

# Lexington, Kentucky

## Home of the WEG and Horse Lover's Ultimate Destination!

By Diana Berthold

The World Equestrian Games for me was an unbelievable once-in-a-lifetime experience and so much more. The thrill of it all took my breath away with great horses, people, demonstrations, vendors—and to think I was there in the midst of it all was like something I never would have imagined!

Besides the Games themselves, I had the opportunity to visit several of the surrounding places of interest. Here are some of them:

### Claiborne Farm, Former Home of Secretariat

Claiborne Farm is one of the most famous of the many thoroughbred breeding farms located in Kentucky and has been in the Hancock family for four generations. Reservations must be made in advance in order to be admitted to a tour of this fabulous farm, and we were fortunate to have been given the opportunity by a vet who services this farm. Since people wanted to see these beautiful places, learn more about the horses and the industry, the many breeding farms worked together on the idea which resulted in the creation of the Kentucky Horse Park since these farms found it hard to accommodate visitors in the middle of their busy operations.



We were greeted by Tony, who is one of the five men who run the breeding operations and is responsible for the three stallions that he presented to us during our time there.

*Eddington*, the massive mahogany bay that stands with great presence,

resides in a stall which bears the plaque of other famous past residents such as *Secretariat*. *Pulpit*, the fresh chestnut, son of *Preacher*, is his neighbor across the aisle. Lastly, *Arch*, the bay with the white blaze that has a craving for peppermint (red ones, not the green ones), can be found down the aisle from *Eddington*. These very valuable stallions are bathed every day, spend most of their time outside without blankets, are not given supplements with the exception for their

hooves, and claim their great health not to the Kentucky blue grass, but the limestone beneath.

Nearly two hours flew by as Tony shared the history of the farm, horses, and his experiences in thoroughbred racing in an exciting and even humorous way. Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom visited Claiborne Farm twice. The farm currently employs about 80 people and in the past up to 150.

When *Secretariat* was syndicated for 32 shares at \$190,000 per share, it was unprecedented and did not even guarantee a live foal. Just this year, the farm will guarantee a live foal with their contracts and those five men are responsible for the stallions to be bred three times a day during breeding season. Mares imported from other countries are the last to be bred in the season.

Claiborne Farm is where the great *Secretariat*, 1973 Triple Crown winner, was conceived, though not foaled, and he was buried in full body in an oak casket, and his tombstone is adorned with one dozen fresh red roses. Many other famous thoroughbreds have been buried there as well. *Bold Ruler*, *Mr. Prospector*, *Round Table*, and *Swale* are just a few of them. Last year, in Paris, the first Secretariat Fair was held and the winner, whose horse most resembled *Secretariat*, was awarded \$5,000. The owner had just bought the horse the previous month and after seeing the horse, Walt Disney Studios purchased the horse for the movie *Secretariat*.

### The University of Kentucky and Lexington Convention Center

We traveled to Lexington to see the special art exhibit at the University of Lexington, and the Lexington Convention Center. Main Street was closed due ticket sales at the King Theatre for the red carpet treatment for the premier of *Secretariat* that evening, October 3rd. The University of



Kentucky had a collection of works on loan and a special exhibit by Polish artist Andrew Pater who traveled to Kentucky and made his home there. There you could view his famed pastels of jockey silks from Keeneland, as well as oils of horses, dogs, and livestock.

There were vendors in Triangle Park, which is

across from the Lexington Convention Center. Along the streets were the fabulous lifelike fiberglass horses painted *Going in Circles*, *Quilted Horse*, a village landscape, a sea creature, and many others.

At the entrance of the Lexington Convention Center, we were greeted by the extraordinary aroma of a 975 pound chocolate cake horse which also boasted its incredible recipe which included 320 pounds of confectionary sugar and 70 pounds of chocolate and that was just some of the ingredients for icing! Inside were lifelike bronze sculptures, art from around the world (even Mongolia), a mechanical horse demonstrating riding lessons, and more.

On display in Triangle Park, across from the Lexington Convention Center, were lifesize horses such as a Sea Creature (right), and a Quilted Horse (below).

Far Bottom: A 975 pound horse made entirely of chocolate was on display at the Lexington Convention Center.



## In the Countryside

In the southeastern Appalachia Mountains in Irvine, we stayed in a 150+ year log cabin at the Snug Hollow Farm on a beautiful 300 acre farm with Barbara Napier, innkeeper, and vegetarian cook extraordinaire. She has stories to tell, great food for breakfast and dinner, music, and a cook book where she shares her wonderful stories, recipes, photographs, etc. I was neither a vegetarian nor a cook, but have been both since I returned home.

Not far from there is a place called Berea, which is considered one of the top 25 art destinations in the country and the capital of the arts in southeastern United States. As a horse woman, artist, quilter, and musician, I felt like I was in heaven. In Berea, you can visit the many artists' studios and also their work at the Artisan Center on RT I-75. Kentucky proudly displays "Quilt Blocks," made of two large plywood sheets, painted in different quilt block designs, mounted on many of the old large dark barns along the roadways and especially on the music highway RT 23.

## How My Trip Began

Six weeks before the WEG my best friend called from Florida and told me that we had to go, that it was an opportunity of a lifetime since it was going to be held here in the United States, and she was not going to take no for an answer. Each of us had just experienced our ultimate health challenge of a lifetime and here she wanted to plan something that I thought would be impossible since arrangements for travel and lodging for these games were made quite some time ago.

With the huge crowds, it could have been a bit daunting, but it was an amazing adventure and the organizers had it well orchestrated. I watched Ashley Holzer ride *Pop Art* in the Dressage segment, and followed the riders along the spectacular course in the Cross Country Event.

I am so glad to have had this great adventure with my best friend, stayed in such a wonderful place where I could inhale the culture and the breathtaking scenery. Where else can you drive and see one beautiful horse farm after another, or the wonderful scenery in the mountains, and meet such interesting people? It was great to see people of many nations waving their flags as they supported their athletes here in our great United States.

As much as I didn't want it to end, I was so inspired that I couldn't wait to get home to work in my quilt and art studios, share my story with my husband, children, and friends, and see my own horses even though they may not have won medals or races. Ω



At the Lexington Horse Park - All Photos by Diana Berthold