

A CHAMPIONS HOA EXCLUSIVE

A GORGE-OUS RED RIVER

EXPLORING THE RED RIVER GORGE

IMPRESSIVE TRAILS

Discover miles of breathtaking trails winding through beautiful forests and along wild rivers

THE FOOD SCENE

The Gorge has a number of excellent cafes and diners, and one terrific pizza joint

PHOTO OPS

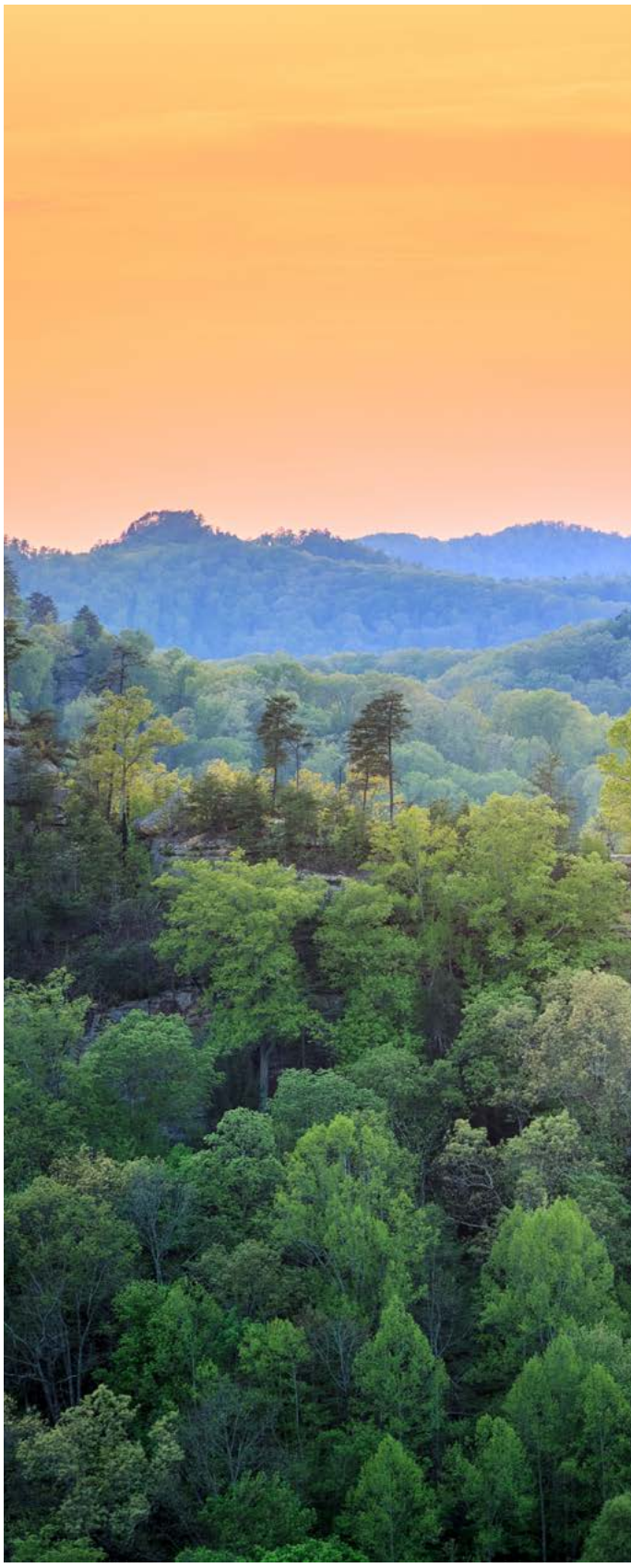
A day in the Gorge may provide the greatest number of photo opportunities in Kentucky

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TRAVEL IDEAS

Planning your perfect day in the Red River Gorge—or "the Red" as it's known locally—doesn't have to be overwhelming. Whether you're a first-time visitor or returning to explore a new trail, the Gorge offers an unforgettable blend of towering sandstone cliffs, natural arches, scenic overlooks, and peaceful forest paths. From sunrise hikes to sunset views, every turn reveals why this corner of Kentucky has become a favorite destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

But a great day here involves more than just hiking. After working up an appetite on the trails, you'll discover plenty of local spots serving everything from hearty breakfasts and wood-fired pizza to barbecue, coffee, and homemade desserts. This guide will help you build an itinerary that perfectly balances adventure, breathtaking scenery, and memorable meals. Located just over an hour east of Nicholasville via I-64 and the Mountain Parkway, the Red River Gorge allows you to spend less time planning and more time enjoying everything it has to offer.





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BACK TO **NATURE**

Adventure begins here

Few places in Kentucky embody the spirit of adventure quite like the Red River Gorge. Nestled within the Daniel Boone National Forest, the Gorge boasts over 100 natural sandstone arches, dramatic cliffs, lush forests, and miles of scenic hiking trails. From easy strolls to breathtaking overlooks to challenging treks through rugged backcountry, there's a trail to suit every explorer.

For many, the adventure commences even before hitting the trails. Driving through the historic Nada Tunnel is a cherished Red River Gorge tradition. Carved through solid sandstone in the early 1900s, this narrow, one-lane tunnel acts as the gateway to some of the Gorge's most popular trailheads. Emerging from the tunnel feels like stepping into another realm, where winding mountain roads reveal towering rock formations, hidden valleys, and unforgettable hiking experiences.

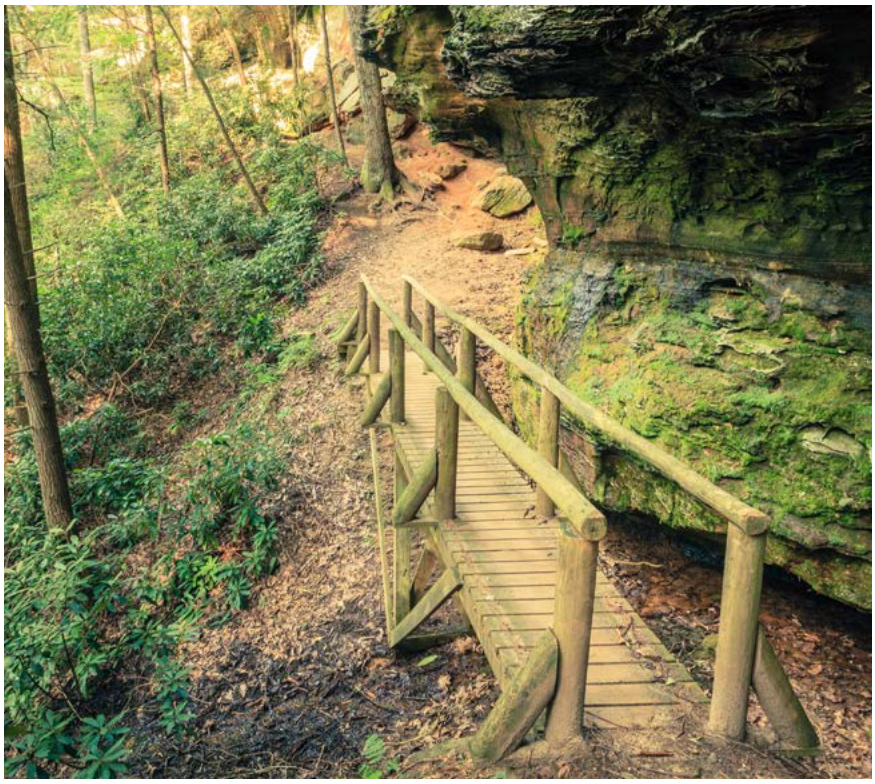
A signature hike in the area leads to Sky Bridge, one of the Gorge's most iconic natural arches. This short loop offers panoramic views, towering cliffs, and the



unique chance to walk across the arch itself. It's an excellent option for first-time visitors or anyone seeking spectacular scenery without committing to a full-day hike.

Another essential destination is Natural Bridge, a massive sandstone arch that stands as one of Kentucky's most recognizable landmarks. Visitors can hike to its summit via various trails or take the skylift partway up before a short walk to the bridge. Standing atop the arch provides sweeping views of the surrounding forest, particularly stunning during the vibrant fall foliage season.

For those seeking more adventurous hikes, Auxier Ridge and Courthouse Rock offer some of the Gorge's most dramatic vistas. The trail traverses narrow ridgelines with expansive views before reaching towering rock formations that highlight the region's unique geology. This route is a favorite among photographers and anyone eager to experience the Gorge's rugged beauty firsthand.



Regardless of the chosen trail, hiking in Red River Gorge is more than just reaching a destination. It's about slowing down, listening to the forest's sounds, discovering hidden arches around every bend, and absorbing the remarkable landscapes that make this area one of the Southeast's premier outdoor destinations. Remember to pack ample water, wear sturdy shoes, and allow enough time to simply savor the journey.



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FOOD & DRINK

After a day of hiking and exploring scenic overlooks, a great meal is the perfect reward. While the Red River Gorge is renowned for its natural beauty, its diverse dining scene has become a destination in its own right. From legendary pizza joints to locally sourced cafés and lively taprooms, you'll find plenty of places to refuel before your next adventure.

Miguel's Pizza

No visit to the Gorge is complete without a stop at Miguel's. A longtime favorite among hikers, rock climbers, and road trippers, Miguel's has earned an almost legendary reputation over the past four decades. Grab a slice or a whole pizza, enjoy a cold drink at one of the outdoor picnic tables, and soak in the lively atmosphere. Whether you're swapping trail stories with fellow hikers or planning tomorrow's climb, Miguel's is as much a community gathering place as it is a restaurant.

Red River Rockhouse

If you're seeking fresh, locally inspired food, the Red River Rockhouse is a must-visit. This family-owned café serves comfort food like burgers, burritos, tacos, and salads, crafted with ingredients sourced from Kentucky farms whenever possible. Pair your meal with a local craft beer, bourbon, or glass of wine, and you'll quickly understand why so many visitors make this a tradition after a long day on the trails.









Sky Bridge Station

For a more laid-back evening, Sky Bridge Station offers one of the Gorge's most unique dining experiences. Tucked along KY-715 near several popular trailheads, this rustic restaurant and bar is known for its gourmet hot dogs, burgers, quesadillas, rotating Kentucky craft beers, and frequent live music. It's the perfect place to relax on the patio, enjoy the mountain atmosphere, and watch the sunset after a day exploring the forest.

The Hungry Hiker

One of the area's newest favorites is The Hungry Hiker, a welcoming sports bar and grill that has quickly become a popular stop. The menu features hearty burgers, sandwiches, Kentucky classics, seafood, and weekend breakfast, making it an excellent choice whether you're fueling up before an early hike or celebrating a day in the Gorge with friends. Its casual atmosphere and generous portions make it a great option for families and groups alike.

No matter where you choose to eat, the restaurants around Red River Gorge share the same welcoming spirit that defines the region. Friendly service, hearty meals, cold drinks, and conversations about favorite trails are all part of the experience. After a full day outdoors, gathering around a table with good food is the perfect way to end an unforgettable adventure in one of Kentucky's most beautiful destinations.

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SEASONALITY **AND PLANNING**



A little preparation can significantly enhance your Red River Gorge experience. Many popular trailheads fill up quickly, especially on weekends and in the fall, so arriving early offers the best chance for parking and enjoying the trails before crowds arrive. Cell service can be unreliable, so download maps beforehand and inform someone of your plans, particularly for longer hikes.

Packing appropriate gear is crucial for a successful visit. Comfortable hiking shoes with good traction are recommended due to rocky terrain, uneven steps, and exposed roots on many trails. Bring ample water, especially in warmer months, along with snacks, sunscreen, insect repellent, and a small first-aid kit. Mountain weather changes quickly, so dressing in layers is a smart choice year-round.







Each season reveals a unique beauty at Red River Gorge. Spring transforms the forest with blooming wildflowers, flowing waterfalls, and fresh green leaves. Summer offers long days ideal for hiking, kayaking, and climbing under a lush canopy. Autumn is the busiest season, as hillsides ignite with brilliant reds, oranges, and golds. Winter provides peaceful trails, crisp air, and dramatic views of the sandstone cliffs after the leaves have fallen.

Nature lovers will discover an incredible variety of wildlife at the Red River Gorge. White-tailed deer are often seen grazing near roads and trails, while wild turkeys, hawks, woodpeckers, and countless songbirds populate the forest. Lucky visitors might even spot foxes, turtles, salamanders, or one of the many native butterflies thriving in the Gorge's diverse ecosystem. Observing wildlife from a respectful distance helps preserve the area's natural beauty for future visitors.

Photographers will find endless opportunities to capture unforgettable images throughout the Gorge. Early morning and late afternoon offer the best light for photographing sandstone arches, towering cliffs, and forested valleys, while sunrise and sunset often paint the landscape in warm, golden hues. Whether using a professional camera or a phone, iconic locations like Sky Bridge, Chimney Top Rock, and Auxier Ridge reward visitors with spectacular panoramic views in every season.

Above all, remember that the Red River Gorge is a place worth protecting. Stay on designated trails, pack out everything you bring in, and follow Leave No Trace principles to help preserve this remarkable landscape. By respecting the forest, its wildlife, and fellow visitors, you'll help ensure that future generations can enjoy the same breathtaking scenery and unforgettable adventures that make the Gorge one of Kentucky's greatest outdoor treasures.



Whether you're seeking panoramic views from a sandstone arch, enjoying a quiet forest stroll, or sharing a meal with friends after a day on the trails, the Red River Gorge leaves a lasting impression. Its charm lies in the fact that no two visits are ever quite the same. Each season brings new colors, every trail offers a different perspective, and every return trip uncovers another hidden corner.

We hope this guide helps you maximize your day in the Gorge and inspires you to experience all that this remarkable destination has to offer. Travel safely, tread lightly, and take time to appreciate the natural beauty that makes the Red River Gorge one of Kentucky's greatest treasures. Until your next adventure, happy hiking, safe travels, and enjoy every moment in the Gorge.

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OUR LITTLE **BLACK BOOK**

This section provides all the essential details you need to effortlessly plan your visit to the Gorge. You'll find comprehensive information for each location, including web addresses, phone numbers, physical addresses, and hours of operation.

Dining Options

Miguel's Pizza

1890 Natural Bridge Road, Slade
Phone: 606-663-1975
www.miguelspizza.com
Monday – Sunday 7 a.m. to 9:45 p.m.
Cost: $10 - $20 per person

Red River Rockhouse

4000 KY-11, Campton
Phone: 606-668-6656
www.redriverrockhouse.com
Thursday – Sunday noon - 9 p.m.
Monday - Wednesday closed
Cost: $10 - $20 per person

Hungry Hiker

1255 Natural Bridge Road, Slade
Phone: 606-947-1905
www.hungryhiker.org
Monday – Wednesday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Thursday 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Friday & Saturday 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Sunday 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Cost: $10 - $20 per person

Sky Bridge Station

8 KY-715, Pine Ridge
Phone: 606-668-9927
www.wallacestation.com
Monday noon - 9 p.m.
Tuesday - Thursday 4 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Frdiay & Saturday noon - 9 p.m.
Sunday noon - 6 p.m.
Cost: $10 - $20 per person

Disclaimer: This newsletter provides general travel inspiration and information. Travel requirements, prices, schedules, and conditions are subject to change without notice. Please verify details directly with restaurants, parks, businesses, and official government sources before making travel plans. Drink responsibly as your enjoy our beautiful state.

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