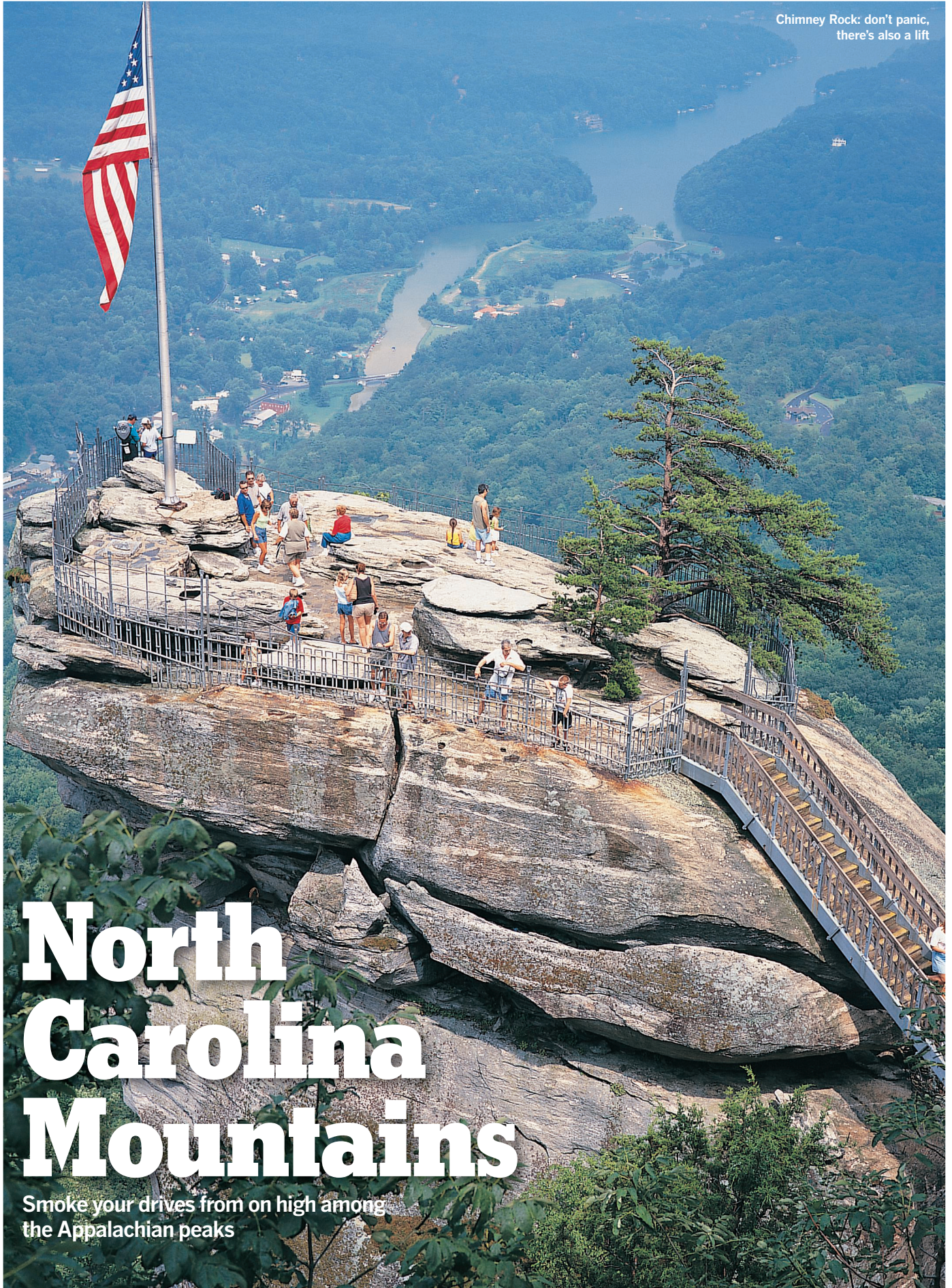




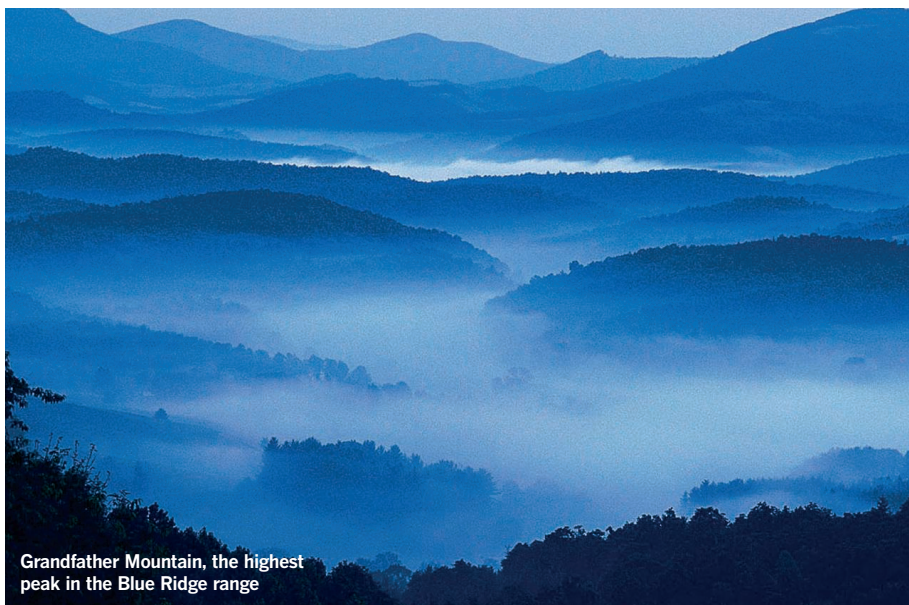
Chimney Rock: don't panic,
there's also a lift



North Carolina Mountains

Smoke your drives from on high among
the Appalachian peaks

PETER ELLEGARD



Grandfather Mountain, the highest peak in the Blue Ridge range

NCDIVISION OF TOURISM, FILM AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

The Smoky Mountains and Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina provide some of the most breathtaking golf scenery in America. To stand on a hillside tee perched high above the fairway, early-morning mist hanging over burbling valley streams and forest-clad mountains stretching into the distance is to feel as though you are on top of the world.

The Blue Ridge highlands bordering Tennessee provide spectacular settings for golf, none more so than at Mount Mitchell Golf Club. An hour's drive north-east of mountain capital Asheville and just off the picturesque Blue Ridge Parkway, the 6,495-yard course lies at 3,000ft and is dominated by 6,685ft Mount Mitchell and its sister peaks.

Surrounded by the thick broadleaf and pine woodland of the Pisgah National Forest, the course is eminently playable and flat for the most part. A river also runs through it — the crystal-clear South Toe which provides danger on several holes, particularly the approach to the stroke index one par-4 14th. You can buy fish food from the clubhouse to feed the river's inhabitants by the tee of the par-3 2nd. Fish and chips with a difference.

Etowah Valley Country Club, near Hendersonville, is a 27-hole facility at a resort which also offers tennis, swimming and croquet and an all-you-can-eat cookout including free beer and wine. Also near Henderson are the two 18-hole courses of Lake Lure Golf & Beach Resort, Apple Valley and Bald Mountain.

You'll need your driving boots on for the monster 747-yard par-6 17th at Black Mountain Golf Course near Asheville, originally laid out in 1929 with the back nine added in the 1960s. It plays to a tight fairway and a dogleg approach over a hillside topped by a chapel. You'll need heavenly guidance to reach the

small uphill green in less than four, although the pro told me the hole is eagled every day and has even seen two albatross threes — or double-eagles as he put it.

Donald Ross left his mark throughout the mountains at courses including Lenoir, Linville and at the grand Grove Park Inn in Asheville. A \$2.5 million restoration, faithfully taking the course back to its original 1924 Ross design, was completed in 2002 and made its 6,702 yards a sterner test. The course clambers up, down and along the lower slopes of Sunset Mountain below the venerable resort and offers wonderful views and memorable holes such as the short uphill par-4 6th. ⇒



Can you eagle the 17th at Black Mountain?



Grove Park Inn course, now restored to the original Ross design

PETER LEGGARD

WHERE TO PLAY

Mount Mitchell Golf Club

6,495 yards, par 72
\$40-\$78

Contact: 00-1-828-675-5454
mountmitchellgolfresort.com
Plenty of challenges to take your mind off the stunning scenery

The Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa

6,720 yards, par 70
\$85-\$145

Contact: 00-1-828-252-2711
groveparkinn.com
Restored Donald Ross gem beneath the mountains

Black Mountain Golf Club

6,215 yards, par 71
\$23-\$28, cart \$14 per person
Contact: 00-1-828-669-2710
townofblackmountain.org/golf.htm

Short length more than made up for by its 747-yard, par-6 17th

Lake Lure Golf & Beach Resort

Apple Valley Course: 6,756 yards, par 72
Bald Mountain Course: 6,283 yards, par 72
\$55-\$59

Contact: 00-1-828-625-3000
lakeluregolf.com
Pretty setting among the foothills for this lakeside duo

WHERE TO STAY

Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa

Contact: 00-1-828-252-2711
groveparkinn.com

Lake Lure Golf & Beach Resort

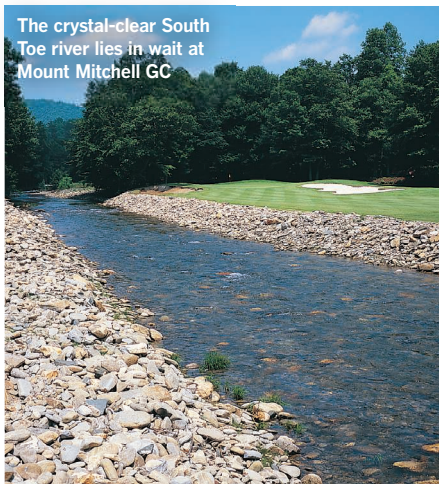
Contact: 00-1-828-625-3000
lakeluregolf.com



The Grove Park Inn is an institution which has welcomed the great and good since opening in 1913. Eight presidents have stayed there, as have Houdini, Will Rogers, George Gershwin and F Scott Fitzgerald. Its striking stone exterior, 14ft Great Hall fireplaces and original Arts & Crafts furnishings have recently been supplemented by a huge subterranean-style spa complex where treatments include a deep-tissue Golfer's Massage, at \$130 for 50 minutes or \$200 for 80 minutes. And for the golf-mad guest, new themed rooms include the Donald Ross which will have you sleeping and dreaming golf. But before that, take in the view over the golf course and downtown Asheville with dinner in the Sunset Terrace Chophouse.

Many mountain region golf courses are open year-round. Carts are usually required because of the terrain. The Great Smoky Mountains Golf Association has a coupon book costing \$149.95 which is valid for up to four weekday rounds or one weekend and holiday round at each of its 19 member courses.

The crystal-clear South Toe river lies in wait at Mount Mitchell GC



PETER ELLEGARD

NORTH CAROLINA FACTS

GETTING THERE

North Carolina is on America's East Coast, between Virginia, South Carolina and Tennessee. Direct non-stop flights operate from the UK to Raleigh/Durham and Charlotte airports while regional connecting flights serve airports in the state.

GENERAL INFO

Time difference: GMT -5

Climate: North Carolina enjoys four distinct seasons with mild winters and warm summers. Golf is year-round in many areas, while mountain snows

mean a shorter season for some higher-elevation western courses. Daily temperatures range from below freezing in the mountains in January to about 30°C in July on the coast.

Information: visitnc.co.uk;
brochure line: 020-7202-6366

For information on holiday packages contact 3D Golf 08701-200 300; 3d.golf.com

North Carolina Mountain facts

WHERE IS IT

North Carolina's mountain region takes in Appalachian peaks of the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountain chains on the western edge of the state, bordering Tennessee, South Carolina and Virginia. Funky and eclectic Asheville is the heart and soul of the mountains, 115 miles from international gateway Charlotte. It also has its own airport served by four airlines offering regional domestic flights.

KEY ATTRACTIONS

■ **The Blue Ridge Parkway**, one of America's most scenic drives which snakes for 470 miles along the crest of the southern Appalachians and which celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2005.

■ **Chimney Rock Park**, 25 miles south-east of Asheville, is 1,000 acres of lush woods and cliffs, a 400ft waterfall and the towering rock formation. The park featured extensively in the movie *Last of the Mohicans*.

■ **Chateau-style Biltmore House**, set among the Blue Ridge Mountains, is America's largest house with 250 rooms filled with priceless treasures. The estate also includes formal gardens and an award-winning winery.

■ **The Great Smoky Mountains National Park**, which straddles the border with Tennessee, is the



PETER ELLEGARD

Just the tonic: Grove Park Inn and Spa

most-visited national park in the US, with 10 million visitors a year.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

■ **The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad** operates year-round excursions along 53 miles of track from Dillsboro and Bryson City. A traditional steam locomotive is used sometimes, and there are special events and excursions from spring to autumn.

■ The whole family can learn about how the **Cherokee Indians** lived for centuries in the Great Smoky Mountains at the Qualla Boundary in the Cherokee Indian Reservation, which has a museum and a re-creation of a 1750s village.

■ **Chimney Rock Park** has trails to suit all ages, including the

interactive Great Woodland Adventure trail aimed at families with small children.

■ Raleigh has a number of free museums, among them dinosaur exhibits at the **North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences** and the North Carolina Railroad Museum.

NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN FACTS

■ **Mt Mitchell**, which rises to 6,685ft, is the highest peak east of the Mississippi River. It is named after scientist Elisha Mitchell, who died trying to verify that particular tall tale.

■ **The 2,160-mile Appalachian Trail** which stretches from Georgia up to Maine reaches its highest elevation at Clingman's Dome, in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The fastest recorded time to hike the entire trail is just under 48 days, achieved in August 2005. Feel free to take a lot longer if you wish.

■ Eight tons of dynamite and a diamond drill bore were used to create the 258ft lift shaft through the cliff behind **Chimney Rock**. The work, including a 198ft tunnel to the lift, took two years. Today the lift whisks visitors to the Skylounge shop and café in just over 30 seconds, though the energetic and the masochistic may prefer to travel under their own steam.

■ **The Grove Park Inn** was built from the profits of Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic elixir, original developed as a remedy for malaria. The hotel took 400 men 12 months to construct, using a team of mules and a steamshovel to transport boulders from a nearby quarry. It houses one of the world's greatest collections of Arts and Crafts antiques, and boasts a great Donald Ross golf course.

Visit Biltmore, huge and historic home of the Vanderbilts



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