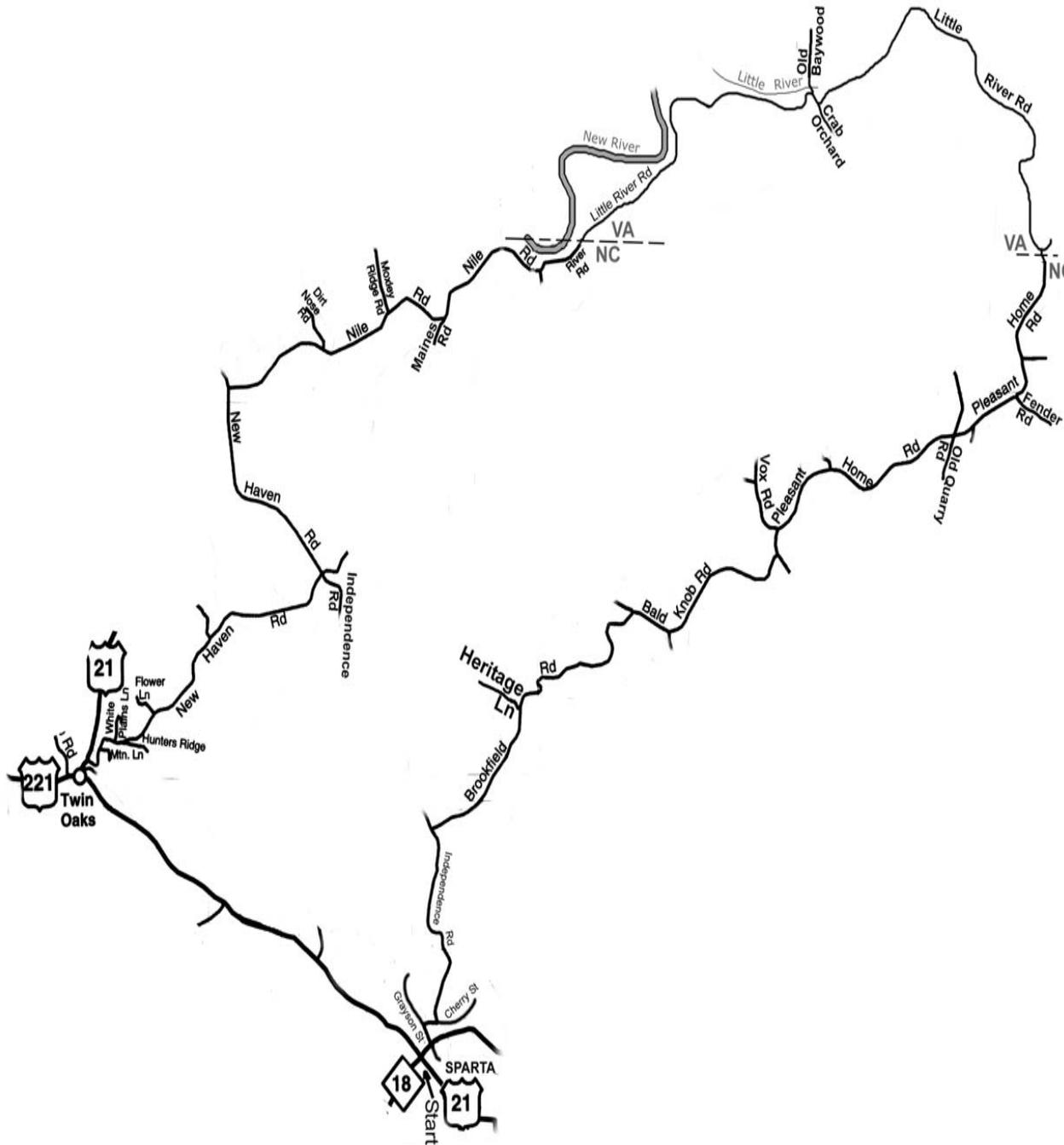


New River Driving Loop

A 24-mile driving loop that winds north of Sparta into Virginia and along the New River, suitable for most vehicles.



Farm Valleys

Scenic Vistas

Historic landmarks

Alleghany County
Chamber of Commerce
58 South Main St.
P.O. Box 1237
Sparta, NC 28675
336/372-5473
800/372-5473

While all roads are well maintained, this is a true back-roads tour that includes some narrow, unpaved roads. It is not recommended for vehicles pulling trailers, large vehicles such as motor homes, or for travel during significant inclement weather. When approached by oncoming traffic on narrow roads, it is courteous to pull as far to the right as practical to permit oncoming traffic to pass.

Approximately 24 miles long, this drive begins at the center of Sparta at the intersection of Main and Whitehead Streets (US 21-NC 18). Take NC 18 north, past the courthouse. At the beginning, set your trip odometer to zero. The numbers at the far left and referenced in the text are the approximate loop mileage to help locate turns (bold text) and landmarks. Many landmarks are private property and except for commercial establishments, should be treated with respect and not trespassed.

There are few retail establishments along the way, so pit stop at the beginning.

0.0 Begin at US 21/NC 18 (center of town) and head north on NC 18. The first *County Courthouse* (left) was built in 1910, but burned in a 1933 during a fire that destroyed a quarter of downtown. Fought mainly with bucket brigades and dynamite, the fire prompted organization of a modern fire department. This stately structure, built during the depression, is not as ornate as the former, but follows a similar design. *Farmers Hardware* (right) was established by Amos Wagoner, Sr. in 1937 at this location and remains in the Wagoner family. The gray stone *Senior Center* directly behind the Courthouse is an example of depression-era construction that provided work for local residents.

0.09 Go left on Grayson Street. *Crouse Park* (right) was bequeathed to the community by its former resident, Floyd Crouse, Sparta's first mayor (1925-44). Known for his conservation efforts, he led the fight against the damming of the New River. Home and park are administered by the Town of Sparta for public use.

0.15 Turn right onto Cherry Street and as you pass the Crouse House, follow the curve of the road to the left as the road turns into Independence Road. At the beginning of the 20th Century, this was the way to Independence, Va. Toward the road's crest going over Doughton Mountain, it is little more than a Jeep trail (don't worry, we'll turn well beyond that point).

1.4 Go right onto Brookfield Rd. Although Christmas trees are the county's major agricultural product, livestock, particularly beef and dairy cattle, have roamed the Alleghany countryside almost as long as people. As you ride through this valley, you see a mix of land put to residential and farm uses. Built for the William S. Hudson family in 1910, the house on the right (2.5 miles) with its

projecting bays and numerous embellishments is one of the best examples of the Queen Anne influence on local homes. Its appearance has been little altered since construction.

3.6 Turn right at the dead-end of Brookfield Road onto Bald Knob Road. Be careful to stay on Bald Knob as it curves left at the intersection with Cross Creek Road in about a quarter mile. Look for break in the trees on the left at the drive around 4.5 miles to reveal the great view.

The house on the left at 4.8 miles was built in 1918. Although it harks back to the traditional "I-house" design (2 rooms wide, 2 stories high, 1 room deep) that presents its most impressive facade to the street, the Tuscan porch columns and pedimented gable over the porch entrance are later influences. Known as the Bald Knob Farmhouse, (336-372-4191) it's available as a vacation rental.

4.9 Turn left at the dead-end of Bald Knob road onto Pleasant Home Rd. The large two-story house just down Vox Road at 5.0 miles was built around 1900. Although from the front it resembles the "I-house," the larger square shape and plan was a favorite in the early 20th Century. Continue on Pleasant Home Rd. The Pleasant Home Union Baptist Church (6.6) was established in 1894. Continue on Pleasant Home Road until you cross into Virginia.

7.9 Turn left onto Little River Road just inside Virginia. As you follow Little River Road, notice the view to the left. At 10.1 miles, the Little River comes up on the right at the intersection with the Old Baywood Road. Little River begins in Alleghany County and forms the eastern border of Sparta. It winds its way through northern Alleghany County and Virginia, eventually emptying into the New River. Just before the New River comes up on the right, the Vannoy Farm home (12.5 miles) is an excellent example of early 20th Century architecture. The traditional main house is set off by the Queen Anne porch and gable treatments. The river is noted for small-mouth bass and walleye. Watch for deer on the far bank. When you cross back into Alleghany County at 14.7 miles, the road becomes River Road.

14.9 Go right on the Nile Road. The house at 15.8 miles across from the Maines Rd intersection was constructed in 1875 as a traditional farmhouse. It has been remodeled and maintained well. Note the log cabin on the left.

17.6 Go left onto New Haven Road. The home at 18.0 miles on this dairy farm on the left is an excellent example of the I-house design. Built in 1873, the soaring vertical proportions, its steep roof and scalloped woodwork surrounding the sidelights of the doorway are typical. The late Harry Tepker lived and painted just down the road. The house is the subject of his Winter Morning print.

18.9 Go right to stay on New Haven Road. Built in 1943 by Ed Razotti, a stonemason who worked on the Blue

Ridge Parkway, the New River Baptist Church is the only church in the area constructed of stone native to the surroundings. If you were to not turn, you would be on the same Independence Road that you rode upon at the beginning of this loop. Just to the right of the intersection is the Delphia Post Office and store building which operated 1897-1915. You pass New Haven Church of the Brethren at 20.1 miles on the left, one of only three Brethren churches in the county, and White Plains Baptist Church at 20.7 miles on the right.

21.2 New Haven Rd. dead-ends at US 21/221. Go left. 21.3 Take US 21 to the left. This intersection is the center of the Twin Oaks community, named for two large oaks that once stood nearby. From the early 1900s until the opening of I-77 in the mid 1970s, US 21 was part of the Lakes to Florida highway connecting Detroit, MI, and Jacksonville, FL, a popular route for northerners who wintered in Florida. The corner was once dominated by the rambling Twin Oaks Motel and Garage and by rental cabins, both operated by Carl Irwin, who died in 1994 at the age of 100. His grandson built the Twin Oaks General Store (336-372-5470).

The small native stone buildings at 22.1 miles on the right near the top of the hill were once part of the Cool Springs Tourist Court, popular lodging for travelers on the Lakes to Florida highway. Just beyond the courts are two more native stone homes (22.3 miles), built in the 1930s. The English Cottage design (right) was the home of school teachers Albert and Kate Richardson. The bungalow on the left was the home of Emerson Black, county Extension agent from 1935 to 1962.

The Alleghany Fairgrounds at 22.6 miles is named after Carlisle Higgins, legislator and lawyer who was a prosecutor in the Japanese war-crimes trials after World War II. The Emerson Black building honors the county's long-time Extension agent.

The striking house at 23.0 miles was built for Sparta's first woman post-master, Lula Maxwell. The English Cottage design, this time in brick, was constructed in 1937. The Senator's House Restaurant on the left at 23.8 miles was built by Eugene Transou who served as state senator (1917), representative (1929) and county commissioner (1923).

At the end of the loop is the old Northwestern Bank building (brick building kitty-cornered to the Courthouse). The Bank of Sparta was established in 1903 and joined with three other mountain banks to form Northwestern Bank in 1937. Purchased by First Union in the 1980s, First Charter acquired the branch, now located three blocks south of here, when First Union consolidated its operations.