

10 Reasons to do the 2026 Biltmore Challenge
hosted by Biltmore Equestrian Center

The 2026 **Biltmore Challenge** is in Asheville in western North Carolina May 1 and 2. The venue is conveniently located about 5 minutes from North Carolina exit 50 of Interstate 40. The area provides great opportunities for an extended stay. This year there will be FEI and AERC Open Divisions, as well as Limited Distance Rides. For more information, go to www.biltmoreendurance.com . Here are my suggested reasons for you on why 2026 is THE year you should do the this ride:

10. Help recovery from Hurricane Helene. You have heard about it, and, to say the least, Helene devastated vast swathes of western North Carolina (as well as Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee). The physical damage is being repaired, but the economic damage from lost jobs, lost homes, lost ways of making a living: all is very real. And economic stimulus (bring \$), will all help. I-40 has one lane re-opened through the Pigeon River gorge North Carolina to / from Tennessee. One lane in each direction, sizes of vehicles restricted. Let's just say, gawking is the mode through this stretch.

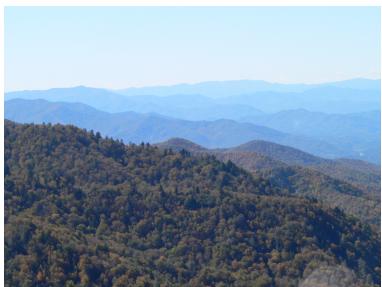


Carol Giles visiting Joyce Kilmer Forest's virgin poplars

9. Western North Carolina. I am prejudiced, but I believe this is one of the most beautiful areas of the country. The weather is good in early May – 75 average high, 54 and less humid than over the summer months. We have the spring azaleas and other flowers in full blossom. The Smokies and surroundings are not as crowded as they get in summer.



We are on migratory routes for birds and butterflies



Views from WaterRock Knob overlook show range after range of mountains – both to the east and the west.

8. Blue Ridge Parkway. Driving north or south along the Blue Ridge Parkway is one of the best experiences of eastern mountain scenery to be had, and it is 'right here'. Very easy day trips take you to Mount Mitchell, highest point east of the Mississippi; to the Smokies; and by some stunning landscapes.



From the Pisgah Mountain overlook, at sunset you get views of Cold Mountain (yes, of the book and movie), and the Smokies



7. Waterfalls. This is the land of the waterfalls including the highest waterfalls in the East. The granite of the mountains combined with the amount of water drainage create an abundance of beautiful waterfalls to see.



Mingo Falls west of Asheville

Linville Falls north of Asheville

6. Asheville. This town of 83,000 is the center of everything for about 100 miles around in each direction. And the city has fostered activities such as its Bluegrass music scene (at the Orange Peel and The Grey Eagle about 15 minutes from the ride camp); its craft beer brewery scene – Asheville has been voted Beer City USA many, many times; its crafts community, as home to the Southern Highlands Handicrafts Guild; its food diversity with emphasis on fresh and local ingredients; and fun activities such as ziplining among the tree tops.

5. Biltmore House. You have seen the pictures. Designed by Richard Hunt for George and Edith Vanderbilt, Biltmore House is truly an architectural and historical wonder. The house was completed in 1895 and the 250-room chateau is as impressive today as it was more than a century ago. For the price of an admission ticket, you can take a self-guided tour through three floors, seeing life 'above stairs' and in the servant's quarters offering fascinating glimpses into the life and times of that era. You will see furnishings unique in this world ranging from the beautiful to the mundane.

4. Biltmore Estate. The main Estate grounds have extensive gardens, a greenhouse, the Equestrian Center, the Inn at Biltmore, several excellent restaurants, a Winery (free tastings), various farm occupations, and Antler Hill Village where you will find a restored farm from the early 1900s, plus some further information on the history of the Estate. New this spring, they are hosting Luminiere in the evenings.

3. Biltmore Trails. After all, this is what you and your horse will be seeing a lot of. These vary from farm roads, to old carriage roads, to grassy fields, to single track through woods. We have over 150 miles of permanently marked trail with trails ranging from easy to moderate, with enough variety to be ongoing fun.

2. Great competition. The Biltmore rides are among the premiere competitions of the year, and it is quite a party! Come help us celebrate and make it the best ever. It is our 30th running and we plan on making it special.

1. Have fun. Make and renew friendships. Enjoy the partnership with your horse. This is all about why YOU do this sport.