Blue Ridge History
Downtown Blue Ridge
Historic Walking Tour

1 Baugh House
2 Blue Ridge Inn Bed & Breakfast
3 Mercier Orchards Downtown
4 Coldwell Banker High Country Realty
5 Historic Fannin County Courthouse
6 The Blue Ridge Depot
7 Blue Ridge City Park
8 Blue Ridge Police Department
9 801 East Main Street
10 Blue Ridge Pharmacy Building
11 The Hall Building
12 771 East Main Street
13 1950’s Gas Station, Love Dogs & Cats Too
14 The Gartrell Building
15 High Country Art
16 The Tilly Building
17 Mitzi’s on Main
18 Hansen’s Grill
19 Cohutta Fishing Company

Caboose Visitor Center

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The town of Blue Ridge was once considered an elite health resort because of its pure mineral waters. Tourists would ride visit Mineral Springs Park as shown on the map.) Today, tourists can still ride the train and take a leisurely walk along Main Street and the other quaint streets of downtown, enjoying the antique and specialty shops, galleries, restaurants and small town atmosphere of Blue Ridge.

Blue Ridge was founded in 1886 as a result of the arrival of the Marietta and North Georgia Railroad. Because of the railroad, Blue Ridge developed as a center of business and in 1895 the county seat was moved from Morganton to Blue Ridge. In the early years, at different times, there were five hotels and several boarding houses in downtown Blue Ridge.

West First Street
1. Baugh House  Baugh House, located at 411 West First Street, is owned by the Fannin County Heritage Foundation. Those interested in genealogy will find lots of helpful information inside. The home was built by pioneer John W. Baugh for his son James in 1890, from bricks manufactured at the Baugh Brick Co. in Mineral Bluff. 706-258-2645.

2. Blue Ridge Inn Bed & Breakfast  477 West First Street. The Blue Ridge Inn (Kincaid House) is a beautifully restored Victorian home built in 1890. It has 14 rooms, 8 fireplaces, 12-foot ceilings, original carved woodwork, heartpine floors and clawfoot tubs. 706-632-0222.

West Main Street
3. Mercier Orchards Downtown  260 West Main Street. The People’s Bank building was built around 1926. It features Doric pilasters, a glass block transom and elaborate cornice. Today it is the home of Mercier Orchards Downtown, a satellite of Mercier Orchards. Serving breakfast and lunch daily. Offering hard cider and wine tastings. Take a peek inside the original bank vault, where you can sit for a group meal.

4. Coldwell Banker High Country Realty  247 West Main Street. Originally built by the L & N Railroad in 1895. By 1901 the first floor was occupied by the North Georgia National Bank and the top two floors were used by the railroad for offices. Later, the building became known as The Haight Building. Renovated by Coldwell Banker in 2006, peek inside to see original brick walls & architectural details.

5. Historic Fannin County Courthouse  420 West Main Street. The historic Fannin County Courthouse was built in 1937 after the previous courthouse burned in 1936. The courthouse is now the home of the Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association. See the original courtroom, and be sure to visit the art gallery shop and enjoy the work of local artists. On the grounds of the courthouse is a historic marker describing the founding of Fannin County. The “Statue of Liberty” was presented to Blue Ridge by a quirky resident.

Church Street
6. Blue Ridge Police Department  301 Church Street. Originally Blue Ridge City Hall and Jail, the building was built in 1936-37 as a WPA project of the Federal Government under President Roosevelt. Now home of the Blue Ridge Police Department, jail cells have not been used since 1999.

East Main Street
7. Blue Ridge City Park  Blue Ridge City Park, once owned by the L & N Railroad, is the heart of downtown Blue Ridge. The park encompasses two blocks and is a popular place for picnics, community gatherings and festivals. The monument in the park was dedicated on October 21, 1937 in a ceremony attended by more than 2,000 people, to deceased World War I veterans from the Army, Navy and Air Force. Another memorial was added to the park in 2012 for William Clayton Fain, a leading Unionist in the state during the Civil War. A Fannin County lawyer and state representative, he served in the 1861 Secession Convention, where he opposed Georgia leaving the United States and refused to sign the Ordinance of Secession. Fain was captured and killed by Confederates in April of 1864.

Restaurant Row
8. Blue Ridge Pharmacy  793 East Main Street. Blue Ridge Pharmacy was founded around 1900, was once located in the building currently owned by Coldwell Banker, and moved to an East Main location in the early 1920’s. Today the Blue Ridge Pharmacy is the home to Blue Ridge Antiques.

9. The Hall Building  781 and 777 East Main Street are actually one building, circa 1900, one of the oldest structures in Blue Ridge. Once adjacent to the Royal Theater, during the 1940’s the Hall family owned a men’s clothing store and a women’s dress shop here.

10. 771 East Main Street  was built in 1945. Downstairs was the original Rexall Pharmacy, along with Trailways Bus Station, and upstairs was the Butt Hotel.

11. 1950’s Gas Station  757 East Main Street. Now Love Dogs and Cats Too. There has been a service station at this location since 1940, the current building dates from 1950.

12. The Gartrell Building  733 East Main Street. A building has been in this location as early as 1909. It was once owned by Annie Gartrell, who operated the Gartrell Hotel upstairs. The entrance is in the back of the building, it is the current location of 2nd Story Entertainment, a family entertainment center with mini-golf, games and more. It has retained its original layout... get a glimpse of the building’s earlier use.

13. High Country Art  715 East Main Street. Built by the Jones Brothers in 1945, one side was a grocery store and the other a pool hall.

14. The Tilly Building  695 East Main Street. Built in the early 1900’s, the Tilly Building was actually used as an auto dealership with the showroom on the second floor and auto repair shop on the first floor.

15. Mitzi’s on Main  831 East Main Street. Built in 1925, the building housed a clothing store owned by Carl Hall during World War II. It was the location of the Western Auto Store during the 70’s and 80’s. Upstairs is a loft apartment with attractive courtyard garden below.

16. Hansen’s Grill  530 East Main St. Built in the early 1900’s as a hardware store. In the 1930’s the building became a boarding house operated by Granny or Maw Blackstock. Cots would rent for 50 cents per night. Local legend says that you could get “a meal, moonshine, a room, and, if you wanted, a gal,” according to Katie Thompson’s book, “Blue Ridge”.

17. Cohutta Fishing Company  490 East Main Street. Small commercial building was built between 1900 and 1917 for a general mercantile and clothing business. Downstairs in the back was at one time a bottling plant for NuGrape Soda. Sources: Blue Ridge by Kathy Thompson; In Touch With the Past; Blue Ridge 2007 Historical Calendar; Facets of Fannin.