

NEWS RELEASE



*Where the Sun Rises
on the Smokies*

HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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FOR MANY IN THE SOUTHEAST, A REFRESHING VACATION IS ONLY A TANK AWAY

Ideal Locale of Western North Carolina Mountains Allows for Enjoyable Trip Without Emptying the Bank

HAYWOOD COUNTY, N.C. (August 6, 2008)—Rising gas prices during the last several months have caused many families to reconsider their vacation plans, but as summer draws to a close there's an affordable option for anyone who doesn't want to spend an exorbitant amount at the pump but doesn't want to forego a vacation either: Visit Maggie Valley and Waynesville, North Carolina.

Centrally located in the Southeast, where the average gas price remains one of the lowest of any region in the country, the natural beauty of these mountain communities is nothing short of breathtaking. And best of all, the cost to get here isn't: For many people in the region, traveling here requires only a few hours and a tank (or less) of gas, making it an increasingly popular vacation destination for residents of towns along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and major Southern cities like Charlotte and Atlanta.

Now a new online tool has been developed by AAA to assist travelers with determining exactly how much such a trip will cost. AAA's Fuel Cost Calculator (www.fuelcostcalculator.com) estimates the fuel cost of your trip based on the current average prices, highway fuel economy ratings and the information you enter into the "calculator," including starting city, destination and vehicle. The results include total number of miles, amount of gas in gallons that will be needed and the estimated cost of that amount of fuel (for both one-way and round-trip travel). Although the choices for starting city and destination are limited to bigger cities, even those living outside of one of the places listed in AAA's menu who would like to know the cost of driving to Maggie Valley and Waynesville (select Asheville as the destination and add/subtract about 20 miles) can get a pretty close estimate.

For example, someone in Atlanta driving a 2004 Honda Accord can travel to Haywood County and back for less than \$55 (again, results of the Fuel Cost Calculator are estimates and can change from the time you use it to the time you actually make the trip). AAA also offers some useful tips on how to get the most out of every gallon in its "Gas Watcher's Guide: Tips on Conserving Fuel, Saving Money and Protecting the Environment" (www.aaasouth.com/acs_news/8556.asp).

A summer getaway is only a tankful away—and to vacation here doesn't mean you have to bust your budget.

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“We have nearly 200 different lodging accommodations, including cabins, B&Bs, inns, motels, hotels, and vacation rentals, from economical to luxury and everything in between,” said Scotty Medford Ellis, executive director of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority. “We really do offer something for everyone, no matter what their travel budgets might be.”

And the natural splendor of the area can be enjoyed without spending much money, Ellis added.

“There’s so much to see and do here at little or no cost,” she said, “from hiking in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to dancing in the street to the music of live bluegrass band in downtown Waynesville.”

Gas prices are not the only thing on the rise this summer; the mercury in thermometers throughout the Southeastern United States is too. A trip to the mountains of Haywood County, thanks to its high elevation is the perfect antidote to the scorching temperatures in the region: the average maximum temperature in July and August is about 82 degrees (Fahrenheit), while the average minimum temperature in those months is about 58 degrees; the average daily temperature is about 70 degrees. The mild mountain air and cool breezes make this location a refreshing summer getaway.

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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.

For more information, log on to www.SmokeyMountains.net or call 800.334.9036 to request a Media Guide.