

Drive One

Greenville Watershed, Tuxedo, and Heatherly Heights

Drive to the center of the Saluda business district and turn onto Greenville Street which begins at the railroad crossing. Just out of town, at the city limits, this street changes names to Mountain Page Road. Not far along this route is a beautiful vista on the left toward Pacolet Valley. Shortly, you will pass Mountain Page Baptist Church on the right. It is one of the oldest churches in the area and its graveyard contains many headstones from the community's earliest days. In that graveyard is an African-American section reflecting burial practices of an earlier time when Saluda had a substantial "colored" community.

Continue out Mountain Page Road to the South Carolina state line and the Greenville Watershed. This watershed area is known for its large butterfly population and, at certain times of the year, you will need to drive slowly to avoid major carnage. Shortly, Mountain Page Road will dead end into old Highway 25 (now 225). You will have traveled 7 miles from Saluda at this point. Just before this intersection, there is a stone wall barely visible in the undergrowth on the right; it is evidence of settlement activity which was extinguished with the development of the watershed. At the dead end, turn right and continue west. In this part of the watershed a spectacular stand of tulip poplars provides dense shade in the summer as one drives through their green tunnel effect. Notice the small waterfall on the right as you ascend. In October and November, the leaves on the poplars turn golden and then, as the poplars shed their leaves, their grey bark stands in stark contrast to the blue sky and green undergrowth.

After crossing the North Carolina state line and just beyond the watershed area, at the town of Tuxedo, turn right onto South Lake Summit Road. After crossing the Green River at the head of the lake and just beyond the old steel bridge, bear to the right on Bell Mountain Road. Here begins an ascent through the countryside to Heatherly Heights. At the top of the mountain, this road will dead-end at Heatherly Heights Road. Turn left onto Heatherly Heights which is unpaved and a bit rough for about a half mile. You will be driving through the edge of the Greenville Watershed until you come to where the pavement resumes. After continuing along Heatherly Heights Road, turn right onto Pace Mountain Road and continue to Mountain Page Road. Turn left onto Mountain Page Road and return to downtown Saluda.

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Drive Two

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Lake Summit

From Saluda's Main Street (US 176) proceed west toward Hendersonville. Shortly after crossing the Green River bridge, turn left onto North Lake Summit Drive which goes under the railroad trestle and to the lakeside.

Lake Summit was created in the 1920's as part of Duke Power's hydro generating project along the Green River. (Lake Adger, also part of that project, is the second of the lakes on the Green River. It is approximately 1,000 feet lower in elevation than Lake Summit and is located at the northern end of Polk County.) Continue along North Lake Summit Drive to old Highway 25 (now 225) which is Main Street in the town of Tuxedo. Turn left and pass through Tuxedo. Turn left again onto South Lake Summit Drive. Continue along the lakeside. The drive along this south shore is much longer than that along the north shore because of the serpentine nature of the shoreline.

The architecture of the lakeside cottages reflects an interesting mix of styles and means dating from the 1920's. Originally, these cottages were constructed for summer use; now, many are used for weekend getaways and a number are retirement homes. At the end of the south shore drive, turn right onto US 176, returning to Saluda.

The Lake Summit drive is particularly beautiful late on an autumn afternoon during the leaf season, especially when viewing the color along the south shore from the north shore.

Charles Street Garden – revised January 2012

Drive Three

Green River Cove and Holbert Cove

From Main Street, start out of town to the east toward Tryon. Turn left onto Ozone Drive (the connector street that comes from I-26). Follow Ozone Drive to the I-26 overpass. Go under the interstate interchange and take the first road on the left. This is Green River Cove Road.

Shortly after beginning the descent into the cove, there is a panoramic view of the cove itself and the adjacent ridge lines. After enjoying this view, drive slowly while maneuvering the fifteen switchbacks encountered on the descent to the floor of the cove. Once at the bottom, continue along the road to a place on the left marked Fish Top which is an access point to the Green River and has space for public parking. It is an excellent place to wet your feet!

Continue along the road until you reach the first bridge—a recent, sorry replacement for the old steel superstructure that dated from the 1930's. Right after crossing the bridge, there will be an area on the left for limited public parking. At this location is the trail head for one of the trails in the Green River Cove trail system. This moderately strenuous seven-mile (roundtrip) trail provides a chance to explore riverside and ridge flora first hand (trail maps are available at many businesses in town).

Resume the drive along the Green River, watching for deer and wild turkeys—and, extremely rarely, a bear. Watch, also, for a small country church on the left. At an earlier time, this church served the once heavily populated cove. Evidence of abandoned farmsteads may be seen in the flats between the road and the river throughout the drive.

At the end of the cove, turn right onto Silver Creek Road. Notice an old cemetery on the right at this intersection. Consider stopping to explore this cemetery. Some of the older headstones reflect the historically dominant Scotch-Irish population of these mountains.

Continue eastward on Silver Creek Road to the next county road—Holbert Cove Road. Turn right onto this road to begin the ascent back to Saluda. About halfway through Holbert Cove, the road crosses Bradley Creek. There is parking on the left side of the road on either side of the creek. A hiking trail to Big Bradley Falls and to an overlook of Green River Cove begins behind the orange barricade on the right side of the road. The hike to the falls takes about 20 minutes. At the beginning of the walk, the path follows an open river bottom which is a good example of the farmsteads that once existed throughout both coves. As one leaves this more open beginning, and after hopping the rocks to cross Bradley Creek, the trail provides a lovely walk through a mature deciduous forest. Retrace your walk to Holbert Cove Road.

To complete this drive, continue along the cove road to the top, back at Ozone Drive. You will have come full circle.

Drive Four

Pearson Falls Road, Fork Creek Road, Mountain Page Road/Greenville Street

On Main Street, going east, pass Nostalgia Courtyard on the right and immediately turn right onto Pearson's Falls Road—a dirt road but well maintained. Joel's Creek parallels this part of your drive. With your lights on, pass through the railroad tunnel. Before reaching the new Pacolet River bridge, the difficult to see trail head for the Lost Forty Trail is on your right. There is limited parking along the road if you wish to take this hike. After passing over Pacolet River, drive very slowly under the canopy of overhanging trees. The river will be on the left. The mountainside on the right has one of the best natural collections of wildflowers in the area; peak bloom time is in April but the area is beautiful all year long.

Just after the second bridge, and the beginning of pavement, you will see the entrance to Pearson's Falls. The falls area is maintained by the Tryon Garden Club. There is an admission charge but the trail, falls, and woodland setting are especially nice.

Returning to Pearson's Falls Road, turn right and, within a fourth of a mile—just before the first curve—look to the left toward the river. In winter, you can see a series of beaver dams. In the late afternoon and early evening, the beavers become active for those willing to sit quietly and wait. Cross the next bridge and, before you turn to the right onto Fork Creek Road, notice the large, two story Pearson house owned by descendants of Captain Charles Pearson for whom the falls are named. He engineered the railroad up the Pacolet Valley in the late 1870's. Other descendants are prominent members of our community even today.

With the small railroad trestle in front of you, turn to the right onto Fork Creek Road. You are at Melrose, once a railroad stop. You may want to pull off to the left by the railroad and hike the tracks eastward (to the right) for about a half mile to view a double waterfall which passes under the railroad.

Continue on Fork Creek Road. The next paved road to the right—West Fork Creek Road—would shorten your return to Saluda by a few miles if you prefer. If you choose to continue without turning, you will soon arrive at the trail head for the Palmetto Trail. There is public parking on the right if you choose to stop for a major walk! Whether you continue straight ahead on Fork Creek Road or turn right onto West Fork Creek Road, both merge to form Mine Mountain Road. Follow Mine Mountain Road and turn right onto Mountain Page Road. You will now be headed back toward Saluda.

On the left, you will pass Mountain Page Baptist Church, one of the earliest churches in this area. You may wish to stop and read gravestones—a “who's who” among the Scotch-Irish settlers of the southern Appalachians.

Continuing toward Saluda, you will pass a wonderful view of Hogback Mountain on the right across what was a major apple orchard, now subdivided—like too many former orchards—into building lots.

Continuing toward downtown Saluda, you see the now named Saluda Inn on the left—formerly the Charlton-Leland Inn, circa 1914 and the Methodist Church, on the right, built in the mid-1880s. Just past the Methodist Church, turn left onto Smith Street and circle the hill. The buildings on the left, for the most part, are the remaining structures of the Saluda Baby Hospital which was established by Dr. Lesene Smith of Spartanburg who, for many years, conducted the Southern Pediatric Seminar on these grounds in the summers. The hospital existed in the mid twentieth century.

Circling Smith Hill will return you to Greenville Street. Turn left onto it and continue to downtown Saluda.

Charles Street Garden – revised January 2012

Drive to DuPont Forest

Go to the center of downtown Saluda and drive across the railroad tracks onto Greenville Street. A few miles from Saluda, the name of this street changes to Mountain Page Road. When this road dead ends approximately 7 miles from Saluda, take a right. This turn will put you onto old Highway 25—now numbered 225.

After approximately 5 miles, turn left onto Green River Road which will become Reasonover Road after you enter the Green River Preserve. This road is paved except for a well maintained graveled four mile section in the middle of the preserve. When you come to where this road dead ends, you will be in Cedar Mountain. Take a right onto Cascade Lake Road. After approximately 2 miles, turn right at the AGFA Plant sign; this turn will put you onto Staton Road. After a few miles on this road, you will see parking areas designated for several waterfalls—Hooker Falls, High Falls, Triple Falls.

When you are ready to leave Dupont Forest, backtrack to the intersection of Cascade Lake Road and Reasonover Road. You may wish to turn left and back track to Saluda. If not, then straight ahead a few hundred feet beyond this intersection is US Highway 276. To the right goes to Brevard; to the left goes to Caesar's Head, Travelers Rest, and Greenville. The view of the piedmont from Ceasar's Head State Park makes this stop quite worthwhile. There are several hiking trails in the park that are especially interesting.

Continue on Highway 276 which will merge with Highway 11 at the bottom of the mountain. Follow SC 11 to the left and stay on it until you reach Highway 25. At the intersection of these highways, follow US 25 toward Hendersonville for just under a mile. Turn right off Highway 25 where the sign says "Saluda – 15 miles" (this turn puts you onto what is old US 25—now 225). After a few miles you will reenter the Greenville Watershed. Well within the watershed, turn right where you see the sign to Saluda. This will put you back on Mountain Page Road which will take you into downtown Saluda.

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