

UNIQUE TOURS: KENTUCKY ADDS COAL TO ITS CHICKEN



Outside the United States, mentioning Kentucky evokes images of deep-fried chicken. Inside the country, mentioning Kentucky means one of the top three coal producing states in the last 50 years. This history is now being celebrated by the opening of the Appalachian coal mine.

The mining industry throws up images of industrial toughness, horrible working conditions and something bordering on slave labour. America is not alone in having these stereotypes pinned to its mining industry. Britain used to be very much the same. As a few of Britain's old mines have turned into museums and artifacts of industrial revolution, America and particularly Kentucky is following suit.

In one of the great mines in the Black Mountain area, Harlan County has now been decorated with the opening of the Appalachian coal mine tour. It is a 30-minute tour of 8 stops designed to show visitors the different conditions the miners had to put up with.

The tour not only provides an insight into the industrial history, yet also sheds light upon the era of immigration to the United States at the turn of the 20th century. Mostly immigrants worked under the bleak conditions and even today people with anything but a southern American accent guide the tours.

The locals have responded to the new interactive and innovative ideas of providing coalmine tours by making the Kentucky more accessible to tourists. Public areas have been cleaned up and Kentucky residents are looking to take full advantage of the potential success of coalmine tourism. There are no real safety issues at the mines as areas of them have been specifically chosen with a 90% safety record. The 10% of accidents occurred because of the lack of safety equipment, which is now widely available.

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