

Autumn in the Appalachians: Hiking & Birding the Blue Ridge Mountains

with Naturalist Journeys and Caligo Ventures



Sept. 23 – 30, 2016

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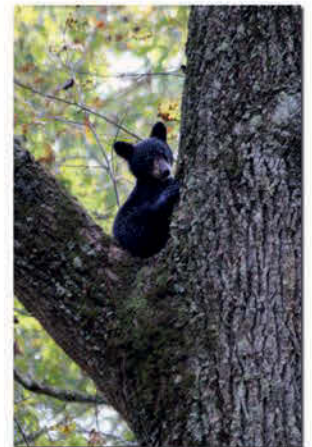
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Naturalist Journeys, LLC.



Join us for an active birding trip timed for the fall raptor migration in North Carolina's scenic Blue Ridge Parkway region. The vast forests of the Southern Appalachians and Blue Ridge Escarpment cover nearly 9.4-million acres of ancient mountains, stretching across five states.

We enjoy walks that highlight vistas of parallel ridges, made abstract by the signature blue haze that frames miles and miles of lush vegetation. Watch the skies for migrating raptors as they pour through the region, while we look for signs of Black Bear, Bobcat, birds, unusual plants, and salamanders. We also make time to enjoy plucky bluegrass music, local brew pubs, and the folk and modern art scene.

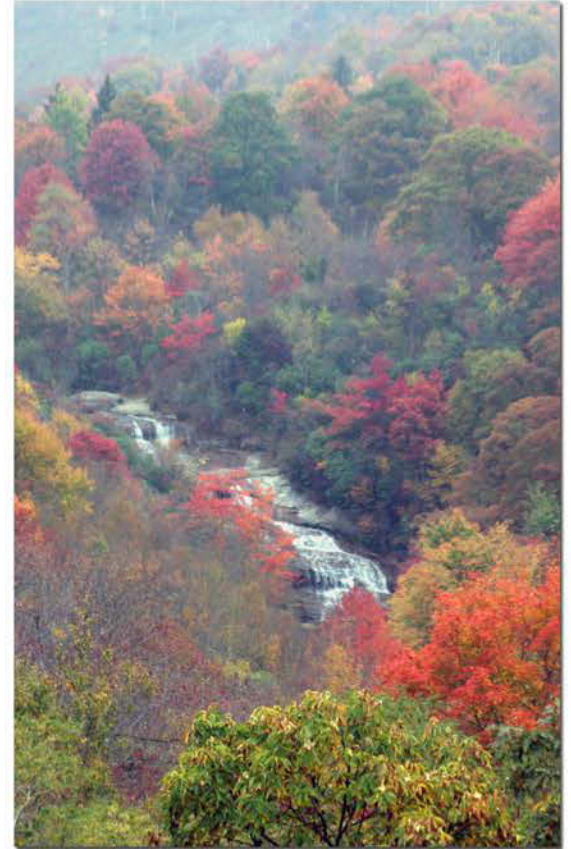


It won't be long before you understand why this region has inspired artists and naturalists for centuries. See it for yourself with our expert guides on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

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Tour Highlights:

- Spend four nights on the Parkway at the Pisgah Inn with stunning views out over the mountains.
- Travel the Blue Ridge Parkway at cloud level as you learn the history of the region.
- Hike to knobs, peaks, and outcrops on the prowl for signs of local wildlife and keeping an eye to the sky for migrating raptors on the wing.
- Make time for music in this epicenter of traditional American music.
- Ready your camera for Linville Falls, a spectacular, three-tiered waterfall that plunges into a deep gorge. Interact with experts, eager to share their understanding of the mountains' vital ecosystems.



Tour Summary:

8-Day / 7-Night North Carolina Birding & Hiking Tour with Guides Dodie Logue & Merrill Lynch

\$2390 double occupancy/\$2850 single occupancy from Asheville, NC

Airport is Asheville Regional (AVL)



Fri., Sept. 23 Arrival in Asheville / Pisgah Inn

Welcome to Asheville! You are picked up upon arrival, then we then immediately head south along the parkway, stopping at some of the classic viewpoints like Looking Glass Mountain. We enjoy a hike, watching for birds and wildlife, and immerse ourselves in fall colors. Our lodgings tonight are on the peak of the parkway at 5000 ft., and we enjoy dinner with spectacular views of the forest close at hand.

Accommodations at the Pisgah Inn, Blue Ridge Parkway (D)

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Sat., Sept. 24 Cradle of Forestry / The Pink Beds / Brevard

Today we visit the North Carolina Cradle of Forestry, America's first school of forestry. The Forest Discovery Center honors forest conservation history with an 18-minute movie about the beginning of forestry in America. The Center has an interactive exhibit hall and the Giving Tree Gift Shop; outdoor activities include two guided trails that lead you back in time to seven historical buildings, a 1915 Climax logging locomotive, and an antique portable sawmill.

We then move along to our next destination, a hike at Pink Beds Trail, a lush area of cove forests and streams that got its name from the profusion of pink wildflowers, including mountain laurel and rhododendron, which bloom in the spring. The Pink Beds area offers excellent hiking and is especially appealing to naturalists, as the relatively flat valley sustains some very large pine trees and rare mountain bogs. We stop to see Looking Glass Falls and Sliding Rock on our way to Brevard, where we have dinner.

Accommodations at the Pisgah Inn (B,L,D)



Sun., Sept. 25 Black Balsam Ridge / Devil's Courthouse / Water Rock Knob

Celebrate a full day along the Blue Ridge Parkway by visiting Black Balsam Ridge, Devil's Courthouse, and Water Rock Knob. Views in the region are beyond measure. The Black Balsam Knob trail often tops the list of "ten best hikes" of the region because of its series of "balds" that afford sweeping views.

This diverse area hosts both spruce and hardwood forests and is home to Black Bear, Ruffed Grouse, Raven, and Wild Turkey. We are on the lookout for migrating birds and raptors.

Accommodations at the Pisgah Inn (B,L,D)

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Mon., Sept. 26 Graveyard Fields / Parkway Views

Today we hike Graveyard fields, a unique loop trail that winds through this high-elevation, flat valley. Two spurs lead to some of the most photographed and enjoyed waterfalls in the state! We pass through alpine-like meadows, stands of Mountain Laurel and Rhododendron, and young northern hardwood forests. Between the falls is a relaxing, lazy section of stream. This is a truly unique and highly recommended hike, great for immersing oneself in fall colors.

Later today we have some time back at our beautiful lodge to relax or wander the grounds.

Accommodations at the Pisgah Inn (B,L,D)

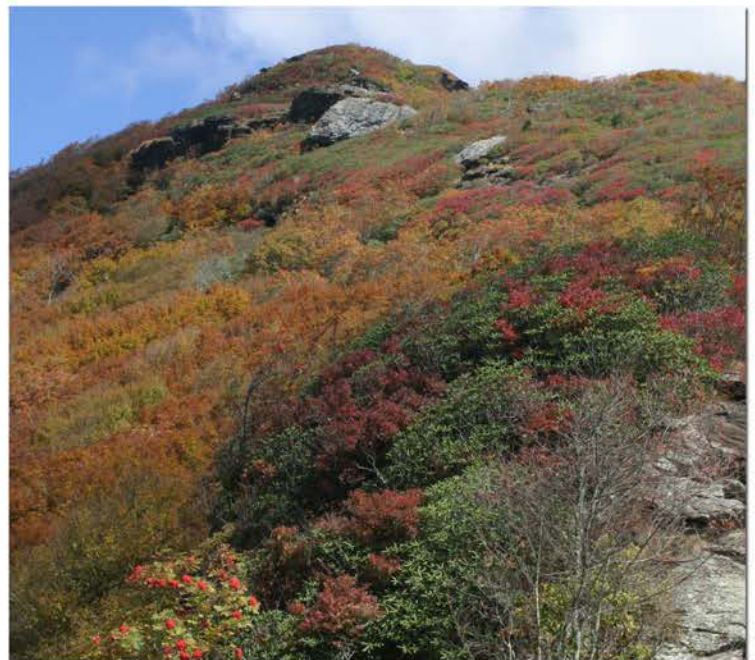
Tues., Sept. 27 Folk Art Center / Craggy Dome & Gardens

A highlight today is time at The Folk Art Center, which is a spacious and impressive building of native stone and wood. The Center has local craft exhibits

and a gift store that displays some of the local handi-crafts. We also stop at The Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center, which features an award-winning film and exhibits that highlight the natural and cultural heritage, economic traditions, and recreational opportunities found in Western North Carolina and along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Later today we stop at Craggy Dome, whose slopes are covered in Catawba Rhododendron almost to the summit. We hike a trail that climbs a short distance from the Blue Ridge Parkway to the high, rocky peak overlooking the Craggy Gardens area, which is a large heath bald covering several hundred acres. Heaths are primarily a group of acid-soil shrubs, often found on high or exposed areas. Fall color should be most impressive, accenting spectacular 360-degree views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. The dome is beautiful, whether seen under clear blue skies or mist-shrouded, as it often is. After a full day, we head to Blowing Rock which is right off the parkway.

Accommodations at Blowing Rock (B,L,D)



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Wed., Sept. 28 Grandfather Mountain State Park / Moses H. Cone Memorial Park

The 2500-acre Grandfather Mountain State Park was established in 2009, and lies adjacent to the 720-acre Grandfather Mountain scenic attraction; both are a part of the larger Grandfather Mountain Biosphere Reserve. Grandfather Mountain is considered an ecological site of global significance, as it provides habitat for more globally rare species than any mountain east of the Rockies. The species include the globally imperiled Bog Turtle, various salamanders, Spruce Fir Moss Spider, Blue Ridge Goldenrod, Spreading Avens, and numerous other species.

We visit the park's iconic mile-high swinging bridge for spectacular views, with a tundra-like habitat of stunted conifers and shrubs. We also visit the Education Center, which has seven different environmental habitat enclosures in natural settings; animals include Cougar, White-tailed Deer, Black Bear, Bald Eagle, and River Otter. The park has numerous hiking trails, and we make several options available, including the Profile Trail if some want a challenge.

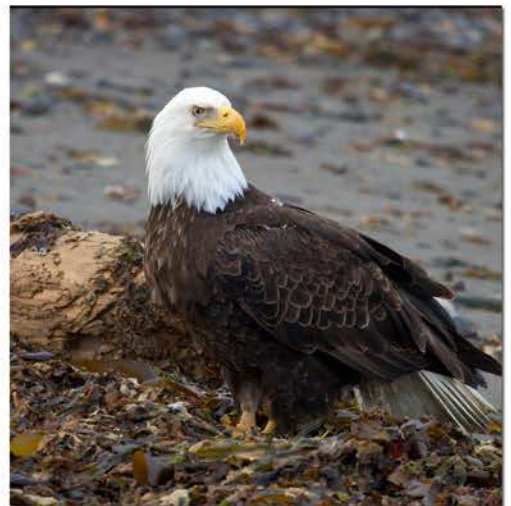
Later we stop at Moses H. Cone Memorial Park, which preserves the country estate of Moses Cone, a prosperous textile entrepreneur, conservationist, and philanthropist of the Gilded Age. The manor is now the home of the Parkway Craft Center, one of five shops of the Southern Highland Craft Guild, which features handmade crafts by hundreds of regional artists. Wonderful quilting, embroidery, weaving, pottery, glass-blowing, and woodcarving pieces are for sale. Twenty-five miles of carriage trails wind through the fields and forests of the 3,500-acre estate.

Moses Cone's interest in nature and conservation led him to plant extensive white pine forests and hemlock hedges (at the advice of friend and noted conservationist Gifford Pinchot), build several lakes stocked with bass and trout, and plant a 10,000-tree apple orchard.

Accommodations at Blowing Rock (B,L,D)

Thurs., Sept. 29 Linville Falls / Mount Mitchell

Mt. Mitchell State Park, at 6,684ft., is the highest mountain east of the Mississippi River. On billion-year old rock of the Black Mountains, we



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walk amid lovely mixed oak-hickory hardwood forests. At the top of the drive we experience marvelous views and stunted, wind-blown Red Spruce forests. Mt. Mitchell State Park has some of the most distinctive and diverse flora in the region and has been an important site for research on forest health, having seen great change over the last century. This is a good area to watch for migrating raptors, including Peregrine Falcon. Lunch is on the trail today.

Linville Falls cascade through a forested gorge, pristine and primitive with virgin pine and hemlock stands. Here we also find unusually tall sourwood, which turn a beautiful red in the fall (we hope to find a roadside stand with sourwood honey for sale along the Parkway). Rhododendrons are plentiful here, and we may even see a small native chestnut. The river has carved such a rugged path that logging and other disruptive human activities were prohibitive, which is why this area has remained so pristine. The plant life by the river and in the gorge includes a wide variety of species, including rarities.

We have a festive farewell dinner at a local brewpub tonight. Overnight by airport (B,L,D)



Fri., Sept. 30 Departures from Asheville

This morning after an early breakfast, we transfer to Asheville Regional Airport for flights home. (B)

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Of Note

The pace of the tour is moderate, with hikes ranging 3 – 5 miles. In order to see a diversity of landscapes, we select hikes in different habitats and different regions of the Parkway. We also visit historic sites, scenic viewpoints, waterfalls, and other attractions. Timing of the tour is to experience fall color, and fall migration of raptors.



This itinerary is representative of your trip, and like all natural history excursions, activities are subject to modification based on weather and unforeseen events. We do our best to keep you informed of any necessary changes.



© Photo Credits: All photos courtesy of Peg Abbott except for the following: Pg1: Northern Harrier, Greg Smith (GS). Pg 5: Richland Balsam, Doug Pratt (DP); Bald Eagle, GS. Pg 6: Peregrine Falcon, GS. Pg 7: Pileated Woodpecker, Tom Dove (TD).

Book your Blue Ridge Mountains adventure today! Contact us:
info@naturalistjourneys.com or
866.900.1146/info@caligo.com or
800.426.7781

COST OF THE JOURNEY

Cost of the journey is \$2390 double occupancy / \$2850 single occupancy, from Asheville, NC. The tour cost includes: transportation during the journey, accommodations for 7 nights, all meals as specified in the itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner), professional guide services, park and other entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses.

Cost does not include: round-trip airfare to and from Asheville Regional Airport, items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, or drinks from the bar; or gratuities for personal services.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

You are responsible for planning your arrival to and departure from Asheville Regional Airport, NC. Please arrive no later than 3PM on Friday, September 23. Departures from Asheville may be after 11AM on Friday, Sept. 30. If you wish to stay on to enjoy Asheville, we can drop you off at your accommodations.

Tour Operations for The Southern Blue Ridge Parkway tour are coordinated by Naturalist Journeys, LLC. Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

