

Travel Florida

Florida has beaches for various moods



Canadian families are no more than an hour from a breezy beach in Florida. Hovering seagulls often join them for a popcorn picnic.

Miles of powdery beaches shelf gently into the temperate waters of the Gulf, offering safe swimming for the entire family.

Calmness is the key here and the leisurely pace gives the vacationer plenty of un-winding time. Just watching others play, while comfortably settled under a shadowy palm, is a popular Gulfside pastime. And it only takes a flip of the wrist to feed a tidbit to the ever-present hovering seagull.

A treat is in store for the beach lover who has not discovered the pleasures of the more than 100 miles of sugary white sands that edge the turquoise waters of Florida's panhandle from Panama City to Pensacola. Gulf breezes spark another kind of holiday not found at more metropolitan resorts. Vacacioners enjoy basking and bathing throughout the lengths of Santa Rosa Island and in all the other polished but unpretentious resorts that ribbon this portion of the Gulf.

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Festive Louisville welcomes the family

By Gary Kent-Smith
Syndicated Travel News

When many Canadians head to the southern part of the United States during the winter time, they are often so intent on reaching their destination that they fail to notice the many varied attractions that are available to them en route.

For example, when driving from Canada to Florida, it is "natural" to spend some time in Kentucky.

If you're looking for a get-away spot that the whole family can enjoy, try Louisville, Kentucky. This city may be just the destination you've been seeking.

Combine a flourishing cultural calendar, horses, a colorful history, and imaginative entertainment with a pleasant climate and down-south hospitality, and you have caught the fancy of every age group.

Special events — many of them free — are staged throughout the year with families in mind. Every year, from late April through early May, the Kentucky Derby Festival holds the spotlight with a spectacular parade and races for boats, bikes, and giant balloons. (This is climaxed, of course, with the annual Run for the Roses — the Kentucky Derby.)

The steam-driven sternwheeler, the Belle of Louisville, for example, is a moving, churning, tooting museum. It brings the steam age to life for both adults and inquisitive children during leisurely afternoon excursions.

Should you be planning a visit to Louisville, you may consider taking a guided tour arranged by the Visitor's Bureau — this in fact is one of the best ways for families to get around the city. It's a three-and-a-half hour excursion, and leaves Tuesdays through Saturdays at 9:45 a.m.

Accommodation in Louisville is plentiful and varied — among the two largest hotel properties are the Galt House, right beside the Ohio River, and the Holiday Inn South, a massive complex comprising hotel, office space, apartments, and so forth.

And, the people — they don't come much more friendly! The cooking — well, Colonel Saunders gives you only an inkling of what down-home cooking really is!

Certainly Louisville has Churchill Downs, the site of the Kentucky Derby. Visitors to the city may also call at the location — but not on Derby Day — and let their imagination run wild as they visualize Secretariat, Man-o-War (who never actually won the Run for the Roses), Northern Dancer and the other greats head for the track.

On Derby Day, some 20-30 thousand fans pack the field, and the publicity officer at the track tells us that

the majority of that number can't even see the race. Where's the best place to watch the Derby, we ask? "In your hotel room", he advises, "on the television set!"

It is a moonlit night, a comfortable warm breeze is blowing, and the strains of well-known melodies fill the air.

The scene is at Bardstown, Kentucky, where Paul Green's "The Stephen Foster Story" is performed 68 times every year in an amphitheatre on the grounds of My Old Kentucky Home State Park.

It's not often that a certain seasoned traveller runs into a situation that causes goosebumps and chills to run up one's spine — but the story and songs in this fine drama turned the trick.

Chronicling one year in the life of America's first popular composer, "The Stephen Foster Story" tells of Foster's struggle to write his most famous song, "My Old Kentucky Home".

Sports buffs will recall this song as the one played just before the start of the annual Kentucky Derby — the haunting strains at the horserace, while impressive, cannot compare with the feeling one gets when one sees the full story.

The first spine chilling song was "The Old Folks At Home" (also known as "Way Down Upon the Swanee River"). The climax vividly displayed young Foster's struggle to be accepted as a song writer — until then an unheard-of occupation — as the song progressed, his future in-laws, the Mayor of his city, and a former employer all gradually accept the fact that song-writing can be an honorable career, and that Foster would be very good at such a craft.

We could never understand how residents of Kentucky could get all excited and have tears flowing from their eyes when the song "My Old Kentucky Home" was rendered.

However, now we understand. To hear this song, and to see the colorful spectacle that goes along with it as Foster and his young bride Jeannie (I Dream of Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair) arrive in Kentucky, that explains it all.

"The Stephen Foster Story" combines light humor, serious philosophies on life, splendid costumes, and great songs. Such songs as "Beautiful Dreamer", "Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair", "My Old Kentucky Home", "The Old Folks At Home", "Camptown Races", and "Oh Susanna" all take an added meaning when seen in the full production of "The Stephen Foster Story". Catch this production should you visit Kentucky — it's a must — and you'll be humming the songs for weeks!

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