

FEATURES

Parkway meanders with historical beauty

A drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the many country roads extending from it, is like taking a time machine into America's past. The Parkway, nicknamed "America's Favorite Drive," extends 469 miles from the Great Smokey Mountain National Park in North Carolina to the Shenandoah National Park in



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Virginia.

The building of the Parkway was a monumental job, started by President Franklin Roosevelt's Work Program Administration during the Great Depression. Roosevelt created many jobs through the WPA for many of the

chians as early as the American Revolution. A group of American family men from these mountains were counted on to prevent British forces from penetrating over these mountains. These men, who were later known as the Over Mountain Men, were not trained soldiers, but they played a key part in America's succession over British rule. Their knowledge of the mountains in which they lived allowed them to neutralize the British march west. Pat Alderman, an author of a book on these men said, "the earth was [their] bed. The sky [their] cover. The creeks and rivers [their] water source."

Continuing your drive along this road that leads to America's past you see many gravel roads that extend to parts unknown. If one travels down



Photo by Michelle Crabtree.

The Blue Ridge Parkway extends 355 miles into the mountains of North Carolina and Virginia.



Photo by Michelle Crabtree.

Waterfalls, like the one above, help maintain the natural integrity of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

unemployed workers of the time, and the Blue Ridge Parkway was one of the many positive results. The completion of this beautiful strip of road, which exposes 355 miles of the extraordinary eastern Appalachians and 114 miles of the southern Black Mountains, took over a half century to complete. It was the first parkway built in the U.S. and remains its longest.

America's past is exposed in many places along the Parkway. While driving on these roads one can get a feeling of what life was like for families who lived in the Appala-

these roads, he or she may see a way of life once prevalent in America, the life of farming. Farming at one time was the way of life for many Americans; the day began with the rising sun and ended with its descent. Days were spent tending to the crops, land, and animals. The simple yet satisfying lifestyle left the farmer more than just familiar with the land; he was part of the land.

On my trip along the Parkway during the late winter accompanied by bluegrass tunes on the radio, I experienced this entrance into America's past. The dulcimer,

acoustic guitar and mandolin are the instruments played with pride in these mountains and the music they make are the voices of the people who live here. The majority of the trees are barren this time of year, exposing the ranges of mountains in the vast distance. These trees which look lifeless will soon be brought back to life as spring approaches. Fall leaves still cover

the ground, but these leaves will soon nurture the plants and trees. These naked trees and fallen leaves are evidence of winter's destruction, but also bring hope of the new life that comes with spring, which is the cyclical nature of these mountains. In the spring, the trillium, trout lily and mountain laurel will blossom like they have for thousands of years.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is not an American treasure because of its magnificent construction. It is a treasure because it takes us back in time to understand the history of these mountains and the many people who lived here. The seasonal changes of the mountains seen from the Parkway allows us to live to a degree like the farmer, not just familiar with the land, but as part of the land.



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