



## Road Trip

Event: Blue Ridge Bike Fest

# Get Your Licks

BY JOE KNEZEVIC

**H**ave you ever heard of a town called Big Lick? Neither had I. So I did some research and, like any self-respecting biker would, decided to load the Fat Bob we had in the office with some clothes and my 300-pound body to make the 500-mile march south.

My destination was the Roanoke Valley in the Blue Ridge Mountains of southwestern Virginia. The history of the region's settlement dates back to the 1740s, but really takes off when the railroads came to town in the mid-to-late 1800s. Then in 1884, the town of Big Lick ceased to exist, and Roanoke was chartered.

I had strategically timed my visit to Roanoke so that it would coincide with the Blue Ridge Bike Fest. Started to provide Virginians with a world-class bike event of their own, in just three years it has grown into the state's largest motorcycle event. The 2011 event featured over 75 vendors, a custom bike show, stunt riding from the Star Boyz, manufacturer demo rides, and live entertainment from local and national bands.

My personal advice? Don't miss the Ms. Blue Ridge Bike Fest bikini contest, which brings out a plethora of beautiful Southern belles.

For a different, local ride, I headed up



to Mill Mountain and checked out the city's most visible attraction, a 100'-high, illuminated, steel-and-concrete star. When I decided I needed to get off the bike for awhile, I went downtown to the Virginia Museum of Transportation, where I was able to get up close with a Norfolk & Western Class J 611, the most advanced passenger steam engine ever built. I was also able to visit the Link Museum, where the story of one of my favorite all-time photographers, O. Winston Link, is told in great detail. He is arguably the best train photographer ever, and his life offers a compelling tale. Then, after working up an appetite at these museums, I made sure to ride by the Texas Tavern for some world-class chili. This landmark restaurant claims it serves 1,000 people a day, so you might have to wait.



So even though I was over 125 years late to the Big Lick party, what I found was a wonderful destination in its own right. Spending a weekend in the Roanoke Valley and attending the third annual Blue Ridge Bike Fest made for a quite a trip. I just wish it was still called Big Lick. **RB**

### hard data

**BLUE RIDGE BIKE FEST**  
[www.BlueRidgeBikeFest.com](http://www.BlueRidgeBikeFest.com)

**ROANOKE VALLEY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**  
[www.VisitRoanokeVA.com](http://www.VisitRoanokeVA.com)

