



Lights Shine on Louisville

The city reinvents itself and welcomes visitors to a new shopping and entertainment center and revitalized parks and play areas.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

BY MIRIAM CAREY

On a cool summer evening, a group of men stand in front of Louisville's Seelbach Hotel, dodging the wedding inside to smoke cigars and fuss with their tuxedo ties and tails. So convincing are these gentlemen in their costumes, they could trick an onlooker into believing this is a movie set for a period film.

They're standing on a section of Fourth Street, an old-fashioned boulevard bookended by the Seelbach at one end and the Brown Hotel just a few blocks away. Trees shade the street, which is lined

with newly refurbished brick buildings. On this summer evening, the majestic Palace Theater hosts Loretta Lynn.

Anyone ambling down Fourth Street this fall will see a new addition to downtown. 4th Street Live, a \$70 million, 350,000-square-foot shopping and entertainment complex, is nearing completion.

This midsized city has poured a lot of energy into revitalizing its downtown, and the results are delighting visitors from the most sophisticated shoppers to the scrappiest in-line skaters. Louisville is definitely worth the trip.

FOR THE SOPHISTICATE

When booking a stylish weekend in



Extreme Park (top) has become a hot spot for skateboarders. The Seelbach Hotel (above) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Louisville, be sure to secure a suite at the Seelbach or the Brown. Both hotels offer luxury service in equally dynamic settings. Built in the tradition of European hotels, the Seelbach opened in the early 1900s, and the building is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The ornate lobby features lavish marble



4th Street Live (left) is Louisville's new entertainment complex, filled with shopping opportunities (above).

accents and is framed by a series of murals depicting Kentucky pioneer history. The Oakroom is Kentucky's first and only AAA, five-diamond restaurant, and hints of a colorful past — rumors of gangster card games taking place in an anteroom just off the main dining room add a dash of intrigue to a dinner party here. Insist on a quick visit to the hotel's underground Rathskeller, a Bavarian-inspired party room made of Rookwood Pottery and adorned with medieval-style reliefs and statues.

The Brown also exudes elegance and charm. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the hotel has a sociable atmosphere and a long, narrow lobby,

with piano bar and wireless connectivity — which operates throughout the hotel — encouraging guests to spend time in this hospitable public space. Rooms are spacious, with large bathrooms and elegant decor. Diners happily retreat to the English Grill to chef Joe Castro's AAA four-diamond restaurant for formal meals, or to J. Grahams for a Kentucky hot brown sandwich, a broiled concoction of turkey, bacon and cheese that was invented at the Brown.

Upscale and boutique shopping can be found along Bardstown Road, a short drive from downtown. Visit the Bardstown Derby City Antique Mall to see real southern antiques, or stop in one

of the many galleries along the road — Edenside and Swanson Reed feature prominent local artists along with select nationally recognized names. This area is also the place to shop for a hat; after all, this is the town that throws a hat parade during Derby Week, so milliners compete to present new and unusual headgear throughout the year.

Art collectors should head to the Glassworks Building, a museum where art glass is celebrated with exhibits, classes, gallery shows and items for sale that range from unique, handcrafted jewelry beginning at \$10 to huge Dale Chihuly works that dominate the gallery space. Glassworks is housed in a restored warehouse building that features generous amounts of natural light that illuminates hundreds of colorful glass objects.

Just around the corner, the Kentucky Museum of Arts + Design showcases the work of regional arts and crafts masters. The museum's gift shop features unusual finds including collapsible ladies' dress hats for traveling and handcrafted baby blankets and gifts, as well as sculpture, glass, paintings and prints.

End the day browsing through 4th Street Live, stopping at a restaurant for a bite to eat, browsing through the Barnes & Noble bookstore, sipping bourbon at the Maker's Mark tasting room, or indulging in the kitsch at the Lucky Strike Lanes, where bowling is hip.



Located along the Ohio River, Waterfront Park (left) features play areas for children. The Seelbach Rathskeller (right) is decorated in a medieval theme.

CITY SPACES

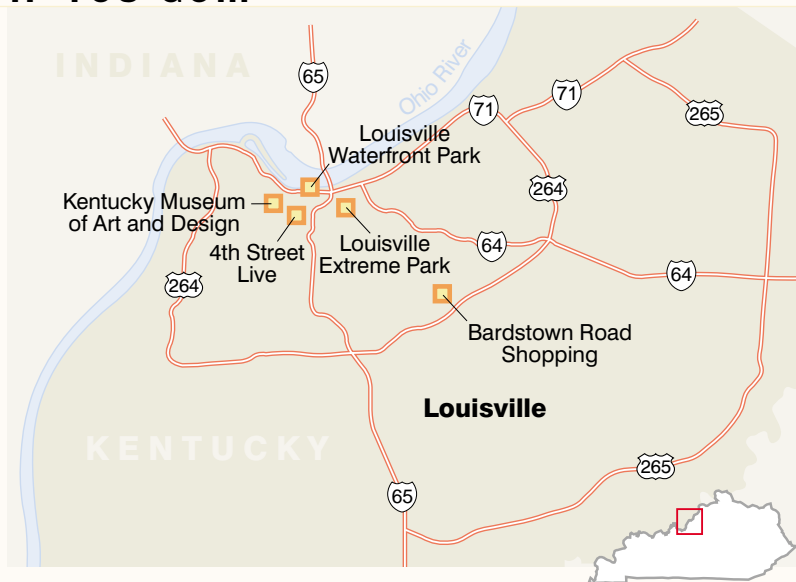
In most towns, a project such as 4th Street Live would be more than enough for the city managers to handle. But Louisville has also devoted resources to creating plenty of room for green space and play.

Little kids splash in water fountains at the Dancing Waters section of Louisville's Waterfront Park, a 50-acre patch of land along the Ohio River. Play areas for kids also feature "imagination" areas filled with play objects that include kid-sized climb-on paddleboats, and a playground filled with colorful, moveable objects to play with, climb on and get wet under. Locals toss Frisbees and lounge on the park's Great Lawn, while the amphitheater hosts concerts and events during warmer months. Early in 2005, Tumbleweed Southwest Grill will open on the Waterfront Park grounds.

Downtown, teenagers flock to Louisville Extreme Park, a cement haven for skateboarders, in-line skaters and trick bikers. Open 24 hours a day, the park's 40,000 square feet of terrain boasts a 24-foot full-pipe. Even if you're not a skater, stop by this unusual facility — ranked among the best of its kind in the nation — to watch the athleticism of these young daredevils.

Back at the Seelbach, the men reluctantly snuff out their cigars and walk up the front steps of the hotel and back to the wedding reception. Perhaps tomorrow they'll take a walk over to the Louisville Slugger Museum just a few blocks away, or hop in the car to visit the Kentucky Derby Museum at Derby Downs. But for tonight, there's still the chicken dance to do, followed by a nightcap in the Old Seelbach Bar where jazz music drifts softly over the dimly lit room. ●

IF YOU GO...



A number of new hotels in downtown Louisville offer great rates for families. Find a package deal by visiting www.gotolouisville.com.

Seelbach Hilton, 500 Fourth Ave.,
Louisville, Ky., 502/585-3200. Rates:
\$199–\$229.

The Brown Hotel, 335 W. Broadway,
Louisville, Ky., 502/583-1234. Rates:
\$199–\$239.

4th Street Live, 401 4th St., Louisville, Ky.,
502/584-7170.

Derby City Antique Mall, 3819 Bardstown
Rd., Louisville, Ky., 502/459-5151.
Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sun. 1–5
p.m.

Edenside Gallery, 1422 Bardstown Rd.,
Louisville, Ky., 502/459-2787.
Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–6 p.m.;
Sun. 1–5 p.m.

Swanson Reed Gallery, 1377 Bardstown
Rd., Louisville, Ky., 502/452-2904.
Mon.–Sat. 12–6 p.m.; Sun. 12–5 p.m.

Glassworks, 815 W. Market St., Louisville,
Ky., 502/584-4510. Mon.–Sat. 9
a.m.–5 p.m.; Sun. 12–5 p.m.

Kentucky Museum of Arts + Design, 715
W. Main St., Louisville, Ky., 502/486-
8100. Mon.–Fri. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sat.
10 a.m.–4 p.m. Free admission..

**Louisville-Jefferson County Metro
Waterfront Park**, 129 River Rd.,
Louisville, Ky., 502/574-3768.

Louisville Extreme Park, Witherspoon and
Clay streets, downtown Louisville,
502/574-3333.