

What to expect: Health and comfort considerations for “Audubon in Kentucky” tour.



Please read through this to make sure this tour is going to be maximum fun and just right for you!

Our “Audubon in Kentucky” tour May 9 - 20, 2022, combines a plethora of cultural and natural history that this amazingly biodiverse region has to offer. Naturally, the primary emphasis of this tour will be on nature (especially birds!). Cultural history is everywhere in Ol’ Kentucky so stops to take in regional historical interests, usually in natural settings, are incorporated throughout this tour.

The tour itinerary includes visits to the JJ Audubon’s Kentucky stomping grounds of the early 1800’s, traces of the Lewis and Clark expedition, takes us into the most extensive cave system in the world, along the ridge lines and rivers of a truly ancient mountain range, and slips into a historic distillery (or two). We’ll spend some real quality time in a wonderfully maintained 19th Century “Shaker” Village, visit an American Civil War era “depot” (a primary Union enlistment site for Black Americans) and travel through world famous “Bluegrass” thoroughbred horse country. All excellent birding locations.

On this trip you’ll have the opportunity to enjoy many regional dining specialties including good ol’ southern cooking, Western Kentucky BBQ along with a variety of modern seafood, steak houses, and Cuban and Mexican restaurants. A focus on delicious and almost always “healthy” options. (Eddie and Noreen are pescatarian).

Hikes/Physical considerations: Kentucky is famous for its hills so, some walking on sloping ground, constructed and natural “steps” are inevitable. To fully enjoy this tour you should be able to hike up to three miles at a time, typically on well-maintained flat to moderate grade pathways. We have planned these hikes with a diverse group of mobility in mind to minimize steep inclines. Some of the best spring birding is in flat river bottomlands, swamps and sloughs anyway.

Hint: water resistant shoes with good traction are helpful in case of recent rain.

Expect several hikes per day generally at a slow, birder’s pace. Walks often begin and end at lodging or park visitor centers with rest and restroom facilities - some with tour shops. We will be in semi-wilderness area at times where trip hazards are possible on the trails so a moderate degree of visual vigilance is required.

An optional (but highly recommended) visit into Mammoth Cave is included. A wide range of Cave tours are available. We can choose one or two based on your comfort, availability, tour and group timing. The tours range from short and easy (ADA: 0 to 100 “steps”; 1 to 1.5 hours) to longer, moderate (500-600 “steps”; 2 to 2.5 hours). We’ll skip the rigorous “cave explorer” options. The tours are popular and often fill. After consulting with participants, tours will be selected in advance to ensure availability.

Our visit to Natural Bridge State Park in Appalachia's Red River Gorge will include a sky lift option to Natural Bridge which offers dramatic views of the area, weather dependent.

It is certainly OK to relax and wait at your leisure for the group at a convenient meeting point. Most walks will be under two hours, generally shorter. Of course for any who separate from the group, it is vitally important to be at the agreed upon meeting point at the planned time.

Other than Louisville (hotels with elevators), lodging is located in the parks and preserves. Most have ground level entrance, the lodging a Shaker Village requires climbing a flight of stairs. We are happy to help with luggage.

Cell phone service is not reliable at some of the preserves and National Parks.

Tour pace: relaxed, consisting of auto tours, stationary observation and leisurely hiking in a wide variety of terrain and habitat types. On most days we will begin our outings immediately following breakfast, generally about 8:00 AM and return to lodging by about 5 PM to freshen up before dinner. The stay at each lodge is 2 evenings, all in preserve settings except for the first two and last evening in the city of Louisville.

This tour is designed to minimize single day drive times which average about 2 hours per day with a maximum repositioning of about 3.5 hours in the van on day 6. We ask that participants pick a new seat row each day in order that everyone will have an equal opportunity for the variety of viewing angles provided in the 15 passenger van.

Stepping up and climbing: for many participants, one of the more physically challenging exercise of the excursion is climbing in and out of the van. **A single step stool** will be provided in order to cut the approximately 18 inch step up height approximately in half. The two steps to enter the vehicle are slightly higher (~1") than a standard stair step. A hand hold and hand up can also be provided. We recommend that you are comfortable with doing this maneuver up to 12 times per day to participate fully in this trip.



Insect avoidance and protection: Mosquitoes and chiggers are uncommon in May in Kentucky but, like many places in the US, they may be present. Ticks are present anywhere deer are. With a little effort, contact with them can be minimized or even eliminated. Advice on how to avoid these pests and repellants will be made available to trip participants. Treating clothing and shoes with Permethrin in advance of the trip is recommended. **Regular hydration and sunscreen are a must.**

This temperate zone has many amphibians and reptiles, all harmless except a very few venomous (primarily water) snakes. These reptiles are seldom seen and generally easy to avoid but situational awareness is required by all participants.

Weather & Climate: Spring weather in Kentucky is typically variable but most often pleasant in mid-May. Average monthly rainfall for May is ~5 inches, ~11 days of measurable rain. The climate trend has been towards wetter springs in recent years which often comes as afternoon “showers”. Temperatures in mid-May averages from lows in the 50’s F to highs in the low 80’s F. Naturally, it is possible to have a cold or hot spell where the temperatures suddenly rise or dip as well as high humidity...or not. Severe weather is uncommon during this time of year but not out of the realm of possibilities. The schedule will be kept somewhat flexible in case we need to account for weather. Indoor activities such as museums and the cave tour are included in the plan. Most of the walks will be in temperate, shaded forests a few in more open grasslands. The van and lodging will have both air conditioning and heating.

Thank you for your interest! We want to provide you with an absolutely wonderful adventure and these guidelines are presented in hopes of maximizing that opportunity. Additional information including more specific itinerary, wildlife checklists, suggested reading and other trip resources are included with the trip packages that registrants receive.

We hope that this information is helpful in answering many questions you may have. Please don’t hesitate to contact us when you have questions or concerns about any aspect of this trip or the minimal physical requirements for the full enjoyment of this excursion.

Contact information:

Eddie Bartley – eddie@naturetrip.com

Noreen Weeden – noreen@naturetrip.com

Cell/texts: 415-355-0450

