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NEXT SUNDAY

Photo winners!

See the very best entries in our 'How I Shot My Summer Vacation' competition

# Clothes cut out for hiking

Grab your scissors - we help you assemble lightweight, high-tech outfits for fall

BY RANDY JOHNSON  
Special to the Observer

The sticky slog through summer is almost over.

A few hours west on the East's highest mountains, the first twinges of color are just days away. Luckily, fall - the best season - lingers longer here in the South than anywhere. When the mountains lose their leaves in late October, color is still flaming away in the Uwharrie National Forest, at Crowders and Morrow mountains. And it lasts through late November. More than two months from now, it'll still be the perfect time to crunch through leaves and camp at those best-kept-secret state park backpack campsites.

Best of all, the newest outdoor gear is so lightweight, high tech - and warm - that now is the time to re-outfit yourself for fall.

I've crawled through the woods all over the state testing the latest garb and gear. Here's my head-to-toe take on what to try.



▲ Native Dash XP. \$115 at REI.

Eyewear

Be flexible, whatever color the leaves are. Smith's Interchangeable series shades come with three different, polarized lens tints. One is the new photochromic lens that adjusts to varying light conditions (about \$139). Or try the **Native Dash XP** polarized and vented glasses (\$115).

Undies

Haven't tried this end of the travel wear shopping spectrum? Now's the time. Pick up **Ex Officio's Boxer Brief Underwear**, for men, or men's and women's styles from a catalog such as Magellan's (\$15-\$20). New, sink-washable fabrics keep you dry and deter odor.

Go to page 6 to find more fall hiking wear you can cut and place onto our model.

Headgear

Tempted to reach for a hat or a headband while puffing up the trail? Reach for a **Buff** instead. This year-round, UV-screening, moisture-wicking, wind-stopping accessory has to be seen to be believed. Click the video on [www.buffusa.com](http://www.buffusa.com) for how to use it.



▲ Buff. \$20 at REI.

◀ **Patagonia Capilene 2 Crew Long Sleeve.** \$38 at Jesse Brown's Outdoors.

◀ **Ex Officio's Boxer Brief Underwear.** \$25 at Jesse Brown's Outdoors.

Online Extras

Hike the Blue Ridge Parkway - online - with Observer video director Peter Weinberger.  
[WWW.CHARLOTTE.COM/travel](http://WWW.CHARLOTTE.COM/travel)

CAROLINAS LANDMARK

## Buenos dias! Y'all come!

Is it cultural fusion or confusion? You got it at South of the Border

DILLON, S.C. — It was late, we were tired. The slightly bored teenager at the front desk told me they were expecting us, and that we were in Room 105, one of the de-luxe suites.

Our room happened to be right next door to the office and had its own private carport. The trapezoidal room was indeed deluxe, and featured a bathroom with two sinks and tile done in construction-cone orange. Right next door, the walking bridge allowed my girlfriend and me to take a romantic stroll over the road that divided the complex in two. From the middle of the bridge, we could stand and bask in the neon glow of South of the Border at night. It actually looks like the original walking bridge across the Rio Grande from El Paso, Texas, to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

We stood arm in arm and gazed at the Dillon skyline, just as thousands of couples have done before us. Young couples on their elopement night, senior citizens on their way to their gated community in Florida, and members of the 101st Airborne from nearby Fort Bragg spending a last night with a loved one before being shipped off to places with names like Saigon and Baghdad.

All here, where U.S. 501/301 and Interstate 95 cross each other as well as the N.C.-S.C. border.

In the beginning

Back in the 1950s, Alan Schafer opened up a beer stand here and began importing Mexican souvenirs. He had two Mexican workers named Poncho and Pedro, and soon Pedro became a general all-around name for anyone who worked there. Pedro went on to become the official mascot of a growing complex of buildings.

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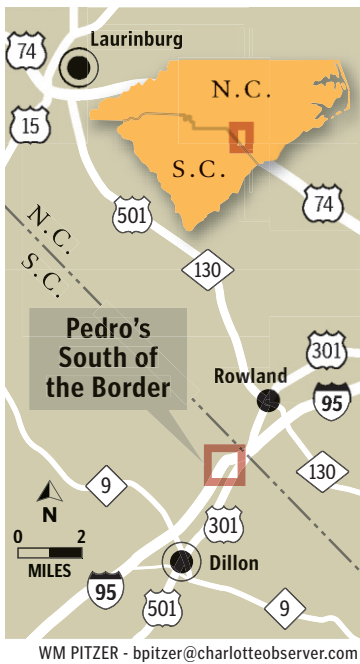


PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY WENDY YANG - [wyang@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:wyang@charlotteobserver.com)  
Clothes courtesy of Great Outdoors, Jesse Brown's Outdoors and REI.

## Have your mind held captive in a Cherokee Village.

Experience Cherokee village life in the 1750s. Visit the council house, ceremonial grounds and sweat lodge where you'll learn of the Cherokee way of life and the seven-clan society. See traditional potters, basket weavers, blowgun marksmen, maskmakers, beadworkers, arrowhead "knappers" and craftsmen making great canoes by ancient methods. A life so peaceful you may not want to return home.

This project is funded in part by the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, 2006.



Oconaluftee  
INDIAN VILLAGE

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[www.cherokee-nc.com](http://www.cherokee-nc.com)