



Burnsville is the place where nature, art, science, Main Street, and Southern hospitality converge. How many rural counties can claim The Appalachian Trail, Blue Ridge Parkway, an internationally certified dark sky park, planetarium and observatory, and a Center for Pioneer Life while being home to one of the largest artist communities, a thriving theater, and Main Street with shops and restaurants that delight locals and visitors?

There's Something for Everyone in Burnsville!

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Parkway Playhouse Celebrates 80 In Style

Not only is the Parkway Playhouse the oldest continually operating summer theater in NC, it's also one of the few remaining theaters on what's known as the Straw Hat Trail. The Parkway has much to celebrate as they've put the finishing touches on a new black box theater, and get ready to renovate the old outdoor amphitheatre. The theater promises a season of audience favorites, along with special guests and concerts from Broadway and beyond.

Weaver Knob Boulders/McKinney Gap Boulders at Bald Mountain Creek Preserve Rocks Boulderers' Worlds

Considered one of the newest publicly accessible bouldering areas in North Carolina, the area was developed to provide sustainable, public access to over 100 potential boulder problems. The park is also home to the near-threatened golden-winged warbler.



The Carolina Mountains Literary Festival Celebrates 20th Year in 2027

The event offers a wealth of free author sessions, hosted in intimate venues across downtown, in addition to several paid workshops. The Friday night dinner and Saturday evening keynote sessions not only generate food for thought, but a whole lot of fun.

Mayland's Earth to Sky Park Adds Children's Discovery Center

Mayland Earth to Sky Park is ONE of only TWO places in the WORLD where visitors can experience an internationally certified dark sky, view the moon, planets and stars through its Bare Dark Sky Observatory (through the southeast's largest public telescope), and watch the latest programming in its 60-seat Glenn and Carol Arthur Planetarium. Recognizing the ability to inspire future generations of astro-professionals, Mayland is in the process of adding a two-building children's discovery center to include an engineering and design-centric space and an environment and conservation-centric space.



Burnsville is the Place to BEE

What's buzzing in Burnsville? A plethora of pro-pollinator beekeepers, who keep the town and visitors in honey, candles, and beekeeping insight. In 2027, volunteers from the Toe Cane Beekeepers, who manage the local apiary at Mayland Community College, will be offering apiary tours.



Meet the women who shape Burnsville's Main Street Charm

From candles to coffee, from fine dining to cozy guest stays, you can count on the women of Burnsville to deliver. In fact, if you look downtown, you'll discover the bulk of Main Street offerings are either women-owned or women-partnered. Warm, passionate, savvy – they inspire visitors and locals to come back for more.

Carolina Native Nursery Plants a Big Punch

Bill Jones likes to say when he opened Carolina Native Nursery in 2003, there wasn't even a curve to be ahead of. Housed on 18 lush acres, the nursery grows nearly 200 species of native plants from seed, including indigenous rhododendrons, azaleas, and mountain laurels, for which they are renowned. Jones likes to say the sex appeal of indigenous plants is birds, bees, and butterflies. He encourages visitors who regularly travel several hundred miles to purchase his plants to save the earth, one plant at a time.



Firecreek Retreat is an ideal place for loafing around and then some

Gavin and Christie McKenzie have several personal passions, including yoga, food, and photography. As the owners of Firecreek Retreat, they bring those passions to light with annual yoga and mindfulness retreats, an annual sourdough making workshop, and plans for an upcoming photography retreat. Then there are the retreats others host on the premises, from writing and painting workshops to college students learning about the unique environment. Gorgeous accommodations, lush grounds, farm animals (including mini donkeys), hot tubs, sauna, pond, and ample acreage for meandering make it an ideal and idyllic option.

Ramping up Spring: A Weekend Ramp Extravaganza, April 2 - 3 — You know it's spring in the mountains when you see feathery ramp leaves emerging from the forest floor. An Appalachian delicacy which tastes like a cross between garlic and onion, they make their way into myriad recipes, from scrambled eggs and biscuits to seafood and pasta. In 2027, they'll be making their way across downtown Burnsville. The Center For Pioneer Life will be offering history, foraging insight and ramp-inspired food trucks. The event will include ticketed foraging opportunities, ramp dinners, and ramp tasting/competition. Local restaurants will also be offering ramp-inspired cocktails and menu items.

Dark Sky on the Square, April 10 — In its stellar 2026 debut, Dark Sky on the Square, created to celebrate International Dark Sky Week, attracted close to 500 star-seekers to the Burnsville Square, eager to learn about the universe with a little help from the staff and volunteers at Mayland's Earth to Sky Park. Downtown restaurants offered special cocktails and menu items, Thrive Appalachia created a dark sky sorbet, Burnsville Candle created dark sky-themed candles, and retailers stayed open late. Homeplace Beer Company will be unveiling a new dark sky brew for 2027.

Burnsville in Bloom: Celebrating Spring Wildflowers, Nature, and the Creative Spirit, April 22 - 24 — What do you do when you live in one of the most biodiverse areas in North America? You hold a wildflower festival to celebrate, of course. From wildflower, birding, lichen, photography, and mindfulness walks, to native nursery and apiary tours, participants will have an opportunity to explore Burnsville's vast natural riches. Participants will also be able to choose from several art programs taught by area artists. Toe River Arts will host a juried nature art exhibition, with cash awards for the top three artists.

Brushstrokes in the Blue Ridge - Burnsville's Plein Air Festival, May 11 - 14 — Burnsville is a painter's paradise with a long history of painters who have worked and taught here, as well as called these mountains home. Participants will have unique "scenery" opportunities from which to be inspired, and be able to sell their work at a fundraising gala to help area art teachers purchase supplies. Beloved Waynesville plein-air instructor Jo Ridge Kelley will be offering a special one-day workshop for interested participants.