

# BlueRidge

COUNTRY

EXPLORING THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SOUTH

BLUE RIDGE  
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YEARS  
SINCE 1988  
COUNTRY

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A MOTHER TURNS TO HER GRANDPARENTS'  
FOLK WISDOM AS A SON FACES DEATH

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Boonville. Now, the 62-year-old Shore and his wife Cindy oversee a restaurant with specialties like pasta with lobster, fried oyster salad, and perhaps the world's finest fried-green tomatoes.

The Shores have also turned from tobacco to wine. "Grapes come in during September and October – the same thing as tobacco," Neil Shore says. "So it wasn't that hard a transition for me."

What makes such great wine? Well, for one, this place is climatically similar to wine-growing regions in Europe, says David Bower, an enology instructor at Surry Community College.

"And it's in the soil," Shelton says.

1. Grapes are grown in a vineyard at Surry Community College, at Dobson, N.C.

2. Kari Heerd is co-owner of Round Peak Vineyards in Mount Airy, N.C.

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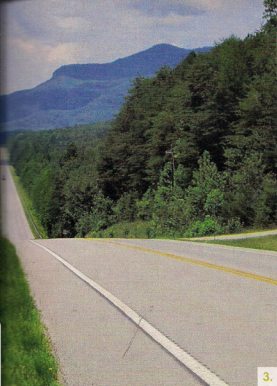
## SOUTH CAROLINA: BRIGHT DAY IN THE DARK CORNER

WE ROLL INTO SOUTH CAROLINA by way of Landrum, hopping into The Hare & Hound Restaurant on East Rutherford Street. Feasting on fish and chips, I award the Hare & Hound my triple-crown rating – for being classy, cozy and cool – just as I would do for the equally-charming Purple Onion of Saluda, N.C., sitting just above the South Carolina border and specializing in live music, farm-to-table feasts plus a three-cheese Crab au Gratin.

Mary Wolters recommends either eatery to any guest galloping into her Red Horse Inn, a farm on the outskirts of Landrum, featuring a collection of comfy cottages and a horse named Secret, a great-granddaughter of triple-crown winner Secretariat. Outlined by whitewashed ranch fences, ponds and graceful landscaping, the Red Horse sets the stage for any great adventure in the South Carolina Upcountry.

Going west of Landrum, we explore S.C. 11 – the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway, stretching 112 miles – and soon stop to see the open-sided Klickity Klack Covered Bridge, built in 2000 at the entrance to Look Away Farm. We pass craggy mountains and, a few miles west, turn right on S.C. 912 for 1.6 miles, then turn right onto Callahan Mountain Road. In another mile, we're at the short trail to Pointsett Bridge, an 1820 stone structure that made me think I could hear ghosts of early travelers above its tinkling stream.

Back on the byway, we relish the roadside roar of the Wildcat Branch Falls, a popular place to take a dip. Then we stop at a slate of state parks: Table Rock, Devils Fork and Caesars Head, which takes its name from a rock that – some say – looks like Julius Caesar. Here, my daughter gazes endlessly into the gorgeous



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3. S.C.11 is the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway, running for 112 miles.

4. Mountains rise behind cottages and a horse pasture at the Red Horse Inn.

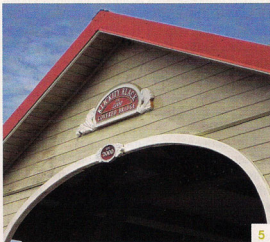
5. Klickity Klack Covered Bridge, along the Cherokee Scenic Highway, dates to 2000.

6. Brittany Jayne is manager of the Victoria Valley Vineyards in Cleveland, S.C.

7. Abigail Tennis looks out over the gorge at Caesars Head State Park.



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gorge while I rave over the easy hike through the Devil's Kitchen, a rock outcrop that, at least one theory suggests, takes its name from being a place where moonshine was made.

Yes, moonshine operations did earn this section of South Carolina a nickname – "The Dark Corner." Only, for us, these mountains shine ever so bright in the summertime sun.

Just off S.C. 11, we stop along South Saluda Road in Cleveland and meet the most gracious Brittany Jayne at her family's Victoria Valley Vineyards. Jayne, 26, is the winery manger plus a talented chef, able to whip up a robust Reuben sandwich while pitching praises for the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway.

"It's a beautiful drive," she says. "You can drive for a couple of hours and never really get tired of the views."



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