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What's Ahead for Louisville's Tourism Economy

2021 convention and event calendar filling back in

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (January 12, 2021) – After a year that crippled the nation's travel industry, Louisville is preparing for a gradual recovery of its once robust tourism economy. Leisure tourism is expected to rebound the fastest with pent-up demand, but the return of significant annual conventions and events will still be needed to stabilize the city's hospitality industry.

The Top 15 events projected (at this time, pending state approval) to have the largest estimated economic impact (EEI) for the Louisville area this year:

Event Name	Estimated Attendance	Estimated Economic Impact
Kentucky Derby / Kentucky Oaks	45,000	\$34,674,173
GIE+Expo	19,125	\$19,552,626
TFN Camps & Clinics "Run 4 Roses"	22,500	\$16,456,704
Assn of Equipment Manufacturers - The Utility Expo (formerly ICUEE)	20,000	\$15,679,281
National Farm Machinery Show and Championship Tractor Pull*	200,000	\$12,665,786
TFN Camps & Clinics "Battle in the Boro"	9,000	\$11,963,818
Mid-America Trucking Show - Annual Trade Show*	36,500	\$11,723,097
NSRA Street Rod Nationals	22,500	\$11,558,920
North American International Livestock Annual Expo	200,000	\$11,313,547
Junior Volleyball Association World Challenge	10,500	\$11,149,410
Circle Center Volleyball Mid East Qualifiers Girls Tournament	17,000	\$10,226,871
KIVA Sports/OVVC Adidas Bluegrass Tournament	7,000	\$6,786,824
Hearth, Patio, and Barbecue Association HPBExpo 2021	6,000	\$6,220,518
USAV Open National Championships & Corporate Annual Meetings	4,550	\$5,814,080
Louder Than Life (Danny Wimmer Presents)	45,000	\$5,798,087

*Note: These events canceled after original release.

"With a universal vaccine distribution plan now taking shape, there is optimism that the back half of 2021 could stabilize as hybrid events begin to take place. Attendance and room block demand will be down considerably but show dates have the chance to stick on the calendar with appropriate GBAC cleaning protocols in place at both KEC and KICC (the city's two convention centers: Kentucky Exposition Center at 1.2M sq. ft. and the Kentucky International Convention Center at 300,000 sq. ft.)," said Doug Bennett, Senior Vice President of Convention Development with Louisville Tourism.

KICC and KEC were the first centers in Kentucky to have received the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) STAR accreditation, the gold standard on outbreak prevention, response and recovery.

“While we missed being in Louisville for GIE+EXPO this fall, we’re very excited to head back to our host city in 2021,” said Kris Kiser, President of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, and Managing Partner of GIE+EXPO. “The outdoors, including our yards, parks, sports fields and other managed, living landscapes, proved to be pivotal to surviving 2020. People wanting to work and reconnect with their landscapes brought tremendous growth to the outdoor power equipment industry, in particular. But we’re eager and ready to return to our Louisville home and know our industry’s family reunion will be back better than ever next year. We have a *lot* to talk about.”

To complement the eagerness to welcome conventions back, Louisville’s MSA has been making significant growth headway with 6,000 new hotel rooms coming soon, proposed or added in the past 18 months.

In addition, Louisville Tourism partnered with national firm Jones Lang LaSalle Americas, Inc. (JLL) in 2019 to forecast the future, outlining how the city can increase the pre-pandemic visitation number from 16.4 million to 25 million by 2030 with a master plan for the entire destination.

“As we eagerly look towards 2021, the return to regular meetings and travel is eminent. Even in the midst of the pandemic Louisville has been moving forward with strategic visitor goals and elevating the city’s brand by earning 40+ accolades, a sixth consecutive perfect Human Rights score and three first place Northstar Travel Group Stella Awards for Louisville Tourism, KICC and KEC”, said Karen Williams, President & CEO of Louisville Tourism. “We know this has been an extraordinary challenging time as many people truly miss travel. Whether they have been unable to visit family and friends, explore new cultures or make business connections, there is newfound realization just how critical our industry is – especially to those that rely on the hospitality industry for their livelihood. As one of the worst hit industries, we are optimistic the return to travel will give our once 60,000-strong Louisville area hospitality workers the vital boost needed for economic survival.”

Meeting planners share the same sentiment, anticipating a robust return for in-person meetings.

“Face to face interactions are critical for the utility industry, and our attendees and exhibitors can’t wait to get together again in late September” said John Rozum, Show Director of The Utility Expo (Formerly ICUEE). “The Utility Expo is looking forward to coming home to Louisville in 2021.”

Press note: Please see additional information on Louisville’s [hotel development news](#) as well as the city’s [Destination Strategic Plan](#).

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Since 1968, **Louisville Tourism’s** primary goal has been to enhance the area’s economy through tourism development - to promote and sell Louisville as a world-class destination. Prior to the pandemic, Tourism was the third largest industry in Louisville generating an estimated economic impact of \$3.5 billion which supported 60,000 local tourism-related jobs.