

Redbud Ride 2026



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Redbud Ride revamped for 20th event

By **Nita Johnson**
Correspondent

The ornamental trees that define southeastern Kentucky are in bloom, almost as if anticipating the arrival of cyclists to convene on London this weekend.

The Redbud Ride is set for Saturday, April 18, but organizers with London Downtown are expanding the event for a full weekend of entertainment.

Sabrina McDaries, Board Member with London Downtown, outlined some of the additions to this year's festivities to make the annual cycling event inclusive to the local community.

Coining this year's event as the 20th year, McDaries said, "This year is honoring the tradition while continuing to evolve in ways that bring new energy and opportunities to the community."

The Downtown Block Party on Friday, April 17 will take a different approach with several downtown restaurants hosting live music as well as their usual menus

to entice the public to participate.

As cyclists gather early Saturday morning for their trek on the four route choices, the Redbud Market will open at 7 a.m. to offer food and crafts throughout the day until 5 p.m. Food trucks will be available as well as a booth with London Downtown and Redbud Ride memorabilia.

"We are expecting a good turnout with 400 cyclists registered and some walk-ups on Saturday," McDaries said. "The numbers are growing every day. The Century Ride (100-mile route) is by far the most popular!"

Children are also welcomed to participate in this year's fun and festivities with the Junior Redbud Ride, which starts at 10 a.m. and continues to 2 p.m. Sponsored by Todd Strouse with Edward Jones, the Junior Redbud Ride offers a bicycle safety training course as well as prizes.

No event is complete without dedicated volunteers and McDaries said there are several groups that will be assisting with this year's

celebration.

"We have a great group of volunteers such as the University of the Cumberlands PatServe, London Women's League and the Laurel County African American Heritage Center, to name a few," she added.

As cyclists return to Farmers Market throughout Saturday, they also have the option of attending a free concert at Town Center featuring local artists. That event is also open to the public,

"We're especially excited about Redbud Market and Saturday evening's event at Town Center. These additions create space for local vendors, live entertainment and community gathering — bringing a new level of energy and accessibility to the weekend," McDaries said.

The After-Party in Town Center will feature performances from Trey Bryant and Jordan Allen, both local entertainers who have had success in their musical careers.

Bryant attended North Laurel High School and has established himself as a singer/songwriter.



Traffic is stopped while the cyclists take off during a past Redbud Ride.

| File photo by Nita Johnson

He recently won the Josie Music Award, which recognizes independent artists, songwriters, performers and music industry professionals from a wide range of genres. It is one of the most respected honors and encourages artists not in mainstream music production to "Chase Your Dreams." His powerhouse vocals highlight the rich country genre with performances that bring rave reviews. Bryant will take the Town Center stage at 5:30 p.m.

Jordan Allen is a familiar name in local entertainment —

especially his past performances fronting the band, Jordan Allen and the Bellwethers. Whether solo or with a group, Allen delivers a solid repertoire of country and rock music mingled in with his original songs. Allen brings an exciting stage show that when blended with the vocals, leaves audiences applauding and wanting more. Allen appeared in Season 27 of "The Voice," electrifying judges with his rendition of Bob Seger's "Old Time Rock and Roll" and eventually joining Team John Legend as his coach.

These new features to the annual cycling event expand the Redbud Ride beyond a tourist event to incorporate the community into the festivities.

"There's plenty to enjoy beyond the Ride," McDaries added. "You can shop at the Redbud Market, attend the Block Party on Friday, and a free Saturday evening concert. It's designed to be inclusive and enjoyable for the entire community."

To learn more about the events, visit redbudweekend.com.

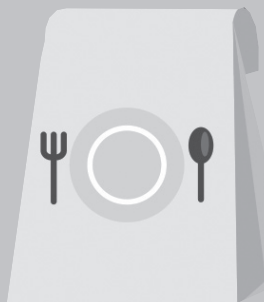


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5th Annual Junior Redbud Ride set for Saturday

By Janie Slaven
Editor

Who said adults get to have all the fun this weekend?

Bring your little budlet out to London-Laurel County Farmers Market for the fifth annual Junior Redbud Ride this Saturday, April 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

“The Junior Redbud Ride brings a different kind of energy to the weekend, helping make the event truly multigenerational,” London Downtown board member Sabrina McDaries said. “When children are included intentionally, it shifts the experience from something you attend to something you share as a family. That intentionality

creates early, positive memories around being active, spending time with loved ones, and feeling connected to where they live.

“Children who develop that sense of belonging are more likely to grow up and pour back into their community, and London Downtown is grateful to play a role in building those connections and fostering a lasting sense of local pride in all ages,” McDaries continued.

This free, family-friendly event is sponsored by Todd A. Strouse of Edward Jones and for riders between the ages of 6 and 12. Activities will include a bike course, safety training, snacks and prizes.



Deputy Kenny Jones of the Laurel County Sheriff's Office provided safety training to participants of last year's Junior Redbud Ride.

“There will be cornhole boards and goody bags,” McDaries said. “We'll have light snacks available, and plenty of

space for kids to play and enjoy being part of the larger Redbud Weekend atmosphere. We're grateful for the support

| File photo by Madison Nantz of Edward Jones - Todd Strouse as the presenting sponsor of the Junior Redbud Ride, helping make this experience

possible for families.”

Helmets are required. Bringing your own bicycle is recommended, but a few bikes will be available for anyone who can't bring their own. A guardian must be present at all times, and a waiver must be signed upon arrival before participation in activities.

“We encourage anything that makes the experience fun — decorated bikes, bright colors and lots of energy are always welcome,” McDaries added.

For more information or to pre-register, visit redbudweekend.com. Families can also register the day of the event.



Personal touches like this Spiderman helmet are encouraged.

| File photo by Nita Johnson



RIDER SPOTLIGHT:

Aiden Smith ready for one more Jr. Redbud Ride

By Janie Slaven
Editor

For someone so young, Aiden Smith is a veteran when it comes to participating in the Junior Redbud Ride.

The North Laurel Middle School 7th grader has ridden in the annual event four years with a Huffy and a Mongoose.

“I really learned a lot at my first event,” Smith said. “I knew how to ride

a bike, but I learned the hand signs to use if I was riding my bike on the road.”

Though Smith has won prizes for participating — including a Bluegrass Baker gift card and even \$100 cash last year — what keeps him coming back is the fun of doing laps and seeing everyone start to come in from finishing the “big ride.” At 12, he's about to graduate from the Junior

ride but that's not the end of Smith's biking the Redbud.

“I already have plans to ride with my cousin Johnny in the regular Redbud Ride the first year I can,” he said, adding that he'd encourage any kid who hasn't already to try the Junior Redbud Ride. “It's lots of fun, and you can learn about our community and meet new friends.”



Aiden Smith, right, participates in the Junior Redbud Ride annually.

| File photo

JUNIOR REDBUD RIDE



2026

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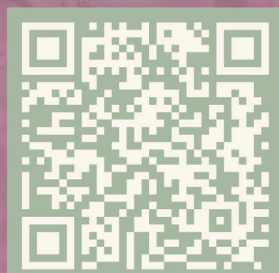
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RIDER SPOTLIGHT:



Hendrickson has participated on both sides of Redbug Ride — cycling and organizing

By Nita Johnson
Correspondent

Hundreds of cyclists arrive in London in every mid-April — many returning for the first Century Ride of the season, some making their first trek through southeastern Kentucky’s landscape, some coming to expand their cycling experience by challenging a more difficult route than in years past.

But one face familiar to most cyclists will not be present this year, a face that has played multiple roles in the annual Redbug Ride — Rodney Hendrickson.

An accident several weeks ago is prohibiting Hendrickson from participating this year, marking only the third year he has not been involved in the countryside trek.

An avid cyclist, hiker and traveler, Hendrickson was practicing for an upcoming week-long ride when he crashed — resulting in a broken hip and pelvis.

“I was hurting but I thought I’d pulled a muscle,” he said. “I could barely walk from the living room to the kitchen.”

The initial pain eased somewhat, and Hendrickson was surprised when he sought medical treatment only to learn that his injury was two fractured bones. That, of course, changed his plans for riding in the Redbug Ride as well as the week he’d been training for.

It did not destroy his plans to recover and participate in future rides, as he reflected back on his involvement in the cycling event that has brought over 11,000 riders to London-Laurel County in past years.

“I was at the first ride in 2008 — it was my 50th birthday,” Hendrickson said “There were only 26

riders and most of us were local.”

Hendrickson, his wife Alice, and Mackey and Jane Williams worked with the second ride, which doubled participation that year.

Hendrickson was an organizer of the event for several years, all while serving as co-director of the London-Laurel Tourist Commission as well as participating in the ride itself.

“I retired from the tourist commission in 2019 but I still came back and rode,” he said. “I’ve only missed three years since it started.”

An experienced cyclist, Hendrickson has tackled the Redbug’s Century Ride — 100 miles of scenic countryside that weaves from Laurel County into Rockcastle and Jackson counties before winding back through the rural section of north and eastern Laurel County into London.

There have been many memories of the Redbug Ride over the years — the beautiful purplish-pink blooms of the Ride’s namesake trees along the four routes, the winding rural roads that curve through forests, the wildlife that watch closely as groups of cyclists whiz along narrow paved roads past farms and homes and wooded areas, cattle grazing in field after field just bursting into their spring green, the sunshine beating on your helmet and shoulders.

And there are years that the weather played an impacted the annual event. While rain has encroached on the event many times, there has also been a range of fair temperatures to bitter cold, including one year when temperatures remained in the low 30s and gave cyclists a full taste of Kentucky weather

of wind, rain, snow, sleet and a limited amount of sunshine.

“We’ve had rain several years, even flooding,” he said. “In 2011, it absolutely poured. Water was three feet deep at the McWhorter stop.”

Hendrickson was riding amidst many of those cold and rainy days, just as he has participated during warm, sunny days. He said as an organizer of the event, he became more and more appreciative of the support from the local community.

“The London Women’s League was the most popular stop at Crossroads Fire Department because they had a party theme,” he said. “One year, they had an ‘80s Prom theme. Another year was Mardi Gras and Kentucky Derby. A rest stop in Jackson County had a Hawian luau. McWhorter Christian Church is also a popular stop because the women make pies.”

The evolution of the Redbug Ride over the years invokes other memories of the early days.

“The rest stops didn’t have much then,” Hendrickson recalled. “At one was a single table, no people and a few bottles of Gatorade, peanut butter and bananas. One stop had nothing. Keith Cottongim, who was riding the first year, went out and bought stuff out of his own pocket the next year. Of course, Papa Johns has donated pizzas for years.”

Community support has played a vital role in the annual event and Hendrickson believes is a major part of its success through the years.

“We’ve had people come from Illinois, Ohio, even Iowa and Idaho. We’ve gotten cycling clubs from Tennessee, Ohio and other

states. We’ve had people from 26 different states and most people love to come here.”

Another draw for cyclists is that the Redbug Ride is the first 100-mile ride of the year. Cyclists can participate in four 100-mile rides, commonly known as Century Rides or more formally as the Kentucky Cycling Challenge, and receive a special shirt designed especially for cyclists — a lightweight polyester spandex shirt symbolizing their achievement.

The Redbug Ride is the first large ride of the year, Hendrickson added, which is a draw for cycling enthusiasts. Other reasons include the broad base of volunteers — from those working the rest stops to the SAG (Support and Gear) riders who follow along the routes to assist cyclists who may need help as well as the beautiful countryside and welcoming community.

“I’ve ridden all over the United States and west Canada and the Redbug Ride is as pretty as any I’ve ever been on,” Hendrickson said. “It’s a gorgeous ride, especially in the spring. Another thing is the community support. Riders like support vehicles and we’ve had as many as 25 out there, checking on cyclists and assisting them if they are needed.”

For many, the annual cycling event has created bonds and friendships that remain strong over the years.

“The best part for me is meeting people and building relationships with the other cyclists,” Hendrickson said. “There are people I met during the first few rides that I still talk to now. A friend, Jim Moyer, a retired



Hendrickson raises his hand in victory as he rides along the Redbug Ride Century route in 2015.

| File photo

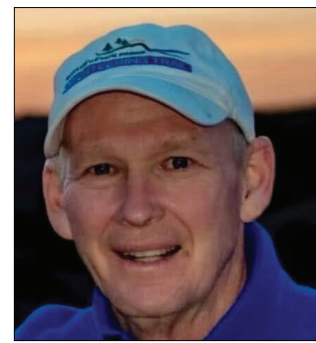
federal judge magistrate who rides, heard about my crash and sent me a note. I’ve made friends that I will keep for life.

“I remember how festive it was on Friday nights. Weaver’s, when it was still on Main Street, would have people lined up. We had a band at Farmers Market, and 96% of the people came over 100 miles for the ride,” he continued

While he regrets missing the 2026 ride, he cherishes the memories of the years he’s participated.

“The years I served as director really made me appreciate the community

and the volunteers. They made my job easy,” he said. “I’m already looking forward to 2027.”



Rodney Hendrickson has participated as a rider as well as director of the Redbug Ride.

| File photo



Rodney Hendrickson, center, poses with members of the London Women’s League who hosted an ‘80s Prom theme at the Crossroads Fire Department rest stop around 2012.

| Photo courtesy Rodney Hendrickson



It was a cold April ride in 2023 but Karen Jewell, Rodney Hendrickson and Lindsey Labore were ready for the challenge!

| File photo

Redbud After Party to headline 20th anniversary weekend in downtown London

By Macee Swafford
Staff Writer

As the annual Redbud Ride returns to London for its 20th anniversary, organizers are adding a new element to the celebration this year — a live music after party aimed at extending the energy of the day well into the evening.

Hosted at Town Center Park, the Redbud After Party will feature local artists Trey Bryant and

Jordan Allen, both of whom have deep ties to the community and the event itself. Allen, a London native singer-songwriter, gained national attention as a contestant on Season 20 of The Voice, where he competed on Team John Legend.

The concert is scheduled for Saturday, April 18 at 5:30 p.m., and is free to attend.

Bryant, a London native, said the opportunity to

perform as part of the milestone weekend holds special meaning.

“I grew up in London so I’ve known about the Red Bud Ride for a long time. I’m excited to be a part of the celebration of its 20th anniversary!” Bryant said. “I’m expecting to bring a lot of energy to the stage as I open up the after party and turn Town Center Park into a big Honky Tonk dance floor!”

He also noted the

significance of sharing the stage with Allen.

“We’ve known each other about as long as the Redbud Ride has been in place and have written songs together so it seems so fitting to have two London-born artists bringing the party to Downtown London!” he said.

According to London Downtown, the after party is designed to create a seamless transition from daytime activities into an evening experience centered around community connection.

“The Redbud After Party is designed to carry the energy of the day from the Farmer’s Market down to Town Center Park, creating a walkable evening experience through downtown,” said Sabrina McDairies with London Downtown. “Everyone will be welcomed to the free After Party concert with themed décor, food trucks, and live performances from local artists Trey Bryant and Jordan Allen.”

McDairies added that the event reflects a broader effort to bring people together and activate downtown spaces.

“Events like this reflect



Trey Bryant, shown here performing at Nibroc Park in Corbin, will kick off Saturday’s After Party.

| File photo by Isaiah Pinto

London Downtown’s commitment to community connections — working with local musicians, small businesses and neighboring organizations to activate spaces like Town Center Park and create opportunities for people to gather, collaborate and experience downtown together,” she said.

The Redbud Ride weekend has long been a staple event in London, drawing cyclists and visitors from across the

region. With the addition of the after party, organizers hope to offer an expanded experience that highlights not only the ride itself, but also the local culture, music and businesses that make up the downtown area.

The 20th anniversary celebration is expected to include a full weekend of activities, with the after party serving as a capstone event bringing the community together in the heart of downtown.



Jordan Allen, Laurel County native and alum of NBC’s The Voice, is once again headlining at Town Center Park as part of the Redbud Ride After Party this Saturday night.

| File photo by Madison Nantz

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Redbud Market to debut as part of new expanded Redbud Weekend

By **Madison Nantz**
Correspondent

In light of the event's 20th-anniversary revamping, London Downtown's expansion of the Redbud Ride into Redbud Weekend is set to include the inaugural Redbud Market.

"As we expanded into Redbud Weekend, we wanted to create something that invited broader community participation," said London Downtown Board Member Sabrina McDaries. "The market felt like a natural extension — something that celebrates local makers, small businesses, and the spirit of downtown while giving people another reason to come spend the day downtown."

The newly organized Redbud Market will take place at the London-Laurel County Farmers Market on Saturday, April 18, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., leading into the Redbud After Party at Town Center Park at 5:30 p.m.



Attendees can expect a curated mix of vendors offering handmade goods, vintage items, boutique retail, local artisans and food items. McDaries said organizers aimed to create a lineup that reflects the creativity and character of the region while offering a

variety of experiences. "We've had a strong response from vendors and are excited to have about 20 businesses present," she said. "The majority of vendors are local and regional, which is important to us, but we're also seeing interest from

outside the area." London Downtown intends for the addition to provide a lively and inclusive atmosphere for those who may not be participating in the ride itself. "The market creates an entry point for everyone,"

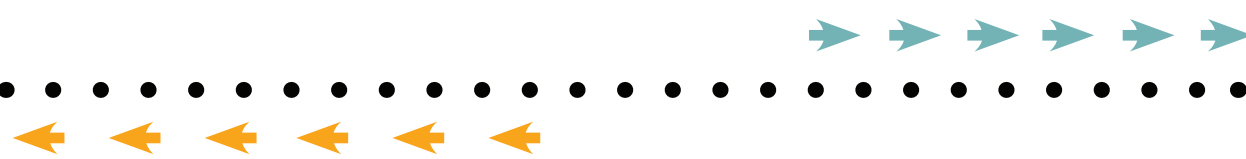
McDaries said. "Whether you're riding or not, you can still be part of the experience — shopping, gathering and enjoying downtown. It broadens the event from a cycling-focused morning into a full-day of community celebration."

Organizers anticipate a strong turnout for the market's first year, with approximately 400 cyclists expected for the ride and additional visitors coming downtown to take part in the festivities. McDaries said she hopes attendees leave with a stronger connection to the community and its small businesses.

"We hope people leave feeling connected — to their neighbors, to downtown, and to the incredible small businesses that make this place unique," she said. "We see the Redbud Market as the beginning of something bigger. It's an opportunity to continue building momentum for downtown and create experiences that people look forward to year after year."

The Redbud Market is expected to serve as an annual addition to Redbud Weekend. To learn more about the London Downtown event and others like it, visit londonkydowntown.com.

MAY IS NATIONAL BIKE MONTH



Before you head out on any ride, brush up on bike safety and follow these tips:

- Inspect your bike and make sure it is in good condition.
- Dress for the occasion—a properly fitting helmet and light-colored apparel with reflective material are a must.
- Ride during the day when possible, preferably on bike trails and lanes.
- Follow the rules of the road and stay alert.
- Watch out for road hazards.



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| Photo courtesy of Rodney Hendrickson

Redbud Block Party set for downtown London Friday night

By Macee Swafford
Staff Writer

LONDON — Downtown London restaurants are preparing to kick off Redbud Ride weekend with a community-wide block party on Friday evening featuring live music, themed menu items and extended dining experiences.

The Redbud Ride Block Party will take place throughout the evening across participating restaurants — encouraging visitors to move between locations and experience a variety of food, drinks and entertainment.

At Local Honey, the evening will center around its “Redbud Revival” event on Friday night. Live music featuring Kelly Caldwell and Kashmir will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the restaurant’s “Honey Hole.”

Local Honey will also feature a lineup of themed



Jordan Allen, who’ll be headlining Saturday’s After Party, performed at Pour Boyz back in May 2023.

| File photo by Nita Johnson

specials for the weekend, including a redbud-glazed pork chop as its evening featured entree, along with brunch offerings such as redbud french toast and a spring redbud salad. A redbud mimosa will also

be available as a cocktail special. The restaurant is closed Mondays, with brunch and dinner service offered throughout the week and extended dinner hours from 5-10 p.m. on weekends.

Nearby, Pour Boyz will be open throughout the day and into the evening, operating from 11 a.m. to 12 midnight on Friday, offering karaoke for those willing to partake, as well as a slew of specials ranging from a \$5 one topping personal pan pizza, \$3 fireball shots, and \$2 fish Friday. To keep updated with the specials, follow Pour Boyz on their Facebook page.

Also joining the event is

across downtown on Friday evening,” McDaries said.

She added that participating restaurants are being provided with activation kits and themed décor to help unify the look and feel of the event, while still allowing each business to create its own unique experience.

“Each participating location will host live entertainment and create a fun experience for locals and tourists alike,” McDaries said. “This approach not only enhances the consumer experience, but also creates meaningful opportunities for local businesses to plug in.”

McDaries also emphasized the broader impact of the event, noting that it encourages visitors to explore multiple locations throughout downtown.

“By encouraging people to move throughout

downtown, stay longer, and support multiple businesses, the Block Party helps drive foot traffic and support the local economy in a way that feels organic and celebratory,” she said. “It also reflects London Downtown’s role as a community connector — bringing together businesses, creatives and community partners to activate downtown spaces and create experiences that are greater than the sum of their parts.”

Additional participating restaurants and a finalized list of block party locations are expected to be announced on London Downtown’s Facebook page, as well as the official Redbud Ride page.

For additional details on participating restaurants, those interested can check the business’s Facebook pages for updates on specials, entertainment and schedules.



Sauced is participating in Friday’s Block Party.

| File photo by Dillan Combs



The long bench style seating against the wall further enhances the history of the building by utilizing frames as a wall design inside Local Honey.

| File photo by Nita Johnson



| Photo courtesy of Rodney Hendrickson

Bicycle Safety Tips for Kids

Spring is here, the temperatures are rising, and it's time to get your bike out of the garage. But before you hop onto your bike, take a few minutes to brush up some bike safety tips.

- Always wear a helmet and suitable clothing. Loose clothing can get caught in a bicycle chain.
 - Learn road rules and use them.
 - Ride with the traffic, not against it.
 - Always check for traffic before riding into a street.
 - Obey all traffic lights and stop signs.
 - Give the proper hand signals when turning or stopping.
 - Stop at all intersections, get off your bike and walk it across the street.
 - Do not carry others on your bike.
 - Avoid riding your bike after dark.
- If you must, make sure your bike has reflectors and wear light-colored, so drivers will be able to see you.
- Have an adult inspect your bike regularly to make sure it is in good condition.

Scenes from the Past



These riders wave to the photographer during the 2010 Redbud Ride.

| File photo



Volunteers mark the routes and turnarounds for cyclists.

| File photo



Grabbing a snack is always a good idea at rest stops.
| File photo by Nita Johnson



It's a huge accomplishment to reach the check-in table.
| File photo by Madison Nantz



The Redbud Ride is an annual father-son outing for Hayden and Mark Hughes.
| File photo by Madison Nantz



London attorney Gary Hudson poses here in his T-shirt from the 5th annual Redbud Ride.

| File photo



The first rest stop for cyclists was Crossroads Fire Department. Here, some cyclists hydrate and prepare their equipment at the stop.

| File photo by Madison Nantz



Some 400 cyclists are expected to participate in this year's Redbud Ride.

| File photo by Madison Nantz



This cyclist waves as he crosses the finish line.

| File photo by Nita Johnson

4 WAYS



to Ride the Redbud

| Photo courtesy of Rodney Hendrickson

By Nita Johnson
Correspondent

The annual Redbud Ride remains a popular challenge for both seasoned and beginning cyclists, offering four different routes that

increase in difficulty.

While each route begins in downtown London and travels along East 4th Street to McWhorter Road, the routes split into different segments to direct challenged

riders to a more rolling terrain of hills, curves and countryside that showcases the beauty of southeastern Kentucky.

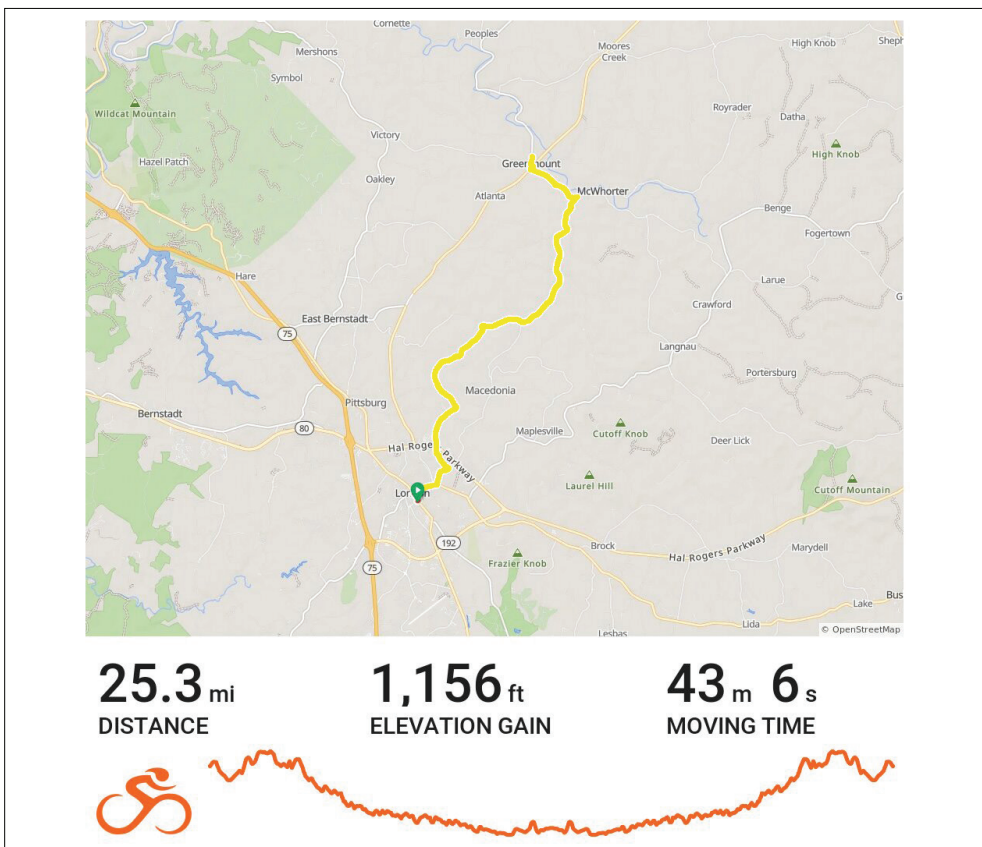
The routes have not changed since the inception of the Redbud Ride and continue to

bring in hundreds every year to participate in the ride. The Century Ride, of 100 miles, remains the most popular, as it is the first 100-mile ride for cyclists participating in the Kentucky Cycling Challenge.

Special features to the Redbud Ride include the scenic sections of rural Kentucky, SAG (support and gear) stops and SAG drivers who travel along the routes to assist cyclists. SAG stops are set every 10 to 15 miles

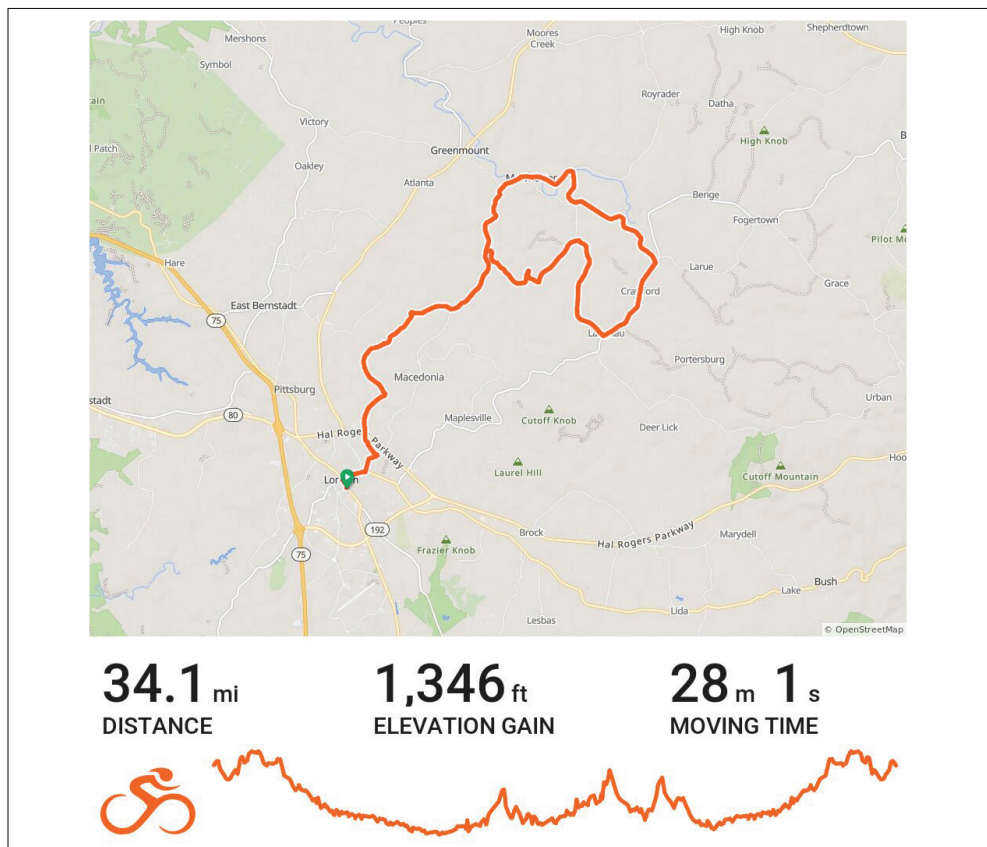
with volunteer groups hosting the rest stops with friendliness and refreshments.

Cyclists are greeted with welcome packets as they register or check in before the ride begins.



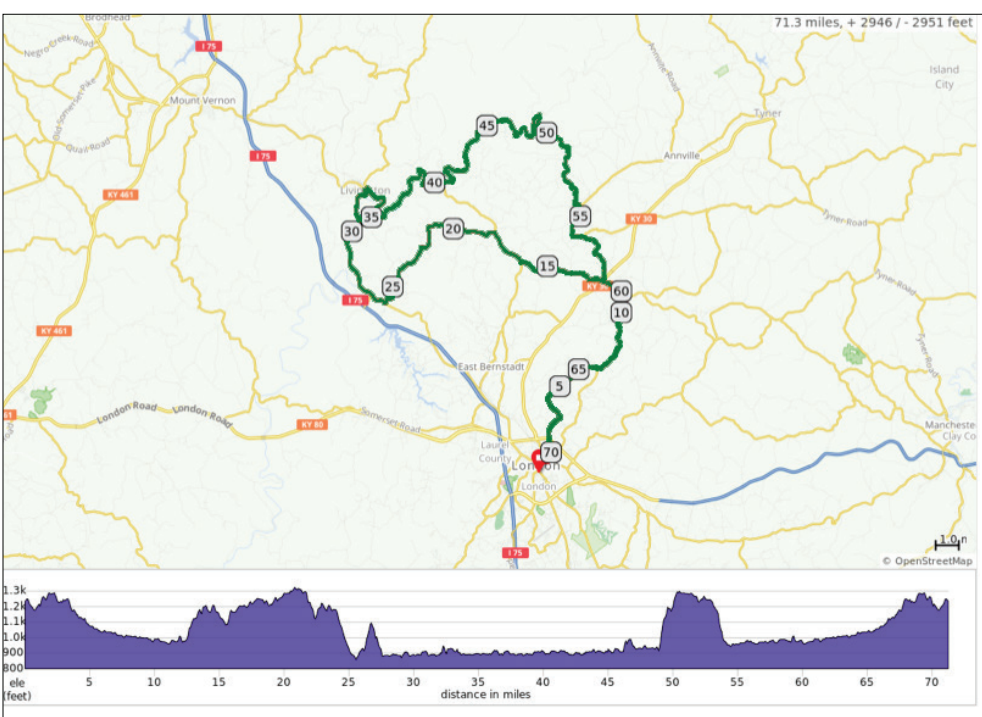
Yellow Route:

This is a 24-mile ride that is termed as the beginners ride due to being the shortest and flattest route. This scenic route showcases the beauty of southeastern Kentucky but offers a less difficult challenge than the other three routes.



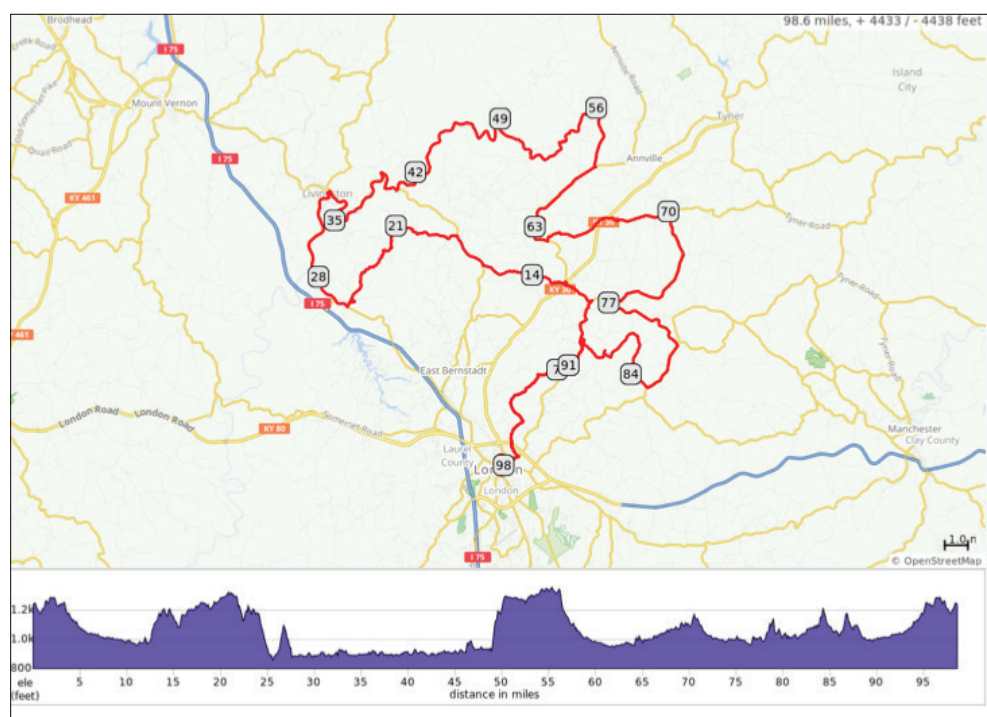
Orange Route:

Called the "Moderate" ride for first-time riders who are seeking to increase their riding time, this route offers some rolling terrain that also gives cyclists a casual pace along southeastern Kentucky's countryside.



Green Route:

This 72-mile route weaves through Laurel and Rockcastle counties through scenic countrysides and is called the Intermediate route with some challenging hills blended with the flat sections for a metric century ride. This route is part of the Kentucky Cycling Challenge and is a popular route for those wishing to seek a challenge



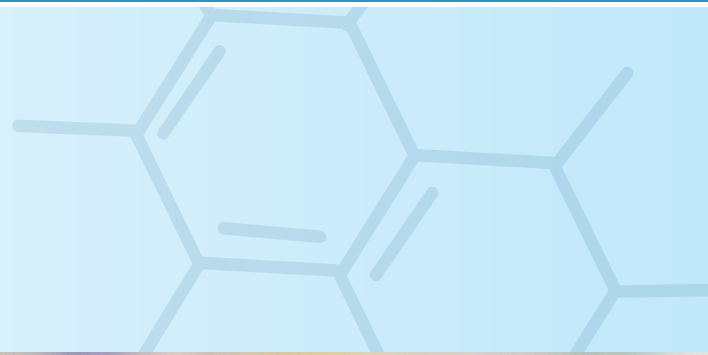
Red Route:

By far the most popular route, this winding route highlights both the scenic sections of rural Kentucky as well as featuring rolling hills, flat sections, curving countryside views of wooded areas and farmland. The Red Route is part of the Century Challenge and has been coined as the "Best Century Ride in America." This route is ideal for cyclists seeking a full-day adventure through southeastern Kentucky.



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Our pharmacists are specially trained to take an active role in your care.



Collaborative Care

We work directly with your provider to be fully informed about your health and treatment plan.



Patient Education

Staffed by a team of skilled pharmacists and technicians who bring a wealth of knowledge to every prescription.



Discounted Prescriptions

Grace Health patients who qualify for our sliding fee discount (SFD) program also receive a pharmacy discount. Ask our staff for more info.

Your health is unique - your medication should be too!

FREE DELIVERY →

Four convenient locations with drive-thru and free delivery. Request refills on MyChart. Call today to transfer your prescription.



Call Us
888-883-9005

SCAN



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www.gracehealthky.org