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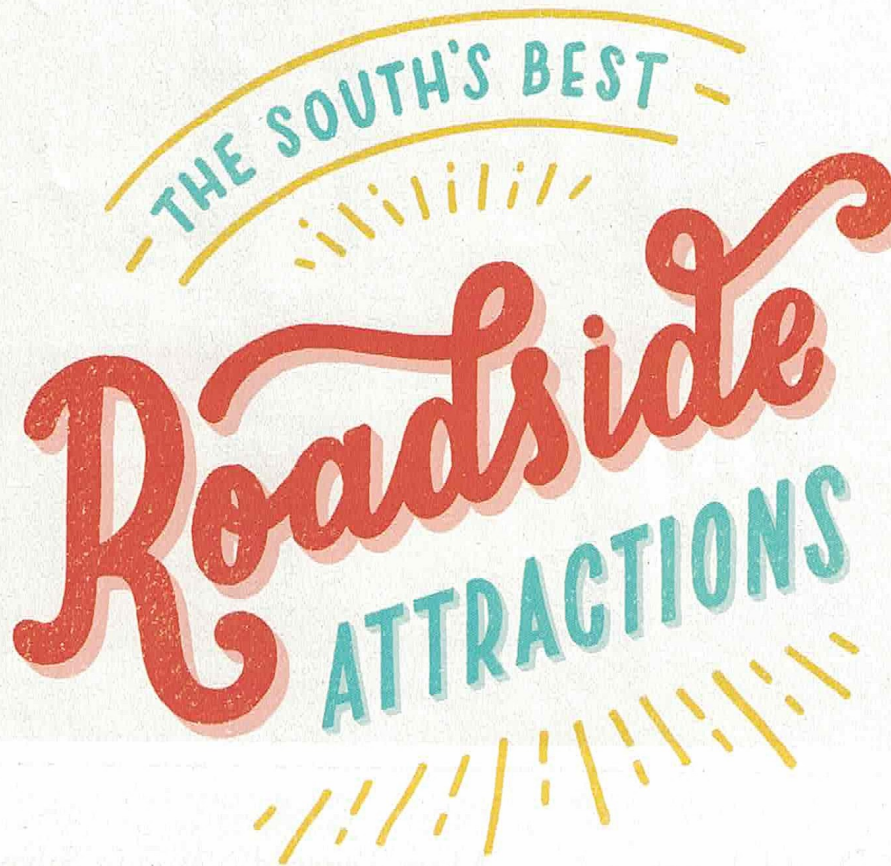
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From a whiskey museum to a town that inspired an iconic TV show, here are the most fascinating stops along our Southern highways

ALABAMA

Unclaimed Baggage Center

SCOTTSBORO

This 40,000-square-foot store—the size of a city block—buys the 1% of luggage that gets lost in airports and never is reunited with its owners. Staffers sort it, clean it, and scrap the junk. What's left goes on sale at discounted prices. It started in 1970 when founder Doyle Owens bought his first shipment for \$300 in Washington, D.C., and sold the contents on card tables in an old house. But Unclaimed Baggage Center doesn't get a piece of luggage until the airlines spend at least 90 days searching for the owner. unclaimedbaggage.com

GEORGIA

Waffle House Museum

DECATUR

Everyone knows his or her go-to Waffle House order by heart. In 1955, two neighbors, Joe Rogers, Sr., and Tom Forkner, opened this beloved chain in Decatur, Georgia. Today, the franchise spans more than 1,700 restaurants in 25 states. Stop by the very first one, which has been turned into a museum. (Don't come hungry.) Restored to reflect the look and feel of the 1950s, it is packed with six decades of memorabilia that pays homage to the best waitresses and griddle masters in the industry. Schedule an appointment

48 hours in advance for a free tour (Wednesdays and Thursdays, weekly) and a guided look at the evolution of this treasure. wafflehouse.com

KENTUCKY

Oscar Getz Museum of Whiskey History

BARDSTOWN

This museum, housed on the first floor of the Georgian-style Spalding Hall, is the perfect place for whiskey lovers to geek out. It's the product of an obsessive collector, and on display are hundreds of different whiskey bottles, including some dating to the Revolutionary War and other bottles shaped like log cabins and pretzels. You'll even find Prohibition-era prescriptions for "medicinal" whiskey, Abraham Lincoln's liquor license, and what is likely George Washington's old still. whiskeymuseum.com

NORTH CAROLINA

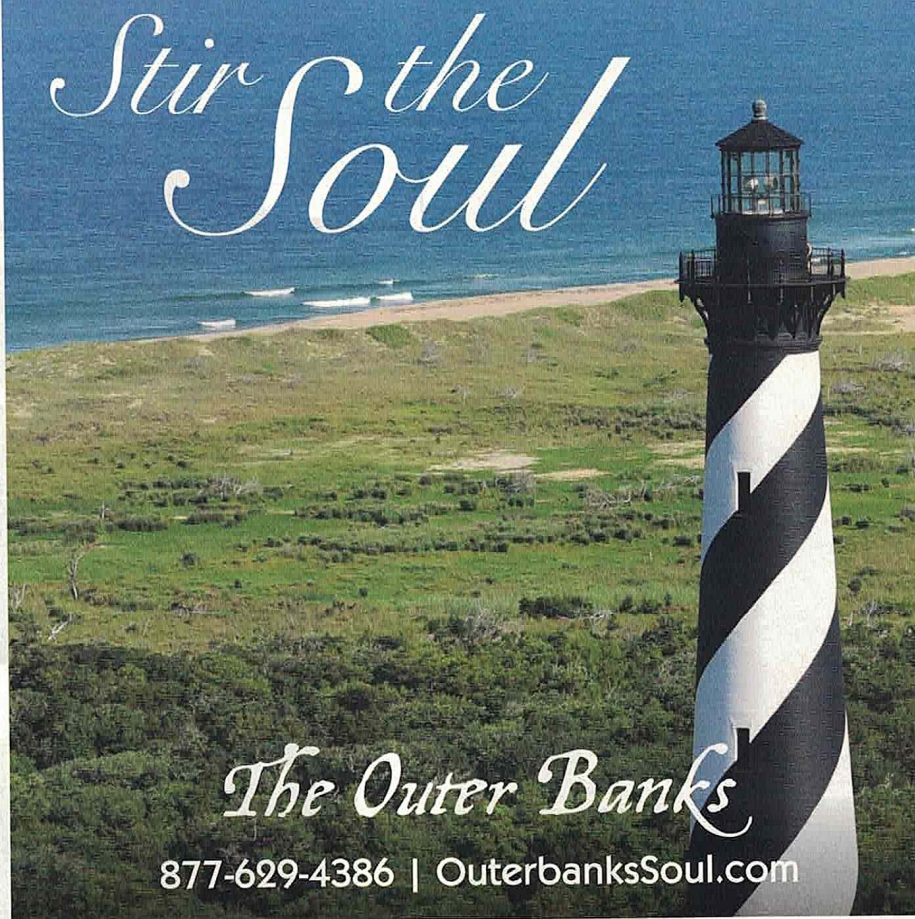
Wally's Service Station and Mayberry Replica Courthouse

MOUNT AIRY

Andy Griffith grew up here, so it's no surprise that Mount Airy inspired the fictional town of Mayberry on his TV show. Visitors feel like they've stepped through the frame and into Andy, Opie, and Aunt Bee's world of old-school values and small-town quirks. Wally's Service Station is a former 1937 gas station that Griffith would walk to as a boy for an afternoon snack. It also serves as the launch spot for the Mayberry Squad Car Tours, which take you by Floyd's City Barber Shop, Snappy Lunch, and Griffith's childhood home. The town embraces its Mayberry identity so much that locals even remodeled the courthouse

by JENNIFER V. COLE

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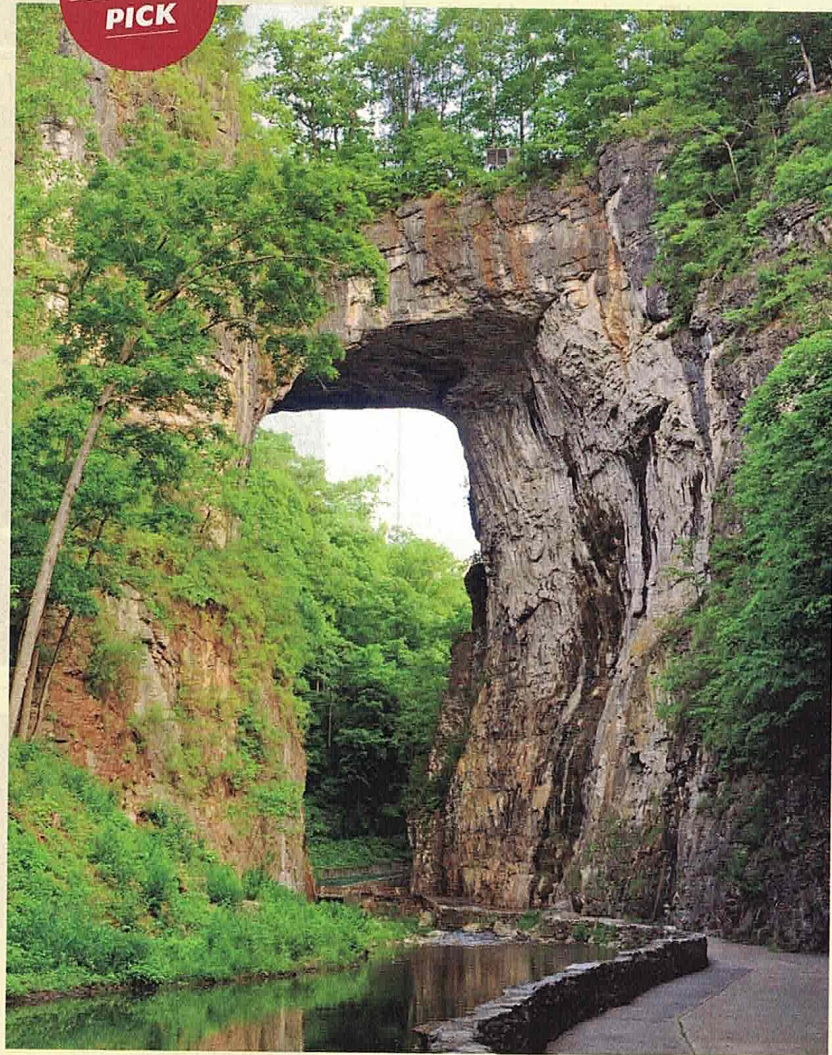


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EDITOR'S
PICK



FOR THE
NATURE FAN

Natural Bridge

LOCATION **NATURAL BRIDGE, VIRGINIA**

This marvel will soon become a state park, marking the end of more than 240 years of private ownership: Thomas

Jefferson bought the land from King George III of England in 1774 for 20 shillings. The stunning bridge, flanked by the Blue Ridge Mountains, was immortalized by American landscape painters in the mid-1800s. This 90-foot-long expanse was formed when a cavern beneath it collapsed, leaving a 215-foot-high arch. The Monacan Indians claim that the bridge appeared as if by magic, right when they needed to escape an enemy. Enter through the Rockbridge Center for access to the bridge, and take in panoramic views of the surrounding Shenandoah Valley. During winter months, call ahead to make sure there's no ice, as they'll close if there's even a hint of slippage. **ADMISSION:** \$20 adults, \$12 ages 7-17. 15 Appledore Lane; naturalbridgeva.com

THE SOUTH'S BEST
ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

to look like the one on TV, complete with jail cells and Sheriff Andy's desk. Mayberry Squad Car Tours are \$35 per carload. (Each car seats up to five people.) visitmayberry.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

The Peachoid

GAFFNEY

In the South, we're so smitten with our produce that we write songs about it, name beauty queens after it, and make it our team mascots. (Go, Fighting Okra!) But perhaps the ultimate declaration of love is to put a fruit or vegetable on a water tower, high for all to see. In 1981, Gaffney, South Carolina, showed its abiding affection for peaches by erecting a 1 million-gallon water tower just off I-85, between Exits 90 and 92. Artist Peter Freudenberg worked to make it look like a real peach, and he was so successful with the cleft that The Peachoid is now jokingly referred to as the "Moon over Gaffney." gbpw.com

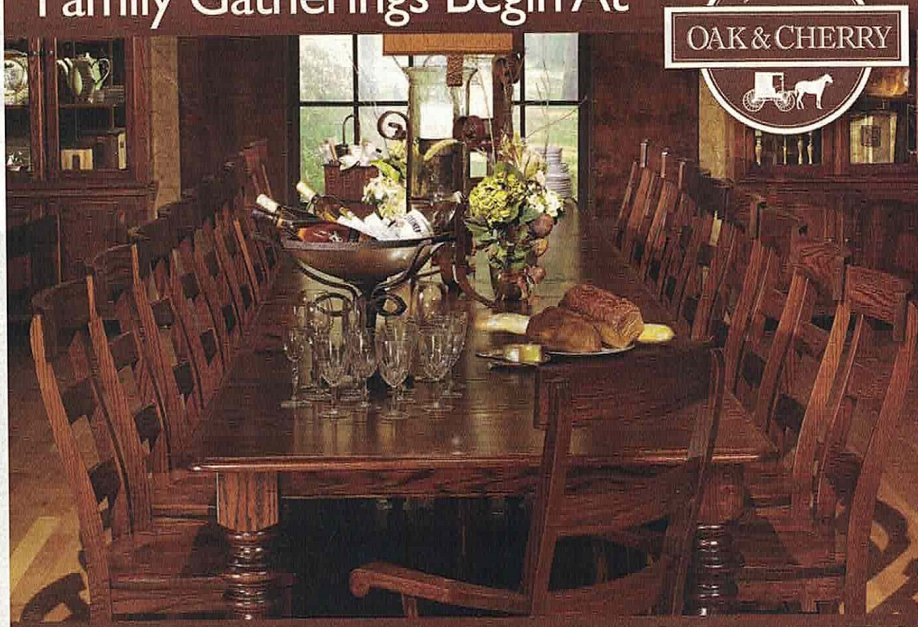
WEST VIRGINIA

Marx Toy Museum

MOUNDSVILLE

Francis Turner, perhaps the biggest collector of legendary toymaker Louis Marx's playful creations, turned his personal assemblage into a museum with more than 60 years' worth of toys filling a former grocery store. Turner wants everyone who visits to be able to travel back to his or her childhood days and remember the joys of Rock'em Sock'em Robots and Big Wheels. Nostalgia is a powerful drug, but don't miss out on the less familiar, slightly kookier models, such as the dollhouse built during the Cuban Missile Crisis that has a fallout shelter. marxtoymuseum.com

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