



Virginia Highlands Festival
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High-resolution photos may be downloaded from the website or requested via email

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“CREATE” YOUR OWN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE
AT THE 71st ANNUAL VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS FESTIVAL
“CREATE”
TEN DAYS OF ARTS AND CULTURE
FESTIVAL DATES: July 26 - August 4**

ABINGDON, Va./June 17, 2019/ Whether you love a strenuous hike or want to learn more about nature from an auditorium seat, the 71st annual Virginia Highlands Festival has an Outdoors event for you.

A downloadable brochure of all Outdoor programs is available on the Outdoors page of the Festival website.

“Those of us who live in this area know what treasures the Appalachian Trail, the Virginia Creeper Trail, and the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area are, as well as Mendota and the Channels State Forest. We try to share the ‘hidden treasures’ of these places with our Festival visitors,” said Outdoors Chair Merry Jennings.

Bike the beauty of the Virginia Creeper Trail. Take a stroll through a local vineyard and winery. Hike the Pinnacle Natural Area Preserve on the Clinch River or to the Channels to see unique geologic formations. Search for mushrooms when they are at the peak of their fruiting with mycologist Ken Crouse. Learn how to use native plants in your landscape from Master Gardener Gail Olson.

More than a dozen outdoor adventures await, so if the variety seems overwhelming, try these thematic adventures:

A DAY IN MENDOTA

Friday, August 2 all day beginning at 9:30 AM

Spend a day in a beautiful farming community with a long history. Once a Native American village, settlers soon discovered the rich soil of this bend in the North Fork of the Holston River. When the railroad came through in the nineteenth century, a prosperous town grew up, with even a posh girls' school. With the decline in tobacco farming and dairy herds, Mendota today is a quiet and charming community.

Historic Overview - 9:30 AM The Mendota Community Center is the base of the day's activities. Visitors can pick up maps and detailed agendas there. The day begins with an overview of Mendota's history. The group will then visit the nearby clinic to see artifacts and tour an unusual house composed of several log cabins.

Lunch and Learn - Noon The group will gather at The Store@Mendota to hear about the Bristol-Mendota Trail and Adventure Mendota's kayaking of the North Fork. Lunch can be bought there.

On-Your-Own Activities - 1 PM After lunch, visitors can choose from several activities -- a talk on organic farming and a farm tour, a walk on the Bristol-Mendota Trail, or kayaking on the river with Adventure Mendota. (Reservations are required for kayaking. Call Adventure Mendota at 276-645-1020.)

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Outdoor Adventurer Activity Book: Daily from 10 AM - 6 PM Children ages four to 14 can become a VHF Outdoor Adventurer by picking up an Outdoor Adventurer Activity Book at the Youth Tent in Humphreys Park and completing activities as they go through Abingdon. Learn about Abingdon's parks—for butterflies, munchkins, and veterans. Find out about the Muster Grounds and two kinds of Virginia Creepers. Receive an Outdoor Adventurer button after completing the activities.

Stream Discovery Workshop: Friday, July 26 from 10 AM - Noon

What is more fun than playing in a creek? Experts from the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable's Save Our Streams program will demonstrate how to catch and identify macroinvertebrates that help diagnose the health of our rivers and streams. The workshop will also feature a pollution-prevention game for kids and a session for educators to learn techniques for teaching about watersheds and pollution prevention. This is a great event for families and educators. Free admission, but advance registration is required. Register by Thursday, July 25 by calling 276-628-1600. Meet at Toole's Creek at White's Mill in Abingdon.

Wings to Soar - Raptors: Tuesday, July 30 from 1 - 2 PM

Watch as hawks and owls soar right above you! Wings to Soar presents a live demonstration of these magnificent birds, paired with music and video. This raptor education group from Trenton, Georgia, provides an exciting educational and entertaining experience for all ages. Event takes place at Pleasant View United Methodist Church, 18416 Lee Hwy, near exit 13, and is free.

FOR PLANT-LOVERS

Abingdon Vineyards Tour: Sunday, July 28 from 10 AM - 12:30 PM

Tour the vineyard and production room with the new owners. After the tour ends at 12:30 PM, buy a bottle or a glass to go with your picnic lunch or snacks purchased at the winery. Abingdon Vineyards is located at 20530 Alvarado Rd.

Using Native Plants in your Landscape: Monday, July 29 from 7 - 8 PM

Our region of Virginia has one of the most diverse collections of native plants in the country. These plants thrive in our varied soils and micro-climates. Being native, these plants take less attention and will provide years of enjoyment. Master Gardener Gail Olson tells how to use native plants to enhance landscaping and attract birds, butterflies, and pollinators. Lecture takes place in the Executive Auditorium of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, One Partnership Circle.

Exploring the Fun in Fungi - A Study of Mushrooms of the Region: Wednesday, July 31 from 7- 8:30 PM

Ken Crouse, a co-founder of the Blue Ridge Mushroom Club, will talk about the basics of mushroom identification, show pictures of mushrooms, and look at some of the best field guides and resources for learning about mushrooms in the Central Appalachians. Lecture takes place in the Executive Auditorium of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, One Partnership Circle.

Mushroom Walk: Thursday, August 1 from 9 -11 AM

Ken Crouse will also lead a walk in Mt. Rogers NRA. Crouse will collect a few specimens for identification and talk about features of mushrooms. The group will meet at Straight Branch parking lot (4 miles from Damascus on Rt. 58) or you can carpool from Lowes near exit 19.

Butterflies and Lavender: Sunday, August 4 from 2 - 3:30 PM

How do butterflies and plants help each other? Ellen Reynolds of Beagle Ridge Herb Farm shows varieties of butterflies and talks about their relationship to growing lavender. Beagle Ridge has a Flying Flowers butterfly house, which is one of the top destinations to see butterflies in the United States. This talk takes place in the Butterfly Garden at Eberhardt Memorial Park at 273 Tanner St. in Abingdon (on the corner of Tanner and Park Streets).

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About the Virginia Highlands Festival: Founded in 1948, the Virginia Highlands Festival is an annual, ten-day event devoted to the celebration of Southwest Virginia heritage and rich Appalachian tradition. Held in historic Abingdon, Virginia, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Festival attracts thousands of visitors each year. The Festival was selected as the "Best Art Event" by the readers of *Virginia Living* magazine in 2019, recognized as a Top 20 Event by the Southeastern Tourism Society and was named as Blue Ridge Country's Best Non-Music Festival in 2018. The 71th Virginia Highlands Festival will run from July 26-August 4

(Antiques Market July 27 - August 4) and feature live concerts, a juried arts and crafts show, and an antique market, as well as workshops, lectures and tours. To learn more about the Virginia Highlands Festival and all of this year's events, please visit

<https://www.vahighlandsfestival.org>