

Coming events

Startrek

A fun way to get to Starfest

It is becoming an MBCA tradition to make road trips into adventures by embellishing the trips to tours with interesting sights and challenging roads. In addition to visiting places you might not know and driving great roads, you get to enjoy the company of many interesting MBCA members who you will find share much more than the appreciation for these fine Mercedes-Benz automobiles with you.

This year's Starfest is an easy drive for both Alabama and Peachtree Section members, and the most direct route (I-75 to I-40 to I-81) is common from Chattanooga to Winchester. Since these two sections would be following the same route, we thought it would enhance the experience to use the great roads in the nearby Smoky Mountains to reach interesting places and to invite other MBCA members to join us on the way to Starfest.



I-26 north of Asheville, NC



Chattanooga Choo-Choo

Near the Georgia line we will rejoin the interstate to Chattanooga where we will have reservations at the unique "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" hotel and restaurant which utilizes real 100 year old passenger rail cars as hotel rooms.

Early arrivals might want to visit the Chattanooga Aquarium featuring aquatic life from the Appalachian Mountains and the Tennessee River system.

We will have dinner together at one of the "Choo-Choo" restaurants where we will rehash the day's adventures and preview those of the following day.

Sunday, 19 September

We are making arrangements with the Barber Museum to have a special visit for those who have not seen the 1200 motorcycles, and 50 Lotus race cars as well as several Ferraris .

That evening we have reserved the "Brio" restaurant that we have used for Heimatfest. We will have an orientation to the event and especially for the factory tour on Monday.

Monday, 20 September

No visit to Alabama is complete for MBCA members without a visit to the Mercedes-Benz US International (MBUSI) factory between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. Of course, people from Atlanta and points south are welcome to come to the factory tour. We will, however need the names of those on the tour for security purposes.

After lunch with the MBUSI associates, this group will proceed to Little River Canyon National Park for a 23 mile drive on extremely challenging roads with spectacular scenery. Traffic is light and police almost nonexistent.

*We will arrange blocks of rooms together and plan one or more meals each day together.
You will also receive a guidebook/routeguide so make sure to register for planning purposes*

Tuesday, 21 September

We will start with a short run up I-75 to get us to US-129 aka the infamous "Tail of the Dragon" with its 218 turns in 12 miles. Because everyone



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has heard of this road, it is very crowded with slow moving Harley's, motor homes, and police.

A great alternative 10 miles south is the 52 mile long "Chero-Hala Skyway" which was built to be a scenic highway in 1993. It is similar to the Blue Ridge Parkway and has moderate to light traffic with beautiful scenery. It joins US 129 at Robbinsville, N.C. And you can even get the "dragon" t-shirt.

US 129 takes us to US 74 near Andrews, N.C. We, however will drive north through the Nantahala Gorge with its multiple whitewater rafting opportunities. The road then becomes 4-lane and ascends the Blue Ridge Mountains.



Biltmore House

We will stop for lunch and visit Silver Star Restorations in Topton, N.C. Owner Piet van Ruscum races a 280SL that he will bring to Starfest. Piet is quite entertaining and usually has some interesting projects. In less than an hour we reach the Blue Ridge Parkway which runs 460 miles along the crest of the easternmost chain of the Appalachian Mountains connecting Shenandoah National Park and Smoky Mountain National Park.

Sometimes 2-4 cars may choose to travel together, and we may spice things up a bit with some questions about the sights or the area.

People can either turn north on the parkway for a 58 mile drive to Asheville through the highest elevation on the parkway (6056'), or drop off the north slope to join I-40 for a quicker way to Asheville and the Biltmore House which is one of the few true palaces in North America.

The parkway is far more challenging and scenic, but it does have a 45mph speed limit and moderate traffic. This should be fairly light at the time of year and midweek.

You will note that this entire drive allows different routes depending on the interests of each participant.

It is not a solid caravan, so there should be no pressure to maintain a specific speed or to stay together.

Wednesday, 22 September

After a night in Asheville, there are different ways to get to Charlottesville, VA.

Obviously you could just follow the Blue Ridge Parkway north for 380 miles. The first



Blue Ridge Parkway south of Asheville, N.C.

150 miles is some of the most scenic of the entire BRP, but it is challenging driving. If you only stop at the most important sights (e.g. Craggy Gardens, Mt. Mitchell), you will have about 10 hours of scenic mountain roads that are beautifully manicured with a combination of breathtaking vistas and tunnels of trees.

The alternative is to take I-26 west (really north) through the Smoky Mountains to Johnson City and Bristol TN/VA. Even though this is an interstate, it passes through a very scenic area. This will connect you to I-81. It is a full 5-6 hours of interstate driving to just north of Roanoke where the BRP is only 10 miles from I-81. This northern most 100 miles of the parkway is at a lower elevation and is much more open and hence faster than the southern portion near Asheville.

Everyone should have at least AAA state map quality maps. Navigation systems may get you to your next destination, but they won't always take you the most scenic way.

Those who really don't want to drive in the mountains can continue on up I-81 to I-64 east to Charlottesville.

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The BRP ends at Shenandoah National Park where it crosses I-64. It is then only 15-20 miles down to Charlottesville where we have arranged another nice hotel. We will also have a dinner there as well.

Thursday, 23 September

On Thursday we will visit Monticello, the magnificent Italian baroque villa that Thomas Jefferson designed as his home, and have lunch at the 18th century Mitchie Tavern.

Some may want to visit 5th president James Monroe's nearby home which is now a working plantation while others might want to continue carving the turns and seeing the sights in Shenandoah National Park.



Mitchie Tavern Mill



Monticello

Friday, 24 September

We should arrive in Winchester by Thursday night. This should give us time to clean up our cars on Friday morning and attend seminars or go on tours Friday afternoon.

By the time you reach Starfest you should have many new friends to share your adventures with and you should have learned about some areas that you might want to visit again.

For more details contact:

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or 800-228-2997

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Startrek to Starfest September 20-24

Names of Member(s)/ gueats attending : _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Will you be joining us for a tour of the Barber Museum Sunday, 19 September _____

Will you be joining us for a tour of the MBUSI Factory Monday, 20 September _____

Total enclosed is \$30.00 per car \$ _____

Please make check payable to Alabama Section, MBCA.
Mail with registration form to: Dr. James Roberts, 2301 Arlingotn Ave S, Birmingham, AL 35205