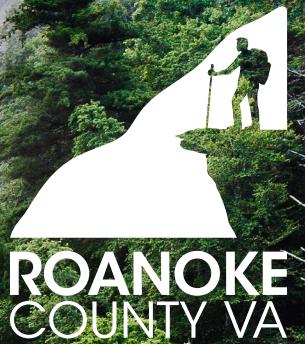


# 2019/2020 ANNUAL REPORT

# EXPLORE PARK



## YEAR IN REVIEW:

Roanoke County took over operation of this 1,100 acre facility located directly adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway in 2013. Guided by community input and a comprehensive master plan, Explore Park is developing into the region's premiere outdoor adventure destination.

Within the past 24-months, core signature attractions have been launched including the **Treetop Quest** aerial adventure course, and **Illuminights**, a multi-day walking holiday light display. Roanoke County has also worked with private partners to develop a growing lineup of adventure recreation services such as **camping**, **river tubing** and a **brewpub**.

### PARK VISITATION

Explore Park saw record attendance in 2019, with an estimated 175,000 visitors. This represents a 172% increase in the past three years alone.\*

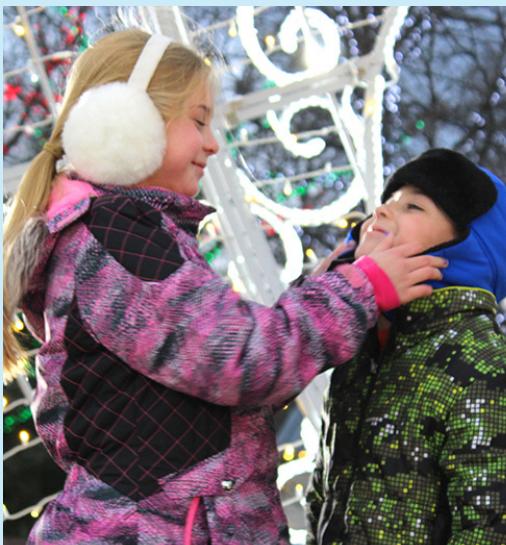
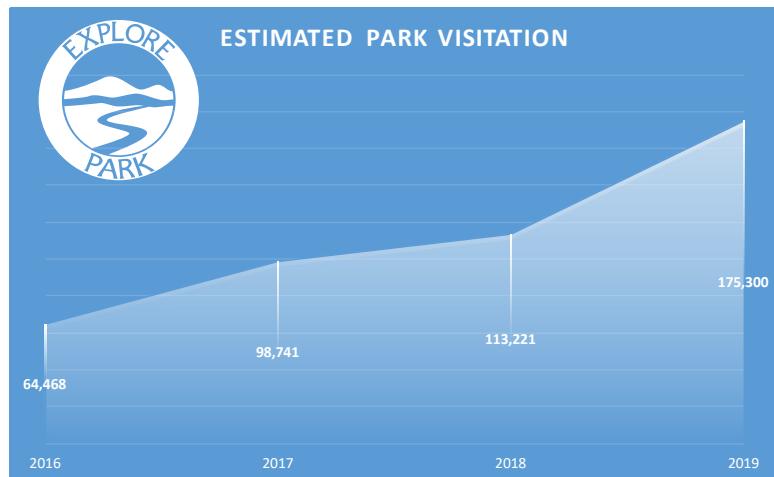
\*Figures are estimates based on vehicle counters at the Visitor Center & Rutroough Point adjusted for event totals.

\*2020 Numbers will be available March, 2021

### 2019 BY THE NUMBERS\*

- Estimated Program Attendance - 500
- Estimated Event Attendance - 50,000
- Estimated Camping Nights Booked - 2,173
- Weddings - 22
- Total Volunteers - 520
- Total Volunteer Hours - 2,001
- Capital Investment by Roanoke Co. - \$5.7 Million

\*2020 Numbers will be available March, 2021



## TREETOP QUEST:

Roanoke County opened Treetop Quest at Explore Park on July 1, 2019 through a franchise partnership. The new attraction consists of progressively challenging aerial obstacles and zip lines. Continuous belay safety features enable experiences for ages four through adult, with an operating season of April through November each year.

The first partial season of operation saw over 8,000 visitors, setting the stage for future growth in 2020. As Explore Park's first major attraction, Treetop Quest will work in synergy with other park amenities to facilitate a multi-day recreation experience for guests. The facility is well positioned for future course expansion. 2020 saw attendance grow to more than 9,000 visitors even with COVID-19 restrictions in place.

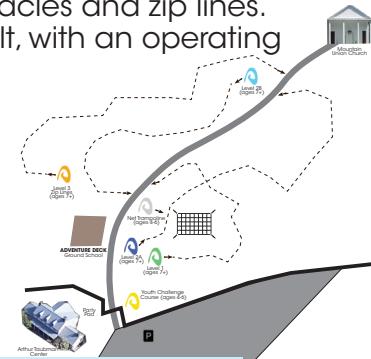


### SEASON 1 BY THE NUMBERS

- Operating Weeks - 19
- Visitors - 8,052
- Birthday Parties - 41
- Scare Quest Participants - 997

### SEASON 2 BY THE NUMBERS

- Operating Weeks - 25
- Visitors - 9,019
- Birthday Parties - 23
- Night Zip Participants - 237



## PROGRAMS & CAMPS\*:

Explore Park continues to expand outdoor adventure and nature education programming. In 2019, the park provided naturalist-led courses and summer camp experiences to 209 registered participants, as well as an estimated 300 more through walk-up programs and partnerships with organizations such as Virginia Master Naturalists and the National Park Service.

**Summer Camps** - Weekly camps served rising grades 3-8, covering topics such as paddling, mountain biking and outdoor skills.

**Wild Things Series** - A popular monthly free event focused on animal life found at the park.

**Adventure Academy** - Last summer, a new rewards program was launched allowing visitors to earn badges by participating in outdoor programs and activities.

**National Park Service** - In 2019 the NPS held free interpretive programs each weekend at the park from April through November.



\*Due to COVID-19, no camps were offered in 2020. Camps will return to Explore Park in June, 2021.



# ILLUMINIGHTS

EXPLORE PARK'S WINTER WALK OF LIGHTS

## ILLUMINIGHTS:

On November 28, 2019, Explore Park launched the region's largest holiday event, a holiday walking tour of lights. Illuminights was the culmination of three years of planning efforts by Roanoke County and local non-profit Center in the Square.

### ORGANIC FACEBOOK VIEWS



Featuring over 500,000 lights, this new annual tradition exceeded attendance expectations with over 43,000 admissions. The event brought together various community partners, business sponsors and media sponsors to result in Explore Park's biggest month of attendance in history.

The public impact of this event was especially visible on social media, where the event organically reached overwhelming market saturation.

## ILLUMINIGHTS 2020:

Illuminights returned to Explore Park on November 20, 2020. The 41-night event took place through January 2, 2021. In 2020, attendance was 40,319, even with COVID-19 restrictions in place.



## 2019 EXTERNAL RACES & TOURNAMENTS \*

- Explore Your Limits Race (March) - 330 participants
- Downs Syndrome Walk (May) - 500 participants
- Shrewd Archery Tournament (May) - 310 pts / 700 spectators
- Hike for Hospice (September) - 426 participants
- Into the Darkness (October) - 300 participants

\*Due to COVID-19, limited events took place in the park.

## ILLUMINIGHTS: BY THE NUMBERS



Advance Tickets  
30,676  
Gate Tickets  
12,421  
TOTAL Admissions  
43,097



Operating Days  
26  
Event Shifts  
527  
Light Set-up Staff Hours  
1750



## **VENDOR PARTNERSHIPS:**

Economic development through public-private partnerships is at the core of Explore Park's mission. 2019 saw tremendous growth in outdoor recreation services provided by vendor partners within the park.

Highlights included the construction of several new cabins, the introduction of tubing rental and the opening of a new brewpub within Brugh Tavern.

### **DON'S CAB-INNS**

After opening in late 2018, this vendor operated cabin and yurt area exceeded expectations for monthly attendance. 2019 saw the addition of three new cabins designed for group visits.

**2019**

• Total Hours Rented - 34,115

**2020**

49,840

### **BLUE MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES**

After two full seasons of primitive campsite and tent rentals, this vendor added tubing rentals and shuttle services along the Roanoke River. These services have become a core revenue generator for their business.

**2019**

• Customers Served -

**2020**

1,205

**2020**

1,193



Photo Courtesy of Tyler Pheeds Photography

### **TWIN CREEKS BREWPUB**

Roanoke County's first brewery expanded this year to a second location, inside Explore Park's Brugh Tavern. This historic 1800's era structure was brought back to life as a restaurant and brewery. Soft launches began in December 2019, followed by weekend operation. The Brewpub was open Friday through Sunday throughout the year.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Questions?

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