

for immediate release

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The Art of Nature: Finding Inspiration in Transylvania County

Brevard, NC: At twilight in early summer, Brevard, North Carolina appears like a mountainous Mayberry, the epitome of small town America, wreathed in mountain laurel and surrounded by the verdant peaks of the southern Appalachians. But beneath its deceptively sleepy veneer, Brevard and its surrounding environs boast a thriving arts community, diverse music festivals that rival any in the Southeast, and a mecca for adventurers eager to sample the thrills of an extraordinary natural landscape.

Transylvania County offers a superb collection of elegant inns, charming bed and breakfasts and a delightful hodge-podge of restaurants and bars tempting to any palette. For travelers willing to wander just slightly off the beaten path, they will find in Transylvania County an astonishing fusion of art and nature in perfect proportion.

Often called the “Heart of the Western North Carolina Mountains,” one-third of Transylvania County lies in state forests and parks, with 250 waterfalls and 500 miles of heart-stopping mountain trails. Its quaint small towns and villages dot the landscape like jewels in an elegant green necklace.

For over a century, Transylvania County has lured travelers, tycoons and a myriad of adventurers. Its name, which conjures a folktale landscape, literally translates as “across the forest,” describing acres of majestic lush woods, crystalline streams, high peaks and magnificent stony edifices that rise like castle walls from the sea of green. There is a fairy tale quality to the scenery.

Its reputation was enhanced by the collaborative efforts of George Vanderbilt, Frederick Law Olmstead, Gifford Pinchot and Dr. Carl Schenck to create America’s first forestry school in shadow of Mt Pisgah. This 6500-acre pioneering institution is credited as being the birthplace of forest conservation in the U.S. In 1968, Congress named the Cradle of Forestry a historic site. The more than 11,000 acres surrounding the Cradle of Forestry, now part of the 510,000 acre Pisgah National Forest, became the first large scale publicly owned and protected forest land after being sold to U.S. government by George Vanderbilt’s widow in 1911.

Pisgah National Forest is world-renowned for its recreational opportunities. It is home to legendary landmarks including granite-faced Looking Glass Rock, Looking Glass Falls and Sliding Rock.

In 1996, Transylvania County welcomed Dupont State Forest, a 10,000-acre tract between Brevard and Hendersonville, with impressive waterfalls, intimate campsites, and nooks and crannies ripe for climbing. Gorges State Park, located near Lake Toxaway and Nantahala National Forest, was purchased by the state in 1999. Gorges features a temperate rainforest, several breathtaking falls, plus superior fishing, hiking and camping.

Transylvania County's near limitless possibilities for those seeking an adrenaline rush on rugged trails are no secret. Among mountain biking circles, Brevard is mentioned with the same hushed reverence as Whistler and Moab. Residents are no longer surprised to see groups of international, competitive or just fun-loving cyclists materialize on street corners after a day's ride.

Not far from this symphony of falling water, hundreds of exceptional students armed with violins and clarinets, trumpets and timpani, tune their instruments at Brevard Music Center. Founded in 1936, the center has emerged as one of America's finest summer music institutes, drawing musicians from around the world to study and perform. Its summer festival features eighty performances over seven weeks. Previous guest artists have included Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Joshua Bell, soprano Renee Fleming and pianists Andre Watts and Emmanuel Ax. All the performances at Brevard Music Center are open air. As a result, concertgoers get to appreciate a summer evening's sublime contributions to the setting and the soundtrack.

With Brevard Music Center long a cornerstone of cultural life, it's not surprising to learn that many musicians and music lovers find their way there. The White Squirrel Festival is touted as "The Best Spring Music Festival in Western North Carolina. September's Mountain Song Festival hosts some of the biggest names in bluegrass for two days of concerts. This year's festival, is hosted by Western North Carolina's own Steep Canyon Rangers be led by actor, comedian and banjo-player Steve Martin. Additional star-power will be provided by celebrated "Newgrass" pioneer and mandolinist David Grisman.

Transylvania County is a gem. It's a fairytale wilderness full of artists, an unparalleled adventure destination, and a host of inviting villages eager to show off their charm, creativity and hospitality. On a summer evening in Transylvania County, one feels a certain energy, a certain atmosphere, unlike anywhere else in the world. The Land of Waterfalls may have been one of America's best-kept secrets, but the word is out. For those looking to experience the art of nature, there's no better place to be inspired.

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