

City of Fountains Welcomes the VFW

For the fourth time in the organization's history, Kansas City will host the VFW's national convention

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Those of you attending VFW's 119th National Convention in Kansas City, Mo., July 21-25, will be glad you did. Located in the heart of America, Kansas City continues to evolve, making it a superb travel destination. Most importantly, it's home to VFW National Headquarters. While the business of convention is of the utmost importance, the "Paris of the Plains" has a lot to offer convention-goers.

Unlike the last time VFW held its convention in Kansas City, in 2007, a new streetcar is in place to make getting around town much easier. Before your visit, check out kcstreetcar.org to see the restaurants and hotels along the route. If you still are undecided about whether to attend the convention, perhaps the sites featured in this article, some of which feature your fellow VFW members who work at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, will convince you.

Country Club Plaza

www.countryclubplaza.com

This 15-block district about three miles south of downtown Kansas City features more than 150 shops and dozens of restaurants and bars. Most impressively, the Plaza is like an outdoor art museum, with Spanish architecture and European art. Designed in 1922 as the nation's first suburban shopping district, the Plaza has a statue of Sir Winston Churchill and replicas of two of Spain's landmarks — the Giralda Tower and the Seville Light. In a quiet courtyard sits an original bronze of the Roman goddess Pomona by Italian sculptor Donatello Gabrielli.

Running along the Plaza is Brush Creek, where gondola rides are offered through Ambiance on the Water (www.ambianceonthewater.com). Rides last from 20 to 35 minutes and are a good way to end the day.

The Roasterie

www.theroasterie.com

Coffee drinkers will delight in a visit to The Roasterie. With a DC-3 aircraft hoisted atop the factory (it's the company's logo), you can't miss it. Take a tour of where the coffee is produced by reserving your spot online. Each tour takes about 45 minutes. Tours are

offered twice per day Monday through Friday, five times each day on Saturday and once on Sunday. Be sure to visit the gift shop and enjoy a Roasterie coffee and a pastry at the café.

Crown Center

www.crowncenter.com

If you are traveling to Kansas City with children, Crown Center is a must-see. From the LEGOLAND Discovery Center to the Sea Life aquarium to the myriad eateries, it's a fun place to visit for people of all ages. Crown Center is a block east of the streetcar's southern terminus.

The Crown Center Square Fountain has 48 water shooters that spout up to 60 feet in the air. Watching the dancing water shows synchronized to music recorded by members of the Kansas City Symphony is a nice way to unwind after a day of convention business.

Power & Light District

www.powerandlightdistrict.com

Located in the heart of downtown Kansas City, the Power & Light District has more than 50 restaurants, bars, shops and entertainment venues. The nine-block neighborhood links the Kansas City Convention Center on the west and the Sprint Center on the east. In the middle of the district is Kansas City Live!, an outdoor concert venue where live entertainment can be heard weekly during the summer months.

Located on the streetcar line, the Power & Light District is easily accessible.

National World War I Museum and Memorial

www.theworldwar.org

This is the only museum in the U.S. dedicated to showing the Great War through the eyes of those who fought in it. Interactive displays and eyewitness testimonies guide visitors through one of the largest collections of WWI artifacts in the world.

Life-sized trenches offer below-ground views and actual tools and equipment used by Doughboys. Recorded statements from the writings of participants from the period and relevant ambient sounds add to this experience.

Perhaps one of the most poignant sites at the museum is the Paul Sunderland Glass Bridge, which you must cross before entering the Main Gallery. Beneath the bridge are 9,000 red poppies, each representing 1,000 deaths — a reminder of the 9 million who died as a result of the war.

Historic 18th and Vine District

www.kcjazzdistrict.org

Located just two miles southeast of downtown Kansas City, this area is rich in jazz history. Hometown of legendary saxophonist Charlie Parker, the city earned its name during the 1920-40 period when it became the center of jazz music. Jazz greats such as Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald and Louie Armstrong performed there.

Today, it's home to the American Jazz Museum and the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. If you are a true lover of jazz, you will want to take in a show at the Blue Room or Gem Theater.

Be sure you have your veteran or military ID, as some places in the district offer free or discounted admission.

Boulevard Brewing www.boulevard.com

Beer enthusiasts will enjoy a tour of Boulevard Brewing, which launched in Kansas City in 1989. A 45-minute walking tour of the brewery, located about a mile northwest of VFW National Headquarters, concludes with samples in the Tasting Room, so be prepared to show your ID.

Tickets are \$5 and are available on a first-come, first-served basis at the Tours & Rec Center welcome desk. Tour hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

This article is featured in the 2018 June/July issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor, VFW magazine.