



The Appalachian Backroads *Mountains of Adventure Tour* is 124 miles of mountain curves, breathtaking overlooks, and lovely green valleys located in Virginia's Heart of Appalachia Region.

Mountains of Adventure with thousands of feet in elevation changes from the crests to the valleys below. The easiest and most spectacular way to enter the Mountains of Adventure Tour is with a ride on the "Back of the Dragon". From Interstate 81 at the Marion, VA exit, take Route 16 back and forth up the Dragon's spine to lush Tazewell County. Cresting the mountaintop, you have a spectacular vantage of Thompson Valley from this overlook.

Day 1: Turning left or west on Route 91 provides a leisurely loop full of great photo fodder that winds along the valley floor and passes the Tazewell County Country Club on 637. At the intersection of 19/460, you'll turn right, heading east. Just up the road sits [Crab Orchard Museum & Pioneer Park](#) where you can experience what it was like to travel across this vast frontier without the help of combustion - so park your ride and explore on foot. The museum offers an impressive collection of artifacts, special exhibitions, self-guided tours through our Pioneer Park, and local crafts and goods in the gift shop, all in a unique historical setting. Crab Orchard celebrates the season of fall with a clever corn maze as well as the Frontier Christmas during the holidays.

Continuing east, the historic Town of Tazewell has a rich history dating back hundreds of years when Thomas Witten and his family created the first permanent settlement at the headwaters of the Clinch River. The stately mountains that surround the town ensure that every season is a beautiful time to visit. Be sure to do some shopping for the folks back home at charming gift stores like Between Friends and shops that feature handmade crafts from area artisans. And when you have filled up your saddlebags, it's time to fill your tummy at Your Grate Escape Restaurant.

For a memorable side trip just past Tazewell, you'll find the gateway to Burke's Garden, also known as "God's Thumbprint." At 3,000 feet, the highest valley in Virginia, Burke's Garden resembles a bowl with a circumference of 10 miles and is completely surrounded by round mountains with just one paved road in. Local legend says that the Vanderbilts tried to purchase Burkes Garden to create their dream of Biltmore but the locals wouldn't sell. Each fall, Burke's Garden hosts an Autumn Festival worth the trip.

The ride on the way to Bluefield is exhilarating, with the mountains towering on both sides of you. If you are ready for a break, the Comfort Inn is a convenient and comfortable place to spend the nights during your Appalachian Backroads tour. Enjoy free WI-FI, fresh baked cookies, a heated pool and relaxing outdoor gazebo to plan the next leg of your journey.

DAY 2: Bluefield sits in both Virginia and West Virginia. A stop at the [Tazewell Visitor Center](#) will provide you more info on whatever interests you as well as a chance to tour the stately Sanders House nearby. Built in 1896, the house was the centerpiece of a 3,000 acre farm and features gorgeous solid oak woodwork, original wood floors, hand-painted imported murals, and many of the original furnishings. Downtown Bluefield offers some one-of-a-kind experiences as well as a charming Farmers Market during summer months.

Route 102 hugs the border between Virginia and West Virginia, finishing in a splash of color that makes you feel like you've been transported into a Thomas Kinkadee painting. [Bramwell](#), WV, known as "The Millionaires Town," had the highest number of millionaires per capita in the late 1800's. This was the home to the wealthy owners and managers of the nearby Pocahontas Coal Mines. Take the tour, do some shopping, and have some lunch, but just try not to fill up on eye candy first. Can't be done.

Down the road is the Town of Pocahontas, which provided such a unique form of coal that the US Navy deemed it 'smokeless.' This composition allowed the US fleet to sneak up on the enemy undetected which helped win WWII for the Allies. A trip to the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine is a one-of-a-kind experience, often guided by retired coal miners. One can sense that this town was a hub of culture and wealth at the turn of the century. Many structures of those glory days still stand, while many more have

disappeared. Many buildings are listed on the historic landmark registers including the Opera House, Exhibition Mine, St. Elizabeth's Roman Catholic Church (which features a dozen frescoes straight out of Michelangelo's imagination) and the cemetery, with headstones from nations across the globe. But this sleepy hamlet is on an upward swing with the opening of the Original Pocahontas All-Terrain Vehicle Trail.

Back on the road, you've got a beautiful stretch of rolling hills as you parallel the border with West Virginia. In Bishop, you'll pick up Route 16 again which brings you near Cavitt's Creek Park. This picturesque spot offers epic views from the upper campground and great fishing, hiking, and pedal boat rentals at Lake Witten below.

Heading West on 19/460, the mountains in the distance continue to inspire. The lush, cascading slopes and intertwining rivers are optically alluring every season of the year. Before your turn onto Wardell Road/603, get inspired at the [Appalachian Arts Center](#) which showcases and sells art and hand crafted works from regional artisans. The facility also offers classes and rotating exhibits.

On 603, you might pass by the Highlands Bull Pub before you know it. The unassuming structure is easy to miss but worth a stop. Following 609, you are driving through the beautiful Thompson Valley which you saw at the beginning of tour from atop the Dragon's overlook. [Plum Creek Winery](#), near the junction of Route 16, is sure to delight visitors with 14 flavors of wine produced on site.

Tazewell Visitors Center
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