

Destination: Louisville, Kentucky—An Art-Lover's Guide

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If you love bourbon, you go to Kentucky. If you love a certain persuasion of deep fried poultry, you go to Kentucky. If you love betting on horses galloping in circles at breakneck speeds, you definitely go to Kentucky. But if you love art? Turns out, you go to Kentucky! Home to working artists such as **Susanna Crum** who founded the city's first fine art print studio and **Ying Kit Chang** who chairs the **Hite Art Institute**, Kentucky's largest city of Louisville is no stranger to the creative community. And with the anchor of **21c**, the first-ever museum hotel that combines a multi-venue contemporary art museum with boutique hotels and chef-driven restaurants to create an entirely new kind of travel experience, cultural enthusiasts have even more reason to enjoy this great Southern city. (*[See our interview with 21c co-founder Steve Wilson.](#)*)



Here, with the guiding hand of [21c](#), we present an art lover's guide to a (long) weekend in Louisville. Between bike rides along the Ohio river, glass blowing workshops, and generous portions of grits, we'll take you through some of Louisville's most exciting cultural experiences. Art may not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the southern city but our guide will surely have you saddled up and on the right track.

DAY 1



Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe's *Asleep in the Cyclone*. Photo: 21c

Check into 21c:

Get this—one of the rooms you can stay in is an actual site-specific sculptural installation and it's truly far out. Created by artists **Jonah Freeman** and **Justin Lowe**, *Asleep in the Cyclone* is outfitted with all the usual hotel comforts (free WiFi, designer bath amenities, coffee machine) as well as a record player, a selection of records chosen by the artists (Jefferson Starship's *Spitfire* lies in the shuffle), and artist-designed blankets and linens. So, if staying in a hotel with over 9,000 square feet of exhibition space dedicated to contemporary art, an award winning restaurant, and a spa isn't enough for you to scream, "take my money, now!", maybe a stay in this neo-hippie art den will have you singing a different song—may we suggest "Love Lovely Love" by Jefferson Starship?

Sit down for lunch at Proof on Main at 21c:

Charred Octopus with bagna cauda, lime, and toast. Whipped Ricotta with oregano, horseradish, and truffle. "Hot" Fried Chicken with hot pepper, white bread, okra+carrot relish, and bread and butter pickles. *drops mic*

Visit the KMAC Museum:

Located just across the street from 21c, **The Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft** is a contemporary art museum that explores the relationship between art and craft—art being the big idea and craft, the intersection between process, materials, and labor. Their current

exhibition, "Victory Over the Sun: The Poetics and Politics of Eclipse" examines the recent collective cosmic phenomena that was the 2017 solar eclipse through a metaphoric, conceptual lens.

Blow glass at Flame Run:

Opportunities to see glass artists blowing life into their delicate creations are few and far between, but at **Flame Run**, not only can you peer down at this world-renowned glass studio to observe their artists-in-residence at work—you can even blow your own glass! Ranging between \$40 to blow your own Christmas tree ornament to \$100 for a vase, this affordable experience is unmissable.

Have dinner at Milkwood:

...Pimento cheese with spoonbill caviar on pork rinds with ham salt, and chimichurri. Burrata and crispy pig ears with shaved brussels, pepitas, and champagne vinaigrette. Bulgogi braised beef cheek with charred corn congee, oyster mushrooms, and crispy sorghum. We're not crying! *You're* crying!

DAY 2



Zephyr Gallery. Photo: LOOK Louisville Art

Rise and Shine! Eat breakfast at Proof on Main:

Just grab a quick olive oil cake with coffee to go, or if you're feeling a bigger breakfast, sit down for some pancakes or a lovely egg white frittatta.

Take a cab up to Carnegie Center for Art and History:

Okay, we know crossing state borders sounds like a big to-do first thing in the morning but we promise Indiana is literally a ten minute drive away! Just across the Ohio River, this hundred year-old former Carnegie library is a great local institution dedicated to the collection, preservation, and interpretation of the county's history as well as the promotion of an appreciation for contemporary art. Right now, you can check out their **2017 Louisville Photography Biennial**, as well as their permanent exhibitions which include "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage: Men & Women of the Underground Railroad."

Come back to 21c and rent a bike:

They've really got it all!

Bike down the Riverwalk:

Running alongside the Ohio River, Louisville's **Riverwalk** will lead you past a few public sculptures including the geometric *Gracehopper* by **Tony Smith**. Be sure to take a little breather at **Waterfront Park** to enjoy the view.

***If you're feeling ambitious:**

We totally understand if crossing the Big Four Bridge back over into Jefferson, Indiana just isn't in the cards for you but let it be known: spiked cookies-and-cream milkshakes await on the other side. If you're ready to commit to a little bit of a work out, **H.M. Frank's** is there with a burger and boozy shake in hand. Some old-timey charm also awaits just around the corner at **Schimpff's Confectionery**, a unique, old fashioned candy store established back in 1891.

Bike down to "NULU":

New Louisville (aka: "NULU", aka: East Market District) is, as its name implies, the cool and trendy part of town, lined with galleries, antique shops, and some great restaurants. We recommend checking out **Zephyr Gallery** (they claim to be the second-longest-running artist cooperative in the country!), **Pyro Gallery**, and **Swanson Contemporary**. And if you didn't get lunch across the river, stop by **Feast** for a solid BBQ fix.

Dinner and cocktails at Decca:

Local art and music pair perfectly with the farm-to-table menu at **Decca**. A little Italian, a little new American, Decca is sure to please. If you're not ready for the night to end, **The**

Cellar Lounge is a cocktail bar and music haven, featuring live jazz, vinyl, and a vintage jukebox to set the mood.

DAY 3:



Speed Museum. Photo: WFPL

Yoga with Art at 21c:

Highly recommended for those who went a little too hard during happy hour at Decca the night before, what better way to start a leisurely last day in Louisville?

Brunch at Proof on Main, then bike or bus toward the University of Louisville campus:

Shrimp 'n' grits!!!

Check out the Speed Art Museum:

As Kentucky's oldest and largest art museum, the **Speed Art Museum** (named after philanthropist **J.B. Speed**) is a mandatory visit for any art-lover in Louisville. The museum recently reopened after extensive renovations that included the expansion of their permanent collection display, as well as the **Elizabeth P. and Frederick K. Cressman Art Park**.

See the Cressman Center for Visual Arts:

Get to know what's on the minds of Louisville's collegiates. Part of the **University of Louisville's Hite Art Institute, The Cressman Center** houses three galleries featuring a rotating program of exhibitions by nationally and internationally renowned artists and designers, as well as students and faculty.

Unwind at 21c's on-property spa:

Massage services, a sauna, and a steam room will have you heading back home from your little slice of Louisville paradise totally relaxed.

Dinner at Proof on Main:

Look, we know there are other restaurants in Louisville but Proof's dinner menu makes it very hard to look elsewhere (it's also very difficult to stop salivating). They make roasted bones (with sea butter, kimchee, and pine nut miso) sound like the only thing we want to eat for the rest of our lives. We could go on but honestly, just go to Louisville!