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## Whale Of A Sale

**Started as a way to entice travelers off the interstate, the U.S. 127 Corridor Sale has grown like kudzu.**

*By Apryl Chapman Thomas*

Every year in August, thousands of yard sale aficionados make a pilgrimage to the mid-South to find as many as 5,000 vendors set up along a 450-mile stretch of backroads, front yards and fields. The U.S. 127 Corridor Sale, held this year Aug. 7-15, features everything from pottery, glassware, furniture, farm tools and garden accessories to a bulldozer, rail car, horse-drawn hearse and stuffed moose. If an item can't be found along 127, it probably isn't worth having.

The sale, which started in 1987, has attracted national attention. The brainchild of Fentress County, Tenn., executive Mike Walker, the sale's goal was to lure people away from the interstates and to the scenic back roads, plus provide residents an opportunity to sell crafts and antiques.

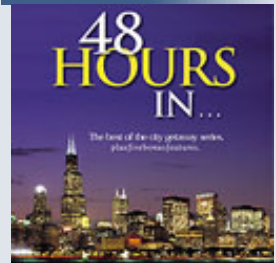
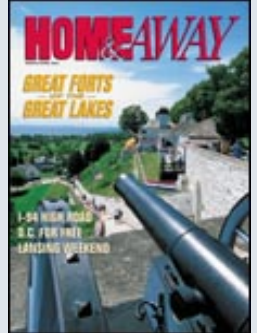
Last year the sale was expanded from four days to nine in order to accommodate the crowds. The route extends from Covington, Ky., to Chattanooga, Tenn., on U.S. Highway 127, then continues on Lookout Mountain Parkway, which dips into the northwest Georgia corner, and ends in Gadsden, Ala. Covering 450 miles, the sale has earned the title "World's Longest Yard Sale." According to the Kentucky Department of Travel, there has been some talk about adding more miles through Ohio.

### BRING EXTRA BAGS

Today, people from all across the country come by car, truck and motor home to take part in the weeklong event. Some even plan their vacations around the Corridor Sale.



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Photography Courtesy of Fentress Co. Chamber Of Commerce, DeKalb Co. Tourist Assoc.

Donna Kremer, administrative coordinator of MainStrasse Village Association in Covington, Ky., recalled two ladies from Alaska who flew into Atlanta in 2002, rented a van and drove north to Covington.

"They were planning on driving back south, buying along the way and then shipping their purchases back home to Alaska. They were acting as an advance scouting party. If they had fun, more of their friends would

come in 2003," Kremer said.

Kremer made a partial trip last year, from MainStrasse to Danville, Ky. She stressed the importance of making hotel reservations in advance. "There were no rooms available on the first Saturday night in Frankfort, Harrodsburg or Danville. We backtracked to Lexington and spent the night there, and then started over on Sunday."

Caroline Keating of Caroline's Closets in Los Angeles, heard about the sale on National Public Radio. It caught her attention, so she contacted the tourism department of Gadsden, Ala. "I realized that I had stumbled onto a treasure trove of secondhand fodder to sell on my Web site." With her mother by her side, she started her adventure in Gadsden and made her way to Kentucky.

"The sale is unbelievably overwhelming," said Keating. "At many points, the traffic crawls at 5 mph, so plotting out 60 miles for your first day is often ambitious. You must also factor in heat, feet and sensory overload."

### **VAST VARIETY**

Johnny and Beverly Sutton of Union City, Tenn., heard about the 127 Corridor Sale for years and were curious to see if it was as spectacular as it was portrayed on television. They decided to cover the Tennessee section, starting in Dunlap, driving north on 127, and stopping at booths along both sides of the road until they reached Crossville, the midpoint for the Tennessee section. From Crossville, they drove north to the Kentucky line.



Photography Courtesy of Fentress Co. Chamber Of Commerce, DeKalb Co. Tourist Assoc.

"The uniqueness of the sale is basically the overall size and variety. There's so many people and so much stuff," said Johnny Sutton. "Everyone had their own story to tell. One vendor, the day after a big storm, offered to sell us all his stuff, including his camper and van -- he was ready to go home. Everyone was willing to stop and chat for awhile, sharing stories of what they had seen somewhere along the route, or telling about what they had bought."

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*Apryl Chapman Thomas is a freelance writer from Athens, Ga.*

### **BEFORE YOU GO: The Fentress County Chamber of Commerce in Jamestown, Tenn., headquarters for the sale, offers this advice:**

- With vendors on both sides of the two-lane route, traffic can become slow, even to a Standstill. Expect sudden stops, and drive carefully

- and defensively along the route.
- Some motel rooms are booked a year in advance, and a few weeks prior to the sale most of the motel rooms are taken. Be sure to plan early.
  - Wear comfortable shoes and sunblock.

For additional information about the sale, call (800) 327-3945 or visit [www.127sale.com](http://www.127sale.com). Ask your AAA office for maps and TripTik routings to the World's Longest Sale.

#### OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

"A diversion from the sale, such as taking in the local sites and museums, helps to clear your mind and rest your body," said Beverly Sutton, an experienced bargain hunter. Whether it's the scenery, river boats, railroads, music, arts and crafts, horses, fishing, hiking or Civil War sites, there are more than 300 attractions worth visiting between sales. Here is a small sampling:

#### Kentucky

- **MainStrasse Village, Covington.** This restored 19th-century German neighborhood is filled with shops, restaurants and entertainment. (859) 491-0458, [www.mainstrasse.org](http://www.mainstrasse.org).
- **Penn's Store, Gravel Switch.** The oldest country store in America owned and run by the same family, it's been open for business since the 1800s. (859) 332-7706, [www.pennsstore.com](http://www.pennsstore.com).
- **Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Harrodsburg.** It's the largest restored 19th-century Shaker Village in America. Stop by for a tour and riverboat ride then enjoy the music, crafts and more. (800) 734-5611, [www.shakervillageky.org](http://www.shakervillageky.org).

#### Tennessee

- **Black Mountain Alpacas, Cumberland.** The farm raises alpacas, sells fiber for spinners and yarns for knitters and welcomes visitors. (931) 707-1996.
- **Ruby Falls, Chattanooga.** The 145-foot waterfall inside Lookout Mountain has been attracting visitors since 1929. (423) 821-2544, [www.rubyfalls.com](http://www.rubyfalls.com).
- **Tennessee Aquarium, Chattanooga.** It's the world's largest freshwater aquarium, and is home to more than 9,000 creatures, including an 80-pound big blue catfish and a century-old alligator snapping turtle. (800) 262-0695, [www.tnaqua.org](http://www.tnaqua.org).

#### Alabama

- **DeSoto State Park, Fort Payne.** The park offers campsites, rustic cabins and mountain chalets plus hiking trails, nature programs and more. (256) 845-5380, [www.desotostatepark.com](http://www.desotostatepark.com).
- **Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts, Gadsden.** Besides three galleries featuring changing national and local exhibits, the center also presents chamber music and courtyard concerts and offers instruction in ballet, jazz dance, strings, voice and more. (256) 543-2787, [www.culturalarts.org](http://www.culturalarts.org).

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