

for immediate release

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Shifting gears: Biking in Transylvania County

Brevard, NC: Transylvania County is home to some of the finest cycling in North America. For those seeking an adrenaline rush on a rugged trail, the possibilities are nearly endless. Pick up a cycling magazine or eavesdrop on any conversation between serious bikers and you'll probably hear Transylvania County mentioned with the same hushed reverence as Whistler and Moab for its wealth and diversity of cycling opportunities. Town residents are no longer surprised to see international cyclists materialize on street corners after a full day's ride.

Between them, Pisgah National Forest and DuPont State Forest provide over 600 miles of single-track trails. Add in the many groomed and graveled Forest Service roads and the total bumps up toward the 1,000 mile mark, creating the equivalent of a biking nirvana. But it's not just quantity that draws riders to the area: it's the quality and variety of the terrain.

Todd Branham, a local mountain bike racing promoter, pinpoints the appeal of the area. "In Pisgah, you've got classic single-track trails with lots of big climbs and fast descents," Branham explains. "And just a few miles down the road in DuPont you've got purpose-built trails that take you over a completely different landscape – sand, slickrock, even waterfall routes."

Transylvania County hosts a friendly and deeply ingrained biking culture open to giving visitors and residents alike all the information they need to make the most of two-wheeled transport. If there's small town that could be accused of good-naturedly conspiring to get your feet on the pedals, it's Brevard. A well-maintained bike path leads directly from downtown to the base of Pisgah National Forest and for those not afraid of a little topography, it's a smooth fifteen-mile climb to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

"It's very easy to just get up in the morning at the Red House B&B and get out on a bike," says Thad Walker, head coach of the Brevard College Cycling Team. "You can spend the day cycling through town, into the parks and back into town again for a bite to eat at nightfall."

“What’s great about this area,” says Walker, “is that it appeals to riders of every level. Whether you’re a beginner or an advanced mountain biker there’s something here for you.”

Word about Transylvania County’s mountain biking has been spreading. In March 2009, Bike Magazine featured Pisgah National Forest’s Black Mountain Trail as one of its “33 Best Rides in North America.” In June, the magazine featured Brevard in its cover story “Secret Stashes: Six Hidden Destinations with Incredible Trails.” The publication sites Brevard as “the perfect starting point for some of North Carolina’s best singletrack.”

Walker recommends all interested cyclists, be they novices or future competitors in Tour de France, stop by Sycamore Cycles or The Hub. “They’ll help you find trails and routes based on your ability and experience levels. As small shops in a small town, they’re absorbed in cycling culture and can help people get what they’re looking for whether it’s an exciting new trail, a rental bike or a new water bottle to take along for the ride.”

Transylvania County may be a new Mecca for mountain bikers, but it’s also a very friendly town. “This is a laid back community geared toward outdoor activity,” says Walker. “I think most cyclists around will tell you the most important part is getting out there and enjoying what this place has to offer.”

The trails

For beginners and families:

Ridgeline Trail
DuPont State Forest
<http://www.dupontforest.com/trails.asp>

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Description: This four mile loop takes about an hour and offers a nice introduction to biking in the DuPont State Forest, which Mountain Bike magazine rates as one of the “Top Five Mountain Biking Destinations in the Southeast.” Riders of this trail enjoy an interesting combination of single track trails and gravel Forest Service roads which are really flowy with sweeping downhills. Advanced riders love it, too, because it’s fast and non-technical. Ridgeline Trail is easily accessible from Dupont Forest’s Guion Farms parking lot.

Directions: From the intersection of Hwy. 276 and 64 head east on Hwy. 64 toward Hendersonville. At light turn right onto Crab Creek Rd. Follow signs to DuPont State Forest. Off Crab Creek, take right onto DuPont Rd., followed by your first left onto Sky Valley Rd. This road will turn to gravel and Guion Farms Parking Lot will be on your right.

For intermediate riders:

Cove Creek Loop
Pisgah National Forest
www.ncdot.org/transit/bicycle/maps/trails.pdf

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Pisgah National Forest Ranger Station
(828) 877-3265

Description: This is a beautiful ride that starts near the Fish Hatchery in Pisgah National Forest. Cove Creek starts with a heart-pumping four mile ascent on a gravel road that's followed by a long single-track descent. Give yourself a couple of hours to enjoy this ten-mile loop.

Directions: Take Hwy. 276 into Pisgah National Forest. Off Hwy. 276 take left onto Forest Service Road 475 heading toward the State Fish Hatchery. Park at Fish Hatchery on left side of road and proceed on FSR 475 and take first right onto FSR 475B. Ride for about 3 miles and take left onto FSR225 and trail head will be on your left as you head down the hill.

For advanced riders:

Sycamore Cove
Pisgah National Forest
www.ncdot.org/transit/bicycle/maps/trails.pdf

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Description: Sycamore Cove throws a little bit of everything at riders: groovy, off-camber rocks and roots, steep climbs, and technical downhill. The mid-section is a mile-long ridge ride. At 3.2 miles, Sycamore Cove makes for an ideal workout of an hour or less. If you've got more time (and energy) link it with the Black Mountain and Thrift Cove trails and make a day of it.

Directions: Drive one-quarter mile past the entrance to Pisgah National Forest on US 276 and look for the trail marker to Sycamore Cove on the right hand side of the road.