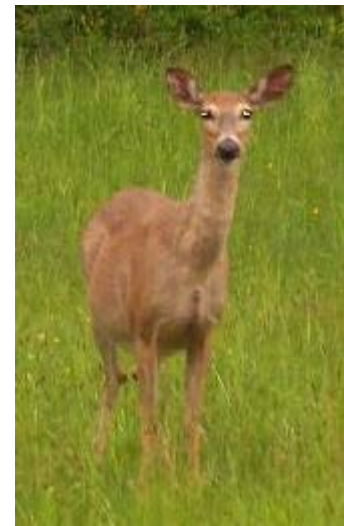


Experience the Blue Ridge Parkway



**Blue Ridge Parkway
& Skyline Drive**



Blue Ridge Parkway/Skyline Drive Tour

Southbound: Front Royal, VA to Cherokee, NC
Wednesday, May 8 – Friday, May 17, 2013



Tentative Schedule:

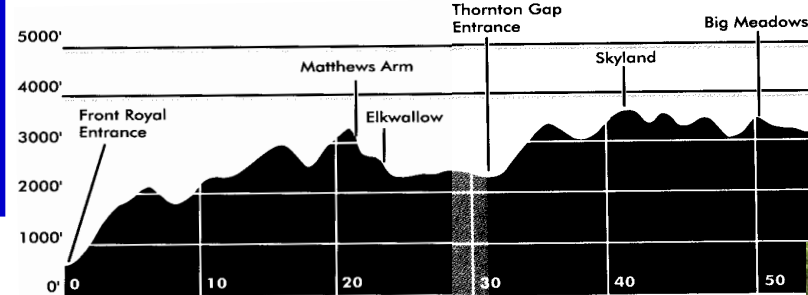
More details to be added as the trip gets closer.

Trip Day	Day of Week	Date	Starting Location	Starting MP	Ending Location	Ending MP	Miles	# feet climbing	Extra miles not on BRP
1	Wed	5/8	Super 8 - Front Royal, VA	0	Big Meadows Campground	51	52	7139	1
2	Thu	5/9	Big Meadows Campground	51	Colony House Motel	105/0	56	3808	2
3	Fri	5/10	Colony House Motel	0	Wildwood Campground	61	64	5490	3
4	Sat	5/11	Wildwood Campground	61	Quality Inn Tanglewood - Roanoke	121	64	6341	4
5	Sun	5/12	Quality Inn Tanglewood - Roanoke	120	Meadows of Dan Campground	180	62	6473	2
6	Mon	5/13	Meadows of Dan Campground	180	Millers Campground	248	68	5681	0
7	Tue	5/14	Millers Campground	248	Linnville Falls Trailer Lodge & Campgr	317	70	6660	1.2
8	Wed	5/15	Linnville Falls Trailer Lodge & Campgr	297	Mt. Mitchell State Park Campground	355	44	7570	6.2
9	Thu	5/16	Mt. Mitchell State Park Campgr	355	Mt. Pisgah Inn	409	59	5135	5
10	Fri	5/17	Mt. Pisgah Inn	409	Magnuson Hotel Great Smokies - Chero	469	61	6681	1
							600	60978	



Day 1 – Wednesday, May 8

Start: Front Royal (MP 0)
End: Big Meadows Campground
(1 mile off SD at MP 51)
52 miles, 7139 ft climbing



Breakfast: Hotel or restaurant in Front Royal.
Lunch: Elkside Wallow Grill and picnic area (MP 24.1)
Dinner: Big Meadows Wayside Grill
Lodging: Big Meadows Campground (hot showers, laundry)

The Skyline Drive - We will begin at the northern entrance of the Skyline Drive. The Skyline Drive is quite similar to the Blue Ridge Parkway, but there are a few differences, including: a lower speed limit (35 mph, not 45 mph), a charge to enter (\$7.00 for bicycles for a week pass), many more park rangers (ride single file or they will stop you), heavily used campgrounds, and many hikers as the Skyline Drive crosses the Appalachian Trail several times. Big Meadows also has a large black bear population. Rangers estimate the population at about 600 bears in this narrow, 100-mile long park - or about “6 bears per mile.” Keep a look out as you cycle and you might spot one. Storing food properly is important.

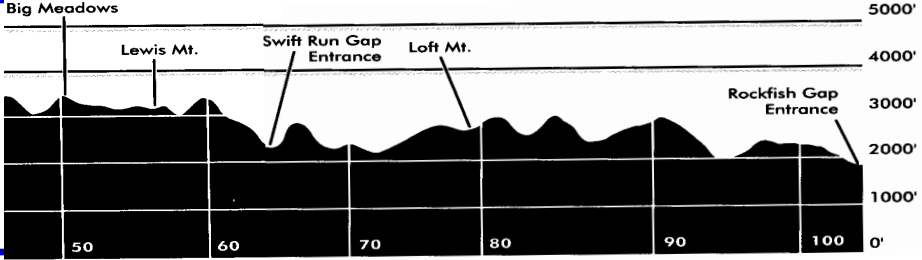


Day 1 - This will be a challenging day with over 7000 ft of climbing. The first 20 miles out of Front Royal are mostly uphill, but then we will get a break for a while. We will go through the only tunnel (Mary’s Rock Tunnel) at MP32.2. We will hit the highest point on the Skyline Drive near Skyland at 3680 ft near MP41. The stretch between Skyland (MP41) and Big Meadows (MP51) is very scenic with many nice overlooks. Big Meadows is aptly named as the area has huge grassy meadows with many deer. Big Meadows Campground has great facilities and is one of the popular campgrounds on the Skyline Drive/Blue Ridge Parkway.

End: Big Meadows Campground

Day 2 – Thursday, May 9

Start: Big Meadows Campground (1 mile to SD at MP 51)
End: Colony House Motel (1 mile from end of SD at MP 105)
56 miles, 3808 ft climbing



Breakfast: Big Meadows Wayside Grill (opens 7:30am)
Lunch: Loft Mountain Grill (burgers, sandwiches) or pack lunch
Dinner: Pizza delivery from Waynesboro, cook in motel, or drive to Waynesboro if anyone joins us here.
Lodging: Colony House Motel

Day 2 – This might be the easiest day of the trip with only 3800 ft of climbing. There are plenty of ups and downs, but no major climbs. We will eat lunch at Loft Mountain which is a popular spot for Appalachian Trail hikers. There is a small café and gift shop, but there are also picnic tables next to the café if you wish to pack a lunch. The Skyline Drive ends at MP105, but it immediately joins the start of the Blue Ridge Parkway at MP0. We will exit here for the night and cycle about 1 mile to a nearby motel as there are no convenient campgrounds.



Day 3 – Friday, May 10

Start: Colony House Motel (1 mile back to MP 0)

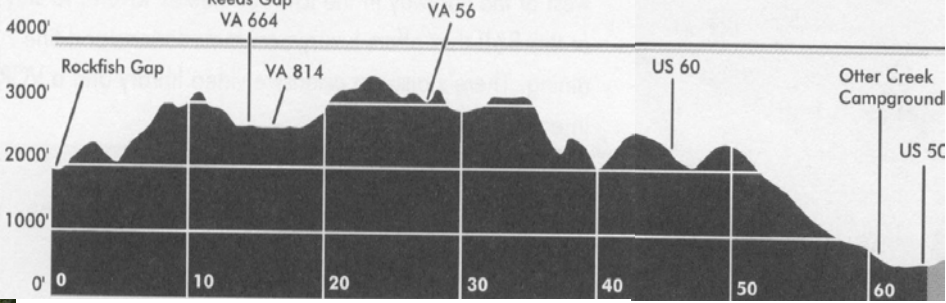
End: Wildwood Campground (1 mile on VA130 from MP 61)
64 miles, 5490 ft climbing



Whetstone Ridge



Raven's Roost



Day 3 – We will enter the Blue Ridge Parkway at MP0 (only 470 miles until the end)! We will soon pass the Humpback Rocks Visitor Center (MP5.8) where water and restrooms are available) and the Humpback Rocks Picnic Area (MP8.5) which includes a steep trail up to the massive rocks that inspired the name if you are up for a hike. We will then climb to Raven's Roost at MP10.7 (elevation 3200 ft) which is a popular spot for rock climbing. We will stop for picnic lunch at Whetstone Ridge (MP 29), but it will likely be closed so no water will be available. We will go through Bluff Mountain Tunnel at MP53, which is the only tunnel on the BRP in VA (there are 26 in NC). We will hit Otter Creek near the end of the day which is close to the lowest point on the BRP. We will exit the BRP at MP62 and cycle 1 mile to the Wildwood Campground.



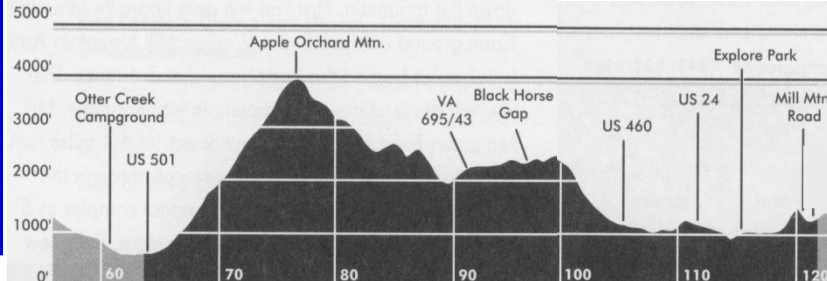
Breakfast: Cook in the motel
Lunch: Pack lunch – Whetstone Ridge probably will not have water
Dinner: Cook in camp or cycle 5 miles to H&H restaurant
Lodging: Wildwood Campground



Day 4 – Saturday, May 11

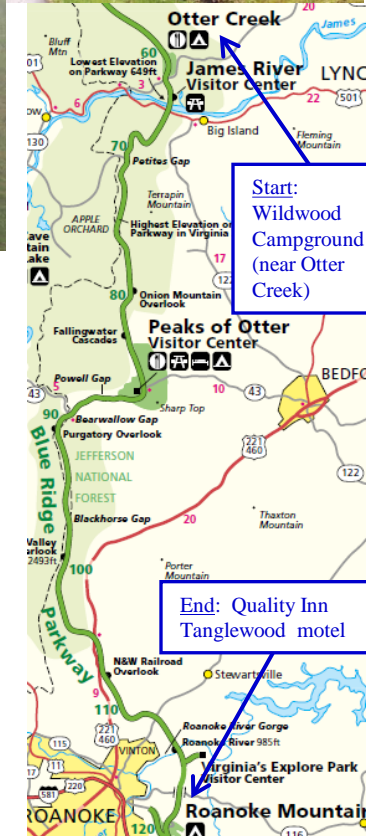
Start: Wildwood Campground (1 mile on VA130 back to MP61)

End: Quality Inn Tanglewood (2 miles US220S from MP 121)
64 miles, 6341 ft climbing



Breakfast: H&H Restaurant (on Rt 501 about 1 mile from MP63)
Lunch: Pack lunch or buy sandwich to go H&H
Dinner: Great 611 Steak (buffet) next to the hotel
Lodging: Quality Inn Tanglewood

Day 4 - We will cycle 5 miles to H&H Restaurant for breakfast (only one mile out of our way) and then get ready for the big 12-mile climb up Apple Orchard Mountain. The grade is not too bad (5% or so), but plan on 2-3 hours to make this big climb. Look for the big radar dome as you climb as it is near the top. Be sure to stop for photos by the sign at the top (MP79.5) as this is the highest point on the BRP in VA. We will then go mostly downhill to the scenic Peaks of Otter area (MP85) where we can eat a packed lunch by the lake. Unfortunately, the managers of Peaks of Otters restaurant & motel did not renew their lease and the park services is looking for new managers. It will tentatively re-open sometime during the summer. As we continue going south after lunch, you can clearly tell you are riding on a ridge as the mountain steeply falls away your left and your right. As we near Roanoke we will encounter a lot of traffic between MP105 – MP121) as the BRP is (unfortunately) used by many Roanoke commuters. We will exit the BRP at MP 121 onto busy 220S and follow it for about 2 miles to the motel.



Sharp Top Mountain beyond the lake – seen from the Peaks of Otter Restaurant



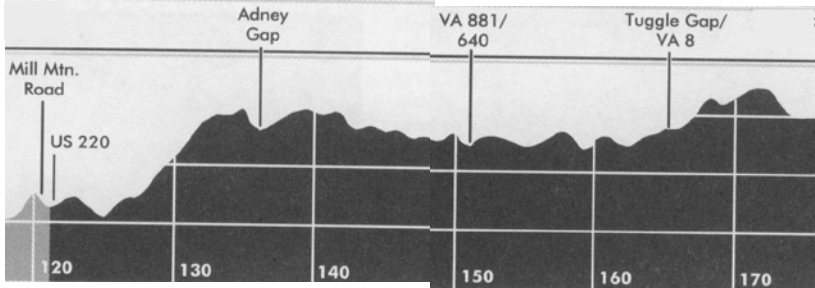
Crossing the James River

Day 5 – Sunday, May 12

Start: Quality Inn Tanglewood
(2 miles on 220N back to BRP
MP121)

End: Meadows of Dan
Campground (0.5 miles from
MP 177.7)

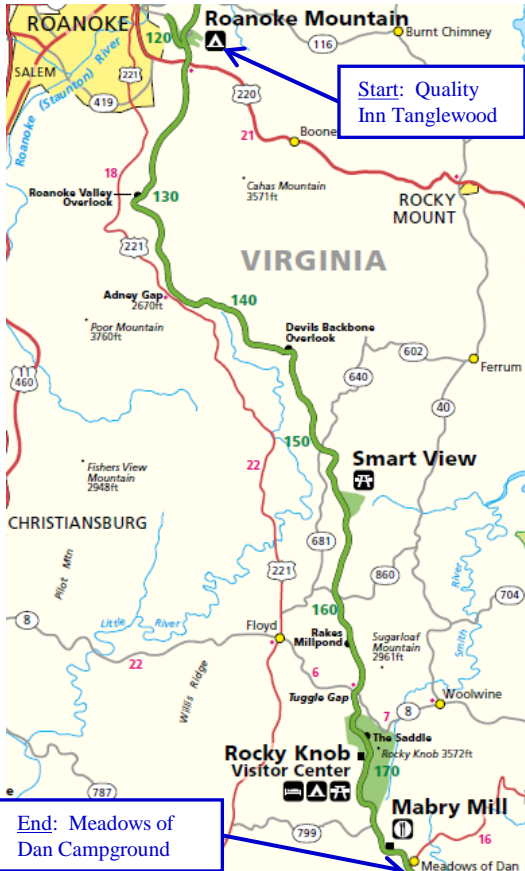
62 miles, 6473 ft climbing



Mabry Mill



Mabry Mill Restaurant



Start: Quality
Inn Tanglewood

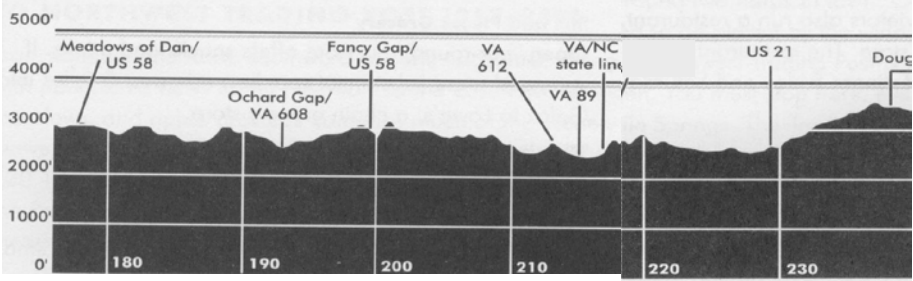
End: Meadows of
Dan Campground

Day 5 – Day 5 begins with a tough climb up Bent Mountain (includes a 5-mile stretch at 7% grade). We won't find much in the way of facilities on Day 5, so we will each a packed lunch on the road and maybe stop for a late lunch at Tuggle's Gap Restaurant (MP165). We will cycle through the scenic Rocky Knob area around MP 165-172. Near the end of the day we will stop at Mabry Mill (MP176). The scenic mill (see above) is said to be one of the most photographed sites in the country. There are many exhibits at the farm/mill to see as well. The area near Mabry Mill is lush with azaleas, rhododendron, and wildflowers. We will exit the BRP at Meadows of Dan (MP177.7). We will cycle about 0.4 miles west on 58 to the campground and then cycle back (0.25 miles east of the BRP) to the popular Poor Farmer's market for dinner and supplies.



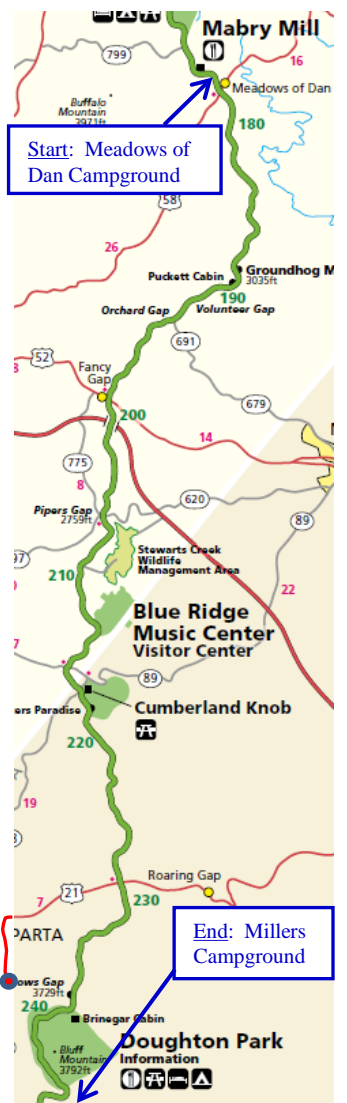
Day 6 – Monday, May 13

Start: Meadows of Dan
Campground (0.5 miles after MP
177.7)
End: Millers Campground (MP248)
68 miles, 6081 ft climbing



Breakfast: Poor Farmers Market
Lunch: The Gap Deli at the
Parkway (MP199) 276-728-3881
Dinner: Cook in Camp
Lodging: Millers Campground
(showers, laundry, camp store)

Day 6 - We will see an exhibit of various types of wooden fences at Groundhog Mountain (MP189) and we may visit a 27-acre alpaca farm at MP 204 (they give free tours and have a nice gift shop). We will stop at Fancy Gap for an early lunch (at a wonderful deli). We will cross into NC around MP217. We will make a tough but beautiful climb near the end of the day to the Doughton Park area. Just beyond Doughton Park we will begin a scenic descent with incredible rock walls where the BRP was carved from the side of the mountain. We will end at Miller’s Campground which is right on the BRP.



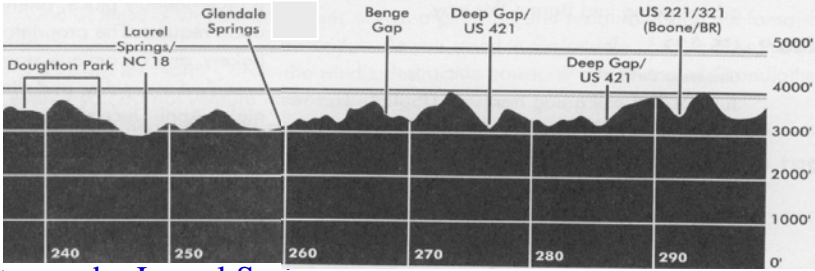
Day 7 – Tuesday, May 14

Start: Millers Campground (MP248)

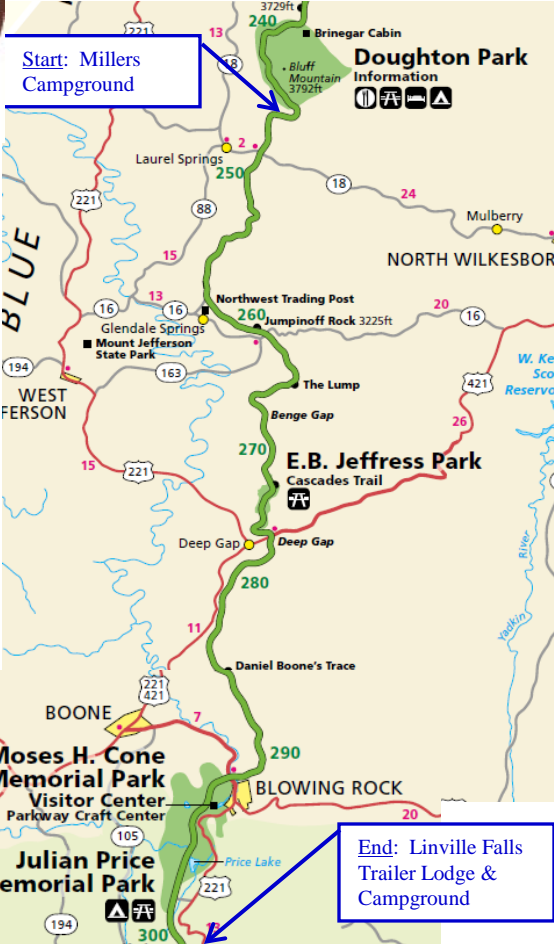
End: Linville Falls Trailer Lodge and Campground (1.2 miles from MP 317)

70 miles, 6660 ft climbing

Day 7 – We will begin the day heading to nearby Laurel Springs, where we might stop for brunch at Woody's Café & General Store. The elevation profile doesn't look too bad, but the many climbs still add up to 6660 ft! We will stop in Glendale Springs and perhaps visit the Church of the Frescoes. We will stop past scenic Blowing Rock for a late lunch, continue past Julian Price Park (and lake), and then will begin to climb with Grandfather Mountain in the distance. We will cross the famous Linn Cove Viaduct (MP304) and continue on to Linville Falls where we will exit the BRP for our campground and dinner.



Breakfast: Cook in camp or stop for brunch in Laurel Springs (MP249 - about 10 miles from camp)
Lunch: Late lunch in Blowing Rock (MP289)
Dinner: Louisa's Rock House Restaurant (1.5 miles from camp)
Lodging: Linville Falls Trailer Lodge and Campground (hot showers and laundry)



Linn Cove Viaduct



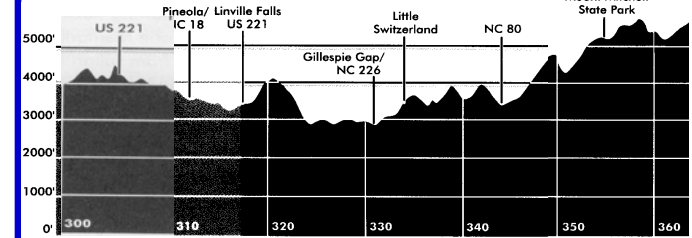
Day 8 – Wednesday, May 15

Start: Linville Falls Trailer Lodge and Campground (1.2 miles to MP317)

End: Mt. Mitchell State Park (5 steep miles on 128 from MP 355)

44 miles, 5866 ft climbing (includes the 1390 ft climb from the BRP to the top of Mt. Mitchell)

Day 8 – We will begin the day with a steep climb up to scenic Little Switzerland where we will stop for an early lunch. We will do lots more climbing as we approach Mount Mitchell State Park. The entrance to the park is a 5-mile spur off the BRP with an 8% grade! This tough climb will be worth it as we will reach the highest peak east of the Mississippi at 6684 ft. The park includes a nice restaurant where we will eat dinner. Beware of bears in the campground and store food appropriately.



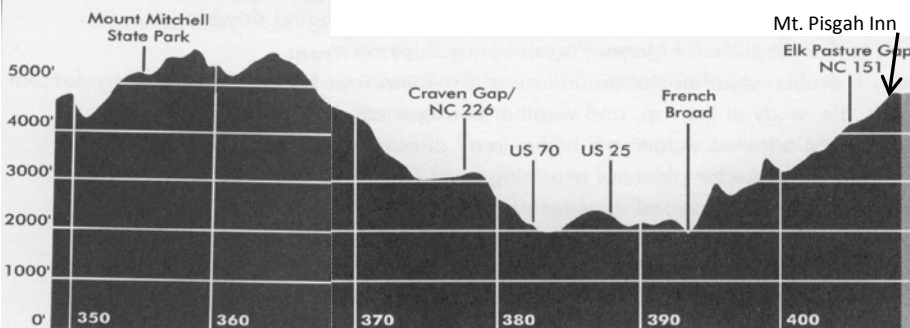
Breakfast: Eat in camp (MP297)
Brunch: Louisa's Rock House Restaurant in Linville Falls (0.7 miles off BRP at MP317.4)
Lunch: Restaurant in Little Switzerland (MP334)
Dinner: Mt. Mitchell Restaurant (open until 8pm)
Lodging: Mt. Mitchell State Park Campground (no laundry or showers)



Day 9 – Thursday, May 16
Start: Mt. Mitchell State Park (5 miles downhill back to MP 355)
End: Mt. Pisgah Inn or Mt. Pisgah Campground (MP 409)
59 miles, 5135 ft climbing



Pine Mountain Tunnel

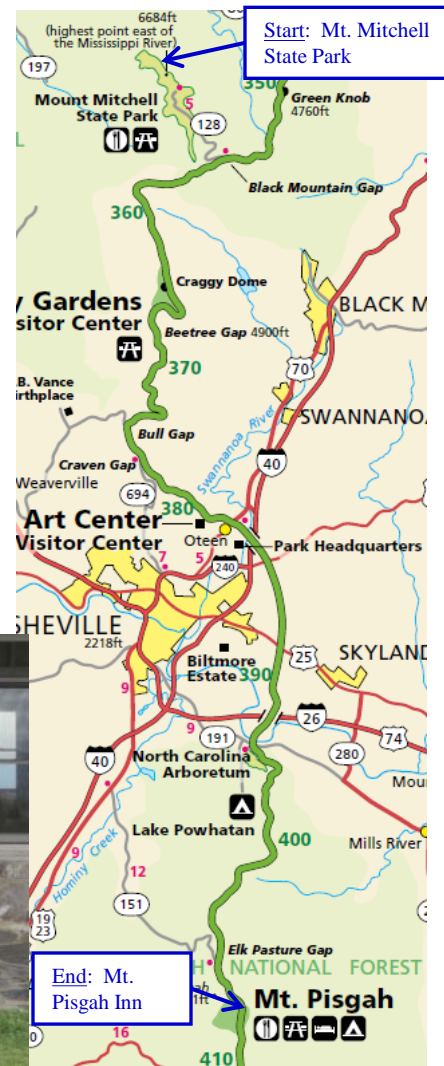


Day 9 – We will start off with a very fast 5-mile downhill back to the BRP and then will do a bit of climbing up to the Craggy Garden Visitor Center (open 10-5, beginning May 3). We will then have a wonderful, long downhill into Asheville (mostly downhill for 24 miles). We will make a stop in Asheville at Liberty Bikes (only 0.3 mi off the BRP at MP 388). There is a Harris Teeter grocery store next door to the bike shop where we can buy subs for lunch. We will finish the day with a challenging 15-mile climb up Mt. Pisgah . We will go through 12 tunnels on Day 9 and this final climb has 9 of the tunnels, including the Pine Mountain Tunnel at MP399, which is the longest on the BRP at 1434 ft (0.27 mi). As we cycle from Asheville at 2000 ft to Mt. Pisgah at 5000 ft, we will see the forests change from deciduous trees at lower elevations to Frasier fir, red spruce, and other evergreens at higher elevations. We will finish the day on top of Mt. Pisgah where we will lodge and eat at the Mt. Pisgah Inn. The view from the restaurant is spectacular and the food is good.



Craggy Garden Visitor Center

Breakfast: Eat in camp or at Mt. Mitchell Restaurant (opens at 10am, but then let us eat early on the last trip)
Lunch: Harris Teeter subs in Asheville
Dinner: Mt. Pisgah Inn Restaurant (nice!)
Lodging: Mt. Pisgah Inn



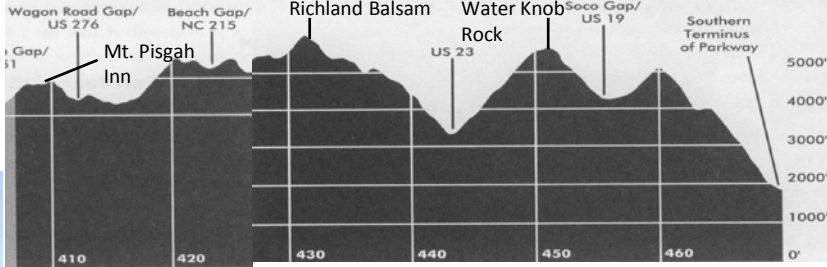
End: Mt. Pisgah Inn

Day 10 – Friday, May 17

Start: Mt. Pisgah Inn (MP 409)

End: Cherokee, NC (1 mile from MP 469)

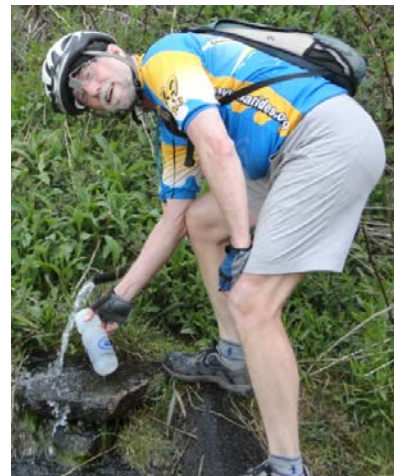
61 miles, 6681 ft climbing



Breakfast: Mt. Pisgah Inn restaurant
Lunch: Pack lunch
Dinner: restaurant in Cherokee (Victory dinner)
Lodging: Hotel TBD



Day 10 - Our final day will begin by taking us past Graveyard Fields, Looking Glass Rock, and Devil's Courthouse and we'll wish that we had time for some hikes. This part of the BRP is beautiful, but the terrain is rugged and desolate. We will cycle through 8 tunnels and will have only two spots to get water: From a pipe to a mountain spring near MP433 and from the Water Knob Rock Visitor Center – open 10am – 5pm beginning May 3). We will hit the highest point on the BRP at Richland Balsam (6053 ft) at MP433. The day finishes with a delightful 10-mile downhill to the end of the BRP at MP469. Be sure to stop for a picture at the final mile marker!



Detours!

Detours are a common occurrence on the BRP given the often remote and harsh mountain conditions. The rugged stretch of the BRP near Mt. Mitchell is especially prone to detours and since there are so few roads in the area, construction on a small stretch of road can result in a very long detour. We were prevented from climbing over Mt. Mitchell due to detours in 2005, 2006, and 2008.

It looked like we might be in for another detour around Mt. Mitchell again this year, but we may be in luck. I emailed the BRP rangers on April 8 and they report that *the closed section of the BRP should reopen by May 1.*



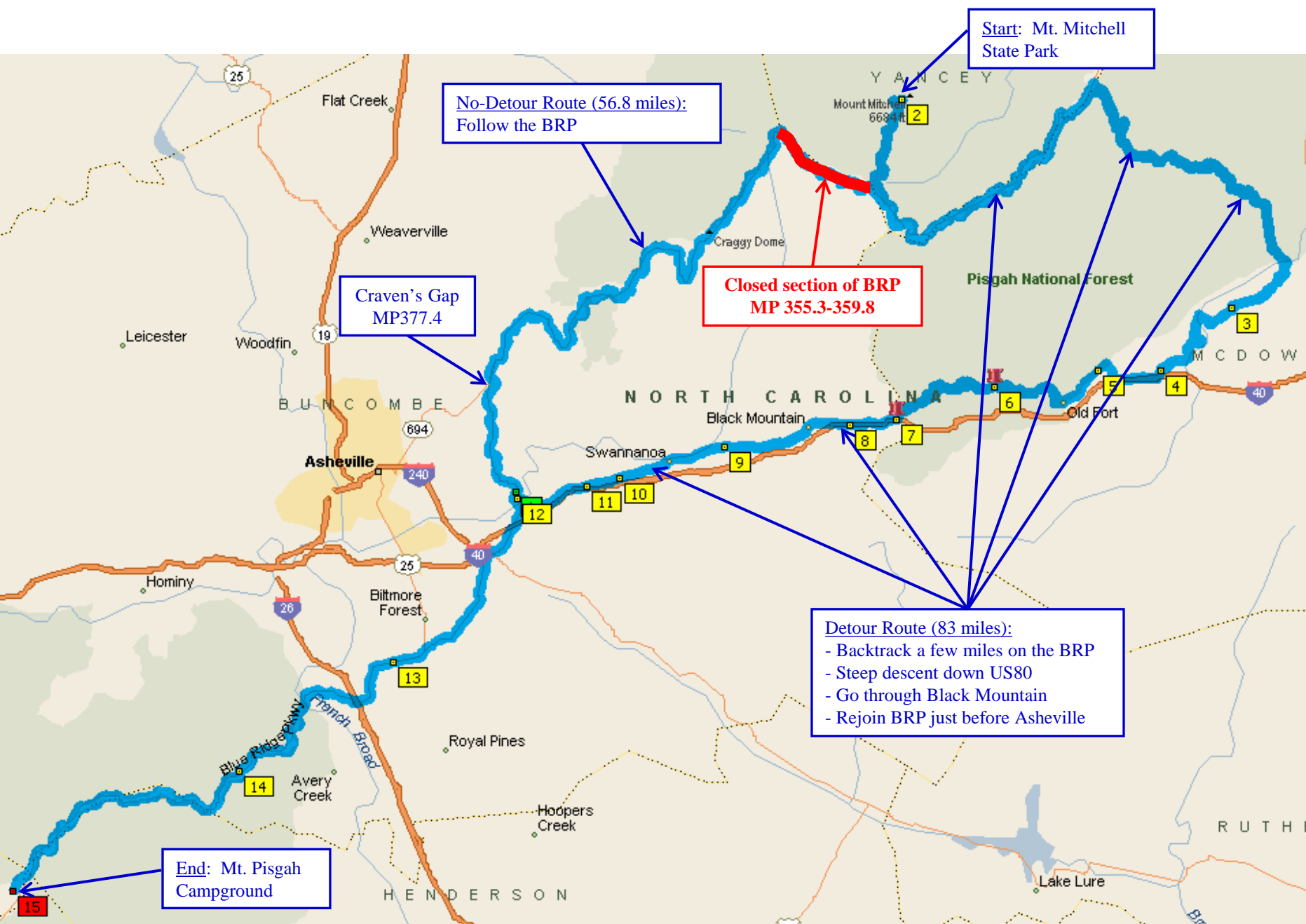
I will have a backup plan (route with cue sheet) in case the BRP is still closed. Hopefully we won't need it as the detour would change Day 9 from a 56 mile day to an 83 mile day! Of course, if this section of the BRP is still closed, we might try to sneak past the detour anyway!

Here is a notice from the Mt. Mitchell website (12-20-12):

Mount Mitchell State Park is only accessible from the north on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Parkway is closed from Mount Mitchell State Park at NC Highway 128 (milepost 355.3) to Laurel Knob overlook (milepost 359.8) until mid April 2013 for slide stabilization. - <http://www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/momi/conditions.php>

Note: Although this notice indicates that only 4.5 miles of the BRP are closed, there are ***no roads*** until Craven Gap at MP 377.4, so effectively 22.1 miles of the BRP are closed (or more since this isn't a convenient point to rejoin the BRP).

Potential detour around Mt. Mitchell

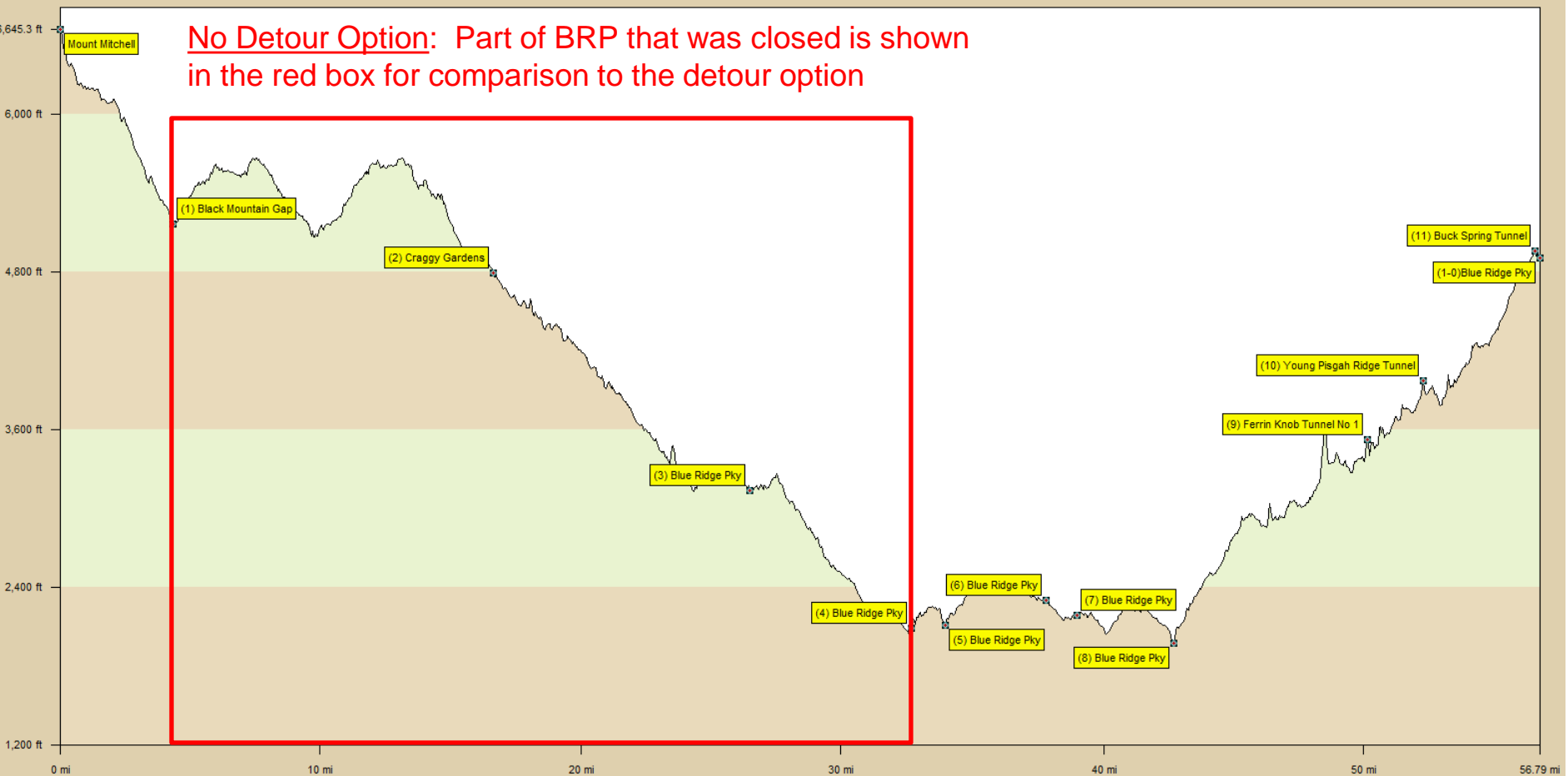


Day 9 – No-detour option (56.8 miles, 5135 ft climbing)

detour option). If we had to take the detour, the portion in the red box would be replaced by the portion in the red box on the following slide.

Marker 1: Enter BRP at Black Mountain Gap (heading South toward Mt. Pisgah)

Marker 4: BRP crosses US70 (detour route joins here)



Day 9 – Detour option 83 miles, 6250 ft climbing

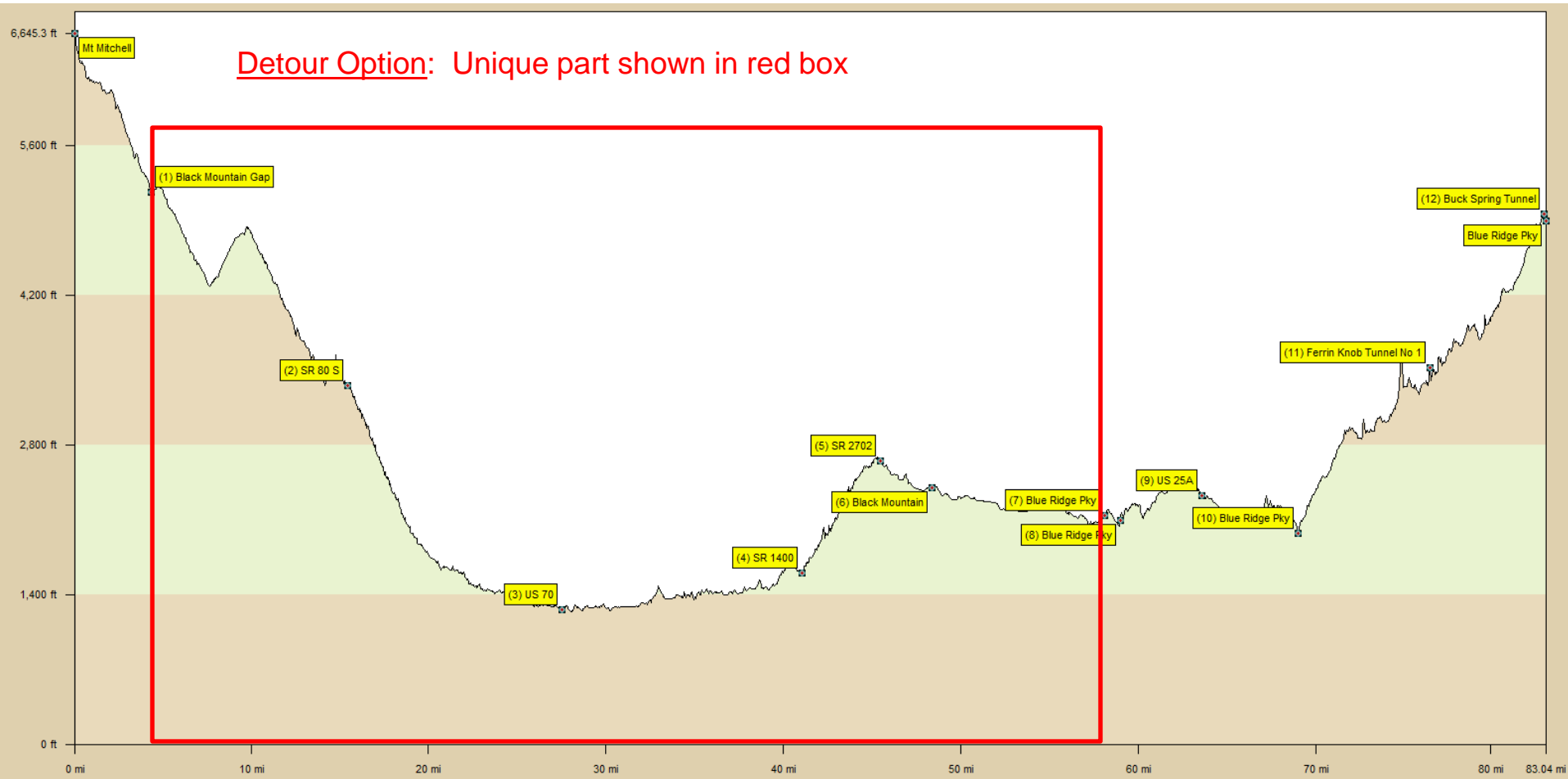
Shown below is the elevation profile from Mount Mitchell State Park to Mount Pisgah using the detour option. The portion in the red box would replace the portion in the red box on the previous slide.

Marker 1: Enter BRP at Black Mountain Gap (heading North to US80)

Markers 4-5: Point Lookout Trail (1000 ft climb)

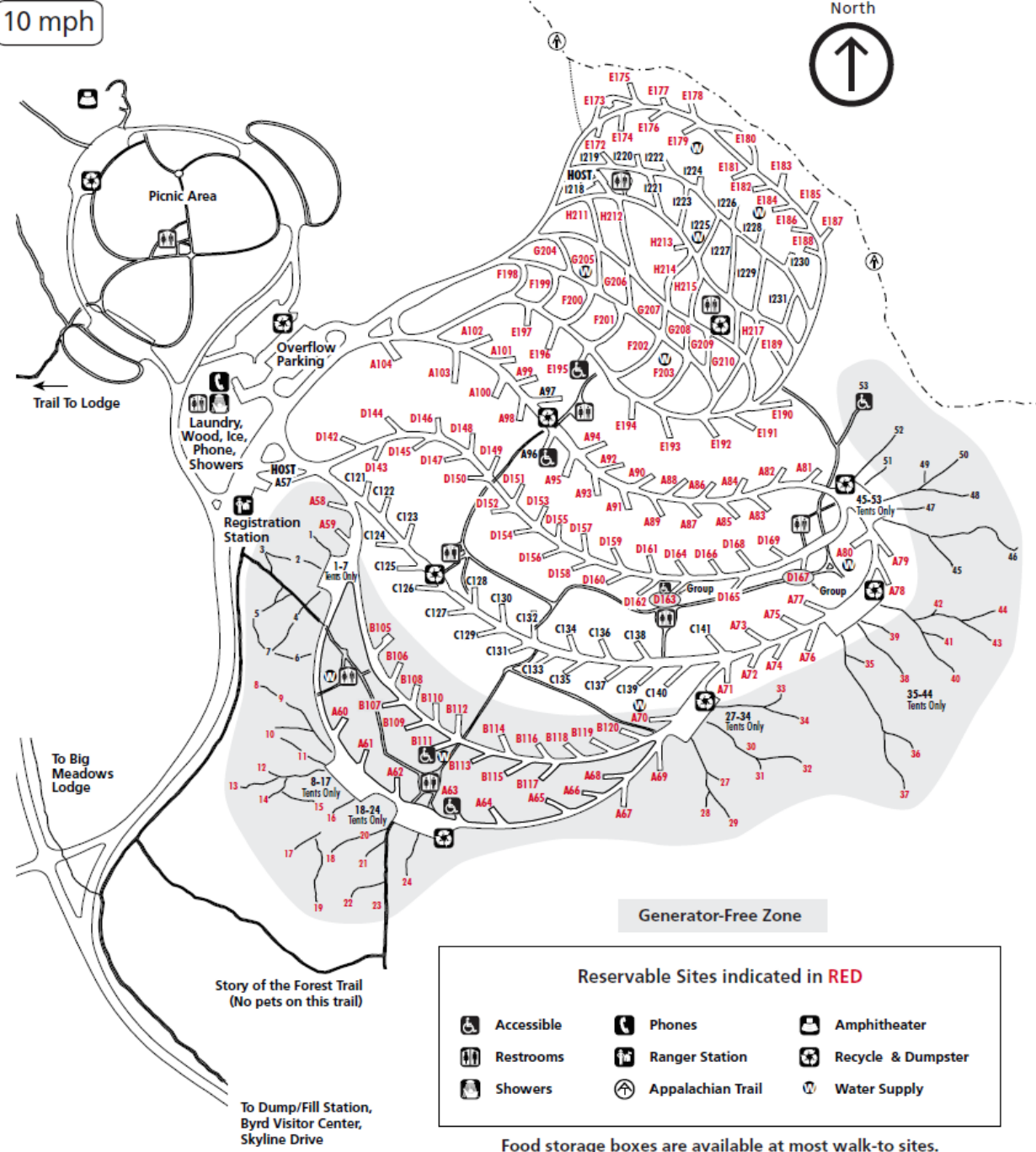
Marker 7: BRP crosses US70 – rejoin non-detour route

*Some good news!
If you have detoured around Mt. Mitchell before you may recall following abandoned US70 over Black Mountain. This wild route has become the Point Lookout Bike Trail!*



Big Meadows Campground Map (Day 1)

10 mph



Wildwood
Campground
Map (Day 3)



Meadows of Dan
Campground (Day 5)



Meadows of Dan
Campground

Poor Farmers
Market

