

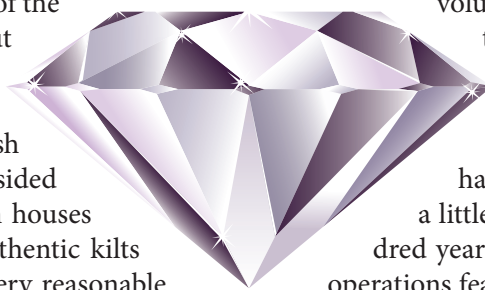
## Franklin, NC



BY: ABIGAIL SUTTON

Nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains the township of Franklin is preserving western North Carolina's rich history and heritage, the area was once the center of the Cherokee Nation and became a destination for Scottish immigrants seeking freedom in the new world, now Franklin exemplifies "Small Town, USA" and, through several museums, provides a window back to a time before paved roads offered access to and from towns and when the mountain wilderness was...well, wilderness.

A must see for your visit to Franklin is The Scottish Tartan Museum located on Main Street. The primary goal of the non-profit museum is to educate visitors about Scottish Highland dress, the role scotch ancestors had in settling and shaping western North Carolina and relationships between the Scottish newcomers and the Cherokee natives that resided in the area for hundreds of years. The museum houses replicas of traditional Scottish clothing and authentic kilts dating back over two hundred years. For the very reasonable admission price of \$2 for adults and \$1 for children you can learn about the history of Scottish dress, why Scots wear kilts and what the thousands of different plaid tartans actually represent. Extra funding for the museum comes from their gift shop offering everything from t-shirts to stylish fashion kilt skirts to full Scottish regalia not to mention a wide selection of family and clan tartans. Don't know your family tartan? No problem, they will help you look it up. Don't have a scotch heritage? Again, no problem! The gift shop also



offers the official Carolina Tartan created to honor the scotch settlers that helped found this great state.

Franklin is also hailed as the gem and mineral capital of the world and to see the best of the best stop by the Franklin Gem and Mineral Museum located in the historic "Old Jail" built in 1850. Opened in 1974 by Franklin's very own Gem and Mineral Society the museum displays thousands of gems from around the world as well as local discoveries including a mammoth ruby from a local mine weighing over two pounds! The museum boasts eight different display rooms and your visit will be hosted by knowledgeable volunteers from the Gem Society. Admission is free, tour groups are welcome by appointment and the museum is open six days a week May through October from noon to 4pm.

If you're feeling lucky and want to try your hand at the same trade that brought prospectors to a little town in the Carolina pan handle over one hundred years ago you can check out any of the local mining operations featuring native gems. Gem mining is a great activity for kids of all ages and mining shops cut out the hard part because the digging is done for you! All you have to do is sift through your bucket to find the unique treasures hidden inside. Some mining locations offer a gem shop as well where your best finds can be polished up or made into custom jewelry! Locations are usually seasonal and open up around the beginning of April; and keep in mind sifting through dirt can get...dirty, so if you plan to mine dress accordingly!

For more great places to see and things to do in Franklin visit [www.franklin-chamber.com](http://www.franklin-chamber.com), whatever activities you choose to fill your day Franklin's small town charm and rich history makes for an ideal weekend escape, family outing or school field trip that everyone will enjoy.