

DESTINATION:
BURNSVILLE, N.C.



FACING PAGE: Street scene; CLOCKWISE: Walk up to peak of Mount Mitchell; family at top of Mount Mitchell; Homeplace Beer Co.; pumpkin picking in the fall



FALLING FOR BURNSVILLE

This North Carolina mountain town invites guests to experience its scenic location, friendly artistic vibe and charming eateries and shops

BY BRITTANY DEAN

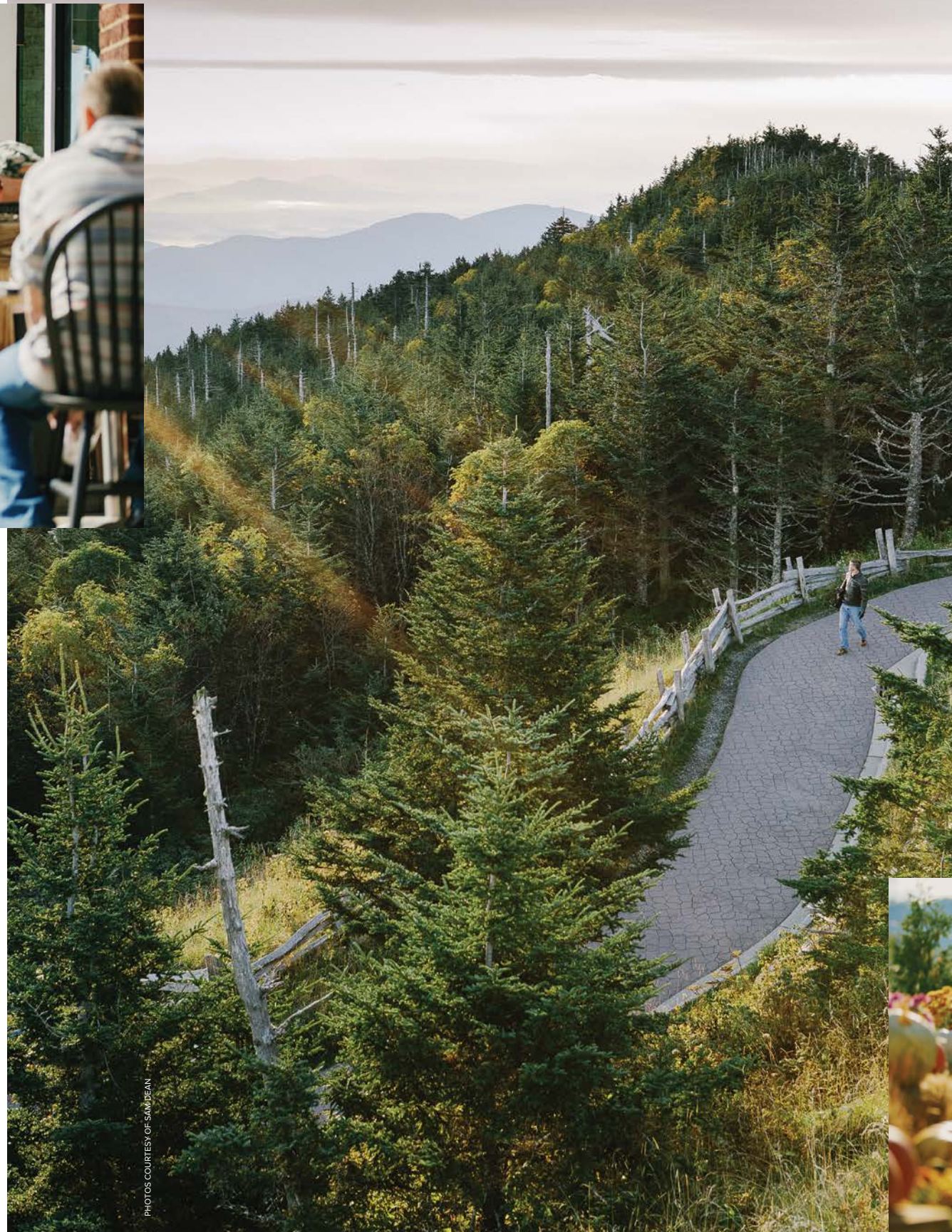
As my husband and I took off along the Blue Ridge Parkway in western North Carolina, heading towards Mount Mitchell State Park, the scenic drive was so captivating that little words were exchanged between us. We were both enthralled with the natural beauty surrounding us. On that cool October morning, the rolling hills were filled with red, orange and yellow colors, and the sky was quite possibly the most magical color of blue I had ever seen. This adventure was starting on an alluring path, and we were both confident that our weekend getaway in Burnsville, North Carolina, wouldn't disappoint.

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Approaching Mount Mitchell State Park's entrance, signs were posted encouraging visitors to tune into Park Radio AM 1630. Like true tourists, we eagerly listened and quickly learned that we might be underdressed for our hike. At Mount Mitchell's summit, temperatures can be 15

to 20 degrees cooler than temps in downtown Burnsville as elevation is 6,684 feet—the highest point east of the Mississippi River. Luckily, the museum and gift shop offered layering options like hats, coats and even socks for first-timers like us. We followed the signs toward the observation deck from the summit parking area and learned that the easy, quarter-mile paved path was taking us to the most breathtaking 360-degree views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The lack of clouds that particular morning provided a panoramic view stretching nearly 85 miles. Yes, I was impressed by the sky while driving here, but the scene from the summit beat anything I had imagined.

After a cool, crisp afternoon of hiking around Mount Mitchell and exploring Yancey County's South Toe River, nothing sounded more appealing than a delicious meal and craft cocktails in Downtown Burnsville. Restaurants like Snap Dragon Bar & Kitchen offer folks specialty cocktails like their infamous Hurricane. This rum cocktail can be ordered Category 1 through Category 5, patrons choice. Snap Dragon is located right in town



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAM DEAN

**DESTINATION:
BURNSVILLE, N.C.**

square and boasts a beer garden-style, natural atmosphere. Customers here rave that the Spicy Island Burger is unlike any other, as this classic Blue Ridge burger is kicked up a notch with grilled pineapple, habanero jack cheese, fried avocado, bacon, and a teriyaki drizzle on a ciabatta roll. Unlike some small mountain towns, Burnsville's restaurant scene offers old town charm with new town recreation, impressing visitors with amazing food and specialty drinks.

With the desire to enjoy this mountain town in an authentic log cabin, I was elated to see the Airbnb listing for Standing Stone Cabin. This authentic log cabin is just one mile up from Main Street, making it close and convenient to all the possibilities of downtown Burnsville. One huge plus for tourists like me is paved roads and signs leading up to the peaceful cabin. Once we arrived, I couldn't believe the view from the back deck as we faced Big Tom Mountain. We were even greeted by a family of deer peacefully enjoying acorns and other autumn treats. The cabin offers everything you would need for modern-day living, such as Wifi/Cable/Smart TVs. Still, my husband and I hardly left the screened-in gazebo as we played cards, listened to animal calls, and slowed down to embrace the beauty surrounding us.

MOUNTAIN VIEWS ON MAIN STREET

Like most, I wake up eagerly searching for a hot cup of coffee to kick start the day, so we made the quick drive down the mountain to Appalachian Java & Cafe in the heart of the town square. Seated along the charming sidewalk, we sipped Mt. Mitchell Mochas, split the pumpkin loaf and began planning the day. Downtown Burnsville offers many unique shops, art galleries and eateries all along a walkable Main Street. Given the cool yet sunny day ahead, the fall weather welcomed a day strolling around town exploring shops like The Book Cellar. This likable used bookstore is full of well-loved literature and captivates your senses, as its "book smell" reminds you of every great book you have



TOP TO BOTTOM: Appalachian Java; one of the many eateries downtown; sunset



ever read. The arts are highly respected and well represented in Burnsville. Colorful street murals indicate this mountain town's rural-artistic vibe and new possibilities.

"For decades, people have been drawn to Burnsville by our thriving community of artists," said Yancey County Chamber Director Christy Wood. "In the last few years, we've built on that with new businesses and attractions that take advantage of our scenic location in the Blue Ridge Mountains."

Our next stop was to Fill-More, an eco-friendly refill shop offering all-natural cleaning supplies, laundry soaps, body care, household products, and so much more. Customers bring their own reusable containers and fill them up, eliminating waste

and plastic from the environment." Their slogan of "Fill-More & Waste-Less" reflects the community's value of the ecosystem. I couldn't leave Fill-More without a few sustainable wool dryer balls that looked like farm animals. I added drops of lavender oil to my new farm friends to give my laundry a natural aroma. After seeing the success of such a niche shop, you realize that Burnsville is made up of a community of caring people who take steps to protect the natural beauty surrounding them.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAM DEAN, EXPLORE BURNSVILLE

AN APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY

Locals were happy to share how they ended up in this mountain town and offer suggestions on where to visit during our stay. On the top of the list was Cast Iron Kitchen to try out our first Appalachian Charcuterie. This memorable starter offers house-made pimento cheese, smoked trout dip, pickled shrimp, sumac crackers, tomato cucumber salad and more. Owner and head chef Chris Hall constructs daily specials based on what's fresh and local. On Saturday mornings from April through November, you'll likely find the entire community, including Chef Hall, in Town Square for the Yancey County Farmers Market. It's quite the event with live music from local musicians like Spinning Wheel, a guitar and fiddle duo, as well as many local vendors selling the freshest ingredients. Back at Cast Iron Kitchen, Chef Hall takes all things locally sourced from the day's market and builds the popular Saturday Farmers Market Special plate. Learning this, you see how Burnsville business owners support each other and invest in the health and well-being of the Burnsville community and its future.

On our final day in Burnsville, I had the pleasure of sitting with Chamber Director Wood at Homeplace Beer Co. Homeplace, the town's brewery, offers craft beers, great food, outdoor entertainment and, like all other spots in Burnsville, breathtaking views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Christy and I spoke about the recent spike in tourism while enjoying a wood-fired pizza and a crisp Golden Heart American Lager. "The pandemic has changed the way people travel," she said. "They're looking for outdoor adventures in less-populated locations with friendly people. The experience is the most important thing, and we offer genuine experiences in Burnsville."

After meeting with Wood, my fall weekend getaway ended, and I was left with a bucket full of experiences I couldn't wait to share with others encouraging them to visit. The Burnsville community has made a lasting impression on me, teaching me to slow down and get lost in a friendly conversation. *NGL*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To plan your visit to Burnsville, North Carolina, please visit exploreburnsville.com.



A Destination for Wine Lovers

Join us for a handcrafted experience at either one of the Painted Horse Winery and Vineyards' locations.

MILTON, GA
Painted Horse Winery and Vineyards

ALPHARETTA, GA
PHW Alpharetta Tasting Room and Wine Bar

WWW.THEPAINTEDHORSEWINERY.COM