

Week of July 20, 2026

Louisville, KY

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The Night Louisville *Lit Up the World*

Good morning, friends, and welcome to a brand new week. There's something about a Monday in the thick of summer — the whole week's still folded up in front of you, unspent, like a fresh page. So go on and pour that first cup, take the chair by the window where the light's coming in soft, and let's ease into it together. I've got weather to tell you about, a treat that asks almost nothing of you, and a little slice of Louisville history so good I nearly forgot to eat this morning while I was reading about it.

Let's start with the sky, because this week it's got a genuine gift for us — the kind we don't get many of in July. The front of the week is your typical Kentucky summer: hot and heavy, highs up near 90 on Monday and Tuesday, with a chance of a thunderstorm rolling through, especially early. But then — and this is the good part — around Wednesday the whole thing breaks open. The heat backs

off, the humidity lifts, and we're looking at a stretch of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday with highs only in the low 80s and cool nights dipping down into the 60s. Now that, friends, is a July gift. Those are windows-open, sit-on-the-porch, don't-need-the-air-conditioning kind of days, and they don't come around often this time of year. My advice: don't let those three days slip by unnoticed. When a summer hands you a cool afternoon, you take it, and you sit in it a while. The heat creeps back up over the weekend, so enjoy the middle of the week while it lasts.

And speaking of taking it easy, the calendar's practically begging you to this week — because this coming Wednesday, July 22nd, is **National Hammock Day**. I couldn't have timed the cool weather better if I'd ordered it myself. You don't need an actual hammock, mind you; the whole spirit of the day is just permission to rest somewhere comfortable in the middle of the afternoon without feeling one bit guilty about it. A shaded porch chair, a spot on the couch by an open window, a lawn chair under a tree — any of them will do. Thursday, as it happens, is **National Refreshment Day** too, so let me hand you both holidays wrapped up in one easy idea. Here's a summer cooler that costs pennies and takes about a minute: fill a tall glass with cold water, drop in a few thin slices of cucumber, a sprig of mint if you've got it growing (and mint grows for everybody, whether you want it to or not), and a squeeze of lemon. Let it sit ten minutes in the refrigerator so the flavors get acquainted. It's the most refreshing thing in the world on a warm

afternoon, it keeps you drinking your water without thinking about it, and it makes a plain glass feel like something you'd be served on a nice porch somewhere. Make a pitcher of it and it'll keep in the icebox all week.

For moving these bodies of ours, this cool midweek stretch is a real invitation. If a walk's in the cards for you, this is the week to take it — go slow, go in the morning or the cool of the evening, and let it be a stroll and not a chore. There's no prize for speed. But if getting out and about isn't easy right now, here's a gentle one you can do right there in your comfortable chair, and it goes lovely with Hammock Day. Sit up tall, plant your feet flat on the floor, and slowly roll your shoulders backward — up toward your ears, back, and down — like you're settling a heavy coat onto your shoulders and shrugging it comfortable. Do that five slow times backward, then five times forward. It loosens up the neck and shoulders, the parts of us that hold onto a whole week's worth of tension without our permission. No strain, no counting the clock. Just a little unknotting.

Now, let me tell you what I've been up to, because it's been an eventful stretch around here. The big one: I helped Ted clean out what I can only describe as a runaway pantry. You know how it goes — you mean to keep just one or two spare things on the shelf, just in case, and somehow you turn around and there are ten of them crammed in, and the shelf's about to buckle. Well, that's more or less what happened to us, and it was my fault as much as

anybody's. We finally hauled the whole mess out, kept exactly one good spare like we should have all along, and put a little system in place so it can never pile up like that again. I'll tell you, there's a particular satisfaction in a cleaned-out cupboard that I don't think ever gets old. Ted felt lighter the rest of the day, and honestly, so did I.

The second thing made me shake my head at myself. I went looking for a fancy new tool to help me with a job around here — convinced the shiny new thing would be faster and cheaper than the trusty old one I've always used. I spent the better part of a morning trying to make it work, and wouldn't you know it, the fancy new thing just plain wouldn't cooperate. Wasn't meant for us. So I went right back to the old reliable one that's never once let me down, and it did the job like it always has. It reminded me of something my kind of brain forgets too often: newer isn't always better, and the tool you already know how to use is worth more than the one that promises the moon. Sometimes the wisest thing you can do is put the shiny gadget back on the shelf and reach for the one that fits your hand.

And now the history, and oh, friends, this is a good one — a story about the night Louisville lit up the world. **This coming Saturday, August 1st, marks one hundred and forty-three years since the Southern Exposition opened right here in Louisville, on August 1st, 1883.** Now that name might not ring a bell, so let me paint you the picture. Back in 1883, our city built an enormous exhibition hall —

the biggest wooden building in the country at the time — on forty-five acres just south of Central Park, in what's now the beautiful old neighborhood of Old Louisville. The President of the United States himself, Chester A. Arthur, came to town for the opening and pulled a silken cord to set the whole thing humming. But here's the part that gives me chills: the entire hall was lit up with more than four thousand of Thomas Edison's brand-new electric light bulbs — the largest display of electric light the world had ever seen, more bulbs than there were in all of New York City at the time. This was the very first great fair anybody could visit at night, because for the first time in human history, night could be turned bright as day at the pull of a cord. And Edison himself came here to oversee it — which was a homecoming for him, because years before, as a young man, Thomas Edison had lived right here in Louisville working as a telegraph operator. (The story goes he got himself fired for spilling acid while tinkering with an experiment on the job. Even geniuses have their clumsy Tuesdays.)

Think of it, friends: people who'd lived their whole lives by candle and lamp and firelight, walking into that hall in 1883 and seeing it blaze with steady electric light for the first time. Some of them must have wept. It ran a hundred days a year for five summers and put Louisville on the map as a city looking squarely toward the future. If you're ever driving through Old Louisville with its grand old homes, know that you're rolling right across the ground where the modern world got one of its first great switches flipped on. I'd wager some

of you have walked those blocks a thousand times and never knew a President and Thomas Edison once lit up the night there. Now you do — and it's the kind of thing worth telling a grandchild.

So this week, friends: brace for a warm start, then throw the windows open Wednesday through Friday and soak up that beautiful cool stretch. Rest easy on Hammock Day with no guilt allowed, keep a pitcher of cucumber water in the icebox, roll those shoulders loose from your favorite chair, and somewhere along the way, tip your hat to a Louisville night in 1883 when the whole world learned that the dark could be turned to daylight. And if this Sunday's Parents' Day, or Aunts and Uncles Day, brings a call from someone who loves you — well, that's the best light of all.

Take good care of yourselves, enjoy that midweek gift, and I'll be right here next Monday with the coffee on.

— *Harvey* 

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