



**CHAPTER IV: HIGHLIGHTS**  
**Along the Norton Loop**

The Norton loop of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail is a 68 mile loop traveling from the City of Norton through the communities of Appalachia, Pennington Gap and Big Stone Gap and on back roads past old and new mining camps.



The Norton Loop starts at the intersection of Hwy 58A and Business 23 and travels west through the downtown Norton where one finds numerous restaurants, historic buildings as well lodging and shopping opportunities.



Turning left on Business 23 begins the Norton Loop of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail through the City of Norton where one will find numerous restaurants, lodging and shopping opportunities.



One of the few drive-in theaters still in operation is located along this route. There are also active coal mining operations visible from the road and even a location where people may purchase coal to heat their homes.

In Wise County, the town of Appalachia is rich in coal heritage and was once the central shopping area for eight coal towns. It has some wonderful historic buildings and offers today a wonderful memorial to coal miners.





## **CHAPTER III: HIGHLIGHTS** **Norton Loop**



A few of the coal towns still exist including Stonega and Derby, two of the most complete coal towns in existence today.

One also passes through small residential communities which were once coal camps including Imboden and Exeter.

In Lee County one finds both active and inactive coal mining areas. As one passes through the town of Keokee, one finds the old commissary for the Keokee Coal Camp now serves as a gymnasium for the community.



One also goes by St. Charles, a small community now, but in the 30's it was a thriving coal town with over 50 taxis in operation, lots of businesses and a number of mining operations nearby. A memorial to miners is located next to the railroad.

As one continues their travels along the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail towards Pennington Gap, one will pass directly under the Stone Face in the Mountain, a natural formation carved out of the mountain. Pennington Gap offers restaurants, gas and shopping opportunities.



The Norton Loop continues east on Hwy 58 through the community of Big Stone Gap where one will find the Southwest Virginia Museum which offers a wonderful coal display.

Big Stone Gap is also home to the Harry W. Meador Coal Museum and has a memorial to Coal Miners near the square. Other attractions include the Lonesome Pines Playhouse, June Tolliver's Museum and Gift Shop, the Historical Society & Museum as well as the home of John Fox Jr., author of the book "Lonesome Pines" based on past happenings at Big Stone Gap and basis for the outdoor drama "Lonesome Pine".





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Below are maps of the Norton Loop of the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail for both Wise and Lee Counties in which the locations of some of the coal, railroad or other notable sites are noted. *More information on these sites is included in APPENDIX A: Snapshot View of the Route and in APPENDIX H: Series of Town Meetings.*

