

A couple is seen from behind, embracing on a wooden overlook. The man is wearing a light-colored jacket and jeans, and the woman is wearing a white shirt, a red skirt, and a blue bag. They are looking out over a panoramic view of downtown Roanoke, Virginia, with a highway and various buildings visible. In the background, there are rolling mountains under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

From the
Mountains
to the Sea

Some men are drawn to oceans. They cannot breathe unless the air is scented with a salty mist. My people were drawn to mountains. They came when the country was young and they settled in the upland country of Virginia that is still misted with a haze of blue that gives those mountains their name.

— Earl Hamner/The Waltons:
Appalachian Portrait

A couple enjoy the view of downtown Roanoke at the famous overlook on Mill Mountain, the site of the popular Roanoke Star. Photo courtesy of the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau.



STAR POWER:

Roanoke

FOR FOODIES & FANS

BY GINGER WARDER

You may have seen the lighted star high atop Mill Mountain as you were flying by on Interstate 81, or maybe in past years, you've visited Virginia's Blue Ridge and the Roanoke Valley to view the fall foliage. Or, if you love railroad history, you may have perused the Virginia Museum of Transportation and the stunning black-and-white photography of steam engines at the O. Winston Link Museum. But if you haven't visited Roanoke recently, it's time for a road trip.

Virginia's largest city west of Richmond, Roanoke has an urban flavor with a small-town personality, combining sophisticated cultural attractions like the world-class Taubman Museum of Art and the newly renovated Center in the Square museum complex with the down-home hospitality of local eateries like the Roanoke Wiener Stand, the Texas Tavern and Pop's Ice Cream and Soda Bar. And, although the city is a perfect location for outdoor adventures at nearby Smith Mountain Lake or popular Blue Ridge mountain hiking spots like the Peaks of Otter, it's the culinary and cultural renaissance in downtown Roanoke that make this destination worth a fresh look.

Above: The Roanoke Star sits atop Mill Mountain and overlooks downtown Roanoke.

Right: Black Dog Salvage in Grandin Village has its own television show on the DIY Network called *Salvage Dawgs*.

Opposite (clockwise from top): The sun sets over the Blue Ridge Mountains (courtesy of Bruce Henderson).

Scottie Thompson and Jane Seymour starred in the 2012 movie, *Lake Effects*, filmed on location at Smith Mountain Lake (courtesy of Life Out Loud Films).

Billy's Shrimp and Grits are the most popular stop on the Roanoke Food Tour (courtesy of Roanoke Food Tours).

ROANOKE FOR FOODIES

The big buzz is about the new Roanoke Food Tours, ranked number one as the top activity in the city on TripAdvisor. A combination of food tour and history stroll, owner Larry Landolt takes locals and visitors alike on a three-hour culinary adventure, exploring Roanoke's Lebanese legacy (who knew?) and enjoying tastings at seven locations in the Historic District, including the opulent Hotel Roanoke and a 24/7 tavern so famous for its burgers that's been profiled on the Food Network. You'll learn about the current farm-to-table movement that dates back to the self-sustaining philosophy of the city's Appalachian roots, as well as get an overview of the long relationship the Lebanese community has had with the city's food culture, beginning with the influx of immigrants in the late 1800's. During the summer, lunch tours are held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with a new Sunday brunch tour featuring an entirely different set of eateries.

If you want to shop for your own local food, take a stroll on the newly-renovated Market Square, featuring a pedestrian-friendly zone, an open-air farmers market and a wide range of specialty shops, where you can spend an afternoon picking up everything from fresh produce to artisanal bread and chocolate. Roanoke has more than four farmers markets, five community gardens and two urban farms, in addition to a burgeoning craft beer movement. Follow the locals to the Roanoke Weiner Stand for the dogs and fries they've been dishing up since 1916, or pick up a sweet treat at Pop's Ice Cream and Soda Bar. And, for late night munchies, join the block-long line at the Texas Tavern for a Cheesy Western – the local favorite burger topped with a fried egg.



Roanoke Star, Farmers Market and Black Dog Salvage photos courtesy of the Roanoke Convention and Visitors Bureau



ROANOKE FOR FANS

Originally intended to be a holiday decoration, the lighted, mountain-top star was dedicated by Roanoke native, John Payne, who played Fred Galey in the classic 1947 movie *Miracle on 34th Street*. Over the years, it became a city icon, earning Roanoke the nickname “Star City of the South.” Enjoy the panoramic view of the city from the top of Mill Mountain and take your turn as a “star” on the Roanoke Star-Cam (Roanokeva.gov/starcam). It’s the best photo op in town for a selfie!

In the historic neighborhood of Grandin Village, stars of another sort reside at the über-cool Black Dog Salvage. Co-owners Mike Whiteside and Robert Kulp, as well as Sally, the store’s black dog in residence, star in the popular DIY Network series, *Salvage Dawgs*. You can meet the cast and friendly crew while browsing the warehouse for one-of-a-kind architectural treasures, or pick up one of Whiteside’s hand-crafted furniture pieces made from salvaged objects that range from boats and trucks to barn wood and horse tack.

Smith Mountain Lake, and its tight-knit community of lake residents, had their own moment in the spotlight in the Hallmark Channel movie, *Lake Effects*, starring Jane Seymour and Scottie Thompson. Virginia producer and the creator of Life Out Loud Films, Sara Elizabeth Timmins, captured the essence of lake life in the 2012 movie shot on location. Timmins’ latest production (soon to be released) is a feature film based on best-selling author David Baldacci’s *Wish You Well*, and also includes scenes filmed in Virginia’s Blue Ridge. Coincidentally, Baldacci has a house on the aforementioned lake.

IF YOU GO:

Visit Roanoke in Virginia’s Blue Ridge, VisitVABlueRidge.com
Roanoke Food Tours, RoanokeFoodTours.com
Smith Mountain Lake, VisitSmithMountainLake.com

