

Blue Ridge Music Center opens for 25th season

The Blue Ridge Music Center is celebrating 25 years of presenting live music on the Blue Ridge Parkway, with its annual summer concert series, special performances at locations like Doughton Park and daily live performances at the visitors center.

The center is at milepost 213 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, near Galax, Va., and about 20 miles from Sparta. It is open daily from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., May through September, including the visitors center, live music, the museum, gift shop and trails.

The National Park Service facility's goal is to preserve, interpret and present the evolving musical traditions of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is a partner venue of Virginia's Heritage Music Trail (The Crooked Road) and Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina. Programming is supported by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the Parkway.

A free series of performances, Midday Mountain Music, is offered every day the center is open, from noon-3 p.m. in the visitor center breezeway.



Milepost Music Series

The center's Milepost Music series brings performances directly to the communities along the Parkway. Closest to Sparta are the Milepost Music concerts at Doughton Park and The Bluffs restaurant, at milepost 241, from 2-4 p.m. on the second Sunday of the month, July-September.

Concerts are held in the grassy area in front of The Bluffs. This year's schedule includes: July 12, David Via; Aug. 9, Glenwood Choppers; and Sept. 13, Gap Civil. Bring snacks and a chair to enjoy

some toe-tapping music.

Milepost Music performances also are held at two Parkway locations in Virginia: Mabry Mill, milepost 176, on the first and third Sundays of the month, June-September; and at Peaks of Otter, milepost 86, on the fourth Sunday of the month, June-September. You can find schedules for these locations online at BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org.

Summer Concert Series

The first summer concert series took place in 2002 when the outdoor amphitheater was newly completed. This season includes concerts commemorating the anniversary, a retrospective exhibition and events celebrating America's 250 years of independence.

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The lineup features a wide range of traditional American musical genres, from bluegrass and old-time bands to Celtic and Asian-inspired artists, country and roots rock. The weekly performances are held on Saturdays at 7 p.m. in the outdoor amphitheater. You can find summer concert dates in the Events section of this guide. Tickets for all summer concerts and season passes are for sale online at BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org.

Mid-Day Mountain Music

Midday Mountain Music is a free program featuring local musicians from noon-3 p.m. each day the center is open. The weekly lineup for this season includes:

- Sundays, Fisher Peak Timber Rattlers;
- Mondays, Buck Mountaineers;
- Tuesdays, Dot and Dan Shikenjanski;
- Wednesdays, (first and third) Goodson Serenaders, (second and fourth) Bill Kunz

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