

Pour Decisions

Barrels & Brotherhood on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail

May 22-26, 2026



Featuring

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Four guys. From Whiskey Row to Glenss Creek

chasing the true spirit of Kentucky

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Chapter 1 - Why We Came

Some trips are planned around places. Others are planned around people. This one was both.

On paper, the trip was simple enough: four guys, several days in Kentucky, and a hard-running schedule built around bourbon distilleries, old brands, warehouse tours, bottle hunts, meals, and whatever trouble could reasonably fit between reservations. But underneath the itinerary was something better. This was time together. Real time. Road time. Family time. The kind of time that becomes harder to find as life stretches people in different directions.

Bourbon became the excuse, but not the whole reason. It gave the group a common language: mash bills, proofs, rickhouses, barrel picks, wax tops, toasted barrels, old labels, allocation rumors, and the small thrill of walking into a gift shop and wondering what might be on the shelf. The deeper subject was patience. Bourbon is made from waiting. It sits in wood and weather, expands and contracts, loses part of itself to the air, and somehow becomes better because of the years it carries. A good road trip works the same way. It takes miles, delays, tired feet, jokes, small frustrations, and a few perfect surprises before it becomes something worth retelling.

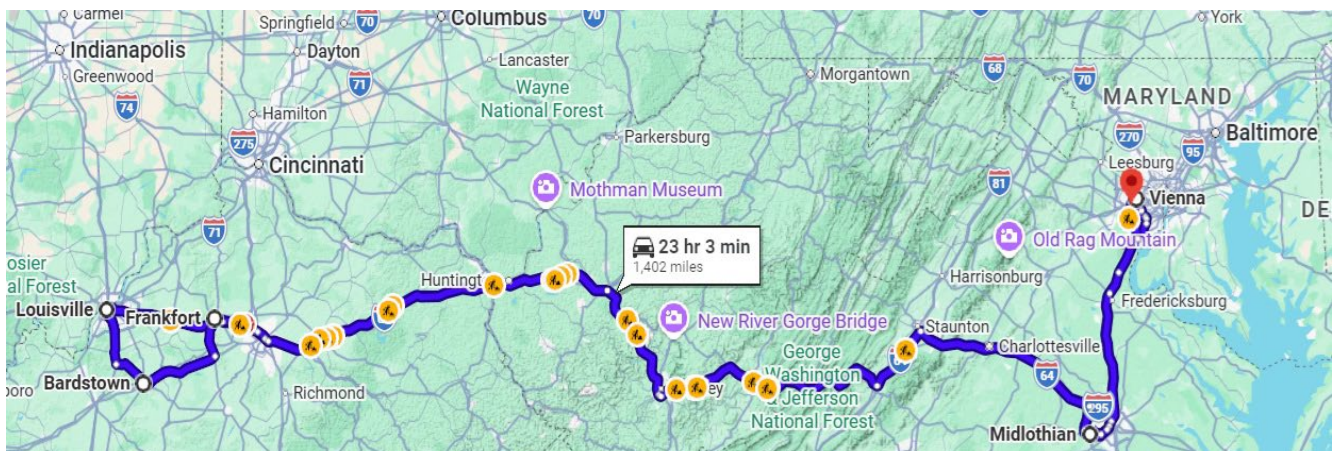
Bob wanted the guys together. Chris planned hard because that is what Chris does. Bobby kept things moving when the map, the rain, or the hidden bar refused to cooperate. Rob brought the kind of energy every trip needs: curious, flexible, and always ready for the next side quest.

The final result was not a perfect itinerary. It was better than that. It was a lived-in memory: missed stops, lost licenses, strange conversations, unexpected tastings, great guides, bad timing, good meals, and one private tour that reminded everyone why small places can still leave the biggest mark.

The bourbon mattered. The time mattered more.

The Crew

- Chris - the planner, driver, bottle tracker, and occasional license-losing cautionary tale.
- Bob - the patriarch, steady presence, knee-brace warrior, and candle buyer.
- Rob - the gift hunter, conversation starter, and reliable source of side-quest energy.
- Bobby - the navigator, speakeasy finder, blending partner, and calm hand when the schedule got strange.



Bourbon Country: A Short Guide for the Road

Kentucky: Why Bourbon Belongs Here

Kentucky and bourbon are hard to separate. Bourbon does not legally have to be made in Kentucky, but Kentucky became its natural home because of geography, agriculture, water, weather, and time. Corn grew well. Oak forests supplied barrels. Rivers and railroads moved whiskey to market. Limestone-filtered water became part of the story. Hot summers and cold winters pushed whiskey in and out of the barrel wood, helping create color, flavor, and character during aging. The Kentucky Bourbon Trail notes that those temperature swings are part of what makes Kentucky aging so effective.

The Kentucky Distillers' Association reports that Kentucky now has more aging barrels than people, with millions of barrels resting across the state. That fact explains something the group felt everywhere: bourbon is not just a drink in Kentucky. It is architecture, agriculture, tourism, family business, tax policy, local identity, and history stacked seven stories high in rickhouses.

For this trip, Kentucky was not a backdrop. It was the main character.

Louisville: Whiskey Row and the Urban Bourbon Story

Louisville gave the trip its polished, city-based bourbon experience. Historic Whiskey Row sits along Main Street near the Ohio River. By the 1840s, that area had become so crowded with whiskey companies, brokers, warehouses, and offices that it earned the name "Whiskey Row."

That mattered on this trip because Louisville showed a different side of bourbon. It was not rolling farmland and rickhouses in the distance. It was brick buildings, restored facades, bars, restaurants, museums, hidden rooms, and urban distilleries packed close enough to walk between. Angel's Envy, Michter's, Old Forester, Sidebar, Troll Pub, Louisville Slugger, and Hell or High Water all became part of one long day that proved bourbon culture can live in a city as easily as it lives on a farm.

Louisville was where the trip felt fast, crowded, modern, and alive.

Bardstown: The Bourbon Capital of the World

Bardstown calls itself the "Bourbon Capital of the World," and after spending time there, the title made sense. The city is home to major distilleries and sits close to several others, including Heaven Hill, Bardstown Bourbon Company, Lux Row, Willett, Barton, Maker's Mark, and Jim Beam nearby.

Bardstown felt like the heart of bourbon tourism. It had the clean modern visitor centers, historic brands, polished tasting rooms, and restaurant stops that made the industry feel organized around guests. Lunch in Bardstown, the green wall, the bottles, and the rush from Beam to Maker's to Heaven Hill all fit the place perfectly.

If Louisville was the city side of bourbon, Bardstown was the showroom.

Frankfort: Kentucky Distilled

Frankfort brought the trip closer to old Kentucky. It is the state capital, positioned on the Kentucky River between Louisville and Lexington, and Visit Frankfort describes the city as “Kentucky, distilled” because it combines government, landscape, history, bourbon, and small-city character in one place.

For this group, Frankfort became the anchor. It was hotel nights, Buffalo Trace crowds, downtown bourbon signs, unexpected tastings, and the road toward Glenss Creek. It felt smaller and less polished than Louisville, but that was the point. Frankfort was where bourbon history felt older, closer, and less staged.

Frankfort gave the trip its best contrast: Buffalo Trace showed the weight of history, while Glenss Creek showed what independent whiskey can still feel like.

The Kentucky Bourbon Trail

The Kentucky Bourbon Trail was created by the Kentucky Distillers’ Association in 1999 as a road-trip-style experience that allowed visitors to go behind the scenes at Kentucky’s signature distilleries. What began with a smaller group of distilleries has grown into a large tourism network with dozens of destinations across the state.

The Trail works because bourbon is not made in one place. It is spread across cities, farms, warehouses, rivers, roads, and small towns. Some stops are polished and corporate. Some are historic. Some are experimental. Some are still rough around the edges. Together, they tell a bigger story than any one brand could tell alone.

This trip followed that arc exactly: Whiskey Row, rickhouses, tasting rooms, giant campuses, small distillers, closed doors, gas station stops, and one private tour that felt more real than anything on the schedule.

What Is Whiskey?

Whiskey is a distilled spirit made from fermented grain mash. Under U.S. standards, whiskey must be distilled from grain at less than 190 proof, retain the taste and character of whiskey, and be bottled at no less than 80 proof.

That sounds technical, but the basic idea is simple:

grain + water + yeast + heat + wood + time = whiskey.

The type of grain, the proof, the barrel, the aging conditions, and the blending decisions determine what kind of whiskey it becomes.

Major Types of Whiskey

Bourbon

Bourbon is America's best-known whiskey style. It must be made in the United States from at least 51% corn, distilled at no more than 160 proof, entered into new charred oak barrels at no more than 125 proof, and bottled at no less than 80 proof. No coloring or flavoring can be added.

Bourbon usually brings flavors like caramel, vanilla, oak, brown sugar, spice, cherry, leather, tobacco, and toasted wood.

Rye Whiskey

Rye whiskey follows a similar legal structure but must be made from at least 51% rye grain. Rye often tastes spicier, drier, sharper, and more herbal than bourbon.

Wheat Whiskey

Wheat whiskey must be made from at least 51% wheat. It tends to be softer, rounder, and gentler than rye-forward whiskey.

Corn Whiskey

Corn whiskey must be made from at least 80% corn. Unlike bourbon, if it is aged, it is generally aged in used or uncharred new oak rather than new charred oak.

Malt Whiskey and American Single Malt

Malt whiskey is made primarily from malted barley. American Single Malt has now been formally added to U.S. standards, giving American producers a clearer identity for malt-based whiskey.

Tennessee Whiskey

Tennessee whiskey is closely related to bourbon but is associated with Tennessee production and typically the Lincoln County Process, where spirit is filtered through sugar maple charcoal before aging.

The ABCDEs of Bourbon

A — American Made

Bourbon must be made in the United States. Kentucky dominates the category, but bourbon can legally come from any U.S. state.

B — Barrel: New Charred Oak

Bourbon must age in new charred oak containers. That charred wood gives bourbon much of its color and flavor: vanilla, caramel, oak, smoke, spice, and sweetness.

C — Corn: At Least 51%

Bourbon's mash bill must be at least 51% corn. The rest may include rye, wheat, malted barley, or other grains. Corn brings sweetness and body. Rye adds spice. Wheat softens the profile. Malted barley helps with fermentation.

D — Distilled at 160 Proof or Less

Bourbon cannot come off the still above 160 proof. That matters because higher distillation strips away more grain character. Bourbon keeps more flavor by staying below that ceiling.

E — Entry Proof: 125 or Less

Bourbon cannot enter the barrel above 125 proof. Distillers may choose a lower entry proof, which can cost more because it requires more barrels and storage space, but it can also produce a different flavor profile.

F — Finished at 80 Proof or Higher

Bourbon must be bottled at 80 proof or higher. Barrel-proof bourbons skip or reduce dilution and are bottled closer to the strength they reached in the barrel.

G — Genuine: No Added Color or Flavor

Straight bourbon does not need caramel coloring or flavor additives. The color comes from the barrel. The flavor comes from grain, fermentation, distillation, wood, proof, time, and blending.

The Bourbon-Making Process

1. Mash Bill

The mash bill is the grain recipe. For bourbon, corn must lead the recipe at 51% or more. Rye, wheat, and malted barley shape the rest. Different mash bills create different personalities.

2. Cooking

The grains are ground and cooked with water to convert starches into fermentable sugars. This creates the mash.

3. Fermentation

Yeast is added. Yeast eats sugar and creates alcohol, carbon dioxide, heat, and flavor compounds called congeners. This is where whiskey begins to gain personality.

4. Distillation

The fermented mash, often called distiller's beer, is heated so alcohol can be separated and concentrated. Many Kentucky bourbon distilleries use a column still to create low wine and then a doubler or thumper to refine it into higher-proof spirit.

5. New Make Spirit

The clear spirit coming off the still is not bourbon yet. It is new make spirit, sometimes called white dog. It has grain character, alcohol heat, and raw potential, but it still needs wood and time.

6. Barreling

The spirit is proofed down if needed and entered into new charred oak barrels at no more than 125 proof. The barrel becomes the aging vessel and flavor engine.

7. Aging

Kentucky's weather pushes whiskey into and out of the barrel wood as temperatures rise and fall. Over time, the whiskey pulls color and flavor from the charred oak. Some evaporates into the air as the angel's share.

8. Dumping and Selection

When barrels are ready, they are dumped. Some become single-barrel releases. Some are blended with other barrels for consistency. Some are finished in secondary barrels, such as port, wine, toasted oak, or other casks.

9. Proofing and Bottling

Water may be added to bring whiskey to the desired proof. Then it is filtered, bottled, labeled, packed, and sent out into the world.

Bourbon Words We Learned on the Trip

Angel's Share — The whiskey that evaporates from barrels during aging.

Barrel Entry Proof — The proof at which whiskey enters the barrel.

Bottled-in-Bond — A legal designation requiring one distiller, one distilling season, government-supervised aging, at least four years old, and 100 proof.

Char — The burned interior layer of a barrel that helps create bourbon's color and flavor.

Heads, Hearts, and Tails — Distillation cuts. The heart is the desirable middle portion.

Mash Bill — The grain recipe.

Rickhouse — A warehouse where barrels age.

Sour Mash — A process that adds acidic backset from a previous distillation to help control fermentation consistency.

Toast — Heating wood before charring or using toasted finishing staves/barrels to create different flavors.

White Dog — Clear new make whiskey before barrel aging.

Why This Mattered on Our Trip

This trip made bourbon less abstract. The group did not just drink it. They saw it being made, aged, dumped, poured, blended, sold, debated, and defended.

At Angel's Envy, bourbon became finishing and flavor.

At Michter's, it became proof and patience.

At Old Forester, it became machinery, barrels, fire, and Penny.

At Beam, it became scale.

At Maker's Mark, it became design and beauty.

At Heaven Hill, it became law, survival, and family control.

At Buffalo Trace, it became history and scarcity.

At Four Roses, it became yeast, recipes, and blending.

At Benson Valley, it became risk and reinvention.

At Glenss Creek, it became personal.

That was the real education of the trip. Bourbon was never just one thing. It was agriculture, chemistry, law, business, history, craftsmanship, marketing, luck, and time poured into a glass.

Chapter 2 - Into Bourbon Country

Friday - May 22, 2026

The trip began at 5:00 AM in the dark quiet of Northern Virginia, when the car was loaded with bags, snacks, bourbon expectations, and just enough caffeine to convince four grown men that hundreds of miles in one day was a reasonable opening move.

The first stop came quickly: Chick-fil-A for breakfast. Biscuits, coffee, and early-morning optimism. From there Chris and Bobby picked up Bob and Rob at Rob's house, and the trip finally stopped being a plan and became a real thing moving west on the highway.

Kentucky still felt very far away.

Rain moved in before noon and stayed most of the day. Mile after mile, the weather followed the group through Virginia and into West Virginia, turning the road gray, slow, and slick. Lunch came at Tudor's Biscuit World, which felt like exactly the kind of stop a bourbon road trip deserved: heavy biscuits, hot food, and no serious concern for cholesterol.

Then came the accident. Traffic slowed to a crawl behind a major backup, and the carefully planned schedule started to collapse in real time. Arrival times slipped. Reservations became uncertain. Phones came out. Chris recalculated routes and ETAs while the rain kept falling.

The first casualty was Wild Turkey. After months of planning, one of the opening stops vanished because the clock simply would not cooperate.

Still, the group pressed on. By the time they reached Buffalo Trace, Kentucky bourbon country had fully arrived. Rickhouses stretched into the distance. The damp air carried the smell of aging whiskey. Even exhausted, everyone knew they had made it.

Then came the irony nobody would let Chris forget. The man who had reminded everyone - repeatedly - to make sure they had their driver's license somehow managed to lose his own on the very first day of the trip. Somewhere between rain, road stops, traffic delays, and distillery chaos, the license disappeared and immediately became the running joke of the weekend.

Dinner was simple: pizza, exhaustion, and regrouping after a long day on the road. The crew checked into the Hampton Inn, where most reasonable people would have called it a night.

Chris and Bobby did not.

They headed back out into the rain looking for a local speakeasy. It was harder to find than it should have been. Chris struggled with the location, but Bobby somehow got them there and in, as if he had been given a secret map.

Inside, they found seats at the bar and stepped into the slightly chaotic rhythm of a busy bourbon night in Kentucky. At one point, the bartender called out loudly for "Jody," a newer bartender who had disappeared just long enough for a table to sit unattended for three full minutes - apparently an emergency in that room. Nearby, a man with multiple thousand-dollar tabs turned the conversation toward his time working in the Trump administration. It was a strange, loud, oddly authentic scene.

The bigger surprise was waiting back at the hotel. When Chris and Bobby returned, an impromptu bourbon tasting had broken out in the lobby. An older woman welcomed them over like they were old friends. Bottles appeared. Pours started. Conversations expanded instantly.

The group never poured the blueberry expression everyone kept mentioning, but they did find Neapolitan, pecan, and several other flavored pours that began to blur together as the night went on. Bobby somehow ended up deep in conversation with another member about Mercedes, because every bourbon gathering eventually creates side quests no one could have predicted.

Sometime around midnight, after rain, traffic, missed schedules, lost licenses, hidden bars, lobby tastings, and accidental friendships, the group finally headed upstairs. Day One was over. Somehow, despite almost everything going wrong, it had turned into exactly the kind of start the trip needed.



Biscuit World



1933 Society



Hampton Inn Lobby – Big Bourbon Share

Chapter 3 - Louisville: Port, Proof, Bats, and Bars

Saturday - May 23, 2026

Day Two began slower. The long rainy drive had caught up with everyone, so breakfast at the Hampton Inn felt less like a luxury and more like recovery operations. Coffee mattered. Water mattered more.

Before the group could leave for Louisville, Chris ran to a local drug store to get a knee brace for Bob. Like most good road trips, the schedule now included equal parts bourbon logistics and basic maintenance for middle-aged knees. - Then it was time for downtown Louisville.

Angel's Envy

The first major stop was Angel's Envy, where the group took the Single Barrel Tour with Eddie. It was one of the most anticipated stops of the trip, and it delivered quickly. Angel's Envy felt modern, polished, and upscale without feeling fake. The huge copper stills gave the building a serious presence, and the tour connected bourbon tradition with the finishing techniques that make Angel's Envy different.

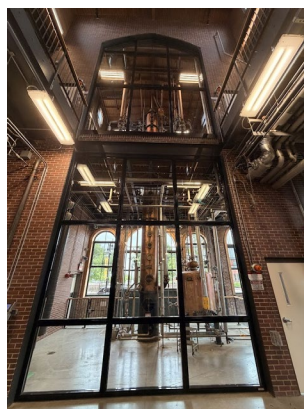
The guide walked through fermentation, the role of yeast and sugar in creating alcohol, and the distilling cuts that separate heads, hearts, and tails. The group also heard about finishing bourbon in port wine barrels, including Kopke port influence, and how the brandy and fortified-wine world connects to what ends up in the glass.

The best moment came when the group was allowed to taste straight from a barrel. Not a tidy retail pour. Not a polished tasting-room glass. A barrel sample. It felt like access, and it immediately changed the mood of the day.

The tour also opened the chance to buy a single barrel selection, which elevated the energy instantly. Serious bottle discussions began. Math became flexible. Responsible restraint briefly left the building.

What We Learned at Angel's Envy

- Yeast eats sugar and creates alcohol during fermentation.
- Distillers separate heads, hearts, and tails to control flavor and quality.
- Angel's Envy is known for finishing bourbon in port wine barrels, which adds fruit, sweetness, and depth.
- The best tours make production feel personal, not just technical. The port wine was delicious.



Sidebar at Whiskey Row

Lunch followed at Sidebar at Whiskey Row, where Lisaa, the manager, made the group feel like the meal had been waiting for them. The food arrived at exactly the right moment. By then, hydration had become less of a suggestion and more of a survival strategy.



Michter's

From lunch, the group walked to Michter's - a walk that felt longer than the map had promised. The tour, hosted by George, landed somewhere between interesting and overly cinematic. There were too many videos, but the details were still worth catching.

Michter's focused heavily on its lower barrel-entry proof, around 103 proof, which costs more and takes longer because the whiskey goes into the barrel with more water and less alcohol than many competitors. That means less water needs to be added later, but yields can be lower. The group also heard about toasted barrel finishing, where a second barrel is toasted rather than fully charred to pull different flavors from the wood.

The most memorable tasting trick was not elegant, but it worked: smell your armpit to reset your nose. Then came the pinched-nose tasting test, proving how much of "taste" is actually smell. It was weird, useful, and exactly the kind of detail that sticks.



Low Proof Entry



Michter's Tasting



Toasted or Charred

Old Forester

An Uber carried the group to Old Forester, where another small crisis unfolded. Bob thought he had lost his driver's license. Less than twenty-four hours after Chris lost his own, the irony was almost too clean. Chris and Bob headed back to look for it. At first, no luck. Then the answer appeared: the license had been in Bob's wallet the entire time.

The stress faded quickly because the Old Forester experience, hosted by Carter, turned out to be one of the best full tours of the trip. It felt immersive from beginning to end. The sights, smells, heat, movement, and production floor all worked together. Unlike a video-heavy tour, Old Forester felt alive.

The tasting at the end wrapped the experience neatly, though Bob wisely skipped it and rested downstairs, saving energy for the long evening still ahead.

And then there was Penny. Nobody forgot Penny. Whether it was humor, timing, personality, or simply becoming part of the Louisville atmosphere, she became one of those side characters who attaches permanently to a travel memory.

What We Learned Old Forester

- Old Forester offered the most complete “grain-to-glass” tour of the trip. The Whiskey Row facility walks visitors through fermentation, distillation, barrel making, barrel charring, maturation, bottling, and tasting all within one downtown Louisville location.
- The centerpiece of the distillery was the massive copper column still called “Penny.” Built by Vendome Copper & Brass Works, Penny stands 44 feet tall, measures 24 inches wide, and weighs roughly 4,700 pounds. Even though the still was not running that day, its scale dominated the production floor and became one of the defining visuals of the trip.
- The tour explained how bourbon moves from fermented mash into “new make spirit” through continuous column distillation, separating heads, hearts, and tails before entering new charred oak barrels for aging.
- Watching barrels being assembled, fired, and charred in real time changed how the group understood bourbon. The barrel is not simply storage — the charred white oak creates much of bourbon's color and flavor through years of interaction with the wood.
- Old Forester balanced real production, bourbon history, and immersive storytelling better than almost any distillery on the trip. The combination of the production floor, Whiskey Row history, barrel-making demonstrations, and personalities like Penny and the guides made the Louisville stop unforgettable.



Mash Room



Penny



Rick House

Louisville Slugger and Bourbon & Bats

By this point the day already felt full, but it was not close to over. The group headed to the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory, where Sarah, the guide, was funny enough to revive everyone. One of the best unplanned comic moments came from watching the guide mouth the words to the factory videos as they played, as if she had performed the script so many times it had become muscle memory.

Then came the Bourbon & Bats experience with John: six samples, six blending attempts, and a room full of rapidly increasing confidence. By the end, everyone was happy. Some blends were respectable. Some were not. Eventually the group created what became known as three Bobs and a Chris. The science behind the names remains unresolved.

Tan. Maroon.

Two colors somehow became permanently attached to the rest of the trip. Nobody fully explained why afterward, but everyone understood the reference immediately.



Louisville Slugger Museum



Big Bat Bourbon and the Kitchen Sink

Troll Pub and Hell or High Water

Dinner followed at Troll Pub Under the Bridge, where heavier food, darker lighting, and another round of drinks finally slowed the pace. But Louisville still had one more stop left.

Hell or High Water felt less like a bar and more like a hidden world under the city: dim lighting, bookshelves, theatrical corners, and one particularly memorable bathroom experience that immediately became trip lore. The group sat at the bar, looked around the library-like room, and eventually accepted that the day had been more than full enough.

Louisville had delivered: port-finished bourbon, low-proof theory, lost-license comedy, an excellent Old Forester tour, baseball history, blended whiskey experiments, a troll, a hidden bar, and enough walking to make the hotel beds look heroic.



Troll



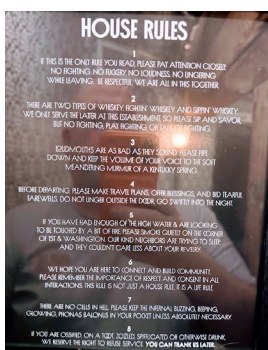
Bricks



Pub



Hell or Highwater



Chapter 4 - The Heart of Bourbon Country

Sunday - May 24, 2026

By Day Three, the group had settled into the rhythm of the trip. Breakfast at the hotel was efficient. Everyone moved a little slower, but with more purpose. Bags were packed early because this was transition day - leaving Louisville behind and moving deeper into bourbon country.

At 9:00 AM, the crew rolled toward James B. Beam Distilling Co. in Clermont. The morning felt different. Less city. More rolling hills, black fences, aging warehouses, and long Kentucky roads.

James B. Beam Distilling Co.

Jim Beam immediately felt enormous. Not flashy. Not boutique. Big and beautiful in a way that blended serious production scale with a campus that still felt welcoming. The Clermont property had green hills, visitor spaces, historic references, and the strong sense that the Beam family story remained central to the place.

The 10:00 AM tour with Devon gave the group a look at one of the giants of American whiskey. The notes came quickly: Old Tub, Booker Noe, family legacy, water, forest, yeast jugs, stills, workers, and the practical steps that turn grain into whiskey. Low wine became high wine. Distillation became less abstract. The operation felt massive but organized.

The group heard about the Booker Noe facility and production numbers that sounded almost unbelievable - thousands of barrels a day across Beam operations. The still system, extra pipes, and constant movement made clear that this was not craft theater. This was industrial bourbon, running hard and at scale.

One technical point stuck: the black coloring on buildings and trees was not dirt in the ordinary sense. It was tied to the angel's share - alcohol vapor escaping barrels during aging and feeding the dark whiskey fungus that appears around distilleries. In older times, blackened buildings could be a giveaway. During Prohibition, that kind of "tattletale" mark could tell the law where whiskey was being made or stored.

Chris then had one of the most personal bottle experiences of the trip. He picked a bottle, watched it move down the line, saw it washed with whiskey, and then pressed his fingerprint into the wax top before it cooled. It turned a purchase into a keepsake.

Then came the birthday barrel incident. A tall man on the tour was selected for a barrel tasting demonstration and held a glass while whiskey was poured. Because the tasting technically had not been paid for yet, he was not allowed to drink from the glass. Instead, whiskey soaked his hand, and he sampled it that way. It was awkward, ridiculous, and instantly unforgettable. The same man later made a loud COVID reference that made the moment even stranger and more unpredictable.

What We Learned at Beam

- Low wine and high wine are stages in distillation.
- Beam operates at a scale that makes bourbon feel like heavy industry.
- Whiskey fungus grows where alcohol vapor escapes aging barrels.
- The best keepsakes are the ones you physically mark yourself.



Barrel Pour, no taster before taxes



Limestone Waterfall

Bardstown Lunch

From Beam, the group headed into Bardstown for lunch. Bardstown calls itself the Bourbon Capital of the World, and the title made sense quickly. Lunch involved a green wall, a few bottle finds, and the growing realization that every stop seemed to create one more reason to buy something.



Maker's Mark

Next came Maker's Mark, and the drive itself changed the mood. Narrow roads, rolling farmland, stone walls, trees, and then the campus appearing like something preserved from another era.

Maker's Mark was the most beautiful property of the trip. Jim Beam was big and impressive. Heaven Hill and Bardstown-style modern campuses were clean and polished. But Maker's had a different quality. It felt like a Kentucky estate shaped into a distillery.

The tour with Kim may have been the best of the trip for some of the group. The story ran through Star Hill Farm, the Samuels family, the old distillery roots, Margie Samuels and the label, the 1950s rebirth of the brand, and the deliberate choices that made Maker's Mark recognizable: the bottle shape, the name, the red wax, the soft wheat profile, and the refusal to rush the whiskey into becoming something it was not.

The property itself carried much of the story. Around 1,100 acres, rickhouses, water, landscaped grounds, and a sense of design everywhere. Maker's did not feel accidental. It felt curated, but not artificial.

The group learned about Maker's 46 and the cellar process, including how stave finishing and temperature control shape the whiskey. The barrel-pick program added another layer: bourbon was not just aged and bottled; it could be tuned, finished, and built toward a flavor profile.

Then came the wax dipping. The full deep dunks may no longer happen the way they once did, but sealing a bottle by hand still felt iconic. Everyone walked away with something connected to the place.

At the end, a ride dropped the group almost directly at the car, which felt like luxury after days of walking distillery floors and warehouse stairs.

What We Learned at Maker's Mark

- Maker's Mark is as much a design story as a whiskey story.
- Margie Samuels shaped the name, label, bottle, and red wax identity.
- Stave finishing, especially in Maker's 46, shows how wood can shape flavor after primary aging.
- A beautiful campus changes the way people remember a brand.



Still



Star Hill Farm



Maker's Mark



Wax Dipping



The Cellar



Samuels Family Art



Service Patch

Heaven Hill

There was no time to relax. The group rushed toward Heaven Hill and arrived just behind schedule, missing roughly the first three minutes of the Bottled-in-Bond tour. Fortunately, the experience recovered quickly.

Heaven Hill felt different from Beam and Maker's. Where Beam was big and beautiful and Maker's felt like a preserved Kentucky estate, Heaven Hill carried a modern, clean, polished energy - closer to the Bardstown-style visitor experience. Wide walkways, sharp presentation spaces, modern tasting areas, and immaculate facilities made it professional without losing its bourbon identity.

The tour with Scott leaned into history and law. Bottled-in-Bond became more than a phrase on a label. It meant one distiller, one distilling season, aging under government supervision, at least four years old, bottled at 100 proof, and only water added to adjust proof. The 1897 act suddenly felt practical instead of academic: a consumer protection law from an era when whiskey quality was not always trustworthy.

The Heaven Hill story was larger than the campus. Founded in 1935 after Prohibition by the Shapira family, the company grew from a young Kentucky operation into one of the largest independent family-owned spirits companies in America. The notes from the tour carried the theme clearly: patience and seeing it through. Multiple generations. A huge portfolio. Hundreds of labels across categories. A company that remained family controlled while much of the industry consolidated.

The 1996 fire deserved its own place in the story. Heaven Hill lost the original Bardstown distillery and multiple warehouses in a catastrophic blaze. Bourbon reportedly flowed into the creek and burned, creating one of the most dramatic fire stories in American whiskey. Yet the company survived, rebuilt, and kept going. In bourbon, survival is part of the brand.

The group toured rickhouses, including a newer one, and stood among aging barrels stacked floor after floor. At one point everyone leaned in to smell directly from a barrel - one of those sensory moments no bottle on a shelf can recreate.

The tasting also produced a useful keepsake: an Old Fashioned recipe with Fee Brothers Aztec Chocolate bitters, Rittenhouse Rye barrel pick, and maple syrup. It was the kind of recipe that deserved to come home with the group.

What We Learned at Heaven Hill

- Bottled-in-Bond means one distiller, one season, government-supervised aging, at least four years, and 100 proof.
- Heaven Hill is still tied to the Shapira family story.
- The 1996 fire became part of the company's identity because they survived it.
- Parker's Heritage connects whiskey legacy with ALS awareness and support.

Frankfort Evening

Dinner that night was at a small local place back in Frankfort, near the downtown bourbon sign. After three full days, the sign felt less like decoration and more like a summary of the whole weekend.

Kentucky was not hiding what it was. Bourbon was everywhere.

Eventually the group returned to the hotel, poured a drink, and watched WWE in the room. No speeches. No deep ending. Just tired feet, good whiskey, and the quiet satisfaction of knowing the trip was turning into something special.



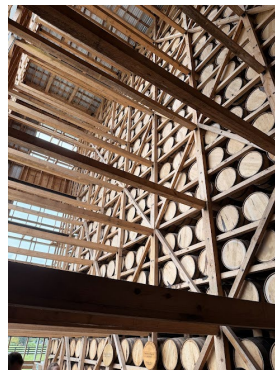
Rick House at Heaven Hill



Warehouse Plumb



Old Barrel for Smelling



7 Floors 21 Barrels High



Heaven Hill Entrance



Brown Barrel Dinner



End of the Day Wrestling and Drinking

Chapter 5 - Real Kentucky

Monday - May 25, 2026

By Day Four, reality had started catching up with everyone. Nobody had to say it. The pace of the trip was showing. Feet were sore. Energy was lower. Breakfast at the hotel was quieter than before.

The group was slowing down. Kentucky still had one full day left.

Buffalo Trace

The morning began back at Buffalo Trace for a 10:15 tour with Ron. The parking lots and sidewalks were already packed. Lines stretched outward. Bottle hunters moved with purpose. Everyone seemed to know exactly what they wanted.

Despite the crowd, the group made it in. Ron became one of the favorite guides of the trip because he made the place feel alive. Buffalo Trace was older, more layered, and less polished in some ways than the newer visitor campuses. That was part of its strength. Brick buildings, old warehouses, steam, railroad traces, flood stories, and decades of whiskey production all blended into a working place that happened to let visitors through the door.

The history was deep: E.H. Taylor, George T. Stagg, Albert Blanton starting young, Elmer T. Lee, medicinal whiskey during Prohibition, and the relationship between Buffalo Trace and other historic Kentucky sites. Warehouse C, tied to E.H. Taylor Jr., carried its own legend, including tornado-damaged bourbon that became wildly collectible.

The tour notes came fast: barrels entering at high proof, water used to cut proof, bourbon needing to be bottled at 80 proof or higher, new charred oak, white oak flavor, char, empty barrels, mash bills, warehouse capacity, flood water that once reached deep into the campus, and the distillery fungus that acts like a visible tattletale around aging whiskey.

The tasting was one of the most balanced of the trip: approachable, clear, and enjoyable without feeling rushed. Afterward came the gift shop, where bottles were picked up along with a significant amount of Buffalo Trace root beer. At some point, the group had enough root beer to make it feel like a secondary mission.

What We Learned at Buffalo Trace

- Buffalo Trace is tied to some of the biggest names in bourbon history: Taylor, Stagg, Blanton, Lee, and more.
- Bourbon must use new charred oak barrels and be bottled at 80 proof or higher.
- Floods, tornadoes, fires, and Prohibition are part of the campus story.
- Every barrel is its own event. Warehouse location, weather, proof, and time all matter.

Lunch and Four Roses

Lunch followed at Sabor, a needed reset before the 2:00 PM Four Roses tasting. After Buffalo Trace's rugged history, Four Roses felt refined and architectural.

The Spanish Mission-style campus immediately stood apart: stucco walls, red tile roofs, arches, and manicured grounds. It did not look like any other distillery on the trip.

Katie hosted the tasting and helped explain why Four Roses matters so much to whiskey people. The brand's history is unusual: once a major American bourbon name, later shifted heavily into blended whiskey and overseas markets, then revived as a respected straight bourbon producer. Its comeback story is part of the appeal.

The production system is the real signature: two mash bills and five proprietary yeast strains, creating ten distinct bourbon recipes. That gives Four Roses a blending toolkit most distilleries do not have. The tasting made that idea concrete, showing how yeast, grain, and blending choices can create different profiles under one brand.

There was also talk of rye and MGP, including a rye bottle around the \$100 range, but the strongest takeaway was simpler: Four Roses is respected because it gives whiskey makers more variables to work with, and then manages to make those variables taste consistent.

What We Learned at Four Roses

- Two mash bills plus five yeast strains create ten bourbon recipes.
- Yeast does more than ferment. It shapes flavor.
- Four Roses has one of the most distinctive campuses in Kentucky bourbon.
- The brand's modern reputation is a comeback story.

Closed Doors and One More Stop

After Four Roses, the afternoon turned into a small scavenger hunt. The group tried Whiskey Thief. Closed. Then Bulleit. Closed. At that point, everyone simply accepted that bourbon tourism does not always cooperate with ambitious schedules.

A gas station stop followed for fuel, bathrooms, and regrouping. It was not glamorous, but every road trip needs those moments. Later, the group squeezed in another tasting back in Frankfort at Benson Vally Bourbon before heading toward what became the defining experience of the entire trip.

What We Learned at Benson Vally Bourbon

- Benson Valley Bourbon felt like the opposite of "Big Bourbon." Instead of polished corporate campuses and massive production numbers, the distillery felt personal, experimental, and still evolving on historic bourbon land outside Frankfort.
- Owner Russ Blakeley brought a different kind of personality to bourbon. Part entrepreneur and part street racer, his approach felt less corporate and more like someone willing to take risks, trust instincts, and build something unconventional from the ground up.
- The distillery sits on the former Old Kennebec Distillery property along Benson Creek and leans heavily into Kentucky bourbon heritage through the use of the original limestone spring and references to older 10-hoop barrel traditions once used on the site.
- Benson Valley helped explain an important truth about modern bourbon: not every company distills every drop they sell. Sourcing, blending, barrel selection, finishing, and aging are crafts of their own — and many respected newer bourbon brands begin that way while their own whiskey matures.

- After several days touring giant operations, Benson Valley felt raw in the best possible way — less polished, more personal, and still becoming whatever its future will be. That honesty made the stop memorable.

Glenns Creek Distilling

Glenns Creek changed everything.

Unlike the massive, polished operations earlier in the weekend, Glenns Creek felt raw, personal, and fiercely independent. The tour was private. The guide was Dave - owner, master distiller, storyteller, critic, philosopher, and unapologetic bourbon craftsman. Within minutes, it was clear this would not be a scripted corporate tour.

Dave talked openly about taxes, regulations, large-scale production whiskey, and what it means for a small distiller to survive in an industry increasingly shaped by big companies, marketing departments, and bottle hype. He did not sound like someone repeating brand language. He sounded like someone who had chosen to make whiskey his way and was willing to explain the cost of that choice.

At one point, PowerPoints appeared. Somehow even those were entertaining. The conversation moved from bourbon economics to production philosophy, from taxes to taste, from big brands to independent whiskey, and from the romantic idea of bourbon to the less romantic reality of making, aging, paying for, and selling it.

Then came the juice. The pours were unforgettable: experimental, personal, full of character, and not trying to please everyone. Barrel strength flavors. Big personalities. Whiskey that felt connected to the person who made it. After days of impressive campuses, this was different. This was a person handing over his work and explaining why it mattered.

Nobody wanted the tour to end. By the time the group finally left Glenns Creek, the answer was obvious: the earlier distilleries had been impressive, but Glenns Creek had been real. That difference mattered.

Best tour of the trip.

What We Learned at Glenns Creek

- Small distilleries carry different risks than large producers.
- Taxes, aging time, and cash flow shape whiskey as much as romance does.
- Big production whiskey can be impressive, but independent whiskey often feels personal.
- A great person can turn a tour into the story everyone remembers. Long live Dave

PHOTO PLACEHOLDER - DAY 4

Suggested photos: Buffalo Trace line, Ron, root beer, Four Roses campus, Sabor lunch, closed signs, Frankfort tasting, Glenns Creek with Dave, private tasting bottles.

Chapter 6 - The Ride Home

Tuesday - May 26, 2026

The final night in Kentucky ended quietly. Dinner had been LongHorn Steakhouse. Chris and Bobby ate at the restaurant and took food back to Bob and Rob at the hotel. There was no push for one more big night. No nightcap. No final hidden bar. No dramatic last pour.

Instead, the evening became practical and human: calls with wives and girlfriends, quiet conversations, people reorganizing bags, and a few simply passing out on their beds. The trip had caught up with everyone.

Morning came slowly. The group ate breakfast at the hotel one last time, surrounded by bags, jackets, souvenirs, and the organized mess that always forms at the end of a road trip. Then came the final repacking of the car. Everything had to fit again.

Before officially leaving Kentucky, the group made one last stop at Buffalo Trace for a final gift shop visit. Rain had returned, and the wait outside lasted about twenty minutes. It turned out to be worth it.

Ron recognized Chris and helped him get a wristband, which mattered because Single Oak was available that morning. That small act became one last gift from the trip. Rob picked up gifts. Bob found a candle. Everyone made a final pass through the store before accepting that it was time to go home.

Then the car turned east. Kentucky slowly disappeared in the rearview mirror.

The drive home was smoother than expected: good traffic, not too much rain, long stretches of highway, and plenty of bathroom stops. Lunch brought the trip full circle with Chick-fil-A again, echoing the breakfast that started the journey five days earlier.

As the miles passed, the group separated. Bob and Rob were dropped off around 6:45 PM. Bobby made it home around 8:50 PM. Chris pulled into his driveway around 9:30 PM.

And just like that, it was over.

No dramatic ending. No cinematic final speech. Just tired men unloading bags after several hundred miles of Kentucky roads, carrying home stories that would probably be retold for years.

Because the real value of the trip was never just the bourbon. It was the laughs, the missed schedules, the lost licenses, the random strangers, the late-night conversations, the long drives, the inside jokes, and the rare chance to spend uninterrupted time together while life still allows it.

The Bourbon Trail was over. The stories were just getting started.

PHOTO PLACEHOLDER - RIDE HOME

Suggested photos: rainy Buffalo Trace line, final gift shop run, packed car, Chick-fil-A lunch, driveway arrival, final bottle lineup.

Best of the Trip

Trip Awards

Award	Winner
Best Campus	Maker's Mark
Most Impressive Scale	James B. Beam Distilling Co.
Best Full Production Experience	Old Forester
Best Surprise	Glenns Creek Distilling
Best Historic Weight	Buffalo Trace
Most Distinctive Architecture	Four Roses
Best Hidden Night Stop	Hell or High Water Bathroom
Best Accidental Memory	Colors Tan Maroon
Best Running Phrase	Where's Jody
Most Useful Road Trip Lesson	Know where your driver's license is always

Best Photo Pages to Add Later

- One full-page group photo near the cover.
- One hero image at the start of each chapter.
- A two-page Maker's Mark campus spread.
- A Glenns Creek photo page with Dave and the bottles.
- A final bottle/souvenir lineup at the end.
- A collage page of inside jokes: Big Bourbon, Tan/Maroon, root beer, candle, license checks, knee brace, WWE.

Suggested Photo Count

Target 80-140 photos total. Use 10-15 full-page hero images, 40-60 mid-size storytelling photos, and 20-40 small detail shots. The writing is strong enough that the photos should support the story, not overwhelm it.

Photo Caption Bank

- The road west: rain, biscuits, and unreasonable optimism.
- First sight of Kentucky bourbon country.
- The license check that came one reminder too late.
- Lobby strangers, strange pours, and the birth of Big Bourbon.
- Angel's Envy: where the trip started to feel like access.
- Sidebar: hydration disguised as lunch.
- Michter's: proof, toasted barrels, and armpit science.
- Old Forester: the day came alive on the production floor.
- Three Bobs and a Chris.
- Tan. Maroon. No further explanation needed.
- Maker's Mark: the most beautiful campus of the trip.
- A fingerprint in wax. A bottle turned into a memory.
- Heaven Hill: modern, clean, powerful, and built on survival.
- Buffalo Trace: old brick, deep history, and serious bottle hunters.
- Four Roses: Spanish Mission architecture and ten recipes.
- Closed. Closed. Gas station. Keep moving.
- Glenns Creek: no script, no polish, just Dave and the juice.
- The final Buffalo Trace run.
- Single Oak made the rain worth it.
- The car turned east. The stories came home.

- **Bourbon Trail Field Guide**
- **Every Place We Visited Along the Way**
- ---
- **Distilleries & Bourbon Experiences**
- **Buffalo Trace Distillery**
- **Frankfort, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- Buffalo Trace sits on one of the oldest continuously operating distillery sites in America. Home to brands such as Buffalo Trace, Eagle Rare, Blanton's, E.H. Taylor Jr., George T. Stagg, and Weller, the campus combines bourbon history with modern production. The grounds feel less like a tourist attraction and more like a working piece of bourbon history.
- **Our Take**
- **Best combination of history and atmosphere.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Ron
 - Warehouse stories
 - Flood history
 - Root beer
 - Single Oak
 - The final gift shop stop

-
- - **Angel's Envy**
 - **Louisville, Kentucky**
 - **About the Place**
 - Founded by Lincoln Henderson and his family, Angel's Envy helped popularize barrel finishing in modern bourbon by aging bourbon in port wine casks. The downtown Louisville distillery blends modern production with a premium visitor experience.
 - **Our Take**
 - **Modern bourbon done right.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - Eddie
 - Port wine finishing
 - Barrel samples
 - Single barrel opportunity
 - Massive copper stills
-
- - **Michter's**
 - **Louisville, Kentucky**
 - **About the Place**
 - Michter's has built a reputation for premium whiskey through lower barrel-entry proofs, toasted barrel finishes, and obsessive attention to quality. The Louisville operation focuses heavily on craftsmanship and barrel management.
 - **Our Take**
 - **Good whiskey, too many videos.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - George
 - 103 barrel-entry proof
 - Toasted barrels
 - Pinched-nose tasting
 - The armpit palate reset
-
- - **Old Forester**
 - **Louisville, Kentucky**
 - **About the Place**
 - Founded in 1870, Old Forester is the only bourbon continuously sold before, during, and after Prohibition. The Whiskey Row facility offers one of the most complete grain-to-glass experiences in Kentucky.
 - **Our Take**
 - **Best full production experience.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - Carter
 - Penny
 - Barrel making
 - Barrel charring
 - Whiskey Row history
 - Seeing the entire bourbon process under one roof

-
- **Bourbon & Bats**
- **Louisville, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- A unique blending experience combining Louisville's baseball heritage with bourbon education. Visitors create and taste custom blends while learning how master distillers develop flavor profiles.
- **Our Take**
- **Most fun tasting.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - John
 - Six blending samples
 - Three Bobs and a Chris
 - Tan. Maroon.
 - Becoming master blenders for an afternoon

-
- **James B. Beam Distilling Co.**
- **Clermont, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- The largest bourbon producer in the world and home to Jim Beam, Knob Creek, Booker's, Baker's, Basil Hayden, and more. The Clermont campus combines family history with industrial-scale bourbon production.
- **Our Take**
- **Most impressive scale.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Devon
 - Fingerprint bottle
 - Booker Noe
 - Whiskey fungus
 - The birthday barrel tasting
 - Seeing bourbon produced on a massive scale

-
- **Maker's Mark**
- **Loretto, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- Maker's Mark revolutionized bourbon with a wheated mash bill and one of the most recognizable brands in spirits. The Star Hill Farm campus is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful properties on the Bourbon Trail.
- **Our Take**
- **Best campus.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Kim
 - Star Hill Farm
 - Red wax dipping
 - Maker's 46
 - The Samuels family story

- The beautiful grounds

-

- **Heaven Hill**

- **Bardstown, Kentucky**

- **About the Place**

- Founded in 1935 by the Shapira family, Heaven Hill has grown into one of America's largest independent spirits companies. Its portfolio includes Elijah Craig, Evan Williams, Larceny, Parker's Heritage, Bernheim, and many others.

- **Our Take**

- **Best bourbon education.**

- **What We'll Remember**

- Scott
- Warehouse Y
- Smelling a barrel
- The 1996 fire story
- Parker's Heritage
- Bottled-in-Bond explained correctly

-

- **Four Roses**

- **Lawrenceburg, Kentucky**

- **About the Place**

- One of Kentucky's most distinctive bourbon producers. Four Roses uses two mash bills and five proprietary yeast strains to create ten unique recipes that are blended into its products.

- **Our Take**

- **Most unique production philosophy.**

- **What We'll Remember**

- Katie
- Ten recipes
- Five yeast strains
- Spanish Mission architecture
- Learning how yeast impacts flavor

-

- **Benson Valley Bourbon**

- **Frankfort, Kentucky**

- **About the Place**

- A newer bourbon company operating on the historic Old Kennebec Distillery property. The company focuses on blending, barrel selection, and restoring bourbon traditions while building for the future.

- **Our Take**

- **The opposite of Big Bourbon.**

- **What We'll Remember**

- Russ Blakeley
- Street-racing stories
- Sourced and blended whiskey
- The Old Kennebec connection
- Seeing a bourbon company in its early stages

-
- **Glenns Creek Distilling**
- **Frankfort, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- Owned and operated by Dave Meier, Glenns Creek is one of Kentucky's most independent bourbon operations. Small-scale, honest, and unapologetically different, it represents a side of bourbon often hidden behind marketing.
- **Our Take**
- **Best tour of the trip.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Dave
 - Independent whiskey
 - Brutal honesty
 - Incredible pours
 - Taxes and reality
 - Real Kentucky

-
- - **Food & Restaurants**
 - **Chick-fil-A**
 - **Virginia & Return Trip**
 - **About the Place**
 - The first and last meal of the journey.
 - **Our Take**
 - **The official beginning and ending of the trip.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - 5:00 AM departure
 - Breakfast sandwiches
 - The trip becoming real
 - Lunch on the ride home

-
- - **Tudor's Biscuit World**
 - **West Virginia**
 - **About the Place**
 - A regional favorite known for oversized biscuits and hearty breakfasts.
 - **Our Take**
 - **The first true road-trip stop.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - Giant biscuits
 - Rain
 - Kentucky still feeling far away

-
- - **Sidebar at Whiskey Row**
 - **Louisville, Kentucky**
 - **About the Place**
 - A popular Whiskey Row restaurant serving elevated comfort food in the heart of bourbon country.

- **Our Take**
- **Best lunch of the trip.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Lisaa
 - Great service
 - Recovery operations
 - Hydration
- ---
- **Troll Pub Under the Bridge**
- **Louisville, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- A unique restaurant tucked beneath Louisville's streets with a fun atmosphere and hearty food.
- **Our Take**
- **Great dinner stop.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - The troll
 - Great food
 - Slowing down
- ---
- **Bluegrass Sabor**
- **Frankfort, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- A family-owned Mexican restaurant that arrived at exactly the right point in the trip.
- **Our Take**
- **Most needed meal of the trip.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Refueling
 - Great food
 - Catching our breath
 - Preparing for Four Roses
- ---
- **The Brown Barrel**
- **Frankfort, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**
- A local restaurant that felt perfectly at home in bourbon country.
- **Our Take**
- **Classic bourbon-country dinner.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Downtown Frankfort
 - The bourbon sign
 - WWE afterward
- ---
- **LongHorn Steakhouse**
- **Frankfort, Kentucky**
- **About the Place**

- The final dinner before heading home.
- **Our Take**
- **Exactly right for the last night.**
- **What We'll Remember**
 - Everyone slowing down
 - Taking food back to the hotel
 - Calls home
 - Knowing the trip was almost over

-
- **Bars, Speakeasies & Nightlife**
 - **1933 Society**
 - **Louisville, Kentucky**
 - **About the Place**
 - A hidden speakeasy-style bar that took some effort to find.
 - **Our Take**
 - **Hard to find, worth finding.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - Bobby getting us there
 - Jody
 - Loud conversations
 - The Trump administration guy

-
- **Hell or High Water**
 - **Louisville, Kentucky**
 - **About the Place**
 - A theatrical speakeasy with a library atmosphere and hidden corners throughout.
 - **Our Take**
 - **Best hidden stop.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - The hidden entrance
 - The library
 - The bathroom
 - Ending Day Two

-
- **Big Bourbon Share**
 - **Hampton Inn Lobby, Frankfort**
 - **About the Place**
 - An unplanned bourbon gathering among strangers that somehow became one of the most memorable events of the trip.
 - **Our Take**
 - **Best unexpected experience.**
 - **What We'll Remember**
 - The welcoming lady
 - Neapolitan and pecan pours
 - New friends

- Mercedes conversations
- Big Bourbon

•

• **Attractions & Museums**

• **Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory**

• **Louisville, Kentucky**

• **About the Place**

- Home to America's most famous baseball bat and a surprisingly entertaining factory tour.

• **Our Take**

• **Better than expected.**

• **What We'll Remember**

- Sarah
- The giant bat
- Factory tour
- Mouthing the video script

•

• **Lodging & Headquarters**

• **Hampton Inn & Suites**

• **Frankfort, Kentucky**

• **About the Place**

- The home base for most of the trip and the place where every day began and ended.

• **Our Take**

• **The unofficial headquarters of the trip.**

• **What We'll Remember**

- Morning breakfasts
- Evening regrouping
- Knee-brace planning
- WWE
- Late-night conversations
- Big Bourbon Share

The Ones That Got Away

Whiskey Thief - Lawrenceburg, Kentucky

Our Take - Closed

What We'll Remember

- The attempt
- The disappointment
- Learning that schedules don't always cooperate

Bulleit Distilling Co. - Shelbyville, Kentucky

Our Take - Also closed

What We'll Remember

- Another failed stop
- A reminder that every road trip needs a Plan B

Final Thoughts

- Some places impressed us.
- Some educated us.
- Some surprised us.
- A few became favorites.
- But the places we remember most are the ones where the people made the experience special.
- Ron. Eddie. George. Carter. Sarah. John. Kim. Scott. Russ. Dave.
- And, of course, the four guys who made the trip happen.

The bourbon was excellent. The stories were better.