

# Forest Heritage National Scenic Byway

Travel back in time and explore history and beautiful scenery on the Forest Heritage Scenic Byway (U.S. 276) through the Pisgah National Forest. As you wind your way on old settlement roads past mountain peaks and cascading waterfalls, imagine how this landscape looked decades ago when modern forestry began.



Length: 17.6 miles / 28.2 km

## Local Information

We do not have contact information for this Byway.

## Visitor Services



### Accessibility

\* Visitors centers and restrooms along the byway are universally accessible. \* Accessible campsites are available at the Davidson River campground. \* The overlook of Looking Glass Falls is universally accessible. \* Exhibits and buildings at the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education and Cradle of Forestry's Forest Discovery Center are universally accessible. \* Hearing assistance devices are available at these locations for video presentations.



### Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

Bicyclists and joggers share the byway with motor vehicles. US 276 from the US 64 intersection to the Blue Ridge Parkway intersection is designated as a state bike route.



### Camping

There are a few places to camp along the byway.



### Food

There is food available at the Cradle of Forestry and there are many picnic spots along the byway.



### Gasoline

Gasoline is available at one of the nearby towns including Brevard, Rosman, or Cruso.



### Information

Travelers can find information at the following public visitor or welcome centers on the byway: \* The Pisgah Ranger District Visitor Center, located on US 276 near Brevard, has a staffed info desk, hands-on exhibits, a gift shop and restrooms. Open M-F (8-5) with weekend and holiday hours in summer. \* The Cradle of Forestry in America, located on the east side of U.S. 276, 11 miles from the southern byway entrance, has restrooms, a staffed info desk, exhibits, a gift shop, cafe and interpretive trails. Open mid-April to mid-Nov daily 9-5. There is a nominal entrance fee. \* The Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education, located at 1401 Fish Hatchery Road, 1.4 miles off the byway, offers restrooms, exhibits, an auditorium, trails and a trout hatchery. Open 8 to 4:45 daily including some holidays. There is no fee for entry.



### Restrooms

There are restrooms at the Cradle of Forestry.



### Retail

There is a gift shop at the Cradle of Forestry, Pisgah Ranger District and visitors can buy maps and basic supplies at the Pisgah Visitors Center.

### Special Considerations

Dense fog occurs in spring and fall and may slow down or interrupt byway traffic. Winter ice and snow may cause unexpected closures. Check local weather before driving the byway.

Drivers who are not used to mountain driving may cause slowdowns. The road climbs from about 2,150 feet at the entrance to about 4,465 feet at the intersection with the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The entire length of the byway accommodates two-wheel passenger vehicles. The route is a two-lane paved road with several paved and gravel pull-offs for public use, and is comprised entirely of existing highways maintained to federal or state standards.

### Restrictions

There is a mix of traffic along the byway including passenger cars, tourist buses and vans, commercial vehicles, heavy logging trucks, large construction or logging equipment. Use caution.

The byway is not usually closed for seasonal travel.

### Seasons

#### Best Time to Drive

The historical significance of the byway can be appreciated at any time, and the full color splendor of the road changes with the seasons.

# Forest Heritage National Scenic Byway

## High Season

Byway travel peaks in the summer, meaning additional traffic. There is also high visitation during the fall foliage season and on holiday weekends. Use caution as this means occasional congestion at the byway entrance.

## Map and Directions



## Legend:

 Point of Interest	 Campground	 Featured Byway	 Water	 State Border
 Park	 Picnic/Rest Area	 America's Byways	 Wildlife Refuge	 Urban Area
 Mountain	 Interstate	 Other Byway	 Wilderness Area	 Tribal Nation
 City	 U.S. Highway	 Other Road	 Other Federal Lands	 Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

## Driving Directions

The byway begins at the junction of US 280, 64, and 276.


- Take US 276 northwest.
- Continue on US 276 for 17.6 miles through the Pisgah National Forest.
- The route goes under the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- The byway ends at the parking lot of the Big East Fork Trailhead for the Shining Rock Wilderness Area.

## Getting to the Byway




### Nearby cities

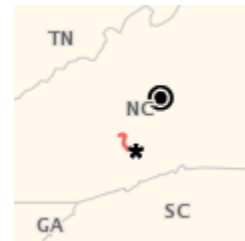
Asheville, NC (30 miles / 48.28 km, 50 minutes)

**Start:**  US 25 South to Westbound I-40  
N 35.572° W 82.550° [?]

- From downtown Asheville take US 25 (McDowell St) south.
- Continue on US 25 which becomes Hendersonville Rd.
- Take the on-ramp for I-40 westbound.
- Get on to I-26 south.
- Continue on I-26 and take exit 40 for NC-280 toward Arden.
- Take a right on US-276/US-64 to the Pisgah National Forest and the southern entrance of the byway.

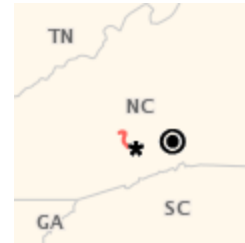
### Directions:

**Junction with byway:**  Junction of US 276, 280, and 64  
N 35.274° W 82.704° [?]



**Hendersonville, NC** (17 miles / 27.36 km, 25 minutes)

- Start:** ● 6th Ave W in Downtown Hendersonville  
N 35.319° W 82.464° [?]
- From downtown Hendersonville, head west on 6th Ave W which is US 64.
  - At the junction with NC 280 and US 276, continue heading straight onto US 276.
- Directions:**
- The Forest Heritage Scenic Byway begins at the entrance to the Pisgah National Forest.



- Junction with byway:** \* Junction of US 276, 280, and 64  
N 35.274° W 82.704° [?]

**Waynesville, NC** (21 miles / 33.80 km, 30 minutes)

- Start:** ● US 276 in Downtown Waynesville  
N 35.488° W 82.988° [?]
- Head east on US 276 away from downtown Waynesville.
  - Continue heading south and east.
- Directions:**
- U.S. 276 turns into the Forest Heritage Scenic Byway at the parking lot for the Shining Rock Wilderness Area, south of Cruso.



- Junction with byway:** \* Shining Rock Wilderness Area Parking Lot  
N 35.287° W 82.761° [?]

## Road Trip: Forest History: A Journey Through Time

**Departure:** Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina

**Destination:** Big East Fork Trailhead, North Carolina

**Time to allow:** 2 days

As you travel the winding settlement roads and logging routes of years past, use your imagination to envision western North Carolina as it was decades ago. Travel passed early settlement homesteads, mountain peaks and cascading waterfalls and step back in time...

### Day 1

- **Start: Pisgah National Forest**

This is one of the four national forests in North Carolina. It was one of the first national forests in the East, established in 1916 after nearly 80,000 acres of land was purchased from Edith Vanderbilt for \$5 per acre.



- **Stop 1: Forest Heritage Scenic Byway Drive-by Orientation Pull-off**



**From previous stop:** 1 minute / 0.2 mi (0.3 km)

**Directions:** Drive 0.2 miles past the stone columns and take the road pull-off on the right.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 5 minutes

At this roadside pull-off, you'll find an exhibit showing a map, information, and interpretation, telling the byway story and identifying highlights for the route ahead.

- **Stop 2: Davidson River Mill at the Sycamore Flats Picnic Area**



**From previous stop:** 1 minute / 0.1 mi (0.2 km)

**Directions:** From the drive-by map display, continue northwest on U.S. 276 for 0.1 miles and turn right at the brown sign for the Sycamore Flats Picnic Area.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

The Davidson River was key to community settlement in 1788 when it was used to forge iron, grind corn, and mill fabric. During the Civil War, water power provided a vital source for iron and fabric. Stop at this picturesque picnic area and enjoy lunch in the fresh air.

- **End: Davidson River Campground**



**From previous stop:** 2 minutes / 0.8 mi (1.3 km)

**Directions:** From Sycamore Flats Picnic Area, travelers should turn left and continue to head north on the byway for 0.8 miles. The right turn into the campground is marked.

This popular campground upstream from the historic Davidson River Mill site offers another great way to experience the river. Hiking trails, fishing streams, and overnight camping with interpretive programs are available here. Sites, restrooms, and shower facilities are accessible. If you're looking for a great weekend trip, don't forget your tent and toothbrush!

### **Totals for Day 1**

**Total Distance Traveled:** 1.1 miles / 1.8 km

**Total Travel Time:** 4 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 35 minutes

## Day 2

- **Stop 1: Pisgah Visitor Center**



**From previous stop:** 1 minute / 0.3 mi (0.5 km)

**Directions:** Turn left out of the campground and continue north on the Byway for 0.3 miles. Turn right at the next opportunity. This is the parking lot for the Pisgah Visitor Center.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 1 hour 30 minutes

Stop at the Pisgah Visitor Center and office for more information about the forest or the byway. The center features an information desk, hands-on exhibits, a short documentary, a gift shop, and accessible restrooms. The Visitor Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. During the summer, it is also open Saturday and holidays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. Across from the visitor center, the Andy Cover Nature Trail (0.7 miles, easy pace) meanders through a beautiful forest where people once lived. Watch for rock walls, apple trees and spring daffodils revealing the sites of former homesteads.

- **Stop 2: English Chapel**



**From previous stop:** 10 minutes / 0.3 mi (0.5 km)

**Directions:** Park your vehicle at the Pisgah Visitor Center, walk across the byway, and head north along the river 0.3 miles. There is a footbridge that allows travelers to visit on Sundays. Parking at the Chapel is not possible.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 10 minutes

In addition to serving as the local church, this building also served as a one-room schoolhouse for the children of the 40 to 50 families who lived in the Davidson River Community. Fill your camera with priceless memories of this historic building. The English Chapel is within walking distance of the Pisgah Visitor Center and Davidson River Campground.

- **Stop 3: Davidson River Community Pull-off**



**From previous stop:** 1 minute / 0.3 mi (0.5 km)

**Directions:** From the English Chapel, continue northwest on the byway for 0.3 miles.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 15 minutes

This interpretive pull-off location marks the site of homesteads from the early 1900s. At the time, the Davidson River and its tributaries were home to a community of independent, self-reliant families who farmed the land or maintained pasture. Walk to the clearing where the homesite once stood and imagine the current forest view being a view of cornfields and pastures as it once was.

- **Stop 4: Coontree Picnic Area**



**From previous stop:** 5 minutes / 2.7 mi (4.3 km)

**Directions:** From the Davidson River Community interpretive sign, continue heading north on U.S. 276 for 2.7 miles. There are several picnic pull-offs between the sign and Coontree, but continue to Coontree and turn left at the sign for a full-featured site, including accessible restrooms.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

This picnic site offers another great way to experience the river and reflect on the importance it played in the area's early settlement. Coontree includes accessible restrooms and opportunities for hiking and fishing.

- **Stop 5: Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education and Fish Hatchery**



**From previous stop:** 5 minutes / 1.8 mi (2.9 km)

**Directions:** From the Coontree Picnic Area, turn left and continue north on the byway. After 0.4 miles, turn left and head west on FS 475 and follow the signs to the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education and Fish Hatchery. After 1.4 miles, turn left into the marked parking lot.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 1 hour 15 minutes

Your visit to this site includes walk around the outdoor trout hatchery raceways, a model backyard wildlife garden, interpretive trails, indoor aquariums representing North Carolina's aquatic habitats, and a documentary. First the site of a logging community, then a Civilian Conservation Corps camp during the Great Depression, the area is now a hatchery operated by NC Wildlife Resources Commission that raises thousands of trout for western North Carolina streams.

- **Stop 6: John Rock Logging Camp Site and Historical Marker**



**From previous** same location

**stop:**

**Directions:** This historical marker is located at the entrance to the parking area of the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education.

**Suggested** 10 minutes

**time at this**

**stop:**

Ponder the interesting history of the John Rock Logging Camp Site. For thousands of years, people have lived and worked on the the flat expanse below the sheer cliffs of John Rock. Over the past 100 years, this was the site of a Black Forest Lodge, a logging camp, a Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and a Boy Scout camp. A trail leading to the top of John Rock begins at the end of the parking area. The Cat Gap Loop Trail (4.4 miles, medium intensity) branches off to the John Rock Trail (1.8 miles, medium intensity), climbing to the top of the dome.

- **Stop 7: Looking Glass Falls Overlook**



**From** 3 minutes / 1.8 mi (2.9 km)

**previous**

**stop:**

**Directions:** From the John Rock Logging Camp interpretive site, turn right out of the parking lot and follow the signs back to the Forest Heritage Scenic Byway. You will reach the U.S. 276 in 1.4 miles. Turn left to continue north along the byway for 0.4 more miles. Pull off on the east side of the road for the Looking Glass Falls overlook.

**Suggested** 15 minutes

**time at**

**this stop:**

Feel the mist of an Oregon waterfall at the Looking Glass Falls overlook. Today's byway passes the falls along the grade of a former logging railroad. Louis Carr built 75 miles of railroad to haul the timber to his sawmill in the town of Pisgah Forest. Today, much of U.S. 276 follows the route of the logging trains.

- **Stop 8: Sliding Rock**



**From previous stop:** 5 minutes / 2.1 mi (3.4 km)

**Directions:** From Looking Glass Falls, head north on the Byway for 2.1 miles. The turnoff to Sliding Rock is marked with a brown sign and is on the west side of the road.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 1 hour

In the summer, visitors may enjoy a cool slide down Sliding Rock Falls' 60-foot rock waterslide into the 7-foot pool of water below. The falls are supervised by lifeguards and a restrooms and changing areas are provided for visitors.

- **Stop 9: The Cradle of Forestry**



**From previous stop:** 6 minutes / 3.4 mi (5.4 km)

**Directions:** From Sliding Rock, turn left to continue heading north on the byway. After 3.4 miles, turn right into the Cradle of Forestry in America's Forest Discovery Center.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 2 hours

This interpretive site is home to the first forestry school in the United States. Operated by George W. Vanderbilt's personal forester, Dr. Carl Schenk, the school taught students the science and business of forestry. During the school's 15 years of operation, over 350 students practiced tree stewardship, lumbering, and maintaining productive woodlands. Many of the forest management principles established at the school have been employed around the world. Today, the Cradle of Forestry includes several enticing activities for visitors to western North Carolina. Visitors will learn all about the forest through informational movies, programs, and special events that occur there. Hikes and trails around the facility lead to historic buildings and to scenic places in the forest. Discover the roots of the forest at the Cradle of Forestry.

- **Stop 10: Pink Beds Picnic Area**



**From previous stop:** 1 minute / 0.2 mi (0.3 km)

**Directions:** From the Cradle of Forestry, turn right to head north and continue on the byway. After 0.2 miles, turn right again into the Pink Beds Picnic Area.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

Enjoy a meal among the trees at the Pink Beds Picnic Area. At the turn of the century, settlers in this small community farmed in the Pink Beds area. The Pink Beds Loop Trail (5 miles, easy) is accessible from the picnic area.

- **Stop 11: Blue Ridge Parkway**



**From previous stop:** 6 minutes / 3.6 mi (5.8 km)

**Directions:** From the Pink Beds Picnic Area, turn north on the byway and continue for 3.6 more miles. There will be directional signs for the Blue Ridge Parkway before the intersection. Travelers don't have to stop or turn off; they can continue under the Blue Ridge Parkway bridge and keep going on the byway.

Get a high-elevation view of the forest's current landscape on this All American Road, managed by the National Park Service, which traverses the backbone of the Blue Ridge Mountains with a section traveling through the Pisgah Ranger District. The route is also a traveling turning point: turning north leads to Mt. Pisgah and Asheville, while going south will take you to Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

- **End: Big East Fork Trailhead**



**From previous stop:** 6 minutes / 2.8 mi (4.5 km)

**Directions:** From the intersection with the Blue Ridge Parkway, continue north along U.S. 276 as the Byway winds and curves. After 2.8 miles turn left into the Big East Fork Trailhead parking lot. This is a main access to the Shining Rock Wilderness area. If the parking lot on the left is full, another one is available immediately on the right.

The 1964 Wilderness Act declared wild areas to be preserved in their natural condition for future generations. This trailhead is a main access to Shining Rock Wilderness, one of the first designated wilderness areas, established in 1964. Wilderness trails are minimally maintained are not signed so as to protect the primeval wilderness character. Wilderness hikers should expect to be self-reliant, must not travel in groups of more than 10, and may not build campfires.

### **Totals for Day 2**

**Total Distance Traveled:** 19.3 miles / 30.9 km

**Total Travel Time:** 49 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 7 hours 35 minutes