

REAL ID Extended
to May 7, 2025

The Department of Homeland Security extended the REAL ID deadline to May 7, 2025. The REAL ID Act established minimum security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards and prohibits Federal agencies from accepting for official purposes licenses and identification cards from states that do not meet these standards. Beginning May 7, 2025, every state and territory resident will need to present a REAL ID compliant license/ID, or another acceptable form of ID for boarding commercial aircraft, accessing Federal facilities and entering nuclear plants. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) considers a current passport or military ID acceptable identification for boarding an aircraft. For more information on Kentucky's REAL ID compliant license, visit [Drive.ky.gov](https://drive.ky.gov).

Free Battery Wellness Clinics from AAA

October is Fall Car Care Month and AAA East Central is hosting Free Battery Wellness Clinics to celebrate. State-of-the-art diagnostic equipment will confirm whether your battery will hold a charge. If a new battery is needed, one can be installed on the spot. The high-quality, AAA-branded battery comes with a three-year, free-replacement warranty, and AAA members receive a discount. Battery checks will be available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at these AAA office locations:

Thursday, Oct. 26

Hurstbourne
• 9421 Viking Center Dr., 502-425-7885

No appointment necessary. If your battery fails the test, new batteries will be available for purchase and installed on the spot at a special AAA Member price.

Free Identity Theft Program October 17th

AAA East Central will hold an identity-theft program in partnership with the Louisville Metro Police Dept. on Tuesday, October 17 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at AAA Hurstbourne (9421 Viking Center Drive, Louisville). Identity theft is quickly becoming one of the most common crimes, and seniors, along with children and teens, are the most vulnerable to identity-theft scams. Learn about identity theft, how thieves steal your identity and steps you can take to prevent identity theft. Seating is limited. For reservations, please call 502-779-3610.

Free Identity Theft Program October 19th

AAA East Central will hold an identity-theft program in partnership with the Bowling Green Police Dept. on Thursday, October 19 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at AAA Bowling Green (1770 Scottsville Road, Bowling Green). Identity theft is quickly becoming one of the most common crimes, and seniors, along with children and teens, are the most vulnerable to identity-theft scams. Learn about identity theft, how thieves steal your identity and steps you can take to prevent identity theft. Seating is limited. For reservations, please call 502-779-3610.

Combine the two ID theft sides to this

Free ID Theft Programs Oct. 17, 19

AAA East Central will hold identity-theft programs with the Louisville Metro Police Dept. on Tuesday, October 17 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at AAA Hurstbourne (9421 Viking Center Drive); and on October 19th with the Bowling Green Police Dept. on Thursday, October 19 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at AAA Bowling Green (1770 Scottsville Road). Identity theft is quickly becoming one of the most common crimes, and seniors, along with children and teens, are the most vulnerable to identity-theft scams. Learn about identity theft, how thieves steal your identity and steps you can take to prevent identity theft. Seating is limited. For reservations, please call 502-779-3610.

Allow AAA to help you find a jewel of a hotel

Diamond statuses separate quality properties from the rest

Diamonds are synonymous with luxury and brightness. They're sparkling gems that quickly grab your attention – and not just at the jewelry store.

Diamonds represent quality, particularly in **travel** and AAA uses these symbols to identify **the** premier spots nationwide.

Not sure which hotel is best for you? Let AAA shine a light on your plans to make sure you won't be disappointed. It's travel information you can trust. Every Diamond-designated property has passed a rigorous professional inspection to ensure that your experience will be clean, comfortable and safe.

All you have to do is decide which Diamond level best fits your needs and budget. Choose from thousands of locations. Whether you're interested in an overnight or extended stay, it's a good bet AAA's rating system won't disappoint you.

Now AAA Diamonds aren't a hotel's only rating. Myriad travel sites offer star ratings that allow travelers to rate their stays. They can be helpful but are subjective and might be biased.

Diamond designations are determined by trained professionals, who inspect nearly 60,000 properties across North America each year. These properties must meet AAA standards for cleanliness, condition and safety at every level, so there are likely no bad choices.

Every hotel, however, isn't an ideal



CHOOSING A WINNER – Allow AAA to help you find a quality hotel that suits your needs. *Image: Brian Jackson. Adobe Stock.*

choice for every trip or every traveler. AAA's inspectors assign Diamond levels based on the experience and amenities offered, giving you guidance at a glance, so you can make the best decision.

There are four levels of AAA Diamond designations, covering a range of amenities that include:

- Approved properties meet AAA guidelines based on the most recent industry standards and member expectations.
- Three Diamonds indicate a more

comprehensive level of amenities, style and comfort.

- Four Diamonds reflect an upscale experience with an extra level of service.
- Five Diamonds indicate world-class luxury and indulgence.

Choose a Diamond level that fits your travel occasion.

If you're on a short business trip and need a comfortable place to stay overnight, there is no need to spend on extra amenities that you won't have the time

to enjoy.

If you're planning a family vacation, choose a Diamond level that fits your budget and offers features in which you are interested.

If you're planning a once-in-a-lifetime occasion, you will want to consider properties that offer the level of amenities you desire for a memorable trip.

It's not difficult to find a hotel that best suits your needs. Visit AAA.com/TravelGuides/Hotels and enter your destination and travel dates. Filter your search by checking the Diamond designations and hover over the logos for a reminder of what each property offers.

Click on any hotel in your search results for a detailed listing that includes photos, a AAA inspector's description, a list of amenities, AAA discounts and more. You can book your room or continue to search.

You also can search for hotels on AAA's TripTik® Travel Planner. Enter the name of your destination and select the hotel icon.

And don't forget about AAA Digital TourBooks®. They're available on smartphone, tablet or desktop. Hotel listings include Diamond designations, descriptions and amenities and convenient "Book Now" buttons that will take you to the AAA website for details and booking with AAA rates.

All diamonds glisten and grab your attention, but few share the clarity of a AAA Diamond.

Mark Twain national forest a tranquil setting

Destination highlights trip on Ozark National Riverways Drive

It takes more than words to describe Mark Twain National Forest. Up close and personal are the best ways to absorb all it has to offer.

Comprised of 1.5 million acres of public land, more than 750 miles of trails and 350 miles of perennial streams, it's an ideal destination for those seeking to find balance on their next trips. Excitement and relaxation collide. Adventurous days conclude with soothing evenings, creating an elixir destined to satisfy any traveler's wanderlust.

Trails wind through various sections of the forest, attracting thousands of visitors annually. Hike, backpack, horseback ride or mountain bike on these magical pathways in the Ozark Highlands, which stretches across Missouri and Arkansas.

Rivers and streams meander through acres of natural beauty, providing locations for swimming, floating, kayaking and canoeing. Experience intense white-water rafting or float down a lazy river – all levels of difficulty are covered.

Mark Twain National Forest boasts 19 Natural Areas, which retain their exquisiteness through careful protection and management, and seven Wilderness Areas that have minimal impact from human development. It's nature at its finest on one of the U.S.'s most ecological friendly stages.

Visit Bell Mountain, where elevations reach as high as 1,702 feet above sea



GREEN WITH ENVY – The beauty of the Ozark Mountains is captured from the Mark Twain National Forest. *Image: sschremp. Adobe Stock.*

level. Hughes Mountain features unique rock formations like those found around Devils Tower in Wyoming. Taum Sauk Mountain State Park offers majestic views of rolling countryside – a mystical playground for leaf-peepers.

Proximity is another attribute. Ozark National Riverways Drive runs through the heart of the forest. Also known as State Route 19, the roadway leads visitors

more than 42 miles through southeastern Missouri. Drivers will cross the Current and Jacks Folk rivers – two of the best floating waterways in the U.S.

Round Spring Cave is a geological treat. Park rangers conduct two-hour tours. Wear sturdy shoes and bring a jacket. Round Spring, meanwhile, is 55 feet deep, rising in a circular pool of water before flowing under a bridge to join the

Current River. Some 26 million gallons of water flow from it daily.

More than 300 caves have been identified within the boundaries of the park, ranging from rock overhangs to one with nearly seven miles of identified passages. Eight caves, including a sinkhole, have been designated as outstanding natural features.

The Alley Community is highlighted by the Alley Mill, a red barn equipped with a waterwheel in the middle of a lush green forest. It's where grain was ground to provide bread more than a century ago. Guests can tour the mill – from top to bottom – to witness its antique persona and learn how grain was transmitted, processed and ground into a fine flour suitable for baking.

As a day's activities conclude, relax at the campground or lodge and gaze into the night sky. The area's limited light pollution opens a doorway to outer space. Star constellations illuminate the setting. Find the Big Dipper. The two stars in the bowl point to Polaris, the North Star. It's an astronomical pinball machine destined to light up a day during its darkest hours.

Travelers interested in visiting Mark Twain National Forest and Ozark National Riverways Drive should follow this advice from the legendary wordsmith:

"You can depend on your eyes, when your imagination is out of focus."

Emphasize responsibility during teen safety week

Parents serve as role models to their children in a multitude of ways. The list is extensive and teaching proper driving habits should be near the top.

Driving could be considered a teenager's initial step on the stairway to adulthood. It's a responsibility to keep themselves and others among them from harm's way.

It's a skill that is honed, but never mastered. There is a threat of an accident each time a driver gets behind the wheel. Those who embrace the responsibility proceed with caution and put themselves at lesser risk than those who fail to take the task seriously.

It's not difficult to take driving for granted and ignore safe habits. Defensive approaches should be stressed and accepted by teenagers.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) understands

the concerns parents might have regarding their children's driving routines and has deemed October 15-21 National Teen Driver Safety Week.

NHTSA advises parents to focus on alcohol consumption, inconsistent use of seat belts, distracted driving, speeding and driving with a passenger in the vehicle. Parents also should engage in safe-driving conversations year-round.

Impaired driving never should be tolerated. Teens are too young to purchase and consume alcohol, but that doesn't stop them from getting into accidents.

But alcohol isn't the only substance that impacts driving. Marijuana affects a driver's ability to react. Teens should be reminded that driving under the influence of any impaired substance, including illicit or prescription drugs, could have deadly consequences.

Seat belts are a simple way to keep

drivers and passengers safe, but too many don't use them. NHTSA reports nearly 50% of teen passenger-vehicle drivers who die in car crashes are not wearing seat belts.

It's never smart to be using cell-phones, answering texts or browsing social-media sites while driving.

Speeding is another cause for teen drivers' fatal-car crashes. Parents can't stress enough the importance of driving defensively.

Research, meanwhile, has proved that teen drivers transporting passengers can dramatically increase the risk of fatal-car crashes. The likelihood of drivers engaging in risky behavior triples with multiple passengers.

Driving is a privilege. Teens struggling to obey the rules might need to have their licenses taken away until they understand the importance of safety.