

National Parks

Day 1

Charlotte to Great Smoky Mountains National Park

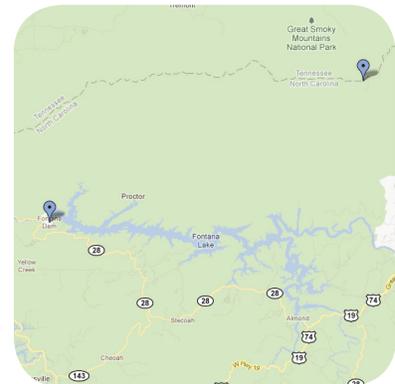
Leaving **Charlotte**, travel to **Lake Lure** and visit **Chimney Rock State Park**, film site of *Last of the Mohicans*. You will have the chance to ride a 26-story elevator through sheer granite that takes you to breathtaking 120 kilometer views of the Blue Ridge Mountains.



Drive thru Hendersonville to **Sliding Rock**, a natural slide on Looking Glass Creek, in the **Pisgah National Forest**, near **Brevard**, North Carolina. About 18 meters long, it has a gentle slope ending in a large, deep pool at the bottom.

Just beyond Sliding Rock get on the Blue Ridge Parkway towards **Cherokee**.

Your trip through the **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** begins in **Cherokee**, just 20 minutes east of **Bryson City**. Highway 441 (Newfound Gap Road) takes you past the **Mountain Farm Museum** at the Park's **Oconaluftee Visitors Center** and **Mingus Mill**, a large water-powered mill for grinding corn. The road winds through the mountains, with a side trip to **Clingmans Dome**, the highest peak in the Smokies. At the halfway point across you enter Tennessee. (North Carolina and Tennessee gave equal amounts of land for the Park.) At the Park's **Sugarlands Visitors Center** take a westerly drive over to **Cades Cove**. You may return the way you came, or in summer take the "back way" home by way of **Parson's Branch**, a one-way road south that brings you to Highway 28 west of **Fontana Dam**.



For driving enthusiasts, take on the **Tail of the Dragon**. Named for its 17.6 km section with 318 continuous curves, U.S. Highway 129 connects Western North Carolina with East Tennessee, and is world-famous among motorcyclists and sports car drivers alike.

Overnight in **Bryson City**

Day 2



Great Smoky Mountain Railroad to Nantahala Outdoor Center – home to the 2013 World Freestyle Kayak Championships, Appalachian Trail stop and great whitewater rafting.

Visit the **Oconaluftee Village and Museum of the Cherokee Indian** on the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

Get on the road to **Asheville**, stop at the **Wheels Through Time Museum** (open May thru Oct), a celebration of American cars and motorcycles with more than 250 vintage vehicles dating back to 1903 located in scenic

Maggie Valley.

Overnight in **Asheville**

Day 3

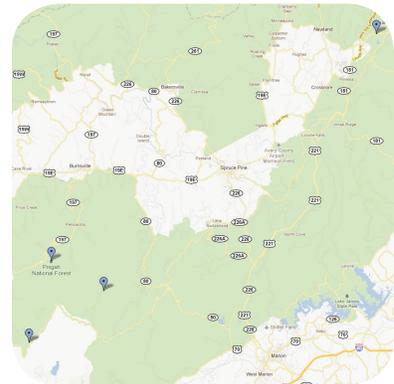
Spend half a day at **Biltmore**, then tour **Asheville** and top off your evening with a twist on the everyday city tour with a **LaZoom Tour**. This is not your parent's tour!

Overnight in **Asheville**

Day 4

Jump back on the **Blue Ridge Parkway** heading north. Just a short drive outside of **Asheville** is the **Blue Ridge Parkway Visitors Center**. Make one stop to learn about the entire 469 miles and 76-year history of the Parkway. Enjoy the scenic vistas on your way to **Mount Mitchell**. In the crest of the timeworn Black Mountains lies the summit of Mount Mitchell; at an elevation 6,684 feet it is the highest point east of the Mississippi.

Nearby is **Grandfather Mountain**, home of the Mile-High Swinging Bridge.



A true landmark of a pioneering spirit, the Mile High Swinging Bridge welcomes all visitors to admire 360-degree panoramic views from Grandfather Mountain. The bridge has been in place since 1952—and for just as long it's excited thousands who've walked across with the thrills of mile-high elevation. Whether you cross it to challenge yourself, for the scenery, or to admire this engineering masterpiece, the experience will make your trip to Grandfather complete.

Overnight in **Blowing Rock**

Day 5

Stroll the charming town of **Blowing Rock**. In just three square miles you'll find more than 100 shops, about two dozen restaurants, and nearly 20 hotels and inns.

Continue north on the **Blue Ridge Parkway** and visit an authentic American general store, the **Mast General Store** in **Valle Crucis**. The store opened in 1883 and has remained relatively unchanged. Mast General has always tried to carry all of the items their neighbors might need — from “Cradles to Caskets,” which led to the popular saying, “If you can't buy it here, you don't need it.”



Continue your journey north to Virginia on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Estimated travel time and distances:

Charlotte to Chimney Rock 1.5 hours, 143 km