



A Mighty Oak Bed & Breakfast in Pilot Mountain

SHAZAM!

Surry County...
More than just Mayberry

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Most long-time Charlotteans know that Mt. Airy, NC is the birthplace of Andy Griffith and home to “Mayberry.” It just so happens that we were there in late September when the finishing touches were being made for “Mayberry Days,” a weekend celebrating Barney, Andy, Aunt Bea and Ernest T. 60,000 visitors were expected to be on hand to celebrate the long running TV series that still touches the hearts and funny bones of fans 50 years after it first aired. *The Andy Griffith Show* broke the TV sitcom mold by focusing on characters and dialogue instead of an endless parade of lame gags.

A cottage industry has sprung up around the show's home spun popularity. Main Street is lined with shops and restaurants celebrating Mayberry. You can take a spin in a vintage squad car from Wally's garage or eat a pork chop sandwich at Snappy Lunch. As Barney would say: “It's big Andy... real big.”

As appealing as Mayberry is, there's much more than meets the eye in Mt. Airy and Surry County. An amazing number of wineries and vineyards have sprung up here. At last count, I discovered 18 in Surry County alone. Time didn't permit us to visit them all, but we squeezed in all we could in a day and a half. Otis would've been proud of us. For a complete list visit www.veryurrry.com.



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GREAT GETAWAYS

We visited Shelton Vineyards, the largest family-owned estate winery in North Carolina. This beautiful campus, nestled in the heart of Yadkin Valley in Dobson, produces a variety of wines that have gained notoriety as well as its share of international awards. Shelton is also home to fine dining at The Harvest Grill.

We also stopped by JOLO Vineyards and Round Peak Vineyards in Mt. Airy. Both had beautiful facilities and offer tastings and tours. Round Peak is also home to Skull Camp Brewery, so you can sample not only wines, but craft beers as well.

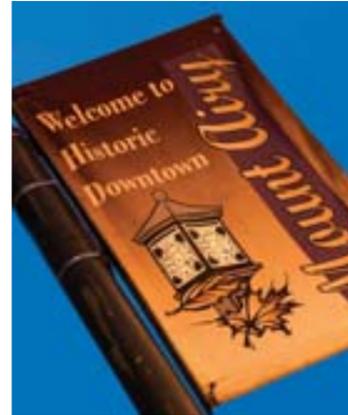
Old North State Winery is located in an 1890s mercantile building on Main Street in Mt. Airy and offers outstanding fine wines as well as hand-crafted ales. We also took advantage of their impressive Tapas menu. Bison Nachos? Yum.

Old North State Winery wasn't the only eclectic offering in the midst of Mayberry. We also lucked upon Trio, a fine dining gem located in the turn-of-the-century Main Oak Emporium on Main Street. The food and the service were excellent. I think we spotted Juanita from the diner there at lunch, but I'm not gonna tell.

We discovered another eclectic oasis in Pilot Mountain, NC. Erin and Scott Needham own and operate The Living Room. What is it? Are you ready? Well, it's a café/coffee shop with live music, a massage studio and a yoga studio...all under one roof. I know it sounds weird, but it works. If you go there, you'll love it.



Jessica Johnson, the Mt. Airy Visitor Center Manager, insisted we join her for lunch at "The Dairy Center." A visit here takes you through a time warp where the waitress calls you "honey",



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Lodging in the area includes plenty of chain hotels as well as more distinctive Inns and Bed & Breakfasts. We were fortunate enough to spend the night at "A Mighty Oak Bed & Breakfast" in Pilot Mountain. Todd and Lisa Morse have created not only a B&B, but "Intended Way Farm," a working farm utilizing a pasture based system where cattle, pigs, chickens and turkeys are raised in a grain-free environment, roaming free on pastureland. This commitment to sustainable, organic farming shows up on the breakfast table. Fresh eggs, fresh sausage, and biscuits baked with flour ground that morning made our breakfast the main meal of the day. Farm to table dining was never better.

On our way out of town we had one last stop that landed us back in the '60s. Jessica Johnson, the Mt. Airy Visitor Center Manager, insisted we join her for lunch at "The Dairy Center." A visit here takes you through a time warp where the waitress calls you "honey", the folks are all friendly, and the food is cheap but tasty. We tried the ground steak sandwich, which is a depression era recipe native to Surry County, and the homemade banana pudding ice cream. It's so much better than Aunt Bea's kerosene pickles.

Mt. Airy and Surry County have come a long way since the days when those old B&W *Andy Griffith Show* episodes hit the airwaves. But one thing still exists there...the pure unadulterated friendliness of the people. It's not a stretch to say that each and every person we met there greeted us with a smile and a kind greeting.

And once again, another businessman in a hurry to get back to Charlotte was reminded of an important lesson. *

