



/r/Bourbon Kentucky Bourbon Trail Guide

Last updated 12/17/2018 - /u/signde

[Intro](#)

[Map](#)

[Distilleries](#)

[Maker's Mark](#)

[Willett](#)

[Four Roses](#)

[Distillery](#)

[Warehouse & Bottling](#)

[Heaven Hill](#)

[Wild Turkey](#)

[Jim Beam](#)

[Buffalo Trace](#)

[Barton 1792](#)

[The Evan Williams Experience](#)

[Other Things to See](#)

[Oscar Getz Museum of Whiskey History](#)

[Independent Stave Company](#)

[Where to Eat](#)

[Lexington area](#)

[Frankfort area, near Buffalo Trace](#)

[Bardstown area, near Willett, Heaven Hill, and Barton](#)

[Lawrenceburg area, near Four Roses and Wild Turkey](#)

[Versailles area, near Woodford](#)

[Shopping for Bourbon](#)

[General Trip Advice](#)

Intro

Welcome to /r/bourbon's list of recommended stops when visiting Kentucky. Understand that this by no means intended to be an exhaustive listing of all the stops for the official [Kentucky Bourbon Trail](#), the [Urban Bourbon Trail](#), the [Craft Tour](#), or whatever other trails that are going to

pop up. There are plenty of places where you can find that information. What you will find here are the most popular destinations, general advice, and recommendations from the /r/bourbon crowd.

Map

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zRc7WKbowBS8.kEVbMDUsc4Mw>

Distilleries

Maker's Mark

<https://www.makersmark.com/distillery>

- Well regarded as having one of the nicest grounds and a good setup for tours
- Drive is very scenic but cellular reception might be spotty
- If using a GPS, make sure you're going to Burks Spring and not Burkes Spring. Burks may also show up as Don Ryan road. Also beware of routes involving Osbourne Rd or Old Elizabethtown Rd as those are one lane and can be scary to navigate.
- Tours include distilling, warehouse, bottling, and tasting of most offerings
- Hand dip your own bottles
- One of a kind [Chihuly glass exhibit](#)

Gift Shop: Occasionally carries exclusive products before nationwide availability (Maker's Cask Strength, Maker's 46 Cask Strength, etc). Also offers a variety of other "dipped" items from shot glasses to baseball caps.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Willett

<http://www.kentuckybourbonwhiskey.com/visit.html>

- Small micro distillery
- Tours are more intimate than other official Bourbon Trail stops
- Knowledgeable tour guides
- Nice grounds with [rustic warehouses](#)
- Close proximity to Heaven Hill and Barton
- Tour includes a tasting of the standard KBD products like Johnny Drum, Noah's Mill, Rowan's Creek and the occasional rarity like Willett Family Estate

Gift shop: Standard KBD products as well as highly sought after exclusive products such as Willett Family Estate bourbons and Rye. Prices average \$11/yr for younger expressions but are much higher for older vintages.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Four Roses

Distillery

<http://fourrosesbourbon.com/visit-the-distillery/>

- Ornate, Spanish architecture make the grounds very unique
- Generally considered one of the better tours with great staff
- Standard tour includes a short video, walk through of distilling operations, and a tasting of the standard products
- Tastings can occasionally include private single barrel selections
- Close proximity to Wild Turkey

Gift Shop: Includes standard Four Roses products as well as private single barrels personally selected by the Master Distiller across the 10 various recipes. Availability can be hit or miss though you can call ahead to find what is in stock.

Warehouse & Bottling

<http://fourrosesbourbon.com/visit-coxs-creek-warehouse-bottling-facility/>

- Warehouse tour is included in the price of the distillery tour (good for up to 60 days). If you go the same day, be advised it's an hour drive

Gift Shop: Scaled down version of the main distillery gift shop. Nice facilities with the bonus of sometimes having stock in different recipes than the main gift shop.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Heaven Hill

<http://www.bourbonheritagecenter.com/tour-and-trolley-ride/>

- Standard tour includes a 15-20 minute video, warehouse walk through, and tasting of common products
- Connoisseur tasting is offered which includes a mix of their standard line like Elijah Craig and Henry McKenna along with a couple of higher end bottles such as William Heaven Hill Cask Strength / Bottled in Bond, Heaven Hill Select Stock Cognac Finished, or Elijah Craig 23. Samples are reported to be on the small side. Lasts about 30 minutes and does not include a tour of the rickhouses.
- The warehouse portion of the tour is more in depth than most other tours
- Close proximity to Willett and Barton

Gift shop: Most all standard Heaven Hill products as well as some exclusive bottles such as William Heaven Hill and Heaven Hill Select Stock. Occasionally stocks products before nationwide release like Elijah Craig Barrel Proof, Pikesville Rye, and Parker's Heritage Collection though they tend to be priced above retail and very limited, sometimes as few as 25-50 bottles per day.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Wild Turkey

<http://wildturkeybourbon.com/visit/>

- Brand new state of the art visitor center with impressive modern architecture
- Scenic views overlooking the [Kentucky River gorge](#)
- Tour includes a bus ride to distilling, bottling, and warehouses as well as tasting of standard products
- Close proximity to Four Roses
- Not uncommon to find Eddie or Jimmy Russell in the visitor center

Gift shop: All of the standard items and possibly some items not available in all markets such as Wild Turkey 101 rye. Occasionally limited edition items will be offered here before nationwide release.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Jim Beam

<http://www.jimbeam.com/en-us/visit-us/book-a-tour>

- An interesting look into distilling and warehouse operations at an enormous scale
- Tour includes distilling, bottling, barreling, decanter museum, and tasting of standard products. One of the longer tours on the trail.
- Huge six story column still
- Massive bottling line
- Endless sea of warehouses
- Smokehouse restaurant on site is said to be pretty good
- Reserve a tour as far in advance as you can realistically do as Beam is typically booked full at least two days out
- The tasting isn't worth doing on its own so skip that unless you do the tour as well

Gift Shop: All of the standard Beam offerings as well as a couple of exclusives such as Old Tub and American Stillhouse Clermont.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Buffalo Trace

<https://www.buffalotracedistillery.com/visit-us/our-tours>

- Standard "Trace Tour" includes ~15 minute video, warehouse tour, bottling line, and tasting of standard/easy to find products. Overall it's thin on content.
- The "Hard Hat Tour" is considered a much better tour particularly for enthusiasts however it requires reservations in advance as far out as 3 months in advance.
- Close proximity to Four Roses and Wild Turkey

Gift Shop: Standard products like Eagle Rare 10 and Buffalo Trace. No limited editions or special releases.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Barton 1792

<http://www.1792bourbon.com/distillery>

- Very close proximity to Willett and Heaven Hill
- Surprisingly large distillery, warehouse, and grounds
- Free tours are offered every hour that include a tasting at the end
- The free tours are considered lackluster at best but [other more intimate tours are offered](#). These tours are also free but have a more limited schedule.
- Be wary this is another distillery that may have GPS issues. The address that tends to pop up is at the bottling gate rather than the gift shop.
- The Barton website contains very little official information regarding tours so consider calling before planning a visit

Gift Shop: More or less empty.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

The Evan Williams Experience

<http://evanwilliams.com/visit.php>

- Fairly high number of lackluster reviews, this is not a very recommended stop.

- Conveniently located on Whiskey Row in downtown Louisville
- High-tech guided tour that takes you through the history of Louisville and Evan Williams
- Features a working micro distillery that runs Tuesday - Saturday
- Standard tour includes tasting of very standard Heaven Hill products
- A more exclusive and pricier [Speakeasy Tour](#) is offered on limited days and includes tastings of some higher end bottles like Pikesville Rye, Evan Williams White Label, Evan Williams 12, and Evan Williams 23. Of the two, this seems like a better deal given the value of the samples involved.

Gift Shop: Standard products as well as a few gift shop only bottles like Evan Williams 12 year, Elijah Craig 23 year. Occasionally offers a first chance at limited edition products like Parker's Heritage Collection, Elijah Craig 18, etc but expect to pay a premium and these sell out almost instantly.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Other Things to See

Oscar Getz Museum of Whiskey History

Bardstown, KY (near Willett, Heaven Hill)

<http://www.whiskeymuseum.com/>

Independent Stave Company

Lebanon, KY (near Maker's Mark)

<http://www.independentstavecompany.com/>

Visit the cooperage where most distilleries buy their barrels. Tours offered Monday - Friday.

Where to Eat

Lexington area

- Windy Corner Market - "horse country style restaurant"
- The Village Idiot - "pricey", duck & waffles
- Blue Door Smokehouse - brisket

Frankfort area, near Buffalo Trace

- Staxx BBQ - numerous recommendations

- Firehouse Sandwich Shop - On premise at Buffalo Trace. Open April-October, serves Staxx BBQ
- Sage Garden Cafe
- Kentucky Coffeetree Cafe - coffee
- Rick's White Light Diner
- Serafini
- Bourbon on Main - "tasty burgers", good selection of bourbons as well as really good pub-style food

Bardstown area, near Willett, Heaven Hill, and Barton

- Talbott Tavern
- The Rickhouse Restaurant & Lounge
- Harrison-Smith House
- Hadorn's Bakery - donuts
- Mammy's Kitchen - standard casual Southern/American fare, awesome breakfast/brunch and lunch
- Kurtz Restaurant - fried chicken, pies, mint juleps
- Bottle & Bond - cast iron fried chicken is recommended. bonus: great whiskey selection.

Lawrenceburg area, near Four Roses and Wild Turkey

- Heavens To Betsy! - "fantastic sandwich shop"

Versailles area, near Woodford

- Wallace Station - sandwiches

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

Shopping for Bourbon

First of all, a general note about buying bourbon in Kentucky, care of [/u/Razzafrachen](#):

Long story short, lots of people think that KY is going to be some abundant untapped garden of rare and exclusive bourbons. The truth is that KY is experiencing the same bourbon craze as everywhere else and the fact that everyone visits there expecting to grab a few rare bottles probably makes the situation a bit worse. Some distilleries offer exclusive bottles (Willett, Heaven Hill, Four Roses) but there tends to be intense competition and inflated price tags for the bottles worth buying.

With that said, here are some things you can actually expect to find on your trip to the trail.

Heaven Hill, Bottled in Bond 6 Year

~~Available at various stores all over Kentucky like Liquor Barn~~

~~Limited to Kentucky and a few other states. Arguably the best buy in all of bourbon at around \$11 per bottle. It's amazing you can get a bottle of this quality for this price. If you drive, pack as much of this in your car as you can carry. As of September 2018, this product is now discontinued.~~

Four Roses Single Barrel, Barrel Strength Private Selections

Available at big box retail chains and occasionally at Four Roses Gift Shops in Cox Creek and Lawrenceburg though gift shop selections have become increasingly more sparse.

Four Roses Private selections come at barrel strength so they are not for the novice drinker but beyond that they are well regarded as some of the best buys in all of bourbon when it comes to quality for the price. Prices at the Four Roses gift shop run higher than normal retail but one or more of their recipes may be available at their gift shop (you can call ahead to confirm). Some of the bigger box retail chains like The Party Source and Liquor Barn often carry lots of these as well.

Bottled in Bond Brands

Some of these are available outside of Kentucky but a lot of them are hit or miss in other markets. All of these are good budget pours that offer very good quality for the price.

- Very Old Barton Bottled in Bond
- J.W. Dant Bottled in Bond
- Old Fitzgerald Bottled in Bond
- J.T.S Brown Bottled in Bond

- Old Bardstown Bottled in Bond - New version, distilled by Willett

Single Barrel Private Store Selections

Available at Liquor Barn and other big box chain liquor stores

Most of the big stores will have a variety of private store select single barrels that may not be available in your area. WhistlePig, Russell's Reserve, Knob Creek, Four Roses, Evan Williams, etc.

Maker's Mark Private Select

Available at the Maker's Mark gift shop

Cask strength Maker's Mark 46 made with various combinations of finishing staves.

Willett Family Estate

Occasionally available at the Willett Gift Shop

This is a controversial one to mention. Finding a Willett Family Estate bottle at the gift shop used to be pretty easy but it's rare these days and the retail price continues to rise. Expect to pay at least \$10 per year if you find one and a lot more if it's an older release, perhaps upwards of \$400.

Various Limited Edition Heaven Hill Bottles

Rarely available at the Heaven Hill gift shop

Another controversial one to mention. They do occasionally release limited edition products here but lines form hours or days in advance and release quantities are very limited. You may get lucky with something that is released several times per year like Elijah Craig Barrel proof but expect to pay slightly higher than MSRP.

Read more in the [discussion thread](#).

General Trip Advice

- Try to book your tours in advance, especially if you are trying to visit more than one distillery in a single day. During the busy season and on weekends tours often sell out. Be advised however that some tours do not take advanced reservations.
- Cellular reception can be a bit spotty in the rural parts of Kentucky which is where most all distilleries are located. Be sure to have your directions mapped out in advance if you usually rely on your phone's GPS.
- Winter months are generally less busy so tours during that time will be more intimate.
- Allow plenty of time to travel between distilleries, some of them are hours apart.

- Be advised that a lot of distilleries don't open very early (~9am) and the last tour of the day is before business hours are over (around 3 or 4 pm).
- A lot of distilleries shut down for one month during the peak of summer. Tours are still available but during the hottest months you may not get to see the mashing process.
- Be cognizant of time zone changes when making travel arrangements. For example, Nashville is on Central time but a majority of the distilleries in Kentucky are on Eastern time so you may lose an hour traveling.