

Washington County

Homemade pies, historic jails make county great place to live or visit

From homemade pies (over 650 baked fresh each day) to historic jails (eight), Washington County has an array of sights, tastes and experiences for the U.S. 36 traveler.

Washington County's 12 communities have plenty of things to do throughout the year. The county's small-town atmosphere will make any traveler feel special.

You won't find one fast food franchise, but you will find home-cooked meals at cozy little country cafes. You won't find a stoplight, but you can stroll through an antique shop, bringing back memories of grandma's house.

Four up-to-date information, check the county website at www.washingtoncountyks.net and click on tourism. Group tours, information, and step-on guide services are available through the Washington County Tourism Office at (785) 325-2116.

Nature enthusiasts should not miss Washington State Fishing Lake and Wildlife Area, 12 miles northwest of Washington. This 111-acre state lake is surrounded by 352 acres of public land with all kinds of wildlife. Washington County is included in the Tallgrass "Prairie Parkway" guide featuring birding, wildlife, prairie flora, national history and scenic vista sites.

WASHINGTON

Washington is one of the state's 46 territorial communities. Founded in 1860, it is the county seat and hosts the Washington County Historical Society Museum, Kansas Law Enforcement Museum (in an 1899 limestone jail), Allis-Chalmers Museum (the largest collection of Allis-Chalmers equipment in the world) and the home of the Mayor of Munchkinland.

The actor Charlie Becker, who played the Mayor of Munchkinland in the Wizard of Oz, lived in Washington along with his wife Jessie, a native of Washington County.

The Munchkinland theme is used for a playground in the City Park on the south side of U.S. 36. The park also has a pool, RV hook-ups, basketball and sand volleyball courts, rodeo arena, race track, softball diamonds, and fairgrounds. The dam over Mill Creek at the south edge of the park is great for bird watching.

Just south of U.S. 36 is the MarCon pie factory, which produces over 600 pies per day. Tours are available by calling 785-325-2439. At the corner of U. S. 36 and "D" Street you will find Kansas Specialty Dog Service, a firm dedicated to the training of dogs for the physically and visually impaired. Tours are available by appointment at 785-325-2256.

Continue your journey to downtown Washington on the original brick streets. Shop at one of the antique shops, or have lunch at one of the eateries, deli or specialty coffee shop. The Washington County Courthouse, a 1930s art-deco structure, is on the National Register of Historic Places. Just north of Courthouse Square is a unique brick waterfall sculpture at the First National Bank Courtyard. The 40-foot brick waterfall was sculpted by artist Jack Curran. Cedar Hills Golf Course offers nine holes with grass greens



Hunters come from all over to try to bag the popular ring-neck pheasant, a game bird which is found throughout Kansas, but mostly in the western and north central parts of the state.

three miles south of Washington on K-15 Washington also is host to the Jayhusker Racing Circuit.

BARNES

The town of Barnes has been experiencing a bit of resurgence in recent years, becoming a favorite stop for travelers. The Hometown Café, a community-operated eatery, was featured on a segment of the Sunflower Journeys television program in 2005.

Barnes Mercantile, which sells Kansas products, collectibles, and antiques, is housed in the 1895 limestone Opera House building. Our Daily Bread Bake Shoppe and Bistro offers fresh-made breads in downtown Barnes. The IOOF Park features a recently refurbished water fountain and WPA-built bandshell.

CLIFTON/VINING

A bit of the Old West can be found in and around Clifton. West of town on K-9 is the LCL Buffalo Ranch, which includes an antique vehicle and machinery museum and has more than 300 bison roaming the prairie. In downtown Clifton, you will find the Historical Museum housed in a former depot.

GREENLEAF

Greenleaf's City Park offers a swimming pool, playground, softball diamond, picnic area with shelter houses and basketball, and tennis courts. An old limestone jail is a half block west of the American Legion Hall. A must-see site south of town is the 120-year-old St. Michael's Catholic Church.

HADDAM

Just two miles north of U.S. 36, Haddam offers an early glimpse of women in government. The jail was built as one of the first orders of business

after a municipal election in 1901 saw all women put into the offices of mayor, city clerk, police judge and council. The stone jail is a half block south of the bank corner on Haddam's Main Street.

The Griswold Wildlife Refuge is south of Haddam on K-22.

HANOVER

One of the oldest structures in Washington County is the Hollenberg Pony Express Station State Historic Site. Built in 1858 by Great Hollenberg, the station, northeast of Hanover, was established as the Cottonwood Ranch. It became a station where wagons, stagecoaches and Pony Express riders paused along the Oregon-California and Pony Express trails. The building is the only unaltered Pony Express Station still on its original site. A Pony Express Rider sculpture stands at the intersection of U.S. 36 and K-15.

Hanover's Fourth of July brings people together for fireworks and musical entertainment. The Days of '49 has one of the biggest parades in the region, a carnival, dance, food and entertainment.

St. John's Catholic Church, a block south of the stoplight at the east edge of Hanover, is the oldest church in Washington County, having been built in 1880 by the parishioners. The limestone was hauled by team and wagon from a local quarry.

HOLLENBERG

Founded by Great H. Hollenberg in 1872, this was where Mr. Hollenberg opened the first store in Washington County. The community well in the center of Hollenberg is maintained by the town.

LINN

Ten miles south of U.S. 36 on K-15, the Linn City Park offers a swimming pool, softball diamonds, RV hookups, a picnic

area with shelter houses and a basketball court. The Ohlde Family Dairy is available for tours by appointment and also sells Alma Cheese.

MAHASKA

The Sixth Principal Meridian, or 40th Parallel Marker, a mile west and a mile north of Mahaska, was the beginning point for surveys in Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado and South Dakota. Originally marked in 1854, the point is the site from where more than 200 million square miles of land was surveyed.

A piece of the original marker was discovered in 1963 and an impressive granite marker is nearby. The site maybe a bit off the beaten track, but it is well worth traveling the back roads to visit.

MORROWVILLE

You'll find a replica of the world's first bulldozer, patented in 1912 by J. Earl McLeod and Jim Cummings, on display in Cummings Park in the center of Morrowville.

The park also has a picnic area, shelter house and playground.

PALMER

The village of Palmer has a quaint downtown with a community-owned café and grocery. Just to the west of the grocery is a 1920s jail.

Two historic churches are part of the community.

On the northwest corner of town is St. Paul Lutheran Church, ELCA, a century-old brick structure, and southwest of town is St. John Lutheran Church, LCMS, an example of an old white wooden frame church on the hill, made fresh with new stained glass windows.