5075 Local and handmade gifts, natural body care products, jewelry, home decor items, and a full espresso bar.

DAY TWO



Ballard and Boatwright Wildlife Management Areas

As two adjoining Wildlife Management Areas at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, Ballard and Boatwright together encompass over 16,000 ecologically diverse acres of bottomland hardwoods, oxbow lakes, grasslands, tupelo and cypress swamps, and agricultural fields. They sit on the Mississippi River floodplain, whose rich ecosystem is a wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl and a haven for wildlife like deer, wild turkey, forbearers, and nesting bald eagles. Boatwright WMA includes Swan Lake, Kentucky's largest natural lake, while Ballard WMA features 25 miles of maintained gravel roads and a 2 mile driving loop that provides access to elevated viewing platforms and a Goose Trap Slough photography blind. Maps and information available at the Ballard office. 864 Wildlife Lodge Rd, La Center, KY 42056, 270-224-2244 M-F 7AM-3:30pm.

Wickliffe

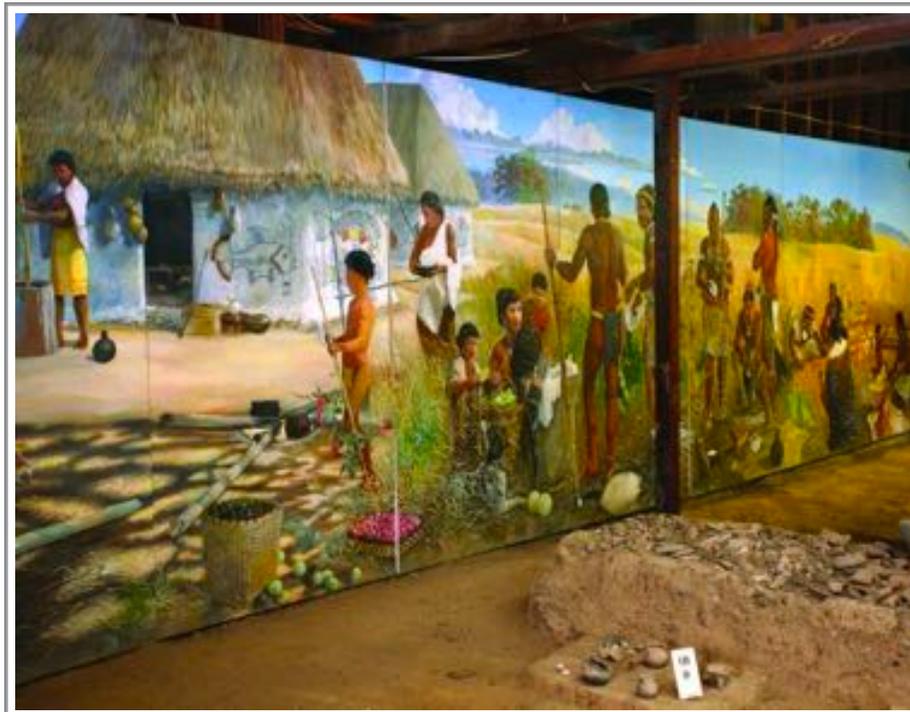
Welcome to the birthplace of the mighty Mississippi! While the river does begin hundreds of miles to the north, it does not gain its power until it is joined by the Ohio River at Wickliffe. Named for Confederate officer Colonel Charles A. Wickliffe, this city also serves as the industrial link from Kentucky to Missouri and Illinois and offers world-class hunting and fishing opportunities at every turn.

Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site

Discover life along the river as it was lived 900 years ago at the archeological site of a prehistoric Native American village of the Mississippian mound builders.

Occupied from about 1100 CE to 1350 CE, the village was a complex settlement of permanent houses and earthen mounds positioned around a central plaza. The Ceremonial, Chief's, and Burial Mounds can be seen on an Archeology Walking Trail. Exhibits at the museum interpret the Mississippian culture and showcase the history of the site through an excavated mound, a mural scene of the prehistoric village and site artifacts and stone tools. The Welcome Center also offers picnic tables, a gift shop, maps and information pamphlets, and access to a 200-yard looping woodland trail.

94 Green St, Wickliffe, KY 42087, 270-335-3681 April-Nov W-Su 9AM-5PM, Dec W-Sa 10AM-4PM, Adults \$6.



Ballard County Courthouse

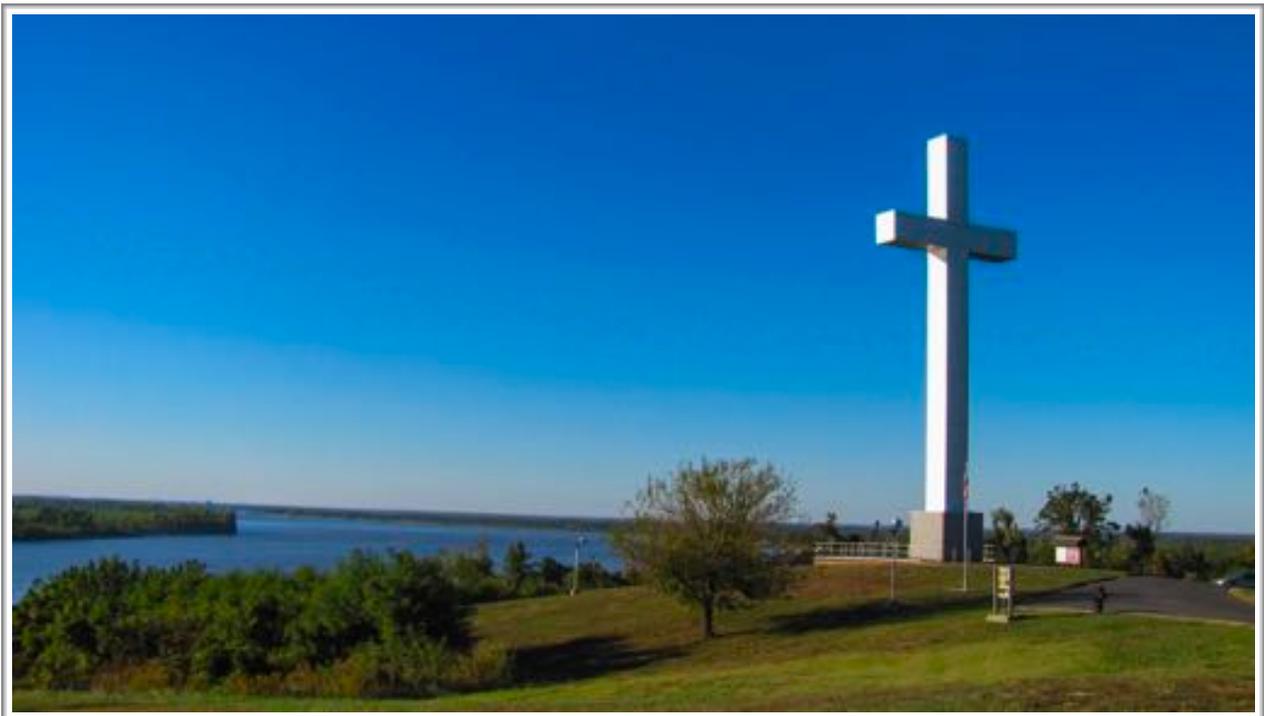
Finished in 1905 and designed by architect Jerome B. Legg, this impressive county courthouse was made to replace nearby Blandville's court house that burned down 20 years prior. Note the octagonal cupola on top and the ionic porticos over three of the entrances.

132 4th St, Wickliffe, KY 42087, 270-335-5168 M-F 8AM-4PM.

Fort Jefferson Hill Park and Memorial Cross

In 1780, Revolutionary War General George Rogers Clark established Fort Jefferson to protect the then-western boundary of the United States from attack. It was abandoned in 1781 but then later used as a Union Army supply post during the Civil War. A paved walking trail leads to a 95-foot memorial cross that sits atop a bluff overlooking the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and from here, visitors can view three states at once - Kentucky, Missouri, and Illinois.

Fort Jefferson Hill Road Wickliffe KY 42087, 270-705-0506 Daily 5AM-7PM.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Iron Banks Lodge 11217 KY-58 West, Columbus, KY 42032, 270-677-4483 Sitting high above the banks of the Mississippi, this quiet and comfortable lodge provides a view as grand as the hotel itself.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Jen's Place 35 E Hoover Pkwy, Columbus, KY 42032, 270-677-2942 Family-friendly restaurant offering good down home Southern cooking for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Beards and Roses, 140 West Hoover Parkway, Columbus, KY 42032, 270-677-2473, General store with great homemade pizzas.

Kountry Cafe, 105 North Washington Street, Clinton, KY 42032, 270-677-2942, Delicious breakfast and homestyle cooking.

Beehive Cafe, 224 North Washington Street, Clinton, KY 42032, 270-254-3075, Classic American dishes.

DAY THREE



Columbus

As western Kentucky's oldest town, Columbus was originally called Iron Banks due to the iron deposits from the river that caused the soil to turn red. In 1820, the city opted to change its name to honor Christopher Columbus, the Italian explorer. The area was of strategic importance during the Civil War because it was the terminus of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, and in fact was the site of the 1861 Battle of Belmont, which caused General Grant to retreat his troops northward towards Paducah. A major flood in 1927 forced survivors to rebuild the entire town on higher ground above the floodplain where it still stands today.

Columbus-Belmont State Park

When a 1927 flood prompted people to look for a new site for the town of Columbus, a Red Cross agent came across the remains of the Confederate fortifications of Fort DeRussy. Situated on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, the Civil War barricades were built to prevent Union troops from accessing the river. The area is now a 160-acre state park that showcases some of the artillery and the six-ton anchor that held the chain that stretched across the river, as well as a 2.5-mile self-guided hiking trail, campgrounds, Civil War Museum, snack bar, picnic area, gift shop, and miniature golf course.

350 Park Road, Columbus, KY 42032, 270-677-2327 April 1-Oct 15 8AM-8pm, Oct 16-May 31 8AM-Dark. Museum: Adults \$4.





Hickman

Though the town's first cabin was built in 1819 and first post office in 1830, it didn't receive the name of Hickman until G.W.L. Marr purchased much of the surrounding area in 1837 and named it after his wife's maiden name. Located on five bluffs above the Mississippi River, Hickman is home to the Dorena-Hickman Ferry, one of the few remaining riverboat ferries in the United States and the only operating ferry crossing the river between Missouri and Kentucky.

Carnegie Library Museum

This restored one-story brick Colonial Revival-style building was built in 1906 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is located at the confluence of the Mississippi River and Bayou de Chien and provides a spectacular scenic view of Missouri and Kentucky. Resources are available for anyone looking to gather information on Mississippian Era culture, the American Civil War, and the fascinating history of river and rail transportation.

902 Moscow Ave, Hickman, KY 42050, 270-236-2464 T-F 9AM-5PM, Sa & M 9AM-12:30PM.

Fulton County Courthouse

When Hickman was selected as the county seat in 1845, a small frame structure was erected to serve as the area's first courthouse. Nearly 60 years later, a second courthouse was designed by architect Frank P. Milburn and completed in 1903. Much of the original vertical tongue-in-groove wainscoting is intact, and visitors will note the building's eclectic Beaux Arts design alongside Dutch-style peaks. Two courtrooms are located in the center of the second and third stories, respectively, and the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

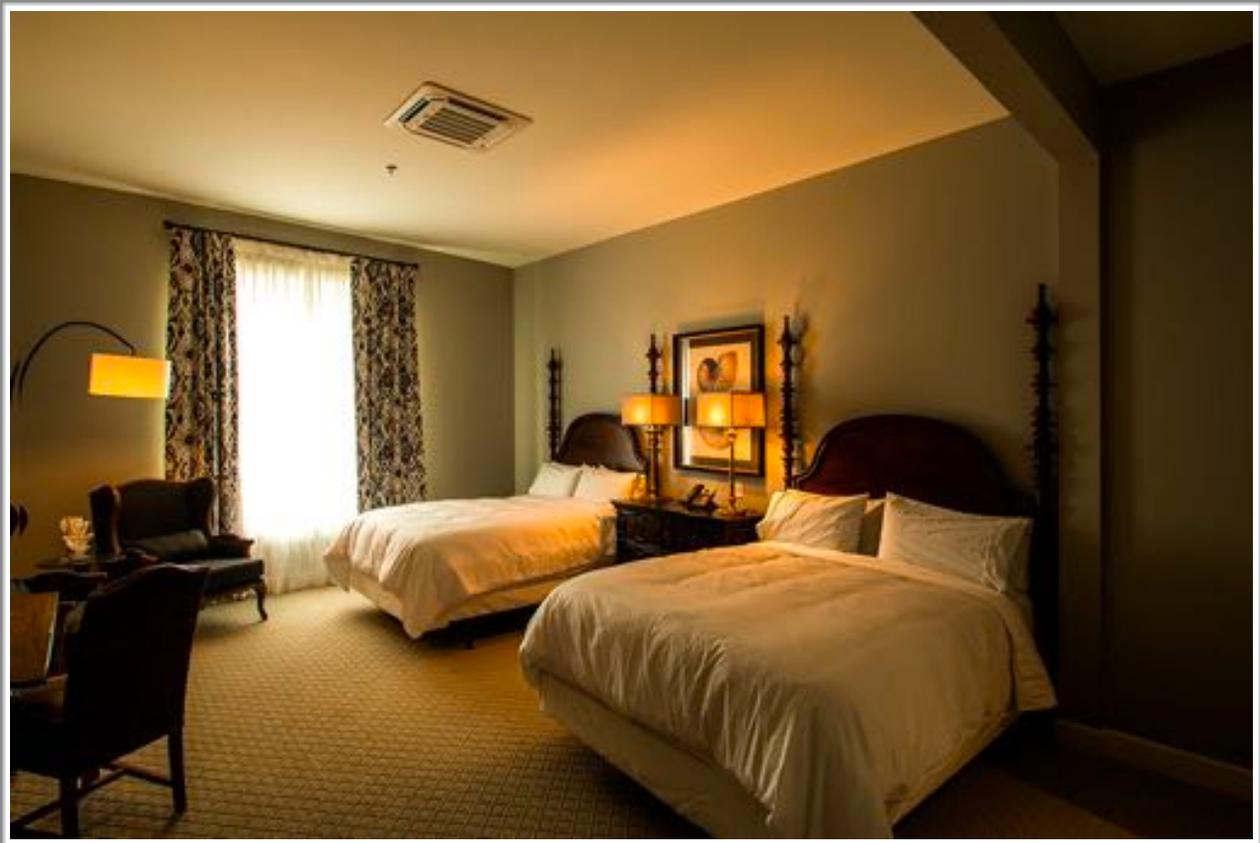
114 East Wellington, Hickman, KY 42050, 270-236-2594 M-F 9AM-3PM.



Dorena-Hickman Toll Ferry

Experience the beauty of America's heartland and the Mighty Mississippi as you ride on one of the few remaining riverboat ferries in the United States and the only operating ferry crossing the Mississippi River between Missouri and Kentucky. The ferry runs seven days a week except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years, departing Kentucky for the first trip at 7AM and the last at 6:15PM. In winter, the last trip departs 5:15PM. Summon the ferry when you arrive at the landing by pushing the call button. Basic standard car fare \$14.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

The Meadows Hotel 101 Commercial Ave, Fulton, KY 42041, 270-472-5555 A historic boutique hotel with 20 luxurious rooms and a full-service bar and restaurant.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Keg Bar & Grill 444 Lake St, Fulton, KY 42041, 270-472-6101 The oldest and longest running restaurant in Fulton, you'll enjoy fine dining in a unique and casual environment.

Smoke House Restaurant 906 Red Bud Ln, Fulton, KY 42041, 270-472-2333 Serving American BBQ and homestyle comfort food in a relaxed setting.

DAY FOUR

Hickman County Courthouse

As you make your way back to Paducah, pause in Clinton to admire the Hickman County Courthouse. The building was built in 1884 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

110 East Clay Street, Clinton, KY 42031, 270-653-2131.

