

A Guide to **SKYLINE DRIVE**  
and the **BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY**

# **BICYCLING the BLUE RIDGE**

**6<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**



**Elizabeth and  
Charlie Skinner**



**MENASHA RIDGE PRESS**

Your Guide to the Outdoors Since 1982

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## **PART 1**

# An Introduction to Bicycling the Blue Ridge

# The Ultimate Bicycling Road

FOR THE BICYCLIST, the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive present an impressive list of statistics. Combined, these two highways comprise 575 miles of continuous road, which rides the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains—the eastern rampart of the Appalachian Mountains, extending from southern Pennsylvania to northern Georgia. Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway enable the bicyclist to experience a large portion of the Blue Ridge Mountains. These two roads can transport you from Front Royal, Virginia (just 67 miles from Washington, D.C.), to Cherokee in the southwest corner of North Carolina at the gateway of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Skyline Drive extends 105 miles from Front Royal to Rockfish Gap just outside Waynesboro, Virginia. At Rockfish Gap the road continues uninterrupted as the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Although elevations in the Blue Ridge are modest compared to the Rockies or the Sierra Nevada, changes in elevation on Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway (hereafter referred to as the Parkway) are fairly irregular. The highest elevation on Skyline Drive and the Parkway is 6,053 feet at Richland Balsam in the Great Balsams between Mount Pisgah and Cherokee. The next highest elevations are in the Black Mountain range, which is in the southernmost section of the Parkway. One of the most exhilarating side trips off either road is the 5-mile climb to the summit of Mount Mitchell, which at 6,684 feet is the highest point in the eastern United States. The lowest point of the roads is near Otter Creek in Virginia, at 649 feet.

After many talks with bicyclists on the Parkway and Skyline Drive, we think that it is fair to say that changes in elevation are a major preoccupation with bicyclists who undertake the Blue Ridge. If we have learned nothing else in our thousands of miles logged on the Parkway and Skyline Drive, it is that cycling is much more enjoyable if you can somehow manage to suspend all worry about elevation and just take it as it comes.

# Weather in the Blue Ridge Mountains

WEATHER IN THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS has amazing, beautiful contrasts. Each season highlights special characteristics of the mountains. Bicycling in the southern Appalachians is great during much of the year, as long as you know what to expect and prepare with the proper clothing. Weather can make or break a cycling trip in the Blue Ridge. That is true in any bicycling situation, but even more so in the mountains, where weather fronts can move in suddenly, making weather a major consideration. Call 828-298-0398 for up-to-date closures and weather-related info.

The Blue Ridge is famous for its display of fall colors. During autumn expect near bumper-to-bumper traffic, especially on the northern half of Skyline Drive, which draws hordes of leaf peepers from the nearby Washington area. This is the biggest tourist time of the year. If you dislike competing with cars for your share of the road, we suggest that you avoid weekends during peak leaf time.

Then November suddenly arrives with its wind and rain, which render the trees bare, and few care about the Blue Ridge except its true-blue aficionados. Houses usually hidden deep in the woods are revealed. Ridges and other physical features of the mountains rise in relief. Fall days on the Parkway can be crisp and bright or overcast with a somber, damp chill that has you preferring a cozy fire to a brisk ride.

Winter is perhaps the most difficult season for the bicyclist, but it can be thrilling. December–February (and sometimes into March), the Parkway may be best suited for cross-country skiing. Winter is certainly the most brutal season; the gnarled, stunted trees are a testament to winter's harsh winds. Snow and ice are treacherous. The National Park Service (NPS) closes off some sections of the road with gates barring car traffic.

Ice is the most serious hazard. We recommend mountain bikes in the winter months. You can find steel-studded mountain bike tires for riding in snow and ice. Extended touring in the winter is not advised; day trips

# Camping Versus Lodging

IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING AN EXTENDED TOUR of Skyline Drive and the Parkway, the first decision you will probably make is whether to camp or stay in motels. There are pros and cons to both approaches. However, if you can afford motels, your trip will be easier and more comfortable. Without a sleeping bag, pad, tent, and cooking gear, you can make better time on the road. Credit-card touring is definitely the streamlined way to go.

Many lodges along Skyline Drive and the Parkway are memorable for their high ceilings and exposed beams, large stone fireplaces, decks and porches for lounging, and restaurants featuring southern mountain cooking. From people-watching by the fireplace in the great room at Big Meadows to gazing out at the lights of Asheville from the deck of Pisgah Inn, lodges heighten the rustic mountain experience.

There are four lodges within strict National Park Service (NPS) boundaries of Skyline Drive and the Parkway. Although Skyland Resort and Big Meadows Lodge are spaced nicely along Skyline Drive, the lodges along the Parkway are far apart. Only two lodges are currently open on the Parkway. Peaks of Otter Lodge in Virginia at milepost 85.6 and Pisgah Inn in North Carolina at milepost 408.6. This makes lodging outside Parkway boundaries essential for any extended tour. In Part 2 of the book, we outline all NPS and private facilities along these roads.

We have devised a rating system for the cost of motels and lodges. These rates are per night and are subject to change, particularly during special events and during the leaf season. Please call ahead.

\$	<b>inexpensive</b>	<b>up to \$75</b>
\$\$	<b>moderate</b>	<b>\$75-\$125</b>
\$\$\$	<b>expensive</b>	<b>\$125 and up</b>

# Gearing Up:

## *Special Equipment and Clothing*

WHEN MAKING CHOICES REGARDING EQUIPMENT and clothing for bicycling in the mountains, three tenets should be foremost in your mind:

- \* Know your abilities.
- \* Know your bicycle.
- \* Anticipate the weather.

Everything we say here may seem obvious, but we want to emphasize the key issues.

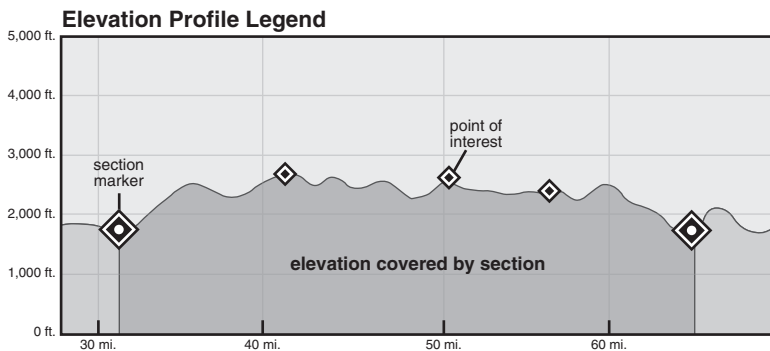
## **BICYCLES AND TOOLS**

WITH THE MANY CHOICES OF HIGH-TECH BICYCLES and cycling equipment on the market, we suggest that you select the best you can afford. If you cannot purchase everything you need all at once, upgrade later. We highly recommend using sealed components as much as possible: sealed headsets, bottom brackets, hubs, and pedals. In the long run, sealed components will endure, especially through adverse weather conditions.

While we choose not to discuss gear ratios, we advise you to make an honest assessment of your abilities when setting your bike up for mountain cycling. The Assault on Mount Mitchell, a 102-mile endurance event, is an extreme case, but it is a classic example of bicyclists getting in over their heads. Each year that we participate, we see a steady procession of cyclists reduced to walking their bikes along the Parkway and the 5 miles up to the summit of Mount Mitchell. This is not the sad fate of one or two cyclists; what you see are 30 or 40 people who thought they would be able to cycle through exhaustion with the gearing they had selected. For more information on the Assault on Mount Mitchell, see the descriptive section on pages 107–108.

## PART 2

# Point-by-Point Descriptions



# An Explanation of Our Point-by-Point Descriptions

IN OUR POINT-BY-POINT BREAKDOWN of Skyline Drive and the Parkway, we list motels, lodges, restaurants, grocery stores, and campgrounds on and off these roads. We also list area hospitals and any bicycle shops within a reasonable distance. Bicycle shops are not in abundance. Because of this, we also list hardware stores that might help you out of a jam.

Our criteria for including facilities off these roads take several factors into account. We have not ventured more than 5 miles off these roads except to visit a few towns we have chosen to highlight. In most cases, we have not included facilities more than 1–3 miles off the road. We have investigated all side roads except those that are strictly residential. We do not recommend roads that involve extreme descents unless there is something on that road to justify an arduous climb back up.

We have not rated the quality of facilities, although we do make remarks about those that made a favorable impression on us.

We begin at milepost 0 on Skyline Drive and travel south. If you decide to travel north, just work backward from specific mileposts. Generally, we divide our sections by National Park Service (NPS) facilities. In some cases, a town will be the dividing point.

There are as many approaches to bicycling in the Blue Ridge as there are riders. A strong rider with gear could reasonably tour Skyline Drive in two days. Unencumbered by gear, one could cycle Skyline Drive in a single day. Then again, there are so many things to see along the way, and so many trails to hike, that spending a week there would not be unreasonable.

**Special note on Parkway closures:** At the time of publication, the National Park Service verified all noted closures of campgrounds and facilities through the 2020 season. The NPS is working to secure concessionaires for privately run facilities (such as Doughton Park and Crabtree Falls). The NPS is also evaluating closures, and a long-range plan to reopen Parkway facilities is forthcoming. As always, please visit [nps.gov/blri](https://nps.gov/blri) for the latest closures and road conditions.

# Skyline Drive

SKYLINE DRIVE IS A SCENIC HIGHWAY that runs the length of Shenandoah National Park for a total of 105.5 miles. Shenandoah National Park (hereafter referred to as the Park) is made up of 195,000 acres near George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in western Virginia. Not only does the scenic highway dissect the Park, but 95 miles of the Appalachian Trail are also within park boundaries.

As you cycle along Skyline Drive, the Shenandoah Valley runs parallel to the west, while the Piedmont extends eastward toward the coast. Small details in the construction of Skyline Drive give it a slightly different atmosphere from the Blue Ridge Parkway. Stone and mortar walls grace the edge of the road as it winds along the Blue Ridge Mountains. These structures and the tendency of the trees to form a canopy over the road give Skyline Drive a secluded feeling.

Because Skyline Drive runs continuously through national forest lands, wildlife may be more prevalent here than along the Parkway. A large Virginia white-tailed deer population exists in the Park. You are guaranteed to spot deer at dawn or dusk. Black bears also inhabit the Park. Bear sightings have become more frequent over the years, as evidenced by the bear-proof trash cans and bear poles found at campgrounds and picnic areas. Other wildlife includes red foxes, gray foxes, striped skunks, spotted skunks, bobcats, raccoons, beavers, groundhogs, and chipmunks. About 200 species of birds fly through the Park. Among the larger birds in the Park, you will find wild turkeys, ravens, and ruffed grouse.

Trees in the George Washington National Forest are primarily young second growth as a result of heavy timbering practiced before the Park was established. The primary species include oak and hickory, but you will also find black locust, hemlock, yellow birch, black birch, basswood, tulip poplar, red maple, and sugar maple.

If bicycle touring in the mountains is a new experience for you, Skyline Drive is a good place to start. Facilities abound, with 25 miles being

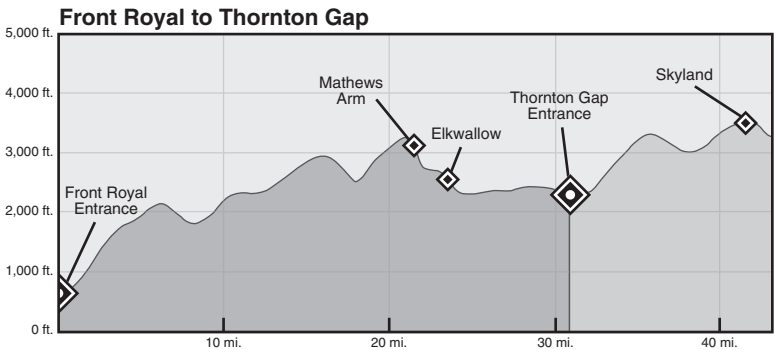
the largest gap between a source of food and the highway. There are two lodges, four restaurants, four camp stores, and four campgrounds in the space of 105 miles. In addition, all but one of the campgrounds have showers. That is pretty good, especially when compared to those along the Parkway. Because this is a national park, there is an entry fee of \$5, good for seven consecutive days.

Now that your basic needs have been provided, you are free to concentrate on some very pleasant bicycling. The grades on Skyline Drive are not as severe as those on the Parkway. The longest climbs and descents are at the northern and southern entrances. The elevation drops to 1,390 feet at the Front Royal entrance and 1,900 feet at the Rockfish Gap entrance near Waynesboro.

## FRONT ROYAL TO THORNTON GAP [0.0–31.5]

FRONT ROYAL, VIRGINIA, is one of the most popular starting points for extended tours of the Blue Ridge. The closest airports to Front Royal are approximately 70 miles away in Washington, D.C. You can cycle out of either Dulles International Airport or Washington National Airport to Front Royal.

When you enter Shenandoah National Park on a bicycle, you experience the sensation of being transported into a separate world. At the height of summer the vegetation is thick and alive with secrets, as if you were traveling through an enchanted forest. The deeper you go, the more entranced you become. Kudzu climbs greedily in the lower elevations. On



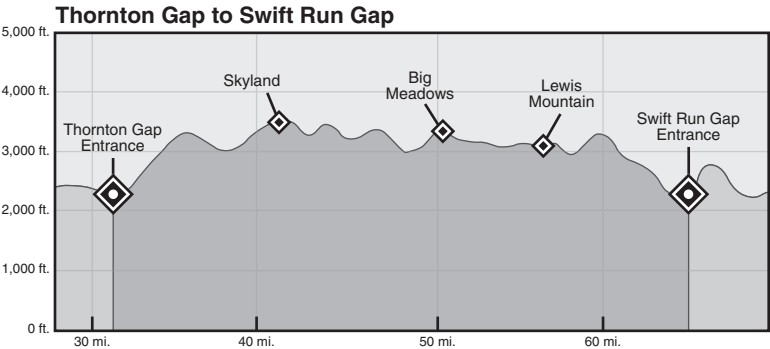
# THORNTON GAP TO SWIFT RUN GAP

[31.5–65.5]

THE NUMEROUS OVERLOOKS AND HIKING TRAILS highlighting streams, waterfalls, and geologic formations are good reasons for taking your time along Skyline Drive. At Thornton Gap you can view Marys Rock, which is formed of granodiorite. Marys Rock Tunnel, just south of Thornton Gap, is the only tunnel on Skyline Drive. As you make your way south toward Skyland Lodge, views of Pinnacles and the profile of Stony Man Mountain dominate the area.

South of Skyland, as you approach the highest point on Skyline Drive (elevation 3,680'), Hawksbill Mountain dominates the view as the highest peak in Shenandoah National Park (elevation 4,051'). The Franklin Cliffs Overlook between mileposts 49 and 50 has great rocky cliffs, perfect for a siesta on a sunny day. If you have time for an hour's hike, Dark Hollow Falls is a good choice at milepost 50.7, just north of Big Meadows.

The trailhead to Bearfence Mountain summit is found at milepost 56.4. The hike is a little less than a mile round-trip for a 360-degree view of the area. From this rocky summit you can see Massanutten Ridge and Shenandoah Valley, as well as Grindstone, Green, Powell, and Smith Mountains to the west. To the east, a dozen peaks are within view—Hazeltop,



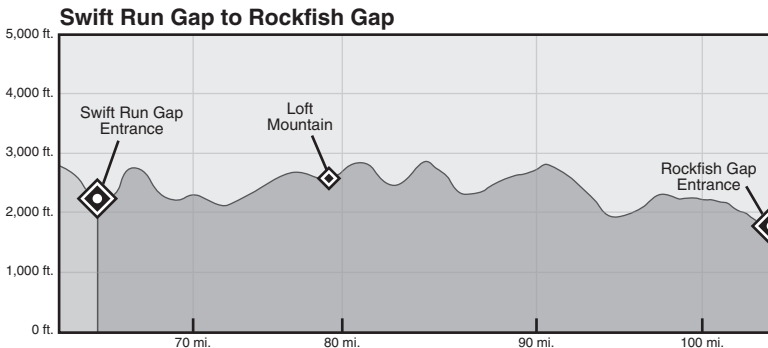
## SWIFT RUN GAP TO ROCKFISH GAP [65.5–105.5]

FROM SWIFT RUN GAP SOUTHWARD, there is a mixed bag of ups and downs, but the road ultimately climbs into the Loft Mountain area. Loft Mountain Wayside is directly off Skyline Drive. However, the road to the campground is an uphill challenge. If Loft Mountain Campground is your destination for the day, save some energy for the climb to the top.

Loft Mountain Campground has some outstanding campsites. It is worth dragging your bike down into one of the more-secluded wooded sites. Deer wander freely through these areas. The Appalachian Trail is no more than 100 yards from one side of the campground; it's great to have just beyond your tent. You can hike a stretch and ponder the differences between experiencing the Blue Ridge by foot and by bicycle.

From Loft Mountain, it is 25 miles to the end of Skyline Drive and the beginning of the Blue Ridge Parkway. If you are heading south, you have an easy descent into Rockfish Gap. If you are heading north toward Loft Mountain, you can expect a steady climb much of the way (nearly a 1,000-foot gain).

For travelers doing a long-distance tour of Skyline Drive and the Parkway, Waynesboro is a good overnight stop. With medical facilities and a full range of shopping opportunities, Waynesboro is one of the few cities in close proximity to Skyline Drive and the Parkway—about 4 miles west of Rockfish Gap. The only disadvantage of a stopover in Waynesboro is that



# The Blue Ridge Parkway

WITH LITTLE FANFARE, the Blue Ridge Parkway begins at Rockfish Gap and continues south for 470 miles. The mile markers still record the terminus of the Parkway at 469 miles even though the construction of the Linn Cove Viaduct added an extra mile. Whereas Skyline Drive is enclosed by national forests, the Parkway winds its way through some disparate geographic situations. The Parkway skirts around two fairly large cities, Roanoke and Asheville. Yet the Parkway does take you through rugged wilderness areas, such as Shining Rock, Linville Gorge, and Pisgah National Forest. Any single-day trip by bicycle along the Parkway can leave you with distinctly different impressions. One day you roll past cabbage patches and rust-colored barns; the next day your surroundings are craggy, rocky, and downright mountainous.

When you're speeding down the side of a mountain, it's easy to experience sensory overload. Greens blur, the wind roars in your ears, and your adrenaline rises with a rush of feeling. The numerous, inevitable ascents of the Parkway, whether they be 0.25 mile or 6 miles long, are the best times to take note of the flowers, animals, rocks, and trees that surround you.

Once again, trees dominate the natural scene in the Blue Ridge. In his book *A Naturalist's Blue Ridge Parkway*, David Catlin devotes an entire chapter to the integral role that trees play. He explains:

*It is difficult to overstate the importance of trees in the natural history of the mountains, for trees greatly determine not only the kinds, but the character of life here. It can even be legitimately claimed that trees put the "Blue" in Blue Ridge, for hydrocarbons released into the atmosphere by the forest contribute to the characteristic haze on these mountains and to their distinctive color.*

There are many distinct forests in the Blue Ridge. In the lower elevations there are oak–chestnut, cove hardwood, and oak–pine forests. The

## **ROCKFISH GAP TO JAMES RIVER VISITOR CENTER [0.0–64.0]**

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IN THE 115 MILES FROM ROCKFISH GAP TO ROANOKE, the Blue Ridge narrows to a single ridgetop, which the Parkway traverses, alternating from side to side. This 64-mile stretch leading to the James River Visitor Center begins with some stunning mountain overlooks. From Humpback Rocks Visitor Center, the Parkway winds upward to the rocky vantage point of Raven's Roost. If you are traveling north, this is one of your first views of the Shenandoah Valley. The rock in this area, Catoctin greenstone, has a green tint and is part of the lava flows along Skyline Drive. When we last stood on these rocks, the view was of the sun breaking through swift-moving clouds and mist slinking along the flint-gray ridges.

This section is memorable by bicycle for its wide, arcing switchbacks, which are visible for miles ahead. The countryside varies: you will

*Meadows and farmland are frequent boundaries to the Parkway. photo by Christine Rucker*



## **JAMES RIVER VISITOR CENTER TO ROANOKE MOUNTAIN [64.0–121.4]**

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BECAUSE YOU ARE STARTING OUT at the lowest point on the Parkway and heading toward the highest point on the Parkway in Virginia, expect to do some climbing. Uphill climbs will amount to 4,000 feet. That's quite a bit for a mere 25 miles.

Midway into your ascent, you will encounter Thunder Ridge at 3,845 feet. This is a thickly forested area of northern red oaks and Carolina hemlocks. From here you will cycle past stands of striped and mountain maples at the overlook of Arnold's Valley. The Appalachian Trail parallels the Parkway throughout this section and crosses it once at milepost 74.9.

Certainly one reason for the popularity of Peaks of Otter, named for the headwaters of the Otter River, is its proximity to numerous hiking trails. It is also one of the most extensive facilities on the Parkway with a large campground and a modest camp store that stocks basic food supplies, beverages, and camping supplies. The lodge and restaurant have a simple mountain elegance, from the gray-stained exterior to the high ceilings and exposed beams of the dining room. Views of Sharp Top, Flat Top Mountain, and Abbott Lake provide the crowning touch.

It is 35 miles from Peaks of Otter to Roanoke Mountain. The city of Roanoke sits in a valley, so the majority of this section is downhill. With both an airport and bus service, this city is a possible beginning or ending point for a tour of the Blue Ridge. If you are on an extended tour, it is also the place to seek assistance for any major difficulties. The population of the Roanoke metropolitan area is more than 300,000; Roanoke and Asheville are the largest cities directly off the Parkway.

There are numerous access roads from the Parkway into the Roanoke area. We have investigated each side road in order to recommend the best ways to safely travel by bike into the city. The Roanoke area provides a key opportunity to stock up on food and supplies. For those seeking motels, there are several possibilities. We discovered an excellent bicycle route into



## ROANOKE MOUNTAIN TO MABRY MILL

[121.4–176.2]

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ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT THE CLIMB SOUTH, out of Roanoke, is that you have plenty of time to appreciate the views of Roanoke Valley. Between mileposts 128 and 133, the Parkway climbs 1,800 feet with a 6.8% grade. Your breakfast will be long gone by the time you reach Smart View at milepost 154.5. You can tell little about road grades along this stretch from studying the Parkway map. It is not safe to assume that, since Rocky Knob is at 3,572 feet and Roanoke is at 1,425 feet, you will have smooth sailing traveling north into Roanoke. Although the map leads you to expect a drop in elevation of 2,147 feet, the Parkway actually rises and descends numerous times. Likewise, these climbs make for welcome descents.

Overall, there are two significant inclines for southbounders between Roanoke and Rocky Knob. The first substantial climb begins about 6 miles out of Roanoke. The second major uphill starts around Rakes Millpond at milepost 162.4 and ends beyond the Rocky Knob Campground at about milepost 169.

There is one area on this stretch that's convenient for food and shelter: VA 8 at Tuggle Gap. There you will find good places to stock up on supplies or have breakfast or lunch.

We want to stress the beauty of the Rocky Knob area. Its grassy knobs are similar to those of Scotland. The huge, protruding boulders and rocks are a farmer's nightmare, but the pastoral setting of Rocky Knob is a great place to set up an easel and canvas, or to simply stand and feel the energy of the wind.

The 9 miles between Rocky Knob and Mabry Mill move through the high knobs of the Rocky Knob area, and then swing down to Mabry Mill in one memorable swoop. If you are traveling south and camping at Rocky Knob, we suggest that you break camp early and cycle the vigorous 9 miles to Mabry Mill for buckwheat pancakes. Arrive at Mabry Mill early to avoid standing in line.



## MABRY MILL TO CUMBERLAND KNOB

[176.2–217.5]

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THE TOWN OF MEADOWS OF DAN is just 1 mile south of Mabry Mill. Here you will find ample facilities: groceries, restaurants, and lodging.

Relative to other sections, this 23-mile stretch is not very demanding. There is one notable climb, a little over a mile long, as you approach Groundhog Mountain, which rises to an elevation of 3,030 feet. You might want to take a break here, climb to the top of the observation tower, and study the various types of fences on display: snake rail, buck and rail, and post and rail.

From Groundhog Mountain, the road rolls out toward Fancy Gap with no big surprises. The Parkway drops slightly, and you will find a straightaway of considerable length through the Orchard Gap area. Orchard Gap Deli is visible to the left.

We have two great sensory impressions of this area. One is the pungent aroma from the many fields of cabbages ready for harvest in September; the other is an abundance of flame azaleas, which bloom bright orange in May.

There is a slight climb into Fancy Gap, where the elevation is 2,925 feet. Fancy Gap, visible to either side of the Parkway, is an obvious stopping place for those camping or needing a motel. For some, the distance between the National Park Service campgrounds of Rocky Knob and Doughton Park will be farther than you want to push in one day. It all depends on pace and where you are in your trip. Before you pass up the facilities at Fancy Gap, keep in mind that the distance to Doughton Park includes roughly 9 miles of steady climbing, and that the park may be closed.

You will cross from Virginia into North Carolina along this section. As you pedal along a shady, winding stretch of road, the Parkway makes a seamless transition from one state to the other. Upon leaving Fancy Gap, you will encounter a fairly steep climb of about a mile. There is an equal proportion of ups and downs all the way to Cumberland Knob.

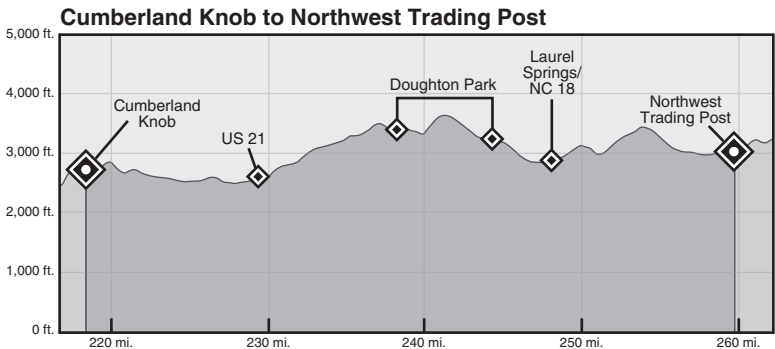
We made up the term *rolling mountain* while cycling this section. When you look at the road, you just know you'll be cycling rolling hills, the

## CUMBERLAND KNOB TO NORTHWEST TRADING POST [217.5–259.0]

FROM CUMBERLAND KNOB SOUTHWARD you will encounter rolling hills with panoramic views of the Piedmont to the east. Pastureland, meadows, and apple orchards compose much of the scenery between mileposts 217 and 230. Milepost 221.5 to milepost 230.1 is relatively flat. This is one of the rare straightaways on the Parkway where cycling is a breeze—enjoy. Big Pine Creek meanders from one side of the Parkway to the other.

Little Glade Pond (milepost 230.1) marks a change in terrain. This is a pleasant place to rest before heading out for the climb into Doughton Park. Conversely, it makes a great place to regroup after tearing down out of the mountains from Doughton Park.

From Little Glade Pond (elevation 2,709'), the Parkway begins a steady 1,000-foot climb, which crests at Air Bellows Gap (elevation 3,743'). The terrain undergoes a subtle metamorphosis from farmland to mountain as you approach the Doughton Park area. Instead of grassy meadows, you begin to cycle past sheer rock face. Doughton Park is one of the larger parks in land area. Although you're only in the 3,000- to 4,000-foot range, south of the lodge the road will thrill you as it cuts right through a mountain; you shoot past a high rock wall where the mountain was blasted to make way for the road.



## **NORTHWEST TRADING POST TO LINVILLE FALLS [259.0–317.4]**

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THERE IS NO LEVEL GROUND from the trading post to Julian Price Memorial Park. You climb from the Northwest Trading Post, descend some, and then climb some more. You are headed toward Boone, Blowing Rock, and Grandfather Mountain, so higher elevations and the climbs that accompany them are inevitable.

There are several fine overlooks in this area, so at least cruise through them: take in views from the Lump (milepost 264.4), Mount Jefferson Overlook (milepost 266.9), and Elk Mountain Overlook (milepost 274.3). At E. B. Jeffress Park a brief trail leads to Cascades Waterfall.

In the 37 miles between the Northwest Trading Post and Julian Price, the Parkway takes you through a busy area. Those traveling south are approaching a spectacular section of the Parkway. Boone and Blowing Rock are major tourist areas. Blowing Rock is far more accessible to the Parkway than Boone. It has numerous motels with a wide price range and several excellent restaurants. Boone does offer one item that Blowing Rock lacks: a bike shop—several, in fact. While Boone is a great town, it is not necessary to travel that far since Blowing Rock is nearby. However, there is a fun way into Boone via Flannery Fork Road if you are traveling on a mountain bike or have tires tough enough to withstand several miles of gravel road. See our directions that follow.

To be sure, this is a great area for mountain bikes. At Moses H. Cone Memorial Park, more than 20 miles of carriage paths wander around the estate. Moses H. Cone is a grand estate with a stately manor house perched on a hilltop that looks down on a man-made lake. The house and estate were donated to the National Park Service. The carriage trails are used for hiking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Although these trails would be ideal for mountain biking, the official policy is a firm ban on bikes. The manor house is used as a gift shop for mountain crafts and pottery. The handicrafts here are very fine and come with expensive price tags. A vast array of pottery and hand-blown glassware, scarves and shawls



FOR THOSE WHO LOVE CYCLING, the question is never if or when; it's only a matter of where. The answer is Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway—the most quintessential scenic roads east of the Mississippi. The 575-mile ribbon of highway flows between Virginia and North Carolina. It traverses Shenandoah National Park and connects to Great Smoky Mountains National Park along the eastern rampart of the Appalachian Mountains. This is some of the country's most beautiful terrain, and the best way to experience it is to ride through it. This definitive guide is what you need to plan the perfect trip for the day, a weekend, or a month.

#### INSIDE YOU'LL FIND

- Detailed, mile-by-mile descriptions of the entire route
- Information on lodging, restaurants, stores, and bike shops
- Professionally designed maps and elevation profiles
- Essential data for planning ahead and maximizing your enjoyment



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Your Guide to the Outdoors Since 1982

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