



Kentucky Department of Tourism

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Angela Blank
Kentucky Department of Tourism
angelag.blank@ky.gov

Civil Rights Trail Links 130 Landmarks

Kentucky Includes 3 Historic Locations

Frankfort, Ky. (January 14, 2018) – Visitors can literally walk in the footsteps of Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers, John Lewis and other African American activists, thanks to the U.S. Civil Rights Trail that launches on King’s birthday.

For the first time, Southern tourism departments have worked together to link the country’s most important civil rights sites - more than 130 landmarks, including museums, churches, courthouses and memorials that were pivotal to the advancement of social equality during the volatile 1950s and 1960s.

“It is an honor to have Kentucky’s historic sites included in the U.S. Civil Rights Trail,” remarked Kristen Branscum, Tourism Commissioner for the Kentucky Department of Tourism. “This trail presents us the unique opportunity to reflect on our history and inspire us as we embark on our path to be a multi-cultural destination for residents and visitors alike.”

The Commonwealth of Kentucky, with unique, rich and revolutionary African American heritage, hosts three sights on the trail where visitors can view historical sites. In Berea, the site is marked for the 20-hour pro-integration sit-in at historic Berea College. In Louisville, the site of a city-wide civil rights movement in 1960s-era inspired progress on a large scale. A lesser-known site in Simpsonville, KY marks the birthplace of Whitney Young, a leader in the Civil Rights Movement and lifelong warrior against employment discrimination who received the Medal of Freedom in 1968.

“Two years ago when National Park Service director Jonathon Jarvis challenged historians to inventory surviving civil rights landmarks, Georgia State University found 60, which became the foundation of the trail,” said Alabama tourism director Lee Sentell. “The 12-state tourism agencies known collectively as TravelSouth USA supplemented the list with other worthy sites.”

“We feel that the trail will encourage Americans to better understand their history,” said TravelSouth President Liz Bittner. “Several British tour companies have added civil rights destinations to their travel plans since being briefed on the trail in London two months ago.”

The trail stretches from schools in Topeka, Kan., known for the *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation court decision in 1954, to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. where thousands rallied for equal opportunity in 1963. Because of the impact of the movement on other parts of the globe, the marketing phrase is “What happened here changed the world.”

Additional famous sites along the trail such as the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala.; Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas; the Greensboro, N.C., Woolworth’s--where sit-ins began--; the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tenn.; and King’s birthplace in Atlanta, Ga., are anchors.

For more information and for a virtual viewing experience, the website civilrightstrail.com offers a 360-degree video of landmarks in Louisville, Memphis, Little Rock, Birmingham, Washington, Atlanta, Topeka, Selma and Montgomery. The website also allows visitors to compare historic photographs with current views of the same scenes in Memphis, Little Rock, Selma, Birmingham, Montgomery, Topeka and Greensboro.

###

About Kentucky Department of Tourism

The [Kentucky Department of Tourism](http://kentuckydepartmentoftourism.com) is an agency within the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet, which promotes the Commonwealth as a travel destination. In 2016, Tourism in Kentucky experienced the strongest overall economic impact growth in the last ten years with an economic impact of more than \$14.5 billion. The Tourism industry supports over 193,000 jobs and generates more than \$1.5 billion in taxes.

