



# OUTDOOR INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

ADVENTURE | ENTERPRISE | HEALTH | WELLNESS

From the Great Smoky Mountains' 800 miles of hiking trails and the Appalachian Trail to the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway, which attracts millions of annual visitors, Western North Carolina (WNC) is consistently acclaimed as a top outdoor recreation destination.

Popular areas close to Asheville, like Pisgah National Forest, Bent Creek Experimental Forest, DuPont State Forest, and Nantahala National Forest attract everyone from casual day trippers to ultra-athletes for outdoor recreation -- ultimately making Asheville the ideal location for companies focused on outdoor manufacturing to innovate and test new gear in the field.

Thanks to these abundant natural resources and a skilled regional workforce, the outdoor industries and economy are continuing to grow in the Asheville area.



Asheville-Buncombe County

[ECONOMICDEVELOPMENTASHEVILLE.ORG](http://ECONOMICDEVELOPMENTASHEVILLE.ORG)

# NORTH CAROLINA

The outdoor economy is an economic driver across the state of North Carolina. Experts estimated 130,000 jobs and \$28 billion in sales in 2021.

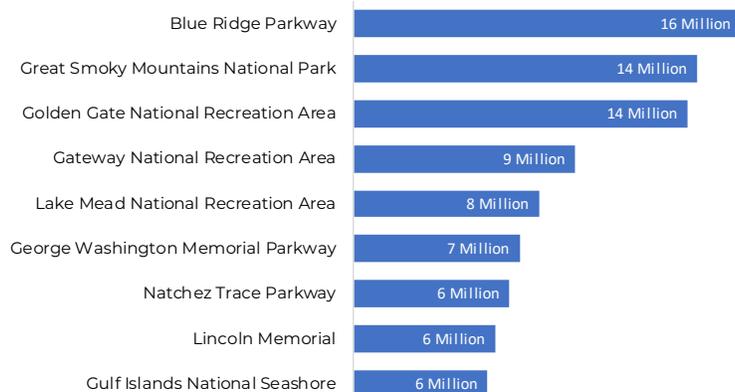
**\$11.8** Billion in GDP

**130,000** Jobs

**\$28** Billion in Sales

**\$5.9** Billion in Earnings

## THE TOP 10 MOST VISITED NATIONAL PARKS IN 2021



***North Carolina has the Top 2 “Most Visited National Parks in 2021”***

*- National Park Service, 2022*

*Western North Carolina is a top outdoor recreation destination.*

# WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Outdoor activities in WNC are enjoyed annually by millions of residents and tourists that benefit from the natural landscape, abundant parks, freshwater lakes, rivers, and outdoor lifestyle the area is known for. Amidst the backdrop of the Blue Ridge Parkway and with four distinct seasons, there is a wealth of outdoor leisure and adventure activity throughout the year. These pursuits have spurred innovation, supported livelihoods, and created an outdoor economy with employment opportunity and economic impact.

## 75+ OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES INCLUDING:

Hiking	Birding
Mountain Biking	Trail Running
Camping	Photography
Whitewater Rafting	Fishing
Ziplining	Waterfall Seeking
Tubing	Picnicking
Kayaking	Road Biking
Skiing	Scenic Drives
Rock Climbing	Foraging
Yoga Hikes	Glamping
Boating	Segway Tours
Visit Historic Sites	Paddleboarding
Horseback Riding	Summit Viewing
Hot Air Balloon Rides	Golfing

*With some of the highest peaks in the Eastern U.S., more than 60 waterfalls and nearly 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail, Western North Carolina is an irresistible destination for outdoor adventures.*

# WNC OUTDOOR ECONOMY

In 18 counties across WNC, a regional collaborative pinpointed 10,000 jobs, \$773 million in GRP, and approximately \$1.4 billion in sales in 2020. Outdoor industries continue to grow in WNC, with a 9% increase in employment from 2015-2020. Additionally, 44% of supply chain purchases made by WNC outdoor industries were from in-region suppliers, supporting the local economy.

**\$773M**  
in GRP



**70%**  
more outdoor industry jobs  
compared to the national  
average

**10,000**  
Jobs



**9%**  
increase in employment  
from 2015-2020

**\$1.4B**  
in Sales



**44%**  
of supply chain from in-region

Cross sector impact in manufacturing, recreation, retail, professional services and more.

*The sheer number of calm water lakes and rushing mountain rivers mean there are countless destinations across WNC just waiting to be paddled.*



*With gravel roads winding through forested valleys and up and down the Blue Ridge mountainsides, WNC is a great place to experience all mountain biking has to offer.*

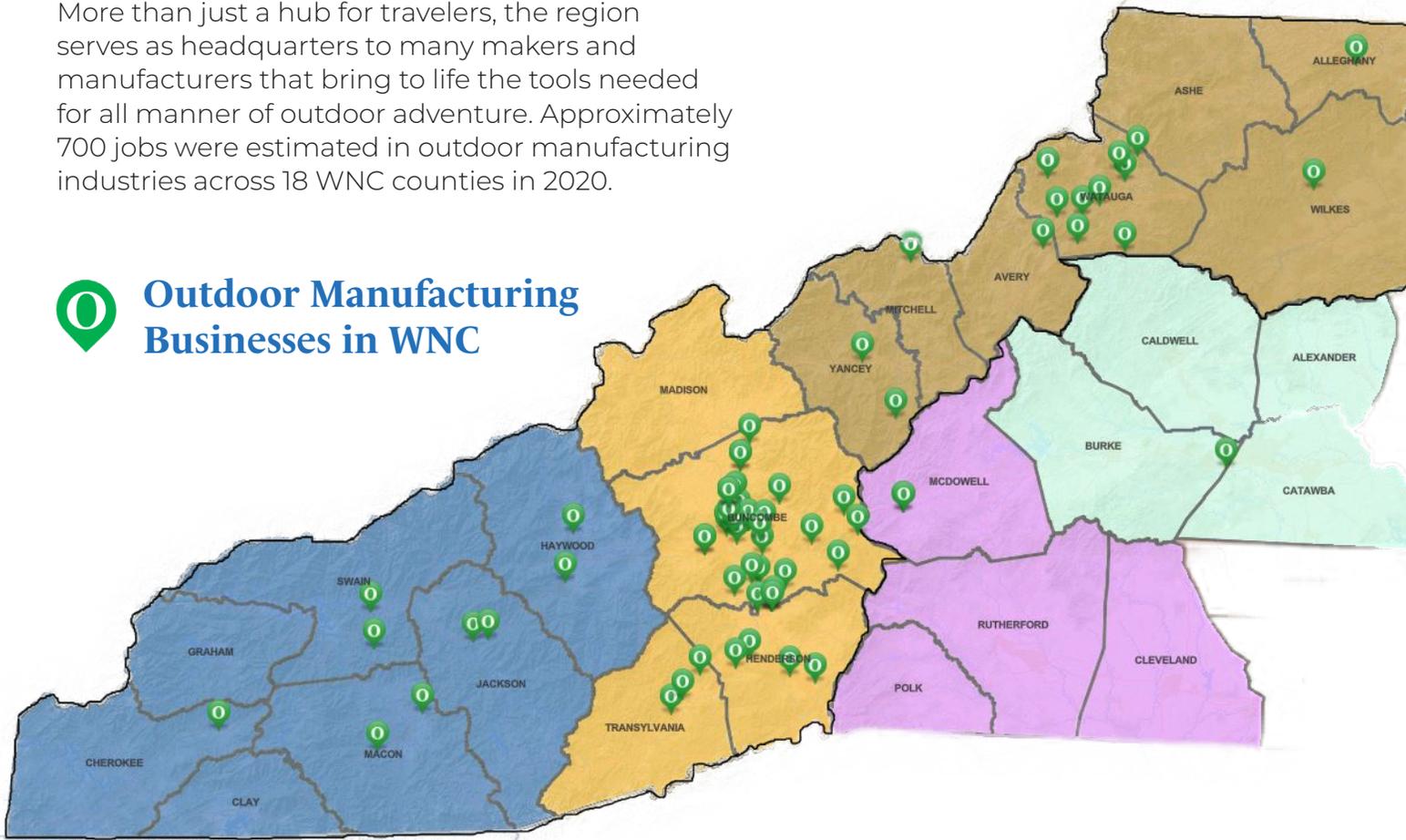
*Taking advantage of the steep terrain of the Blue Ridge mountains, skiing and snowboarding enthusiasts can be found at ski resorts across WNC.*



# WNC OUTDOOR MANUFACTURING

More than just a hub for travelers, the region serves as headquarters to many makers and manufacturers that bring to life the tools needed for all manner of outdoor adventure. Approximately 700 jobs were estimated in outdoor manufacturing industries across 18 WNC counties in 2020.

## Outdoor Manufacturing Businesses in WNC



## *INDUSTRIES INCLUDE:*

- ◇ Textile Bag and Canvas Mills
- ◇ Other Apparel Knitting Mills
- ◇ Lawn and Garden Tractor and Home Lawn and Garden Equipment Manufacturing
- ◇ Travel Trailer and Camper Manufacturing
- ◇ Boat Building
- ◇ Motorcycle, Bicycle and Parts Manufacturing
- ◇ Sporting and Athletic Goods Manufacturing



**700**  
Jobs

**American Backcountry**

Tee Shirts for Hiking

**Astral**

Shoes & Watersports

**Bellyak**

Kayaks

**Cane Creek**

Bike Components

**Cross Canvas**

Canvas Bags & Throw Blankets

**Diamond Brand Outdoors**

Camping and Backpacking Gear

**Eagles Nest Outfitters**

Hammocks & Camping Gear

**Fox Factory**

Bicycle Parts

**French Broad Boatworks**

River Boats

**Industry Nine Componentry**

Bike Components

**Liquid Logic**

Kayaks

**Mount Inspiration**

Outdoor Apparel

**Outrider USA**

Performance Bikes

**Rightline Gear**

Camping Gear & Accessories

**Sport Hansa**

Camping Gear & Accessories

**SylvanSport**

Outdoor Clothing & Gear



Photography: Courtesy of Industry Nine

*Industry Nine received the North Carolina 2022  
Governor's Export Award - Small Business category*



Photography: Courtesy of Sylvan Sport

# WNC OUTDOOR EDUCATION

The region's strong manufacturing base means companies building outdoor gear can attract the talent needed to produce the best possible product. WNC's robust school system offers a wide variety of vocational and academic programs to produce a skilled workforce capable of supporting the outdoor industry's growth.

## WNC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OFFERING OUTDOOR RELATED PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Appalachian State University  
A-B Technical Community College  
Blue Ridge Community College  
Brevard College  
Haywood Community College  
Lees-McRae College  
Mars Hill University  
Mayland Community College  
Montreat College  
Southwestern Community College  
Tri-County Community College  
University of North Carolina at Asheville  
Warren Wilson College  
Western Carolina University  
Wilkes Community College



Photography: Courtesy of WCU

Western Carolina University's Experiential and Outdoor Education Master's program shows commitment to continually grow the talent pipeline that supports the outdoor industry in North Carolina, and across the nation. WCU's proximity to nationally recognized outdoor recreation opportunities make it the perfect place to cultivate the leadership skills necessary for graduates looking to be a driving force in this growing industry.

# NUMEROUS PROGRAMS

*To Train An Outdoor Industry Workforce*

Outdoor Education

Welding Technology

Apparel & Textiles

Precision Machining

Environmental Science

Parks, Recreation, & Leisure Studies



# BUNCOMBE COUNTY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Outdoor Industries are an integral part of our economy in WNC. The Economic Development Coalition (EDC) for Asheville-Buncombe County has long been a partner to existing and new outdoor industry businesses. Over the years the EDC has supported outdoor gear builders like Industry Nine and Fox Factory.



*"Industry Nine is proud to continue building on the foundation that started in 1969 with Turnamics here in Asheville. The area's ethos, in combination with manufacturing and a love for the outdoors, continues to be a reason for our success."*

— CLINT SPIEGEL | PRESIDENT

## INDUSTRY NINE

- Location Drivers:** Strength of Regional Workforce, Quality of Life, Access to World-Class Biking
- New Jobs:** 50
- Capital Investment:** \$6 Million
- Industry:** Transportation Equipment Manufacturing

<< **Photography:** Courtesy of Industry Nine



*"We are very excited to now call Asheville, NC home for one of our bike division's satellite offices. Along with a very passionate mountain biking culture, we believe Asheville offers us the ability to tap into a top-notch talent pool to help us continue to improve our business."*

— LARRY L. ENTERLINE | CEO

## FOX FACTORY

- Location Drivers:** Strength of Regional Workforce, Quality of Life, Access to World-Class Biking
- New Jobs:** 47
- Capital Investment:** \$1 Million
- Industry:** Transportation Equipment Manufacturing

<< **Photography:** Courtesy of Fox Factory

# SUPPORTIVE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Numerous organizations support and build outdoor communities in Western North Carolina. Together, they have helped put Western North Carolina on the map as a premier place for outdoor businesses to grow.



*"MADE X MTNS brings together partners to celebrate the region and support the outdoor recreation industry and culture that is shaped by WNC's extraordinary landscape. Through collaborative partnerships, industry stakeholders are working together to advance the region's outdoor community and economic development goals, centered around healthy people and places. With world-class outdoor recreation opportunities and world renowned brands, WNC is the outdoor industry hub of the East, and a thought leader in advancing the industry nationwide."*

— AMY ALLISON | DIRECTOR  
Made by Mountains Partnership



*"We have a well-established and thriving outdoor economy in WNC where the spirit of collaboration is strong. Outdoor companies will find a network of industry leaders in WNC who understand the benefits of working together in ways that bolster a stronger outdoor economy. Fostering these connections for the past 10 years has been the Outdoor Gear Builders with the mission to cultivate, connect and support our outdoor businesses. Today, the Outdoor Gear Builders has grown to over 100 member companies working together and making WNC the best place to relocate, start or grow an outdoor business."*

— MATT GODFREY | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Outdoor Gear Builders

Additional Partners Include:



# SELECT ASHEVILLE OUTDOOR RECREATION ACCOLADES

“23 Must Visit Cities for  
Outdoor Adventure”

- Sea to Summit, 2022

“15 Best Places to Hike”

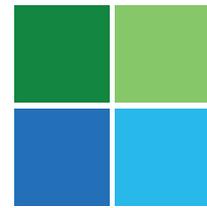
- Wildandtrekking.com, 2021

“10 Beautiful North American  
Mountain Destinations”

- USA Today, 2021

“America’s Best Mountain Towns”

- Travel + Leisure, 2021



COMPILED BY  
**RIVERBIRD**  
RESEARCH

ADDITIONAL SOURCES: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, NC Office of State Budget and Management, NC Department of Commerce, National Park Service, Lightcast, Land of Sky Regional Council, and source websites.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



Accredited Economic Development Organization

*One of only 63 Accredited Economic Development Organizations in North America, the Economic Development Coalition (EDC) for Asheville-Buncombe County is a public-private partnership committed to creating and retaining high quality jobs, community leadership, and being a resource for better business decisions. The EDC accomplishes this mission through its four core services: Business Retention and Expansion, Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Research, and Marketing and Recruitment.*



**ASHEVILLE**  
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## PLEASE CONTACT US

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SCAN QR CODES FOR MORE INFO



VIDEO



STORY MAP