



REGION **5**

*Roanoke Valley-
Alleghany*



Dragon's Tooth on the Appalachian Trail | Sam Dean/Virginia Tourism Corp.

Introduction

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region includes the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig and Roanoke, the cities of Covington, Roanoke and Salem, and the towns of Clifton Forge, Iron Gate, Fincastle, Troutville, Buchanan, New Castle and Vinton. Stretching from the Blue Ridge Mountains across the Shenandoah Valley to the ridge and valley section of the Appalachian Mountains, the region is a mixture of urban centers and rural farms and forests. Marked by topographic variety, numerous rivers, streams, and many notable cultural and historic sites, the area offers a range of historic and outdoor experiences. Whether hiking the Appalachian Trail or driving the Blue Ridge Parkway, exploring the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests or paddling the James River, the outdoor enthusiast's choices of activities are many.

Regional Focus

Table 5.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Natural areas	58	54
Trails	49	43
Water access	45	43
Parks	40	49
Historic areas	37	39
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	31	29
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	17	22

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

Table 5.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	73
Visiting natural areas	71
Walking for pleasure	67
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	49
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	48
Outdoor festivals (music festivals, outdoor-themed festivals, extreme sports festivals, etc.)	47
Swimming/outdoor pool	46
Viewing the water	36
Swimming/beach/lake river (open water)	35
Music festivals	34

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey. Visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop to view regional participation rates for more than 100 activities.

Regional Featured Projects

To be considered a regional featured project, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance.
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany region:

- Promote and implement the James River Heritage Trail including the Upper James River Water Trail and the Alleghany Highlands Blueways.
- Implement the Roanoke River Greenway and Blueway Plan.
- Implement the Tinker Creek, Glade Creek and Daleville Creek Greenways.
- Implement the Alleghany Highlands Trails system.
- Implement the Appalachian Trail Priority Landscape at Catawba Valley and McAfee Knob.
- Promote and Implement the 2016 Explore Park Adventure Plan.
- Promote Virginia’s Blue Ridge Ride Center, an International Mountain Biking Association Silver-Level Ride Center.
- Design and implement in-river kayak parks.
- Develop the Arcadia Initiative as a multijurisdictional effort to preserve large landscapes for the protection of wildlife migration and forest ecology.



Staying overnight in a cabin. | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 5.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Alleghany County	79.20
Botetourt County	58.91
Craig County	?
Franklin County	18.23
Roanoke County	89.17
Town of Clifton Forge	44.73
Town of Vinton	74.84
City of Covington	267.83
City of Roanoke	73.06
City of Salem	154.06
Statewide	71.09

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, “Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures,” 2016.

Table 5.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Douthat	Bath, Alleghany counties	84,005	139,273	223,278	\$6.8M
Smith Mountain Lake	Bedford, Franklin* counties	41,861	471,099	512,960	\$11.1M

* Roanoke Valley-Alleghany and West Piedmont regions share Franklin County.

Source: Virginia State Parks

Regional Health

Table 5.5 Health Trends

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

locality	adult smoking (% of adults)	adult obesity (% of adults with BMI over 30)	physical inactivity (% of adults age 20 or over reporting no leisure time/physical activity)	access to exercise opportunities (% population with adequate access to locations for physical activity)	air pollution – particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)
Alleghany County	17	33	27	100	8.7
Botetourt County	14	26	22	81	9.1
Craig County	16	28	23	97	8.3
Franklin County	17	28	22	34	9.1
Roanoke County	16	27	26	76	9.2
City of Covington	19	26	23	100	8.5
City of Roanoke	19	32	26	88	9
City of Salem	16	25	21	85	9
Statewide	17	27	21	81	8.7

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Explore Park is a 1,000-acre park with over 2 miles of Roanoke River and Back Creek water front. The park is located on the Blue Ridge Parkway at milepost 115. The [Explore Park Adventure Plan](#) outlines key environmental preservation recommendations while providing tools for public interpretation of the park’s unique natural and cultural history.

Outdoor Recreation Interface with Virginia Tourism

The Virginia State Tourism Plan was completed by Virginia Tourism Corp. in March 2013. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled “Nature & Outdoors” recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

Regional Historic Resources

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region is characterized by rolling ridge-and-valley topography. The area remains largely rural open space, with several scattered population centers. This region shares many characteristics with the nearby New River Valley and Mount Rogers regions, including its historic focus on agriculture, timber and mineral extraction, and rail transportation. Thermal springs and associated resorts are found in this region, along with historic furnaces associated with the processing of ore into iron. The cities of Roanoke, Salem and Covington are home to historic districts containing examples of mid-19th through early 20th century buildings that reflect both national design trends and local variations.

Appropriate conservation activities may include installation of highway markers to commemorate historic locations and events, placement of historic properties on the Virginia Landmarks Register or National Register of Historic Places and placement of historic preservation and open space easements. Conservation targets include: 19th century farmsteads, 19th and early 20th century dwellings and commercial buildings/districts; thermal springs resorts and hotels; and significant prehistoric habitation sites. Information about historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites is maintained in the permanent files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is available to local planners.

Table 5.6 Regional Historic Resources

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Preston House	Town of Salem
Humpback Covered Bridge	Alleghany County
Iron Furnaces	Botetourt County
Craig Healing Springs	Craig County
Tombstone Cemetery	City of Roanoke

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources



Farmland surrounding Smith Mountain Lake | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Land Conservation

Table 5.7 Conserved Lands

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Alleghany County	9,945.93	142,398.13
Botetourt County	17,405.63	85,988.93
City of Covington	270.00	0.00
City of Roanoke	668.32	1,852.71
City of Salem	3.48	0.00
Craig County	5,206.25	117,135.02
Roanoke County	9,656.54	19,032.14
Total	409,563.07	

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany region is drained primarily by the James and Roanoke rivers, waterways that are home to a number rare mussels and fishes, including the James spiny mussel and Roanoke logperch. Varying geology and topography support an array of significant plant communities, including shale barrens and nice examples of old growth forests. Several biologically significant caves are scattered across the region and the high forest around the Peaks of Otter is home to its own species of salamander.

DCR recommends that conservation activities and land protection efforts in the region focus on unprotected Essential Conservation Sites and all unprotected portions of Natural Area Preserve resiliency areas. Secondly, strategic land conservation should expand upon existing managed areas and seek connectivity via protecting and/or managing intact ecological cores and natural vegetation cover between currently protected lands. Finally, attention on remaining unprotected natural heritage resources within the region should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The appropriate conservation activities and methods of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia’s Registry of Natural Areas; developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner; securing a conservation easement through a local land trust; acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust; dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner; or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve.

Conservation targets include:

- Significant caves and karst areas.
- Improve water quality for globally rare aquatic communities.
- Significant shale barren communities.

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR’s Natural Heritage Program. For more on the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 11 and Appendix 11.

Table 5.8 Natural Area Preserves

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Johnsons Creek	DCR	Alleghany County
Poor Mountain	DCR	Roanoke County

Table 5.9 Natural Heritage Resources

Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	402
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	152
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	55
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	9
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	17
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	118
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	39
Number of partially protected conservation sites	56
Number of well protected conservation sites	23

Information as of Feb. 28, 2018. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program