



Blue Ridge, Georgia

By Ann Cipperly

Surrounded by mountains with distant, towering peaks in Tennessee and North Carolina, Blue Ridge, Ga., is home to Mercier Orchards, the state's largest u-pick farm, and the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway, providing a sightseeing journey through the North Georgia mountains. During the autumn months, the mountains become ablaze with a spectrum of vibrant colors.

Boarding for the railway is at a historic, 100-year-old depot in downtown Blue Ridge. During the fall months, the train runs most days and twice a day on weekends.

As the train heads north into the high country, it winds through mountains by the Toccoa River. Fall foliage can be viewed from vintage air-conditioned coaches and open-air cars. The train stops in the border towns of McCaysville, Ga., and Copperhill, Tenn., for lunch and antiquing.

A shorter trip is offered on Sundays without a layover for lunch.

Before or after the train trip, be sure

to stop by Mercier Orchards for just-picked apples, apple cider, and assorted jellies and jams, including no-sugar-added varieties. The freshly made cider is one of the best we have tasted.

During weekends, ride a wagon pulled by a tractor up the hill to pick your own. Along with apples, Mercier offers u-pick for other seasonal fruits.

While at Mercier, stop by the bakery for a pie to take home or try a freshly made fried pie with homemade ice cream. Among the baked goods, the sourdough bread is exceptional.

Breakfast and lunch are available at the cafe, offering sandwiches, wraps and salads.

In the back of the shop in the sampling room look for 93-year-old Adele Mercier. She will be helping customers find just the right type of apple for their needs.

Adele and her late husband Bill purchased the orchard in 1943 from a pharmacist who planted the original orchard at the turn of the century.

The original orchard included 27 acres, a tractor and two employees. Bill, who was working as the county extension agent, agreed to keep the employees.

Over the years, the 27 acres grew into a 200-acre fruit farm, retail market and bakery. Mercier is still family run with four generations working in the business.

During the fall season, the orchard produces 26 varieties of apples in jewel tones from deepest ruby to bright greens. Mercier will ship gift packs and baskets. Apples can be ordered online.

After an afternoon of picking apples, head back downtown for dinner.

The downtown area has a variety of restaurants, art galleries, antique and specialty shops.

At Christy Lee's Courtyard Grille, the dining room has a cozy feeling with dark woods. Tables are unique with a marble design. Our server explains they were made by the owner's husband, who is an artist.



\$500 PER EYE
EXPIRES 11.01.11

www.hollislasik.com
1100 South College St. Suite 108 Auburn, AL. 36832
334-826-8778 800-698-4746 800(MY VISION)
Toll Free for AL and FL ONLY!
All others call direct line
*Financing available.

HOLLIS
LASIK

The Webster House OF AUBURN



The Webster House of Auburn is the perfect location for that elegant southern wedding. Our facilities accommodate both indoor and outdoor weddings and receptions. The home is decorated with beautiful antiques, adding a unique atmosphere to any special event.



New 31x70 pavilion!

Celebrate your special event at the Webster House of Auburn.

2484 AL HIGHWAY 14
W AUBURN, AL 36832
334.524.7656

The appetizers sound so appealing we can't pass on seafood stuffed scallops and lobster bites with two sauces. The scallops are perfectly cooked with the tasty seafood filling arranged on the top of each one, rather than actually stuffed.

Lightly coated with flour and fried, the lobster bites are served with a remoulade and spicy Thai sauce.

Caesar or house salad with romaine, carrots and tomatoes in citrus vinaigrette come with the meal.

For entrees we settle on prime rib served with garlic mashed potatoes and a tender beef filet with a crab cake and a twice-baked potato embellished with green onions and cheese. The crab cake is made with lump crabmeat and contains only a small amount of breading.

For dessert we share a luscious tiramisu with ladyfingers and a creamy coffee-laced filling.

Other items on the menu include a pork chop with a brown sugar apple glaze, stuffed chicken breasts and assorted fish and seafood.

Christy Lee's is open for lunch and dinner with dining in the courtyard or dining room. The restaurant is open Tuesday-Saturday.

Blue Ridge is located 90 miles north of Atlanta. For an overnight stay in Blue Ridge, there are several cabins, including Heavenly Creekside and Mountainview Cabins. Comfort Inn Suites is situated near downtown and the orchard.

For further information to assist with a visit to Blue Ridge, contact the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce at www.blueridgemountains.com or call 800.899.MTNS. To purchase tickets online for the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway go to www.brscenic.com or call 887.413.8724, and for information at the orchard check www.mercier-orchards.com or call 706.632.3411.

For reservations at Christy Lee's Courtyard Grille, call 706.946.5100.