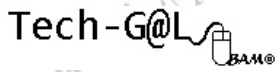


# Travel North Carolina via the Blue Ridge Parkway



By Beth A. Martin

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One of the most spectacular scenic drives in the United States of America is the Blue Ridge Parkway. It travels through 2 states, several National Forests and Parks, it is near the Appalachian Trail and it touches the Appalachian (Smoky) Mountains. It is 469 miles in length. The Blue Ridge Parkway was conceived and work began to build it in 1935 as a way to create jobs during the Great Depression. The building started in Cumberland Knob, North Carolina. This is almost a half a mile from the North Carolina and Virginia state line at which is at mile marker 216.9.

This year (in 2010), the Blue Ridge Parkway will celebrate its [75th Anniversary](#). It is part of the [National Park Service](#), but it, itself, is not a National Park or Forest but it borders and is in several.

The first part of our "great drive" begins in [North Carolina](#) on the south end of the Blue Ridge Parkway at the [Great Smoky Mountain National Park](#) at US441. This is also home of the [Cherokee Indian Reservation](#). There are several little Bureau of Indian Affairs highways to get lost on and you can also take US19 (Soco Rd.) to [Maggie Valley](#). Visit this link for an excellent [map](#) of this part of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The second part of our journey is through the [Nantahala Forest](#) and its surrounding areas. Here you can catch the Great Smoky Mountains Expressway also US74 to [Waynesville](#) and [Lake Junaluska](#). You can take Old Balsam Road which runs above the Great Smoky Mountains Expressway and visit the Balsam Mountains.

At one point during your drive, you will have the both Nantahala (on the west) and [Pisgah National Forests](#) (on the east) on both sides of you.

Once in the Pisgah Forest on the Blue Ridge Parkway, you can visit Lake Logan via NC215 or drive [NC 276](#) (Cruso Rd.).

The Blue Ridge Parkway runs through the heart of [Asheville, NC](#). You can get into Asheville via NC 151 (Mt. Pisgah Hwy.) or NC 191 (Brevard Rd.). Interstate 40, Interstate 26, US74, US23 (Smokey Park Hwy.) and Interstate 240 all come together here. Portions of 240 are enclosed by mountains and others are open to overlook downtown. It's magnificently strange.

Once out of Asheville and still on the Blue Ridge Parkway, you end up back in the Pisgah National Forest and on your way to [Mt. Mitchell State Park](#). This is home of the highest mountain east of the Mississippi at 6684 feet. From there you can take NC226 north to Spruce Pines or US221 north to [Linville Falls](#). Linville Falls then connects NC181 and NC105 north to Sugar Mountain (great skiing) and [Banner Elk](#) off of NC184; further north you can get to Beech Mountain for even better skiing.

US221 runs somewhat parallel and is southeast of the Parkway and finally crosses it at Linville Falls. US221 and the Parkway (staying on the Parkway) cross again a little further north below the [Julian Price Memorial Park](#) and Price Lake. This is still within the Pisgah National Forest.

The Pisgah National Forest ends in the north where the Blue Ridge Parkway meets US321 and US221. To the south from there, you head to [Blowing Rock](#). This eventually comes Blowing Rock Blvd. To the North via US321, you head towards [Boone, NC](#).

If you continue on the Parkway, heading northeast and drive approximately 65 more miles you will reach [Cumberland Knob, NC](#) which is where the Blue Ridge Parkway construction began and within a half a mile you will enter the [State of Virginia](#). This a little less than the halfway mark of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Once in Virginia, you can continue on the Parkway to the [George Washington National Forest](#) that eventually ends in the [Shenandoah National Park](#) and Skyline Drive.

Traveling the Blue Ridge Parkway is for [scenic drives](#) with roadside stops and spectacular views of the Smoky Mountains. You can also find hike to waterfalls, nature trails, observation decks, pack some food and picnic at one of the many stops. All that is required is a love of nature and a sense of adventure. The views of the Appalachian Mountains are truly breathtaking!

Visit these links to learn more about the [Blue Ridge Parkway](#) or to plan your trip to [North Carolina](#).

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