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U.S. SERIES

THE GREAT AMERICAN HEARTLAND

Greetings from LOUISVILLE

48 hours, solo, at your own pace

POCKET EDITION · 2027

48-HOUR GUIDE · SAFETY GUIDE · PLANNING CALENDAR

GOINGSOLO.LIFE

Welcome to Louisville

Louisville sits on a bend of the Ohio River and has the easy pace of a southern city with the manners of a midwestern one. It is the home of the Kentucky Derby, the Louisville Slugger, and a bourbon trail that begins on Main Street downtown.

Traveling alone here works because the city's best experiences are built around a bar, a counter, or a museum bench. A single traveler at a bourbon bar is the most ordinary sight in town, and strangers on the next stool are usually happy to talk.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read through once before you go. Day One covers Main Street's bourbon row, the Slugger Museum, and the waterfront. Day Two visits Churchill Downs, Old Louisville, and the NuLu neighborhood. Section 03 is the new-for-2027 story of the Hot Brown. Spring and summer are warm and humid, so plan outdoor activities for mornings and evenings.

ESSENTIAL QUICK FACTS

CURRENCY
US dollar (cards accepted nearly everywhere)

TRANSIT
TARC buses · about $1.75 a ride

TIME ZONE
Eastern (UTC–5; UTC–4 in summer)

EMERGENCY
911 · city services 311

TIPPING
18–20% in restaurants

DRINKING
Must be 21; bourbon tastings often need ID

01 DAY ONE

Main Street · The Slugger Museum · The Waterfront

The first day stays downtown, where bourbon, baseball, and the river all sit within a few blocks.

MORNING · 8:30 AM – 1:00 PM

8:30 AM

Waterfront Park

A wide lawn along the Ohio River with a view of the Big Four Bridge. Walk or jog the loop, then cross the bridge on foot to Indiana and back.

The bridge is a pedestrian walkway and is busy in the evening.

10:00 AM

Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory

A giant steel bat leans against the building. Inside, watch bats being made and see the baseball bats of great players.

Check tour times and book ahead on busy weekends.

12:00 PM

Lunch — The Brown Hotel

A grand 1923 hotel that gave the city the Hot Brown, an open-faced turkey sandwich smothered in sauce. Section 03 tells the story.

Order the Hot Brown at the bar, with a glass of tea or a bourbon cocktail.

AFTERNOON · 1:30 PM – 6:00 PM

1:30 PM

Muhammad Ali Center

A museum devoted to Louisville's most famous son, with films, exhibits, and quotes on his life in and out of the ring.

Allow about two hours; the film at the start is worth the time.

4:00 PM

Bourbon Row on Main Street

Several distilleries have opened visitor centers on or near Main Street, including the Evan Williams Bourbon Experience, so you can taste in town without driving.

Book tastings ahead, and carry ID.

EVENING · 6:30 PM – 10:00 PM

7:00 PM

Dinner at a bourbon bar

Louisville's bar menus are built around local bourbon. Take a seat at the bar and ask for a flight or a classic cocktail.

Eat something substantial with your tasting.

9:00 PM

Fourth Street Live

A lively downtown entertainment strip with music venues and late-night food. Pick a spot with a window seat and watch the crowd.

It gets busy on weekends; stay on the main blocks.

02 DAY TWO

Churchill Downs · Old Louisville · NuLu

The second day moves from the track to the Victorian streets and ends in a lively neighborhood.

MORNING · 8:30 AM – 1:00 PM

8:30 AM

Churchill Downs

The home of the Kentucky Derby since 1875, with twin spires and a track that is among the most famous in the sport. Check whether live racing or a tour is on during your visit.

Early morning is a good time to see the grounds quietly.

10:30 AM

Kentucky Derby Museum

A museum beside the track with a 360-degree film about the race, hats, trophies, and the story of the horses. Admission includes a grounds tour at some times.

Check combination tickets online.

12:30 PM

Lunch at a Kentucky diner

Try a regional plate such as country ham, Kentucky burgoo, or fried chicken. Burgoo is a thick stew and a Derby tradition.

Ask what the day's burgoo is made from.

AFTERNOON · 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

2:00 PM

Old Louisville

One of the largest collections of Victorian homes in the country, with turrets, stained glass, and wrought iron. Walk St. James Court and Belgravia Court.

Stay on the main streets and walk in daylight.

4:30 PM

NuLu

A walkable neighborhood east of downtown with galleries, boutiques, and restaurants in old warehouses.

Many shops close early on Sundays and Mondays.

EVENING · 6:30 PM – 10:00 PM

7:00 PM

Dinner in NuLu or Butchertown

Both neighborhoods have restaurants with bar seating and local ingredients. Ask for a Kentucky bourbon pairing.

Reserve a table on busy weekends.

9:00 PM

Bardstown Road

A long strip of bars, bookstores, and live music venues in the Highlands, popular with locals.

Take a rideshare back if it is late.

03 HOT BROWN

The Hot Brown

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know a famous Kentucky sandwich was invented to feed late-night dancers?

In 1926, chef Fred Schmidt at the Brown Hotel created an open-faced sandwich of roast turkey on toast, topped with a creamy Mornay sauce and broiled. The hotel had been attracting crowds to its late dances, and guests wanted something more than ham and eggs. Bacon and pimento were added after broiling.

HOW IT BEGAN

The Brown Hotel opened in 1923 and became the social heart of the city. By the 1920s, thousands came to its dances, and by the early morning many wanted a meal. Turkey was a rare treat in those days, which made the dish feel special.

HOW TO EAT IT

A true Hot Brown arrives piping hot in a shallow dish, with sauce bubbling and bacon crisp. Eat it with a knife and fork. Many Louisville restaurants offer a version, but the hotel's own is the original.

WHERE TO GO

Order one at the Brown Hotel, either at the bar or in the dining room. Pair it with a Kentucky bourbon, and try to go off-peak, when the room is quiet.

04 WHERE TO EAT

Hot Browns, burgoo, and bourbon

Louisville cooking is Southern and generous. Most places below have bar seating or counters, which are ideal for one.

BREAKFAST & LUNCH

The Brown Hotel
DOWNTOWN · $20–35
The original Hot Brown, in the room where it was invented.

Wiltshire on Market
DOWNTOWN · $12–22
A bright, easy lunch spot with local ingredients and a bar.

Hillbilly Tea
DOWNTOWN · $12–20
Southern lunch plates and a long list of teas and lemonade.

A neighborhood diner
VARIOUS · $8–15
Biscuits, country ham, and strong coffee at a neighborhood counter.

DINNER & LATE NIGHT

Evan Williams Bourbon Experience
MAIN STREET · $15–40
A tasting and a bar on historic Bourbon Row.

Proof on Main
DOWNTOWN · $25–50
A modern kitchen and a bar inside the 21c Museum Hotel.

Mayan Café
NULU · $20–40
Yucatán-inspired dishes with local ingredients, in a cozy room.

Hammerheads
BUTCHERTOWN · $15–30
A casual spot with local beer and a big patio.

05 GETTING AROUND

Navigating Louisville

Downtown is walkable, and the main sights are close together. For farther neighborhoods, use buses or rideshare.

TARC buses	about $1.75	Routes cover downtown, Old Louisville, and Churchill Downs. Check current fares.
Airport (SDF)	Rideshare or taxi	About 15 minutes by car to downtown.
Rideshare	by trip	The easiest way to reach neighborhoods and evening venues.
Walking	Free	The riverfront, Main Street, and the Slugger Museum are within a short walk.
Bikes	by the hour	Bike rentals are available near the waterfront.
Scooters	by the minute	Shared scooters are available downtown; ride carefully near traffic.

Summer heat and humidity can be intense. Plan outdoor activities for mornings and evenings, and carry water.

06 BACKUP PLANS

Louisville on a rainy afternoon

Louisville gets rain in spring and storms in summer. These are good indoor options.

DOWNTOWN
Muhammad Ali Center
Films and exhibits on Louisville's most famous son.

DOWNTOWN
Frazier History Museum
Kentucky history and an armory of historic weapons.

DOWNTOWN
Louisville Slugger Museum
Baseball history and a bat-making tour.

OLD LOUISVILLE
Speed Art Museum
A major art museum near the University of Louisville.

CHURCHILL DOWNS
Kentucky Derby Museum
Trophies, hats, and a 360-degree film.

DOWNTOWN
21c Museum Hotel
A free contemporary art gallery inside a hotel.

07 NEIGHBORHOODS

Know your neighborhoods

BOURBON & RIVER

Downtown

Main Street, the waterfront, and the Slugger Museum.

VICTORIAN

Old Louisville

Turrets, stained glass, and tree-lined courts.

GALLERIES

NuLu

A walkable strip of shops and restaurants.

BARS & BOOKSTORES

The Highlands

Bardstown Road and a lively local scene.

WAREHOUSES

Butchertown

Old industrial buildings turned into restaurants.

RACING

Churchill Downs

The track, the museum, and the neighborhood around them.

08 GOOD TO KNOW

What nobody tells you

- Bourbon is a serious subject. Taste small, add water or ice if you want, and eat something with it.
- Derby week is expensive and crowded. Book months ahead, or visit in another season.
- Order a Hot Brown at least once. It is filling, so skip dessert.
- Louisville summers are humid. Plan outdoor activities early or late.
- Tip 18–20% in restaurants. Sales tax is added at the register.
- Dress up a little on Derby Day. Hats are traditional and fun, and nobody minds if you wear one.

WHEN TO GO

Apr–May	Best and busiest	Spring weather, the Kentucky Derby Festival, and the Derby on the first Saturday in May.
Sep–Oct	Second best	Mild days, harvest menus, and the St. James Court Art Show in early October.
Jun–Aug	Peak heat	Hot, humid, and lively with outdoor concerts.
Nov–Mar	Off-season	Cold and quiet, with lower hotel prices.

09 SOLO TRAVELER SAFETY

Is Louisville safe?

Safe, with standard city awareness. Downtown, Old Louisville, NuLu, and the Highlands are busy and well lit during the day. As in any city, avoid walking alone in quiet or poorly lit streets late at night, and use rideshare after dark.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AT A GLANCE

Waterfront Park	●●●●●
Downtown (daytime)	●●●●○
Old Louisville (daytime)	●●●●○
NuLu	●●●●○
Bardstown Road (evening)	●●●●○
Downtown late at night	●●●○○
Outside the central core at night	●●○○○

COMMON SCAMS

Panhandlers and street petitioners may approach you downtown. Decline politely and keep walking. Never leave valuables visible in a parked car.

HEALTH & MEDICAL

UofL Hospital is the main downtown hospital. Pace your tastings and drink water. Carry travel insurance.

SOLO TRAVELERS

Share your plan with someone back home, keep your phone charged, and use rideshare late at night. Do not drive after bourbon tastings.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Police, fire, medical	911
City services and non-emergency	311
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Nearest ER (Downtown)	UofL Hospital · 530 S. Jackson St.

10 PLANNING CALENDAR

Louisville, month by month

Exact dates shift each year, so confirm before booking.

APR–MAY KENTUCKY DERBY FESTIVAL

- Two weeks of events lead up to the Derby on the first Saturday in May.

MAY KENTUCKY DERBY

- The Run for the Roses fills Churchill Downs and the city with hats, mint juleps, and parties.

JUN SUMMER

- Warm evenings, outdoor concerts, and baseball at Louisville Slugger Field.

SEP BOURBON SEASON

- Bourbon heritage events take place across the state through the month.

OCT FALL

- The St. James Court Art Show fills Old Louisville in early October.

DEC HOLIDAYS

- Lights, holiday markets, and a decorated downtown.

SDF

Every Stop, Mapped

Scan the code to open the free interactive Louisville map — every stop in this guide, filterable by day, food, and transport.

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TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.
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