



WHAT IS 226A – THE DIAMONDBACK?

Get ready for sweeping curves, amazing scenery and cool mountain breezes. The Diamondback, NC 226A, is one of the last great stretches of WNC backwood, mountain roads.

NC's 226A is loaded with switchbacks that double back almost 360-degrees, strings of linked S-curves and a steady climb through lush green forest. The road is in great shape for riding or driving - smooth pavement, well marked centerlines with reflectors and very little traffic. This 12-mile stretch is a great connector from Marion, NC to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Little Switzerland at Mile Post 334.

Averaging a 10 to 12-degree drop in temperature by the time you reach the Diamondback's peak at Switzerland Inn and the Chalet Restaurant (Mile Post 334), this rolling highway snakes alongside heart-stopping views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and rolling valleys below.

NC 226A is the only remaining alternate state route in North Carolina, as all the other state routes with an

"A" have been phased out. Designated as the Diamondback by locals, it passes through Pisgah National Forest by way of a curving and mountainous two-lane road. Generally traveling north-south, 226A is entirely within McDowell and Mitchell counties and essentially parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway along its northern segment.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

NC 226A travels west (signed north) after splitting from its parent route, NC 226, near NC 226's junction with US 221 in the Pisgah National Forest. Curving along the Blue Ridge Mountains, NC 226A heads northwest toward Little Switzerland. Paralleling the Blue Ridge Parkway, the route turns westward to go through Little Switzerland and rejoins NC 226 just south of Spruce Pine, North Carolina.

HISTORY

In 1928, the road which 226A now follows used to be signed as NC 19. Around 1932, US 221 joined the NC 19 route from NC 28, north to the town of Spruce Pine. By 1934, US 221 was routed to the south and NC 19 was renumbered as NC 26. In the late 1940s, following World War II, a faster NC 26 route through the mountains was constructed; the old route was given the designation: Alternate NC 26 or NC 26A. When Interstate 26 was routed through North Carolina in 1959, NC 26 was renumbered as NC 226 to avoid confusion with the Interstate Highway. NC 26A followed the trend of its parent state route and became the NC 226A known today.