

2007 USCA National Rally – Area Attractions

The area around Boone, NC is a popular tourist destination. Winter skiing gives way to a variety of outdoor activities in warmer weather, including fishing, rafting, horseback riding, hiking, camping, golf, tennis, and hang gliding. And of course, motorcycling. There are number of specific attractions to be enjoyed, too, all within a short ride from the rally.

The main attraction for motorcyclists will probably be the roads, which range from gentle to full-workout.

The **Blue Ridge Parkway** goes right through the area, intersecting with Hwy 221 at several points. This is one of the great motorcycle roads in the country, and the Linn Cove Viaduct, an elevated roadway that crosses an environmentally fragile portion of Grandfather Mountain, is the most-visited part of the Parkway. Great roadway and scenery make the Parkway worth the trip all by itself.

US Hwy 221 between Hwy 321 at Blowing Rock and Hwy 105 at Linville is about as twisty as you want. There are a number of areas to pull off and stop on the west side of the road, but only one offers a really scenic overlook. No guard rail on the open side. The rock comes very close to the road in a couple of places on the east side, and actually overhangs the road at one point. No problem for your sidecar outfit, but you may have to stop and wait for oncoming traffic to clear if you're in a tall vehicle like an RV. There can also be congestion around the entrance to the Grandfather Mountain attraction (note: this is not the entrance to the Grandfather Campground, which is on the other side of the mountain on Hwy 105, about 9 miles away by road).

Hwy 181 between Morganton and the Blue Ridge Parkway is known as The Winding Stair, climbing 2,800 feet in its 25 miles.

From the sweeping four lanes of Hwy 321 to the rugged back roads, whatever your riding style, there's a road in the area that will accommodate it.

Grandfather Mountain (www.grandfather.com) (800-468-7325) is a privately-owned attraction and nature preserve that includes the highest peak (5,964 feet) in the Blue Ridge Mountain range. Featured are mountain scenery, environmental habitats, a nature museum, walking and hiking trails, and the Mile High Swinging Bridge, which is actually a suspension bridge for pedestrians. There is an entrance fee: \$14 for ages 13-59, \$12 60+, \$6 for ages 4-12, and children under 4 get in free.

To get to the Grandfather Mountain entrance from the rally site, take Hwy 105 south to Linville, then Hwy 221 south (left turn) toward Blowing Rock. The entrance is on the left after a couple of miles (one mile south of the intersection with the Blue Ridge Parkway at milepost 305). It's about 9 miles from the rally site.

Please note that the Grandfather Campground rally site is outside the attraction, on the other side of the mountain. You don't enter the attraction, and pay the fees, to get to the campground and the rally.

Further south (about 10 miles) on Hwy 221, in the community that bears its name, **Linville Falls** (828-765-7818) is a 90-foot waterfall that plunges into the Linville Gorge Wilderness area. No admission is charged.

Keep heading south on 221 about three miles and you'll find **Linville Caverns** (www.linvillecaverns.com) (800-419-0540). The only underground caverns in N.C., they offer spectacular formations created by the streams running under Linville Mountain. Admission from \$4 to \$6 per person is charged for those over age 5.

The Blowing Rock (www.theblowingrock.com) (828-295-7111) is billed as NC's oldest travel attraction. It's a cliff overhanging the Johns River Gorge, and gets its name from the fierce wind updrafts. It's on Hwy 321 south, just beyond the town of Blowing Rock (about 15 miles from the rally site). Admission charge of \$1 to \$6 for those aged 4 and older.

Tweetsie Railroad (www.tweetsie.com) (800-526-5740), on Hwy 321 between Blowing Rock and Boone (12 miles from the rally site), is a family, old-West-based theme park that features rides and live entertainment. The centerpiece activity is a ride through mountain scenery behind the historic steam locomotive. A one-day ticket is \$21 for children 3-12, and \$29 for adults.

Very close to Tweetsie on Hwy 321 is **Mystery Hill** (www.mysteryhill-nc.com) (828-264-2793), where balls roll, and water flows, uphill. Included are the Hall of Mystery with science exhibits and hands-on experiments, the Appalachian Heritage Museum, and the Native American Artifacts Museum. Admission is \$6 to \$8 for those 5 years and older.

The **Mast General Store** (www.mastgeneralstore.com) (828-963-6511) in Valle Crucis, NC - seemingly unchanged since its opening in 1883, this is what you see in your mind's eye when you think of country general store. They carry an astonishing variety of old-timey mercantile goods, traditional clothing, modern outdoor outfitting items, and candies. There are Mast stores in other locations, including Greenville, SC and Knoxville, TN, but this is the original. It's very much a working store, so there's no admission, but it would be difficult to go through without seeing something that you've just gotta have.

To get there from the rally site, go north on Hwy 105 toward Boone about 5 miles, then turn left onto Broadstone Road toward Valle Crucis. There's a traffic light at the well-marked intersection. After about 3 miles, the Mast General Store Annex will be on the right. Keep going a quarter of a mile and the original store will be

on the right. Then come back and visit the Annex after you've been through the main store.

Grandfather Mountain is home to the annual Highland Games and Gathering of Scottish Clans (held in July). If your heritage or interest is Scottish, you may want to visit the **Everything Scottish** store (www.everythingscottish.com) (888-606-5458), about 7 miles from the rally site, in Linville, NC.

Much farther away, but of particular interest to motorcyclists, is the **Wheels Through Time Museum** (www.wheelsthroughtime.com) (828-926-6266), with one of the most extensive collections of vintage American motorcycles to be found anywhere. And everything runs. Presentation is excellent, and the folks are extremely friendly and knowledgeable. This is a special place that deserves your visit. Admission \$6 - \$12 for those 5 years and older.

Wheels Through Time is in Maggie Valley, NC, about 100 miles from the rally site. There may be a group ride over during the rally; if not, or if that would be a longer day than you'd like, please consider stopping over on your way to or from the rally.

This list of attractions really just scratches the surface of all there is to see and do. Come explore!