

# KENTUCKY TRIFECTIONA Golf, Bourbon, and Horses

By Danny and Alice Scott



Kentucky has long been known for horses and bourbon. Add great golf and you have the ultimate travel trifecta. A short five-to-six-hour road trip from Chicago, just east of Louisville, the neighboring destinations of Georgetown and Shelby County delight with surprising authenticity. It's like driving in a Hallmark movie with miles of horse farms and bluegrass blooming in the spring. Equestrian estates sit beside challenging fairways, distilleries pour liquid heritage, and every meal comes with a side of storytelling. Pack your clubs, bring a healthy appreciation for bourbon, and prepare to horse around.

## Georgetown: Where Bourbon was Born

Georgetown fancies itself the birthplace of bourbon. When we received an invitation to their "Genesis Experience," we weren't entirely sure what that meant until we arrived at the TownePlace Suites by Marriott and discovered a welcome bag that was equal parts clever and curious. Along with hats, snacks, fans, and bourbon miniatures was a Baptist hymnal. We looked at each other and said in unison, "Whaaat?" We flipped it open to find after a few legitimate songs, the pages had been hollowed out to reveal flasks of Elijah Craig bourbon.

The joke carried a bit of historical reverence as Elijah Craig, a Baptist minister in the late 1700s, is often credited with discovering the magic of charred oak barrels, an innovation that helped define present day bourbon.

The minister-to-bourbon pipeline still exists. Jeremy Atwood spent twenty years as a Baptist minister before becoming what he cheerfully calls a "bourbon geek." Today he serves as Director of Education for Heaven Hill Distillery, which manages more than 60 spirit brands. While dining at Local Feed, on bourbon

wagyu meatloaf, no less, Jeremy walked us through the history and flavor profiles before the evening's main event.

The Genesis Experience turned out to be the release of a private bourbon barrel selected from Heaven Hill and bottled exclusively for Georgetown. Locals lined up along Main Street before filing through em + me Boutique and into the adjacent Maime's Fine Wine and Gifts for a sip poured by Jeremy himself. The bottles sold out faster than a Sunday sermon.

## Righteous Golf

Bourbon may fuel the evenings, but golf fills the days. Cherry Blossom Golf and Country Club features beautifully conditioned fairways, mature landscaping, and a memorable signature hole: the par-3 12th, where a peninsula green guarded by water and a fountain demands attention for its beauty and precise positioning. Before or after your round, the clubhouse burger topped with Kentucky beer cheese is practically mandatory.

For a relaxed walk on bluegrass, head over to Canewood Golf Course. Designed by Danny McQueen, the layout winds through the Canewood community where homes act as informal galleries and the pace feels pleasantly unhurried. Fairways are tree lined with ponds and glimpses of Elkhorn Creek adding to the serenity. A charming colonial brick home serves as the clubhouse where PGA Director Joe Davis welcomes golfers with a small-town warmth.

## Small Town, Big Flavor

Georgetown's culinary scene satisfies the foodie within, starting at Fava's Restaurant, a Main Street diner dating back to 1910. The atmosphere is nostalgic, and the homemade pies are dangerously good.

Beer lovers appreciate Country Boy Brewing near the Toyota plant, where brews like Cougar's Bait and Shotgun Wedding pair nicely with pub fare. Downtown, Chickapin Brewing serves rotating craft beers and wood-fired pizza amid games and sports screens.

For a more refined evening, Chef Rodney at Rodney's on Broadway slips out of his kitchen to greet diners who rave about the lobster bisque and lamb chops so divine they earned a nod from *Southern Living*. His secret, "You have to reinvent yourself every day."



University of Louisville Golf Club Photo: B-Quiet Media



And when the night is still young, head to Slainte Public House where the bar often fills with Irish horsemen and local musicians serenade the garden crowd.

### Horses and Heart

In Georgetown, horses are everywhere – along the roads, across the pastures, and embedded in the culture. Kentucky Horse Park is like a Sea World for horses, with live breeds, shows, and a museum honoring horse history. Former Director John Nicholson now serves as President and CEO of Old Friends Thoroughbred Retirement Home, a serene haven for racing's legends, founded by Michael Blowen, once the film critic for the *Boston Globe*. He and his wife, Diane White, also a renowned *Boston Globe* columnist and former *Golf Digest* editor, live among the noble athletes, including 32-year-old Silver Charm. Horses graze and romp in wide paddocks, showered with love and carrots from devoted staff and visitors. John notes, "The love and reverence for the eternal bond that we as humans have with this splendid creature brings us together and allows us to dwell more on our common humanity than those other things that attempt to divide us." Amen.

### Shelby County: The Saddlehorse Capital

In the heart of Kentucky, just a short drive away, Shelby County stakes its claim as the Saddlehorse Capital of the World, where tradition rides alongside progress. Base camp for exploring can be the new Candlewood Suites Shelbyville. Ask for a room overlooking the Weissinger Hills Golf Course and you'll be viewing one of the area's most whimsical landmarks: a tall water tower painted with galloping horses like a carousel in the sky. It's impossible not to smile.

### Great Golf

Weissinger Hills Golf Course is named for the landowner who built Kentucky's largest barn, first for mules, then dairy cows. Today it's the cart barn, clubhouse, and pro shop where Bryan Sloan, for his 23rd season, takes pride in the course's renovations and loyal patronage.

The tower carousel is visible from most holes in a pastoral setting with rustling trees and birds singing to match the cadence of cicadas. Number ten's drive must cross a pond which skirts to the green for a pretty target hole, while another fairway borders a field of hay, no doubt for horses. With our "Butthead" upside down horse headcover riding along, we embraced its tag line: Kick up your heels and have nothing "butt" fun.

Clear Creek Golf is part of Shelby County Parks and Rec with a fun nine-hole track on a first-come first-serve basis, plus a full practice facility, simulator, and lessons.

The University of Louisville Golf Club in Simpsonville is an exclusive experience either by invitation or by investing in one of the few remaining memberships. Conditions are immaculate on the top-tier layout where many Championships have been held through the years. The fierce Cardinal logo is everywhere, even inside the cups, while real life cardinals are whistling Dixie.

### Bourbon: Ground to Glass

Nearby Jephtha Creed is a family-run operation born from a fifth-generation farming dad's vision with a chemist mom at the helm and their daughter Autumn's marketing flair. From ground to glass, everything's grown on-site. It's all in the family for patrons as well with lawn games and concerts, like the Bacon Brothers, delayed due to Kevin's new film role.

Stay tuned for two more distilleries in Shelby's secret development.

### Dining Kentucky Style

Even international visitors link Kentucky to fried chicken thanks to global KFCs and Shelbyville is proud of Claudia Sanders Dinner House, named for the Colonel's wife and founded by the pair. Though fires and corporate changes have altered parts of the landmark, its Southern hospitality and classic recipes remain firmly intact. And yes, the chicken still earns the phrase "finger licking good."

New eateries are also popping up during an economic renaissance. The Paddock Coffee, Eats, and Gatherings is owned by Awake Ministries, with portraits of recent graduates from their rehab program framed on the wall. At Weathered Oak Farm in Simpsonville, soft Christian music serenades service with a smile and small tables are draped in cloth with a fresh bouquet of peonies. And at McKinley's Café on Main Street, you can't resist adding a pastry from the case to carry out. Supper up at the brand-new Parlay Sports Bar on Main Street with several sports screens. Split the buffalo pasta with side salads and you're set.

Or dine at Bell House, an old Kentucky home, circa 1902, near the Shelby Community Theater and more downtown exploration. Saunter through the museum, antique shops, and duck into the Polka Dotted Pineapple boutique to try on a fancy Derby hat.

### Horses that Heal

Beyond racing and recreation, horses also serve a powerful therapeutic role in Shelby County. At Horse Sensing, recovering addicts and veterans with PTSD rebuild confidence by learning horse grooming and care. Trainers, therapists and volunteers guide participants through programs that reconnect people with purpose.

Continue horsing around with a tour of Léttleiki Icelandics, home to 90 horses, affectionately called "Fabios" for their flowing manes. After glimpsing them in Iceland, a close encounter was a must. This sturdy, gentle breed is known for their kind temperament and smooth "tölt" gait.



An unusual gift with a surprise inside!



Weissinger Hills Golf Course Photo: Chris Nicholson Jr



Weissinger Hills Golf Course Photo: Luke Douglas

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## THE BLUFFS CHANNAHON, IL EST. 1993

Located right off of Interstate 55 in Channahon, IL, Heritage Bluffs Golf Club, known as The Bluffs, offers both a challenge and composure across its rolling 166 acres.

Premiering in 2026, fully reimagined bunkers featuring Better Billy Bunker technology! This includes new bunkers, removed bunkers, and updated bunkers all for a better quality of play.

In addition to an award-winning course, The Bluffs also features a large all-grass practice range, putting green, new expanded chipping green and bunker, and a modern clubhouse.

The clubhouse is open 7 days a week and features a full dining room and bar as well as indoor golf simulators for year round fun!

## Kentucky

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Foals are born in June and raised within the herd, untouched by humans for three years to foster natural development, all with registered Icelandic names like Petra and Ija. Visitors can observe, pet, trail ride, or train at Léttleiki.

### More Courses, of Course

There is no shortage of golf in the Louisville region. On Chapel Road, The Quail Chase Golf Club has 27 holes designed by David Pfaff. Rolling through the woods over creeks and Kentucky blue grass, this is pure country golf, with no homes on the West course, except for the wildlife, deer, fox, and turkey. The East course has a few estates tucked in but out of play. It is the toughest of the three nines with blind narrow fairways carved out of the native forests, in contrast to the wide-open South course. The clubhouse is down home, understated with a friendly staff and members. It could be your new Kentucky home.

Heritage Hill Golf Club is a popular choice in Shepardsville, designed by Doug Beach, a former design associate of Jack Nicklaus. Its signature 18 delivers a powerful finish with a panoramic view from the hilltop tee box. The slim fairway ends with a pond protecting the front and left side of the green in an amphitheater setting with golfers staring for patrons on the clubhouse patio.

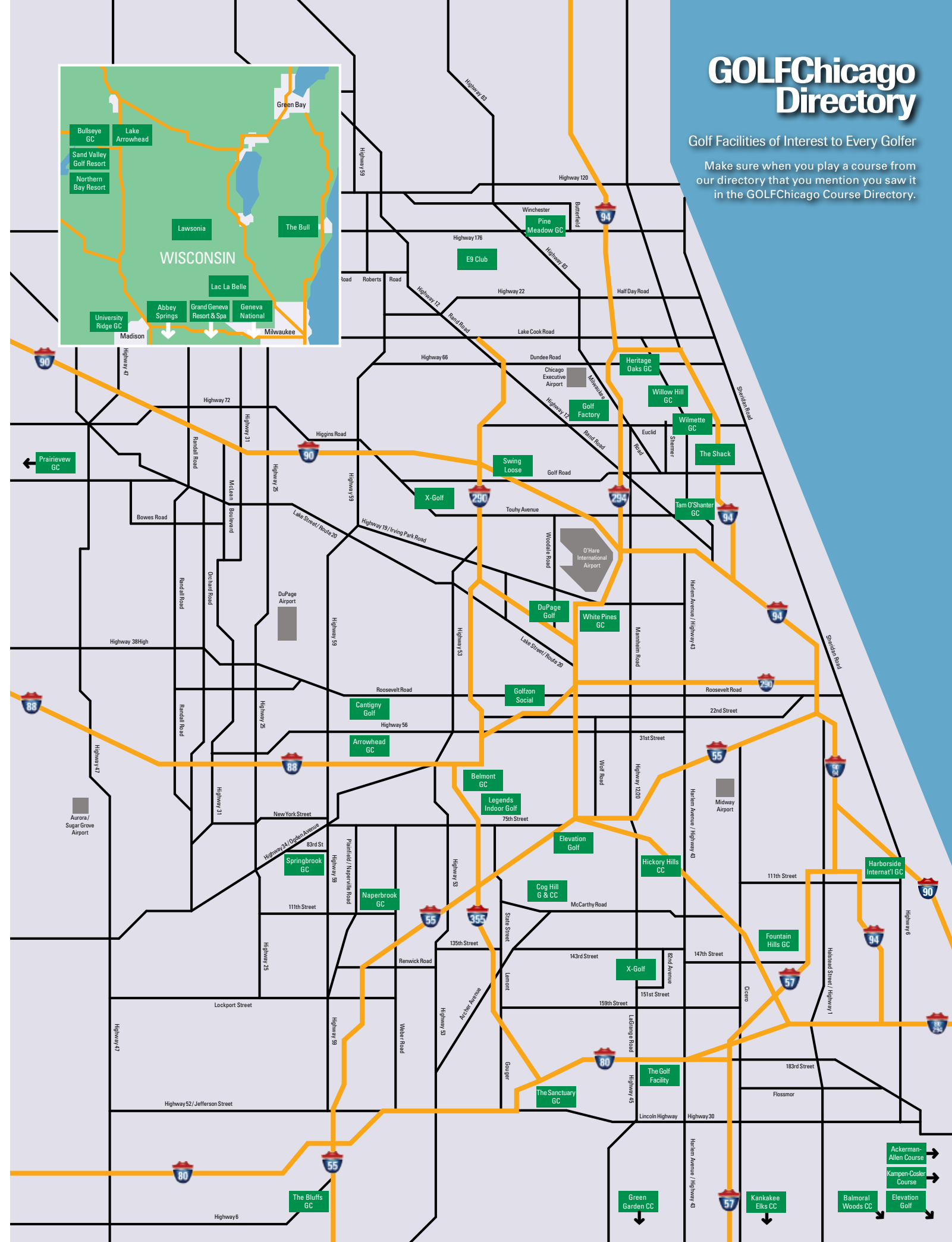
A little further south in Bardstown is My Old Kentucky Home State Park Golf Course, which opened in 1933. It's another nice walk in the woods with notoriously undulating greens, and just miles from Heaven Hill and Makers Mark where you can dip your personalized bottle in the red wax. Bourbon and birdies, girls, and boys.

### A Kentucky Kind of Welcome

Between rounds of golf, glasses of bourbon and encounters with remarkable horses, Kentucky's hospitality is genuine. Everyone we met felt like someone we'd love to have as neighbors or friends. It's easy to see why so many are relocating there.

From Georgetown's bourbon-soaked storytelling to Shelby County's pastoral charm, it's a relaxing golf vacation. While flying in and out of Louisville International Airport is easy, gas prices are friendly and so are the green fees. Memories, as the saying goes, are priceless. So, head to Kentucky to horse around, tee it up and raise a glass, y'all.

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