

## NEWS RELEASE



*Where the Sun Rises  
on the Smokies*

### HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**CONTACT:** Darren Miller  
Public & Media Relations Manager  
(828) 452-0152  
[darren@smokeymountains.net](mailto:darren@smokeymountains.net)

**FOR 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY, EXPLORE SPECTACULAR STRETCH OF BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY**  
*Haywood County's 46 miles of 'America's Favorite Drive' Offer Unparalleled Vistas, Fun Adventure*

**HAYWOOD COUNTY, N.C. (JUNE 26, 2009)**—There are plenty of good reasons why the Blue Ridge Parkway has been dubbed “America’s Favorite Drive,” and all the evidence needed to understand the lure of this national landmark for more than seven decades is revealed with a cruise on any portion of its 46-mile stretch through Haywood County, North Carolina.

At elevations greater than anywhere else on the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway, which spans the Appalachian Mountains from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and is gearing up to celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010, the Haywood County span offers motorists breathtaking views of seemingly endless mountain ridges and picturesque valleys.

“It’s almost impossible to put into words the beauty of the views from the Blue Ridge Parkway,” said Lynn Collins, executive director of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority.

“Just when you say, ‘That’s the most amazing panorama I’ve ever seen,’ you drive to the next overlook, and then the next after that, to discover even more stunning vistas,” Collins said. “Luckily, there’s no limit on how many times you can utter oohs and aahs.”

The 20 overlooks that dot the Haywood County section of the Blue Ridge Parkway include Richland-Balsam Gap at milepost 431 (the highest point on the entire Parkway at 6,053 feet) and one of best views in the county of Cold Mountain at milepost 412 (made famous by Charles Frazier’s award-winning, best-selling historical novel of the same name and its film adaptation starring Jude Law, Nicole Kidman and Renee Zellweger). There are many other reasons to interrupt your drive and pull over, from more scenic overlooks to recreational opportunities (including scores of great hiking trails) and hidden gems, like waterfalls, that require a bit of exploration.

Looking Glass Rock, known for its striking granite face, is visible from the overlook at milepost 417 (as well as various other points on the Parkway). At milepost 418.8, explore Graveyard Fields, where a short

**-MORE-**

downhill hike (accessible to just about everyone, thanks to its paved walkway and deck stairs) leads to one of three waterfalls. A popular and unique hiking destination, Graveyard Fields morphs into a wild blueberry patch in late summer and fall, so bring your buckets or bags. Pull into the parking area at milepost 422.4 for a view of Devil's Courthouse (according to Cherokee folklore, the devil holds court in a cave on the mountain). A walk to the bare rock summit is worth every step. Waterrock Knob, at milepost 451.2, offers a remarkable panorama of the Great Smokies from its summit at 6,292 feet; there's also a visitor center here, along with a trail and exhibits.

"One of the great things about the Blue Ridge Parkway here is that it is so much more than just a road, more than a scenic drive," Collins said. "There's a lot to explore, see and do along the parkway."

That will especially be the case in 2010, she added, when many special events will be scheduled to commemorate the Blue Ridge Parkway's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

While the parkway is open year-round (weather permitting), the true beauty of the surroundings is revealed beginning in spring, as the valleys and mountainsides green before your eyes. The two most popular times of year to travel the Haywood County section of the Blue Ridge Parkway are June, when flame azalea, mountain laurel and catawba rhododendron typically bloom at higher elevations, and October, when leaves set the mountains ablaze as they change from their summer green to a spectacular spectrum of fall colors.

Haywood County—encompassing the towns of Maggie Valley, Waynesville, Canton, Clyde, and Lake Junaluska—is home to more than 200 accommodations, from quaint bed and breakfasts in the heart of downtown to cozy cottages and cabins secluded from the hustle and bustle, from recognizable brand hotels to budget-friendly motels, from golf resorts to historic inns.

With four entrance/exit points throughout the county, access to a majestically scenic drive is always just minutes away, no matter where you're staying.

"From our friendly people to the wide array of accommodations and restaurants, Haywood County is a host visitors won't soon forget," Collins said. "And if, during their stay, they exhaust all the possibilities the Blue Ridge Parkway has to offer, they'll be only minutes from dozens of entertaining attractions in Haywood County: gun fights and rides at Ghost Town in the Sky theme park, great shops and cafés in downtown Waynesville, and Cataloochee Valley in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park—to name a few."

-###-

Haywood County, North Carolina, "Where the Sun Rises on the Smokies," is 554 scenic square miles of spectacular country, with beautiful mountains and valleys dotting the landscape. More than a dozen of its mountain peaks soar to elevations of at least 6,000 feet (more than any east of the Mississippi River), and the county is one of the highest, with a mean elevation of 3,600 feet, east of the Rockies. One of its most notable mountain peaks is Cold Mountain—the basis for the award-winning, best-selling novel by Charles Frazier and the ensuing 2003 major motion picture—at 6,030 feet. The county sits at the western edge of the state, with the Blue Ridge Parkway running along its southwestern border. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Pisgah National Forest are located in the northern section of the county. Call 800.334.9036 to request a Media Guide, or visit [www.smokeymountains.net](http://www.smokeymountains.net) for more information about Blue Ridge Parkway's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and all that Haywood County has to offer, from accommodations to restaurants to attractions.