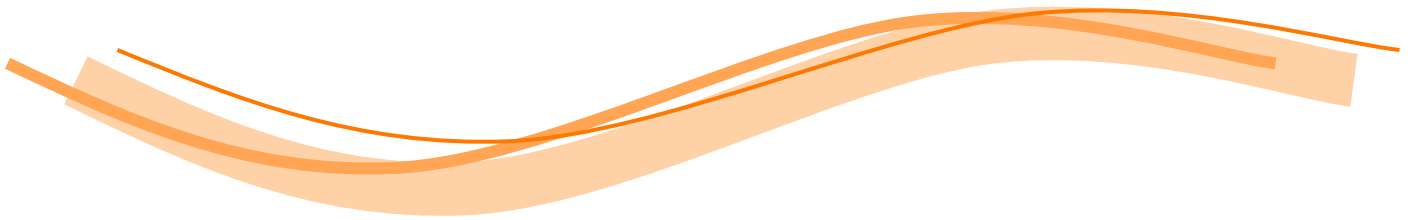




SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA





SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA & THE CROOKED ROAD

The Crooked Road in South West Virginia takes you on a journey to explore the very roots of Country Music. Wander back through time and discover Old Time Music, Bluegrass, Gospel and Country in the musical melting pot that is South West Virginia. This is where you will find music in its natural habitat - played in small town venues, country stores and on the porches of local folk who grew up with a fiddle or a banjo in their hands practically before they could walk.

Despite easy access by road or air from Canada, and accommodation types from quaint B&Bs to historic hotels, South West Virginia is nevertheless the “road less travelled”. However, as well as the music that is ingrained in the culture here, landscapes and outdoor adventure, small town hospitality, delicious food and wine, shopping, history and more await the visitor.

You won't go hungry in this fascinating corner of Virginia. You can expect bowls of homemade applesauce, heaping helpings of chicken pan pie and, in the morning, dishes of grits with moats of butter. Big farm breakfasts—especially biscuits and gravy—are mandatory, and tangy fried apple pies are a regional specialty.

A little known fact is that Virginia is also tied with Texas as the 5th largest wine producing state in the US. Vineyards are dotted all around the South West of the State and you can also discover distilleries (some also producing genuine Moonshine, which only became legal in the last 6 years). Plus there are some exciting craft breweries and cideries.

Explore the delightful small towns with quaint shops and handicrafts – all set against a backdrop of wonderful Appalachian scenery with lakes and mountains. The famous Appalachian Trail runs through the Region and there are many other opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, hiking, fishing and biking.

The Crooked Road is a great way to discover the history of the music in the area. If you are curious about the Crooked Road lifestyle, The Blue Ridge Institute & Museum showcases exhibits that explore all kinds of folkways from the region, with everything from old-style music making to modern-day quilting. And the Blue Ridge Institute and Farm Museum – the official State Center for Blue Ridge Folklore - highlights the folk traditions of western Virginia, old and new. The Institute's Blue Ridge Farm Museum re-creates life on a Virginia-German farmstead in the year 1800

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	<p>The quaint town of Whytheville was the home of Edith Bolling Wilson – the second wife of President Woodrow Wilson. It is very rare for a US President to fall in love and marry while still in office – and the museum that preserves her birthplace gives a fascinating insight into the First Lady’s life. When Woodrow Wilson became ill it was said that Edith supported him in many of the President’s day to day tasks – some go as far as to call her the first US female President!</p> <p>The charming historic town of Whytheville boasts two other museums. The Haller- Gibboney Rock House Museum is housed in a mansion built in 1823. It provides a glimpse into the life of a country doctor of the period.</p> <p>The Thomas J. Boyd Museum next door is named for Thomas Jefferson Boyd who is known as the Father of Wytheville. He was an attorney, town mayor, surveyor, hotel builder and Virginia Legislator. Artifacts cover local history and civil war exhibits. Around 1950 Whytheville suffered more than any other place in the US from outbreaks of Polio – and a section of the museum also tells this story. Artifacts include a heartbreaking infant sized “Iron Lung” that allowed tiny victims of this terrible disease to breath.</p> <p>And no matter what time of year you visit you are sure to find lots of festivals going on. Here are just a few of the many events celebrated in South West Virginia:</p> <p>This year The Crooked Road inaugurated the Mountains of Music Homecoming Festival in June – with concerts in over 30 different communities the length and breadth of this tourist trail.</p> <p>In the community of Galax you can discover the annual Old Fiddlers Convention, which has been celebrated each August for over 80 years. The Carter Family Memorial Music Festival, held at the end of July, is over 40 years old. And the Dock Boggs and Kate Peters Sturgill Music festival takes place at the Country Cabin II in September.</p> <p>The Abingdon Virginia Highlands Festival in August gives the visitor the opportunity to discover more about the fine arts, history and music of the area. And then The Blue Ridge Folklife Festival in Ferrum in October gives an insight into country life and culture.</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>Located midway between New York and Florida, Virginia is the gateway to the South. It is also sometimes classified in the Mid-Atlantic region. The Commonwealth is bordered by Washington, D.C., the USA capital, and Maryland to the north; the Atlantic Ocean to the east; North</p>

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	Carolina and Tennessee to the south; and West Virginia and Kentucky to the west.
Geography	The southwest of Virginia is a beautiful landscape of rolling green ridges that rise from the coastal plain towards the higher and higher peaks of the Appalachian Mountains.
Name	Named after Elizabeth I, Queen of England 1558-1603
Population	6.9 million
Language	English
Currency	US Dollar (the Canadian Dollar stands at 81 cents US as at July 2015)
Tipping	Tipping is expected: 15% where appropriate
Government	Democracy
Documentation	Passports are required
Time zone	Eastern Standard Time
Health	Fine medical facilities - but take travel insurance as medical treatment in the US can be very expensive.
Safety tips	Normal caution whilst travelling

CLIMATE	
General climate	Mild with four distinct seasons
Today's weather	28 degrees Centigrade and sunny in Bristol, Virginia as July 4 th 2015
Best time to visit	Spring and fall are especially beautiful

GETTING THERE	
Flying time	Flying time: just 65 minutes from Toronto and 2 hours from Montreal Airports: Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport, both located in Virginia, are major gateways.
Cities	Three of the most important cities in Southwest Virginia are Bristol, Wytheville and Abingdon – although in reality, they are really more like charming country towns than big cities! Bristol Bristol is one of the must-see stops as you discover the musical roots here in South West Virginia. This is where Country Music began – back in 1927 – when the Victor Talking Machine company pioneered its new “Orthophonic” recording technique to capture the extraordinary talents of musicians from all across the Region in what has become known as the “Bristol Sessions”. John Cash was quoted as saying that “The Bristol Sessions is the single most important event in the history of country music.” Bristol is therefore rightly the home of the Birthplace of Country Music Museum – a wonderful modern museum that is affiliated with the Smithsonian. It is truly interactive you can belt out the tunes at the sing

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along station and mix your own music! The museum tells the story of the 1927 Bristol Sessions recordings and explores how sound technology shaped their success. Listen to the songs of the 1927 Bristol Session and discover how they have influenced later artists in their arrangements of classic songs.

Bristol was built straddling the Virginia Tennessee border and the famous Bristol sign (the oldest of its type in the US) marks the State boundary and proclaims Bristol as "a good place to live." Many generations going back over 150 years have found that to be true. Bristol is a historical and cultural hub, having played a pivotal role in the early expansion of the American frontier, the Revolutionary War, and the growth of American music.

As well as giving birth to Country Music, the Blue Ridge Mountain roads and the 1940's Ford coupes executing "Bootleg" turns were the precursor to NASCAR. Many early NASCAR drivers cut their teeth driving moonshine around in modified "liquor cars" that could outrun the police.

A certified Main Street USA community, Historic Downtown has a thriving Arts and Entertainment District. It is full of specialty shops, dining, galleries and more to explore. We will touch on the Bristol's music history and stop at the Paramount Center for the Arts.

Abingdon

The architecturally stunning Heartwood in Abingdon is the fitting home of the Crooked Road organization. You can also shop for crafts made by local artisans who are members of "Round the Mountain" - Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network. They are masters of their media, carefully selected through a rigorous jurying process. Artisans appear at demonstrations to meet and talk with visitors about their work. "Round the Mountain" also publishes a series of Artisan Trails, enabling you to see artisans at work, visit craft venues, shop at galleries, take classes, and more.

Within Abingdon's beautiful Main Street and historic district you will find the vibrant Barter Theatre. With a rich history spanning eight decades, Barter Theatre still draws patrons from around the globe to enjoy the magic of live entertainment. The theatre was started in 1933 during the Great Depression and its name comes from the fact that when it opened its doors patrons could pay in cash or by bartering local produce – 'Hams for Hamlet' as it was known.

Barter, now the State Theatre of Virginia, helps visitors make memories through its talented cast of resident actors in shows ranging from comedies to dramas to musicals. A multitude of famous actors such as Ernest Borgnine, Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal got their start in Barter plays, and today the theatre continues to launch stars from its stages.

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	<p>Abingdon is surrounded by the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains, which forms a massive wilderness playground complete with rivers, lakes and trails. The famous Appalachian Trail is nearby and the Virginia Creeper Trail begins in downtown Abingdon. A “Rails to Trails” conversion from the original railroad tracks, the Virginia Creeper trail is a bikers paradise because it is mostly flat and you can also be taken by road to the start of the trail and return, almost completely downhill, to Abingdon! Local bike shops and shuttle services will get you on the trails around Abingdon quickly and easily.</p> <p>Wytheville Wytheville (pronounced WITH-vill) was founded in 1792 as Evansham on 100 acres of land. Named for the first signer of the Declaration of Independence for Virginia – George Wythe, it was selected as the county seat of Wythe County (1790). Discover a community rich in heritage, scenic beauty, charm, and hospitality. From several major Civil War skirmishes to being the birthplace of a very notable First Lady, Wythe County has left its mark in the history of America.</p>
Distances	Virginia is a 12 hour drive south of Montreal and Toronto
Trains	Virginia Railway Express www.vre.org Amtrak www.amtrak.com
Car Rental	Viaroute www.viaroute.com
Buses	Greyhound www.greyhound.com
Passes	Passes are available for many of the historical sites – see www.virginia.org for details

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>There is every type of accommodation available in SW Virginia from pretty B & B’s to motels to five star hotels. I can recommend the following from my recent trip to the region:</p> <p>Courtyard by Marriott, Bristol 3169 Linden Dr., Bristol, VA 24202 276-591-4400 http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/tricy-courtyard-bristol/</p> <p>Bolling Wilson Hotel, Wytheville The Bolling Wilson Hotel offers a unique upscale lodging experience in Downtown Wytheville, Virginia with 30 luxurious guest rooms on three floors featuring a different décor theme on each floor. “Graze On Main” is a vibrant restaurant with indoor and outdoor patio seating, “The Perch” offers a rooftop venue and event space for meetings, weddings and social gatherings.</p> <p>Visit Wytheville to experience-Where the LOVE is!</p>
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	<p>170 East Main Street, Wytheville, VA 24382 (276) 223-2333 http://www.bollingwilsonhotel.com/</p> <p>The Martha Washington Inn & Spa, Abingdon A Historic Hotel of America, The Martha has a long and rich history. Much of the architectural integrity of this historic landmark has been meticulously preserved for over a century and a half. Today The Martha Washington Inn & Spa stands as gateway to the past, providing those modern amenities expected by today's traveler amid the genteel elegance of period antiques and furnishings. 150 W Main St, Abingdon, VA 24210 (276) 628-3161 http://www.themartha.com/</p> <p>Inn at Wise Step off the Crooked Road and wander back in time - relive history and capture a piece of it for yourself. Surrounded by nature, history, culture, and mountain traditions, The Inn at Wise is a 100-year-old historic landmark in southwest Virginia and is the ideal spot for a cozy get-away. With a full restoration of the building complete, The Inn is truly "The Charm of Tradition Reimagined" 110 E Main St, Wise, VA 24293 (276) 321-7600 http://innatwise.com/</p>
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TARGET GROUPS	
Kids	All the attractions here have plenty of hands-on kid's activities to keep the little ones amused. The hotels too are very child friendly, many with pools and supervised child minding facilities.
Teens	Most teens are interested in music and a trip to this part of Virginia gives teenagers plenty of opportunity to indulge their musical passions.
Romance	"Virginia is for lovers"! says it all...
Honeymoons & Weddings	Wonderful resorts and settings for weddings and honeymoons abound in Virginia
Zoomers	The slower pace of life in the countryside and the fascinating historical sights make this a great state to visit for Zoomer travel.

UNIQUES	<p>The Crooked Road is your route straight to the roots of country music. The South West of Virginia is steeped in music tradition - a fiddle tune may be played three different ways in one county! The sound here is markedly modified as you travel deeper into the mountains toward the coalfields. Some of the oldest, loveliest songs are known as "crooked tunes," for their irregular measures; they lead the listener in unexpected</p>
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directions, and give the touristic music trail its name – The Crooked Road.

South West Virginia was a melting pot for the music of European settlers who arrived on wagon trains from Pennsylvania, African slaves, coal miners, ministers of the church and more. The foundation of today's music is in ballads that are over 300 years old, since music traditions have been carefully preserved and handed down the generations.

You are immersed in music where you go, and the generations from old to young share a passion for playing and preserving their musical heritage. This is the music of poor people – escaped slaves and farmers and coal miners who endured hard times and who understood loss. And despite it all, they made their own instruments and they danced and sang!

You will discover linked but different music genres - old time dance music is older and simpler, whereas Bluegrass has more vocal harmonies. Both these genres strongly influenced modern day Country music. The iconic Banjo evolved from an African instrument brought over by slaves and other common instruments of the area include fiddles and dulcimers from Europe, the autoharp, the mandolin and the dulcimer.

Historically many poor musicians made their own instruments and many fine musical instruments are still made in the region. You will also have many opportunities to buy the music of the Region.

The Crooked Road covers 530 kms with 9 Major venues where you can hear live performances by local musicians. There are also 26 Wayside exhibits (with FM radio interpretation for your car radio) and 50 affiliated venues and festivals.

Two of the most traditional venues on the Crooked Road are the Country Cabin II and the Carter Family Fold.

The Country Cabin with its descendant, Country Cabin II, is the oldest mountain music cultural venue currently operating along The Crooked Road. The original Country Cabin was built in 1937 under President Roosevelt's WPA program as a community recreational facility and is a National and State Historic Landmark. Local musicians gathered at the cabin every Saturday night to perform and carry on traditional bluegrass and country music. In 2002, a larger facility was built in nearby Appalachian Traditions Village.

Country Cabin II presents old time and bluegrass music every Saturday night, featuring local and regional musicians. And if you want to explore the dance that accompanies the music - mountain-style clogging is taught at Country Cabin II.

The Carter Family Fold celebrates the "First Family of Country Music"

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	<p>and the music of AP Carter, his wife Sara and his sister-in-law Maybelle. They recorded 300 songs between 1927 and 1942 and were hugely influential in the evolution of Country Music. AP Carter's old General Store is now a museum and the Carter Family Fold is a rustic, 800 seat music shed offering traditional old time and bluegrass music every Saturday night.</p> <p>In keeping with the traditional music style, no electrical instruments are allowed (everything is acoustic). However – this rule was set aside when Johnny Cash played. Cash had married AP's daughter Joan and he gave his last ever concert here. Nowadays the Carter Family Fold remains a family venue with lots of fun and dancing for all the family. Two of the most modern venues on the Crooked Road are the Blue Ridge Mountain Centre and Heartwood in Abingdon.</p> <p>The sounds of the fiddle, banjo, and guitar are likely to welcome you when you visit the Blue Ridge Music Center in the heart of the Blue Ridge Parkway National Park. Experience regional traditional music each day of the week with FREE local Mid-Day Mountain Musicians playing on the breezeway of the visitors center from Noon - 4 PM. Concerts take place in a beautiful outdoor amphitheater (capacity 2,500) at the base of Fisher Peak, feature local, regional, and national touring performers and bands, and are presented most Saturday evenings from late May through September.</p> <p>Heartwood is the home to The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail. You can hear musicians play and talk to them at concerts in the live performance area. In addition there is a huge collection of local old-time, bluegrass and gospel music on CD and DVD - so you can take some music home with you. Heartwood's striking architecture is also your gateway to Southwest Virginia craft, food and local culture.</p>
Surprising	Southwest Virginia was the birthplace of Country Music – not Nashville Tennessee!
History	<p>Colonial Era: The Virginia Company sailed from England to try and establish the first permanent English colony in the New World. Their instructions were to settle Virginia, find gold and a water route to the Orient. The explorers landed on Jamestown Island on the banks of the James River on May 14, 1607.</p> <p>Virginia is the site of the first permanent English-speaking settlement in North America at Jamestown in 1607. Here, the English met the Powhatans, a chiefdom of Algonquian Indians who lived in central and eastern Virginia. The New World's first English women and Africans came to Jamestown in 1619, the year and place where the Western Hemisphere's first representative legislature met.</p> <p>Virginia was the largest, most populous and prosperous of the original 13 colonies.</p> <p>Virginia leaders including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson,</p>

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	<p>James Madison, James Monroe, George Mason and Patrick Henry, played a major role in the Revolutionary War-era events and in the writing of documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.</p> <p>At Yorktown on Oct. 19, 1781, British forces under General Charles Cornwallis surrendered to the combined French and American forces serving under the command of General George Washington.</p> <p>Virginia is called the Mother of States & Mother of Presidents: Eight states were formed in whole or in part from Virginia, including Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky and Pennsylvania. Virginia has produced more U.S. presidents than any other state: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor and Woodrow Wilson.</p> <p>More major battles of the American Civil War were fought in Virginia from 1861 through 1865 than in any other state. Today, one-third of America's most important Civil War battlefields are in Virginia, and most are open to the public.</p>
Books	A Guide to the Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail by Joe Wilson – this guide comes with a musical CD.
1000 Places to see before you die in Virginia	<p>Shenandoah Valley – between the Allegheny Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains</p> <p>Monticello – home of Thomas Jefferson</p> <p>Colonial Williamsburg – open-air living history museum recreating 1750-1775 end of colonial era</p> <p>The Inn at Little Washington</p> <p>The Homestead hotel</p>
Must Sees	Seek out a local music concert to experience what this region is all about. It's as much about your fellow concert-goers as the music itself.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	Boating and sailing on ocean, bay and rivers; kite-boarding, hang gliding.
Golf	Cedar Hill Country Club, Jonesville and Scott County Park in Gate City are two courses in SW Virginia, but there are many more courses dotted all around this state.
Fishing	Virginia offers excellent, extremely diverse freshwater angling opportunities. Over 176,000 acres of public lakes and 50,000 kms of fishable streams provide every freshwater angler something: tidal river for largemouth bass, striped bass, blue catfish and shad; unsurpassed float fishing smallmouth bass rivers spread across the state; expansive reservoirs renowned for largemouth bass, striped bass, and crappie; numerous "close-to-home" small, family fishing lakes and ponds with great chances to land bass, sunfish, and channel catfish; and

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	phenomenal stocked and wild trout fishing in the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains.
Horse riding	There is great trail riding in Virginia's many parks.
Hiking	<p>Appalachian Trail Virginia is home to 860 kms of the Appalachian Trail, more than any other state! And much lies in beautiful Shenandoah National Park and parallel to Skyline Drive.</p> <p>The A.T. also parallels the famous Blue Ridge Parkway, goes through Mount Rogers National Recreation Area in George Washington & Jefferson National Forests, and ends in Damascus, known as Trail Town USA, where the trail goes right down its main thoroughfare. The best time to hike the southern end, is May through October. The A.T. travels more westerly through the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests from Roanoke County to Pearisburg in Giles County. According to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, this portion of the A.T. is the most remote and less travelled in Virginia. By the time you reach Damascus, you'll probably be ready for civilization again or you can begin your hike on either the Virginia Creeper Trail or Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail.</p>
Cycling	<p>The Virginia Creeper Trail The 60 km Virginia Creeper Trail was named after the steam engine that once crept up the rails into the Iron Mountains. Also, a plant called the "Virginia Creeper" grew along its tracks. By the 1970s, many railroads were abandoned. And in 1986, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy began converting old railroad beds into trail systems for hikers and bikers.</p> <p>Abingdon at Mile 0 is the one of the most popular places to enter the Virginia Creeper Trail. Parking is available, and a steam locomotive is on display at the Trailhead. Other popular access points are at Alvarado Mile 8.5, Damascus Mile 15.5, Creek Junction Mile 25 and Whitetop Station Mile 32.3.</p> <p>Although no facilities are available on the trail itself, 11 access points lead hikers and bikers to towns, forest service centers, water and toilets, year-round.</p>

CULTURE	
Arts	<p>The Barter Theatre, Abingdon With a rich history spanning eight decades, Barter Theatre still draws patrons from around the globe every day to Abingdon to enjoy the magic of live entertainment. Barter, the State Theatre of Virginia, helps visitors make memories through its talented cast of resident actors in shows ranging from comedies to dramas to musicals. A multitude of famous actors such as Ernest Borgnine got their start in Barter plays and today the theatre continues to launch stars from its stages.</p>

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	<p>127 W Main St, Abingdon, VA 24210 (276) 628-3991 http://www.barthertheatre.com/</p>
Music	<p>Heartwood, Abingdon On the Crooked Road, Heartwood is your gateway to Southwest Virginia craft, music, food, and local culture. I enjoyed a Mountains of Music Homecoming Festival Concert here, featuring the Bluegrass Kinsmen, New Ballards Branch Bogtrotters and Fiddlin' Billy Baker - some of the region's best carriers of bluegrass and old time traditions. One Heartwood Cir, Abingdon, VA 24210 (276) 492-2400 https://www.myswva.org/heartwood</p> <p>Carter Family Fold The Carter Fold is a rustic, 800-plus-seat music shed offering traditional music every Saturday night. The attached museum opens an hour prior to the show. The Carter Family (A.P. Carter, his wife Sara and his sister-in-law Maybelle) were discovered in 1927 by Victor Recording Studio in Bristol and recorded 300 songs between 1927 and 1942. Playing traditional Appalachian music, the family is often credited as forerunners of modern-day country music. Today, A.P. Carter's old general store acts as a museum. 3449 A. P. Carter Highway, Hiltons, VA 24258 (276) 386-6054 https://www.myswva.org/venue/carter-family-fold</p> <p>Country Cabin II, Norton Another important stop on the Crooked Road, the original Country Cabin was built in 1937-38. Country Cabin II was built in 2002 to accommodate larger audiences. In addition to clogging and line-dancing classes, the site continues to host local musicians and bands performing bluegrass, country and old-time music throughout the year every Saturday night and is the longest continuously running site for traditional music along the entire Crooked Road. 6034 Kent Junction Road, Norton, VA 24273 (276) 679-3541 https://www.myswva.org/venue/country-cabin-ii</p>
Films	<p>Coal Miner's Daughter was shot here in southwest Virginia in 1979 in Wise County.</p>
Museums	<p>The Birthplace of Country Music Museum An affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, the Birthplace of Country Music Museum explores the history of the 1927 Bristol Sessions and their lasting impact on America's music heritage. From the Bristol Sessions and beyond, The Crooked Road region continues to influence music around the world. Through text and artifacts, multiple theatre experiences, film and sound, and interactive, technology-infused displays the exciting story of mountain music and its far-reaching</p>

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	<p>influence comes alive. 520 Birthplace of Country Music Way, Bristol, VA 24201 (423) 573-1927 www.birthplaceofcountrymusic.org</p> <p>Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Museum, Wytheville History, Heritage, and Romance – These three words describe the story of the collection of artifacts, photographs, china, and furniture on display at the birthplace of First Lady Edith Bolling Wilson, second wife of President Woodrow Wilson. 145 East Main Street, Wytheville, VA 24382 (276) 223-3484 http://edithbollingwilson.org/</p> <p>Haller-Gibboney Rock House Museum, Wytheville Built in 1823, the Haller-Gibboney Rock House Museum is the home of Wytheville's first resident physician. Dr. John Haller served his community as a country doctor, county coroner, and delegate to the Virginia Legislature. The home contains over 1,400 original artifacts and period furnishings. 205 East Tazewell Street, Wytheville, VA 24382 (276) 223-3330 http://www.wytheville.org/museums/index.php</p> <p>Thomas J. Boyd Museum, Wytheville Located beside the Rock House, the Boyd Museum is named for Thomas Jefferson Boyd, known as the Father of Wytheville. The Museum houses an extensive collection of artifacts within exhibits on local history, Civil War, and the polio epidemic. The Discovery Corner offers ten interactive stations where children can learn math, science, and local history. 295 East Tazewell Street, Wytheville, VA 24382 (276) 223-3330 http://www.wytheville.org/museums/index.php</p> <p>Ralph Stanley Museum The Ralph Stanley Museum and Traditional Mountain Music Center features the life and music of the legendary music performer. Dr. Stanley donated an extensive collection of memorabilia - ranging from vintage instruments to countless musical awards. Located in a historic four-story Victorian house, the collection includes exhibits on Ralph and Carter Stanley, the region's musical roots, and on popular successors like Ricky Skaggs and Patty Loveless. 249 Clintwood Main St, P.O. Box 456, Clintwood, VA 24228 (276) 926-8550 https://www.myswva.org/venue/ralph-stanley-museum</p>
Festivals	From nine Major Venues to over 60 affiliated venues and festivals, you can experience live traditional music seven days a week all year long in

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	<p>The Crooked Road region. Use this link to find the details of individual events: https://www.myswva.org/tcr/events/festivals</p> <p>I attended the Mountains of Music Homecoming Festival at the Blue Ridge Music Center which was a whole bunch of fun! The Blue Ridge Music Center celebrates the music and musicians of the Blue Ridge. Established by the U.S. Congress in 1997, The Music Center includes an outdoor amphitheater, an indoor interpretive center/theatre, and The Roots of American Music, a complimentary interactive, and entertaining, exhibition highlighting the historical significance of the region's music and the continued influence on many forms of folk, rock, and popular music made across America today. Milepost 213 Blue Ridge Pkwy, Galax, VA 24333 (276) 236-5309 www.blueridgemusiccenter.org/</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	
Wildlife	With its many parks there is a surprising amount of wildlife and birding opportunities in Virginia.
Parks	Virginia State Parks have been voted "America's Best" by The Sports Foundation and the National Recreation and Park Association; Shenandoah National Park.
Gardens	Blue Ridge Highlands Stroll through the themed gardens and watch hummingbirds feast on the flowers at Beagle Ridge Herb Farm near Wytheville while sipping a cup of tea on the patio.
Historical Sites	Virginia is an American history icon. The country began here in 1607, and it's no surprise that the Old Dominion has more than its share of historic and historical sites, exhibits, monuments and legendary personas. Each has its own unique story, and nearly all have a friendly Virginia face to share their passion for the tale. From the rivers of John Smith's explorations to the wilderness of the early westward pioneers, you'll find interesting diversions across the state. And for the casual browser or the serious history buff, the lone seeker or the family of enthusiasts, visitors will likely never exhaust the historical experiences available in Virginia.

OTHER ACTIVITIES	Inject a little excitement into your vacation with the help of Virginia outfitters who package everything from caving, boating, offshore and freshwater fishing, beachfront sports, llama trekking, inn-to-inn hiking, cycling and camping adventures, white-water rafting and sea kayaking. Golf and ski resorts abound here. Each year, in fact, Virginia golf resorts are ranked among the top in the country in a host of national magazines. More than one-fourth of the Appalachian Trail runs through the mountains of Virginia and you will find more caverns here than in
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	nearly any other East Coast state.
Shopping	No big outlet malls here in SW Virginia...but one of a kind craft shops abound. For instance, I chanced across the biggest batik fabric store in the US in a tiny Appalachian town...
Markets	Virginia is host to many wonderful curiosity and collectible shops, from thrift stores, antique shops and auctions where you can talk to appraisers, vendors and fellow collectors. Abingdon Farmer's Market is a delightful gathering of local food producers and crafts people from the surrounding region. Casual and friendly, I loved this market and enjoyed a fresh breakfast and bought some boutique-style soaps.
Nightlife	Nightlife in Virginia includes ballroom dancing, theatre, concerts as well as line dancing, neighborhood pubs and karaoke. Since country music found its origins here, visitors can hear old timey mountain tunes every weekend.

CUISINE	
Food	Dining in Virginia is a real treat for travellers. Regional dishes like country ham and grits can be found on the same city block as ethnic dishes from the Old Country. Choose a chrome/neon diner and a malt, a family-style buffet of soul food or a country kitchen with crisp cotton curtains and fried chicken; all offer comfort food that mum used to make. Virginia also presents quality five-star restaurants famous for their unique menus, fabulous service and elegant settings.
Wine	Virginia is one of the top six states wine producing wine in the US with many wineries and breweries scattered across the gorgeous countryside. I visited the Davis Valley Vineyard and Distillery , located in the beautiful mountains of Southwestern Virginia, just minutes from Interstate 81 Davis Valley. It is a wonderful place to sample Virginia wines and distilled spirits on a 100-year old oak bar, learn about wine-making and distilling, and enjoy a spectacular view. 1167 Davis Valley Rd, Rural Retreat, VA 24368 (276) 686-8855 http://www.davisvalleywinery.com/
Restaurants	Here are a couple of my personal recommendations in Southwest Virginia... Burger Bar, Bristol This local burger joint is forever linked to Hank Williams as allegedly the last place the country music legend was known to be alive. The milk shakes are divine! 8 Piedmont Ave, Bristol, VA 24201 (276) 466-6200 www.burgerbarbristol.com

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	<p>Skeeters Skeeters has been serving Skeeter-Dogs to locals and travelers since 1925. You haven't been to Wytheville unless you have been to Skeeters! 165 E Main Street, Wytheville, VA (278) 228-2611 https://www.facebook.com/SkeetersWorldFamousHotdogs</p>
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MORE INFO	
Brochures	Call 1-800-671-4195 for a range of brochures
Website	<p>State-wide website: www.virginia.org Connect with Virginia on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/VirginialsForLovers Follow Virginia on Twitter: https://twitter.com/visitvirginia See Virginia on You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/user/VisitVirginia</p> <p>For The Crooked Road: Website: www.thecrookedroad.org Connect with the Crooked Road on facebook: https://www.facebook.com/thecrookedroad</p>

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>I toured through Southwestern Virginia in June 2015 and you can read my Travel Blog of my journey here: http://www.chrisrobinsontravelshow.ca/Blog.aspx I have also created a Pinterest board of images from my trip : http://www.pinterest.com/TravelShow/virginia</p>
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