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BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

The Blue Ridge Parkway is known today as perhaps the greatest scenic highway in the world. Indeed, it was designed to meet this expectation almost 65 years ago. It extends 469 miles along the crests of the Southern Appalachians and links two national parks – Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains. Along the way, it meanders through some of the most significant cultural and natural resources in North Carolina and Virginia. The Parkway provides seemingly endless but breathtaking views of parallel mountain ranges, scattered hills, and mountain farms.

Wildlife is abundant along the Parkway. Your students may be delighted to observe deer, bear, wild turkey, or bobcats. They may enjoy bird watching – like the hawk migrations in the spring and fall or the high elevation species such as the winter wren. Perhaps they will observe a groundhog as it sits erect along the roadside or enjoy a glimpse of a fox or opossum. They are sure to note signs of wildlife all around.

History is rich in this national park. The stories of independent mountain people are told at many overlooks along the way. There are log cabins, working farms, a mountain mansion and a grist mill. All walks of historical mountain life leave some type of tale to tell along the Parkway. In some areas, students may even observe authentic Appalachian handicraft in production.

Wherever you go along the Parkway, you will find resources to match your curriculum. Recreation areas, varying in size from several hundred to several thousand acres, are wilderness gems for those who enjoy the out-of-doors. Cultural resources are abundant. Most developed areas include picnic facilities, restrooms, water fountains

and hiking trails. The Parkway offers an ideal spot for a field trip for any age group.

Be sure to be prepared for cool weather and unexpected changes in the weather. As in many mountain areas, students will need good walking shoes, plenty of food and water, and a warm jacket.

The activities that follow reflect but a sample of what you can do along the Blue Ridge Parkway with your class. We hope that you will adapt all of the activities in this book to various Parkway sites – or perhaps create a few activities of your own. For further information about the Blue Ridge Parkway, call (828) 298 0398.

