

BellaOnlinesm

The Voice of Women

Printer Friendly Version



Candyce H. Stapen

BellaOnline's Adventure Living Editor

Discover the New Roanoke, VA.

A former railroad headquarters, Roanoke, the largest city in Virginia's southwest, moves with a new energy. Surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains, Roanoke offers a weekend getaway that combines interesting shopping and good food.

Anchored by the Farmers' Market, a continuing presence on Market Street since 1882, the downtown has managed to eschew chain stores for local boutiques and eateries. That in itself goes a long way toward making Roanoke's shopping district, at least the streets long the market, an icon of southern charm.

Chocolatepaper and Firefly Fare rate among our top choices. At Chocolatepaper, walk straight past the mugs and mini-stuffed tigers to the sweets. The chocolatier gains fame for its five-inch chocolate rendition of the city symbol, the Roanoke Star, as well as for the shop's delectable truffles with a hint of espresso, pomegranate, sea salt caramel or champagne.

Firefly Fare proves fast food can be both healthy and good. Using locally sourced items, this eatery in the repurposed City Market, the former refrigeration structure for farmers, dishes up Teriyaki tofu, quinoa salads and a sweet potato soup that's among the best we've sampled.

First and Sixth, opened about two months, serves sophisticated takes on southern fare that don't obscure the entrees basic ingredients. Among the entrees are Dr. Pepper glazed pork tenderloin, Southern fried chicken with macaroni and cheese, and our favorite, Low Country shrimp and grits.

What else is downtown? You can't miss the remodeled Taubman Museum of Art. It's striking, angular glass façade "is a statement of where Roanoke is going," says David Mickenberg, executive director. The 81,000 square foot facility's permanent collection focuses on American art from 1865 to the 1930s. Highlights include works by Norman Rockwell, Edward Steichen and others. We also like the Mixed Bag Gallery, a cleverly set presentation of Judith Lieber purses donated by a local woman.

Signature 9 and the Market Gallery feature a mix of watercolors, photographs, sculpture and hand-crafted pottery and textiles. John Wilson, Wilson Hughes Gallery, creates pop art and abstract sculptures from thrown away items. His bicycle sculptures recombine wheels and frames to make new statements.

Noted area artist Eric Fitzpatrick's studio door features a paintbrush knocker. His interpretive landscapes recently appeared in the movie "Lake Effects" as stand-ins for a character's art. In Fitzpatrick's gallery, located in his South Roanoke home, you can purchase his watercolors and oils as well as prints of Virginia Tech game days done in what Fitzpatrick labels "whimsical realism."

If you like rummaging for finds, don't miss Black Dog Salvage, a 40,000 square foot warehouse, named for the black Labrador who often greets visitors. This is the place to admire "stuff," from Victorian tubs to massive glass and wood doors taken from a manor home to stained glass windows, wrought iron fences, antique oak fireplace mantles, plus old lighting fixtures, locks and whatever else has been rescued from about to be demolished buildings.

Where to stay? Situated hillside across the railroad tracks from downtown, the Hotel Roanoke is the city's grande dame. Built by the railroad in 1882, the renovated property reopened in 1995 as a Doubletree. For those who prefer a modern style, try the recently refurbished Sheraton Roanoke Hotel & Conference Center. A short drive to downtown, the Sheraton has a gym, indoor and outdoor pools

and is pet-friendly.

Related links

www.visitroanokeva.com

www.hotelroanoke.com

[Adventure Living Site @ BellaOnline](#)

[View This Article in Regular Layout](#)

Content copyright © 2011 by Candyce H. Stapen. All rights reserved.

This content was written by Candyce H. Stapen. If you wish to use this content in any manner, you need written permission. [Contact Candyce H. Stapen for details.](#)

[| About BellaOnline](#) | [| Privacy Policy](#) | [| Advertising](#) | [| Become an Editor](#) |

Website copyright © 2012 [Minerva WebWorks LLC](#). All rights reserved.

