



THE FIRST PEAK OF THE BLUE RIDGE

Historic Saluda, Tryon and Columbus, N.C.

The [First Peak of the Blue Ridge](#) is a scenic mountain destination that provides nature's playlist – but the 'volume' of your experience is up to you. Turn up the volume with America's steepest canopy zip line, guided whitewater adventures or local music. Wind down with peaceful hikes to waterfalls, local wine tastings, and quiet 'porch time' at one of our cozy inns, B&Bs or cabins.

THE FIRST PEAK IS THE PLACE TO BE DURING A PANDEMIC

This rural county features stunning mountain scenery, three tiny towns and just 20,000 residents, which, it turns out, is just what the doctor ordered to boost well-being during a pandemic. People seeking a safe change of scenery kept our vacation rentals booked solid. From July 2020-June 2021, the county occupancy tax collections on overnight stays exceeded its budgeted revenue by 96%, a new record. In 2020, Polk County was one of 14 N.C. counties with an increase in visitor spending, and one of 20 counties where tourism employment increased.

NINA SIMONE'S LEGACY BRIGHTENS UP HER HOME TOWN – TRYON, N.C.



Nina Simone's legacy is bringing new life to her home town of Tryon, N.C. Born in 1933, the young Eunice Waymon showed natural musical talent and the Tryon community stepped in to support her with music lessons. This gifted performer would become Nina Simone, the world-famous jazz singer and civil rights activist known as the High Priestess of Soul. Her life and music have earned some much-deserved recognition including:

- She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2018 and her childhood home was designated a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Rehabilitation and use plans are being developed for her home. savingplaces.org/NinaSimone
- In 2019, the exterior of her childhood home received a facelift and an interactive kiosk was added to Nina Simone Plaza downtown where visitors can listen to her music and learn more about her life.
- An amazing two-story mural popped up on a building in 2020, painted by Scott Nurkin as part of the N.C. Musician Murals Project.
- And in May 2021, the Nina Simone Project announced that her archive will be built in downtown Tryon, across from Nina Simone Plaza. A \$2 million capital campaign was launched in June. The archive will house thousands of items, including rare recordings, scores and letters, and will feature a gallery and rooftop performance stage. NinaSimoneProject.org.

- more (over) -

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE FIRST PEAK OF THE BLUE RIDGE

- In March 2020, [Emberglow Outdoor Resort](#) opened, bringing glamping to the First Peak. It features yurts, restored vintage campers, tree houses and other unique lodging options with family friendly amenities like trails, a dog park and a gathering area with a large pool and fire pit.
- [Iron Key Brewing Company](#) was created in 2020, but the structure began in 1932 as a North Carolina state prison. The building has been renovated but maintains several nods to its past, including the craft beer names, like Big House IPA, Lock-Up Lager and Solitary Stout.
- Large annual events are drawing people to the First Peak, including the [Tryon International Film Festival](#) in October, the [Tryon Beer Fest](#) in November (2021 is its 10th year), [Night in the Country Carolinas](#) music festival and the inaugural [Earl Scruggs Music Festival](#) coming in 2022 - both music festivals are held at Tryon International Equestrian Center & Resort.

LOOKING GLASS CREAMERY – A JOURNEY FROM CHEESE TO FARMING



Husband and wife team Jen & Andy Perkins bought the farm in 2018 - a 226-acre dairy farm! [Looking Glass Creamery](#) had been making award-winning artisan cheese for ten years using milk from this Columbus, NC farm. Needing to secure their milk supply, they learned how to farm and built a creamery with proper aging cellars nestled underground. Today, visitors can see cheese being made, peek into an underground aging cellar and, of course, sample and buy cheese and more. They continue to grow, adding their own hard cider to the mix in 2020, made right on the farm using local fruit.

ENJOY A DAY OF WINE TASTING – OR STAY OVERNIGHT

Our four wineries with tasting rooms continue to expand, offering visitors an amazing experience. [Mountain Brook Vineyards](#) has an event space surrounded by vineyards and hosts regular guided tours and special events, [Parker-Binns Vineyard](#) has a large tasting room with lots of outdoor areas overlooking its vineyards and [Overmountain Vineyards](#) has two luxury vacation rentals. All are located near Tryon and offer award-winning wines, tastings and scenic mountain views.

TRYON INTERNATIONAL EQUESTRIAN CENTER SHOWCASES TRYON HORSE COUNTRY

More than 80 years of Tryon Horse Country's local equestrian tradition helped pave the way for the 2014 opening of world-class [Tryon International Equestrian Center \(TIEC\) & Resort](#) in Mill Spring, NC. TIEC hosts more than 35 weeks of multi-discipline equestrian competition annually and has welcomed riders from around the world. The 1,600-acre resort has a wide appeal, offering a variety of onsite lodging, eight restaurants, a golf and gun club, a spa, and a collection of shops. While horses are the core, the resort hosts non-equestrian events such as the three-day Night in the Country Carolinas Music Festival, Saturday Night Lights, the Carolina Pumpkin Spelltacular, and Winterfest.



WHERE IS THE FIRST PEAK OF THE BLUE RIDGE?

We are four hours west of Raleigh, N.C. Head west from Charlotte and you will be rewarded with long-range views of Tryon Peak – the First Peak of the Blue Ridge – as you follow Hwy. 74W to our front door. Take Exit 170 for Tryon Resort, Exit 161 for Columbus and Tryon, or continue onto I-26W and take the next exit to discover Saluda. Welcome to the Blue Ridge Mountains! You choose what's next: get out and explore, or rest and rejuvenate. This area features a wonderful blend of scenic beauty and small town charm, with great lodging, restaurants, shops, events and outdoor activities. Historic Saluda, Tryon and Columbus are within a few miles of each other, but each has its own distinct personality.

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