Tour Route

Capitol Grounds Walking Tour
In January 1905, a special session of the Kentucky Legislature was called to consider a site for a new State Capitol building, due to the rising need for more space as well as space with modern technologies. An appropriation of $40,000 was allotted for the purchase of the land and preparation for the new building. The site chosen was known in Frankfort as the "Hunt Place," a farm containing 33 acres in South Frankfort. The amount expended on the purchase of the grounds for the site and the work done thereon, performed by day labor, totaled $100,000. The setting was a naturally picturesque location. Frank M. Andrews, the architect whom the commission selected to build the new Capitol, stated that "Nature herself fixed the site."

The Kentucky State Capitol Grounds was one of the few state capital grounds sites designed by the Olmsted brothers, a team including step-brothers John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. The brothers formed their partnership in 1889 and followed in the footsteps of their father, the notable Frederick Law Olmsted, the nation's first landscape architect. Not only did the Olmsted Brothers carry on the ideals and characteristics of their father, but they also were outstanding leaders in advancing landscape architecture to a status of honor and recognition among professionals. The two brothers were among the founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects and played an influential role in creating the National Park Service. Their notable commissions include the United States Capitol and White House grounds, Great Smoky Mountains and Acadia National Parks, Yosemite Valley, Central Park in New York City, Atlanta's Piedmont Park, as well as entire park systems in cities such as Seattle, Boston, and Louisville.

1 Rose Garden
Created in 1961, the Rose Garden is a colorful spot on the Capitol grounds boasting many varieties of beautiful roses.

2 Sweetgum Tree
The Sweetgum Tree, also known as red gum, southern gum, American Sweetgum and American red gum, is one of the most important timber trees in the United States. It is often used for sliced veneer and furniture stock, and its even texture allows it to be stained or painted easily.

3 Linda Bailey Marker
A memorial plaque and tree are dedicated to Linda Bailey, a respected employee that began working for the state in 1967 and ended her career as Personnel Branch Manager for the Finance Cabinet. She was born in 1949 and died in 1990.

4 American War Mothers Marker (Bridge-Capital Avenue)
Organized in 1917 in response to a call from the national government for food conservation, the American War Mothers grew rapidly in 1919, and received a national charter in 1925. The Kentucky State Chapter was organized in 1919, and multiple branches exist in the state.

5 National Register of Historic Places
The Kentucky State Capitol was built in 1910 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

6 Japanese Zelkova
This tree is an Asian cousin to America's native elm tree, and is popular because it is resistant to Dutch elm disease and its tolerance of urban conditions.

7 Kentucky Coffee Tree Marker
A memorial plaque and tree are dedicated to John "Stony" Spicer, Marker honors John "Stony" Spicer, who died in 1993. Stony was a long time director of the Physical Plant, which is a part of the Finance and Administration Cabinet.

8 Floral Clock Marker
Dedicated in 1963 as a project of the Commonwealth and the Garden Club of Kentucky, Kentucky's floral clock is the perfect photo opportunity. Boasting immense hands and a face 34 feet across, the clock is one of the largest of its kind in the world and is planted seasonally with more than 10,000 plants grown in the Commonwealth's greenhouses.

9 Welcome to Kentucky Marker
This marker highlights Kentucky's recreational opportunities, including the Kentucky State Park System.

10 Freedom Tree Marker
This tree honors those Prisoners of War who served during the Vietnam War from Kentucky.

11 Charles Wickliffe Marker
A marker and tree are dedicated in memory of Charles D. Wickliffe, general counsel and procurement law expert for the Finance and Administration Cabinet from 1966-1995.

12 Bert Combs Marker
Bert T. Combs was an important political figure in Kentucky. His political career is highlighted on this marker.

13 A Civil War Reprisal KHS Marker
The Civil War was one of the most divisive, bloody, and tragic times in our country's history, especially for all the state of Kentucky.

14 John "Stony" Spicer Marker
Marker honors John "Stony" Spicer, who died in 1993. Stony was a long time director of the Physical Plant, which is a part of the Finance and Administration Cabinet.

15 Capitol Interior-Rotunda Statuary
Beginning in 1911 with Abraham Lincoln and finished in 1963 with Alben Barkley, the Capitol's Rotunda Statuary is a fascinating chronicle of Kentucky's history and is part of the guided interior tour of the Kentucky State Capitol.

16 National Register of Historic Places
National Register of Historic Places designation plaque adorns the north entrance vestibule of the Kentucky State Capitol.

17 Time Capsule
This capsule was placed on the Capitol Grounds to be opened in the year 2076, marking the 300th year anniversary of our nation's founding.

18 Time Capsule
A time capsule was buried as part of the 75th anniversary of our nation's founding.

19 Restoration Marker
A major restoration of the Kentucky "New" State Capitol was undertaken during 1986-1987.

20 View of Capitol
This vantage point affords one with a picturesque view of the Capitol building and its promenade.

21 New Capitol KHS Marker
Marker describes the New Capitol's construction, funding, and architectural style.

22 Frankfort Chosen as Capitol KHS Marker
This marker chronicles the events and happenings in the history of Frankfort and its destiny as the Capital of Kentucky.

23 Landscape Garden
An area to relax, reflect and gather at the west side of the Capitol building. Future development of this area will feature walkways, benches, beautiful flowers, and areas for markers and monuments reflecting Kentucky's rich heritage.

24 Red Maple Tree
The Red Maple tree, also known as the Swamp Maple or Soft Maple, is one of the most common and widespread trees of the eastern half of North America.

25 Chestnut Tree
The American chestnut tree was once used in Kentucky for a variety of purposes, and keeping it planted is vital to not only Kentucky's forests but also to its heritage and culture.

26 Kentucky Coffee Tree Marker
Kentucky Coffee Tree is the official State Heritage Tree.

27 Governor's Christmas Tree 1975 and Julian Carroll Marker
In 1975, Governor Julian Carroll planted a Christmas tree in honor of the first child to be born to a Governor while in office to reside at the Governor's Mansion.

28 A.B. “Happy” Chandler Marker
This marker given by the Kentucky Chapter of the American War Mothers, honors A.B. “Happy” Chandler, who served as governor of Kentucky from 1935 to 1939 and 1955-1959.

29 Governor's Mansion Garden
The current Governor's Mansion garden, intended to convey the feel of a formal French garden, was completed during the John Y. Brown Administration as part of a major renovation from 1982-1983 of the Governor's Mansion.

30 Kentucky's Executive Mansion
The history of Kentucky’s second Governor’s Mansion, built in 1914, is explained on this marker by the Kentucky Historical Society. The executive residence was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

31 Yellow Buckeye from Hope Taft
A Yellow Buckeye tree was planted as part of a state tree exchange between Ohio and Kentucky, given by First Lady of Ohio Hope Taft in 2006.

32 Sycamore Tree from Martha Wilkinson
A Sycamore tree was planted by Martha Wilkinson, the First Lady of Kentucky from 1987 to 1991, wife of Wallace G. Wilkinson.

33 Tanya Gritz Marker
A Yellow Buckeye tree was planted as part of a state tree exchange between Ohio and Kentucky, given by Governor Louie B. Nunn in the bird sanctuary in 1970.

34 Yellow Poplar from Governor Nunn
A Yellow Poplar Tree, also known as the Tulip Poplar Tree was planted by Governor Louie B. Nunn in the bird sanctuary in 1970.

35 Thomas Dunigan Marker
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

36 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
This marker describes the New Capitol's construction, funding, and architectural style.

37 Bill Perry Marker
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Bill Perry, a former employee with the office of Controller from 1993 to 1999.

38 Yellow Poplar from Governor Ford
A Yellow Poplar Tree was planted by Martha Wilkinson, the First Lady of Kentucky from 1987 to 1991, wife of Wallace G. Wilkinson.

39 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

40 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

41 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

42 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

43 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

44 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

45 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

46 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

47 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

48 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

49 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

50 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

51 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

52 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

53 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

54 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.

55 Yellow Poplar from Governor Dunigan
Bird sanctuary marker in memory of Tanya Maria Gritz in 1995.