



RV TRIPGEN

The Complete Guide to
RV Travel in

Kentucky

Speed limits, towing rules, NPS reservations, bourbon-trail RV parking, and everything else you need to know before you cross the state line.

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RV travel in Kentucky

Kentucky is a remarkably efficient RV state for a one- or two-week loop. Mammoth Cave (the longest cave system in the world) anchors the central karst country; the Bluegrass region around Lexington holds the working horse farms and the Kentucky Bourbon Trail; the Daniel Boone NF and Red River Gorge dominate the east; and the Land Between the Lakes NRA in the far west has hundreds of miles of dispersed shoreline camping. State parks are notably good with full-hookup resort lodges. Roads are well-maintained, fuel is cheap, and the I-64/I-75 corridor handles big rigs without complaint. The catch: the eastern Appalachian back roads (KY-15, KY-80) have low bridges and tight switchbacks, the Bluegrass region's two-lane state highways can be narrow with stone walls right at the shoulder, and the state sits at the northern edge of Tornado Alley with peak risk Mar-May.

Kentucky by the numbers

Boondocking + dispersed sites	218
Established campgrounds	122
Dump stations	15
Propane refills	11
Potable water fill-ups	38
Laundromats	9
RV showers	6
Verified-bad spots (overnight prohibited)	7

Source: iOverlander community database (62% of Kentucky spots verified in the last 24 months).

Driving rules

Interstate (cars)	70 mph
Interstate (trucks + towing)	70 mph
US/State highway (cars)	55-65 mph (posted)
US/State highway (towing)	55 mph
Built-up areas	25-35 mph (posted)
Drive on	Right
RV passenger seatbelts	Required for all front-seat occupants

Cell phone use while driving	Texting banned statewide; hand-held banned for drivers under 18; hands-free strongly recommended
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Highways

RV-friendly corridors

Highway	Note
I-64	Louisville east through Lexington to Ashland and West Virginia. Standard four-lane interstate.
I-65	Louisville south through Bowling Green to the Tennessee line at Franklin. Easy. Mammoth Cave exit at Cave City.
I-75	Cincinnati south through Lexington to Tennessee. Easy except through Lexington at rush hour.
I-71	Louisville to Cincinnati. Easy.
I-24	Paducah southeast to Tennessee via Land Between the Lakes. Easy.
Western Kentucky Parkway / Bluegrass Parkway / Mountain Parkway	Free-of-charge limited-access highways forming a partial loop around central KY. Generally rig-friendly; Mountain Parkway gets twisty east of Campton.
US-127	North-south through the Bluegrass. Two-lane in many stretches; manageable but slow.
Natchez Trace Parkway (NW corner)	Brief KY section near Paducah; rest is TN/MS/AL. RV-friendly two-lane, no commercial services.

RV-restricted segments

Segment	Restriction
KY-15 / KY-80 east of Hazard	Tight Appalachian switchbacks, narrow shoulders, occasional weight-limited bridges. Big rigs should stick to I-64 and the Mountain Parkway.
Red River Gorge interior roads (KY-715, Tunnel Ridge Rd)	The Nada Tunnel on KY-77 is a single-lane bored-rock tunnel approximately 13 ft high and 12 ft wide -- many RVs cannot fit and even those that can require oncoming-traffic awareness. Use KY-715 instead but check Forest Service current advisories.
Cumberland Falls access (KY-90)	Twisty two-lane to the state park. Manageable for 35-ft motorhomes; tight for trailers over 30 ft.
Pine Mountain (US-119)	Sustained 6-7% grades climbing over Pine Mountain in Letcher County. Engine-brake on descent.
Lexington downtown (US-25/27)	Stone walls and low bridges on the older horse-farm two-lanes -- avoid in big rigs and use the interstate loop (I-75 / Man o' War Blvd / I-64).

Mountain passes

Pass	Elevation	Note
Pine Mountain (US-119)	2200 ft	Sustained 6-7% grade over the ridge in Letcher County. Engine-brake on descent.
Black Mountain (US-119 / KY-160)	4145 ft	Highest point in Kentucky; summit accessed via KY-160 spur. Two-lane mountain road, manageable for 30-ft motorhomes.

National parks + monuments

National Park / Monument	Entry fee	Reservation note
Mammoth Cave NP	Free park entry; cave tours \$8-66 by tour type	Mammoth Cave Campground (in-park) is reservable Mar-Nov via recreation.gov; RVs to 40 ft, no hookups. Houchin Ferry CG is small/primitive. Cave tours book up months ahead in summer -- reserve before you arrive.
Cumberland Gap NHP	Free entry	Wilderness Road Campground (in-park) takes RVs to 40 ft on electric-only hookups, reservable via recreation.gov.
Abraham Lincoln Birthplace NHP	Free entry	Day-use only. Lincoln Homestead State Park 30 miles north has hookups.
Big South Fork NRR (KY portion)	Free entry	Bandy Creek CG (TN side) is the main developed RV CG with hookups. KY-side Bear Creek is primitive. Reservable Mar-Nov via recreation.gov.
Camp Nelson NM	Free entry	Day-use only. Lake Reba (Richmond) or Kentucky Horse Park CG take big rigs.
Mill Springs Battlefield NM	Free entry	Day-use only. General Burnside Island State Park 5 miles south has hookups.

State parks

Kentucky State Parks operate 49 parks including 17 "resort parks" with lodges and full-hookup RV camping. Notable: Cumberland Falls, Natural Bridge (Red River Gorge), Lake Cumberland, Kentucky Dam Village, Kenlake, Carter Caves, Pennyryle Forest, Greenbo Lake, Jenny Wiley. Reservable up to 12 months ahead via parks.ky.gov. Day-use generally free. Camping \$20-45/night for full hookups. Several resort parks offer big-rig pull-throughs.

Boondocking + dispersed camping

BLM: No BLM-managed dispersed camping in Kentucky. Public-land boondocking is restricted to the Daniel Boone NF, the Land Between the Lakes NRA, and a handful of USACE projects.

National Forest: Daniel Boone NF (700,000+ acres across eastern Kentucky) permits free dispersed camping along forest roads with a 14-day stay limit. Popular: Red River Gorge area (subject to permit

zones -- check current rules), Cave Run Lake, Stearns Ranger District. Land Between the Lakes NRA (NRA, not NF) is jointly KY/TN and permits backcountry camping on designated dispersed sites with a small permit; check lbl.org for current fees and stay limits.

Stay limit: 14 days at any one location (federal rule, applies to BLM and NF dispersed).

Tribal lands

No federally-recognized tribal nations are based in Kentucky today; the Cherokee, Shawnee, and Chickasaw were displaced in the late 1700s and 1800s. The Trail of Tears NHT passes through western Kentucky and is interpreted at Trail of Tears Commemorative Park (Hopkinsville).

Propane, dump stations, fuel

Propane: Plentiful in Louisville, Lexington, Bowling Green, Paducah, and along all interstates. Tractor Supply, U-Haul, and most KOA / Good Sam parks fill on-site. Sparse in the deep Eastern Kentucky coalfield counties -- fill at Pikeville, Hazard, or London before heading into the Daniel Boone NF backcountry.

Dump stations: Most Kentucky State Parks have free dumps for registered guests. Flying J / Pilot on I-65, I-75, and I-64 have fee dumps. Land Between the Lakes campgrounds (Hillman Ferry, Piney) have free dumps for guests. Sparse in the eastern coalfield counties.

Fuel: Diesel and gas widely available along all interstates. Rural stretches in eastern Kentucky along KY-15 and KY-80, and along US-127 through the Knobs, can run 30-40 miles between stations. Top up at Lexington, London, Somerset, or Hazard before heading into the backcountry. Fuel prices typically among the lowest in the country; the Bluegrass region around Lexington is reliably cheapest.

Weather windows

Best months: April through early June and mid-September through October. Daytime highs 65-80 F, low humidity, leaves spectacular in the Appalachians mid-October.

Avoid: July and August: 85-92 F with 75%+ humidity and frequent afternoon thunderstorms. March through May is peak severe-weather season; western Kentucky sits in the heart of the December 2021 tornado-outbreak path and experiences violent overnight tornadoes regularly. Winter (Dec-Feb) brings ice storms that can shut Eastern Kentucky for days; the 2009 ice storm left some hollows without power for weeks.

Climate caution

Western Kentucky from Paducah to Bowling Green is a tornado-frequent corridor with high overnight-tornado risk Mar-May. Treat any NWS tornado watch in this zone as a get-to-a-sturdy-building plan -- your RV is not shelter.

Emergency + road conditions

State patrol

Dial *KSP (*577) from a cell phone, or 502-695-6300 for Kentucky State Police main line

Road conditions<https://goky.ky.gov>

How RV TripGen helps

Bourbon Trail RV-stop curation

RV Tripgen knows which Kentucky Bourbon Trail distilleries have big-rig parking (Maker's Mark, Heaven Hill, Buffalo Trace, Wild Turkey) versus which need a smaller dinghy run (Woodford Reserve, Willett, several craft stops).

Western Kentucky tornado-corridor awareness

RV Tripgen flags overnight stops in the Paducah / Mayfield / Bowling Green tornado corridor during active NWS watches and surfaces nearby sturdy-shelter options.