



**“...memories to last a lifetime”**

## Mini 53: Spring Back to the Smokies

Words and photos: Mike Guido

Classic Minis United returned to the Great Smoky Mountains in the USA for another picture perfect three-day driving adventure (19-21 April). Classic Minis came from as far as 850 miles away, while some CMU members made the trip from England. The event was based at a beautiful campground on an American Indian reservation surrounded by mountains and trout-filled streams in Cherokee, North Carolina.

While Minis are entertaining to look at and fun to talk about, CMU events are all about driving them – a lot. Every morning started with a solid line of classic Minis cruising on some of the most scenic and twisty roads in the country. Cruise masters led the group in a different direction each day to give everybody one unique drive after another. Highlight drives were routes through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park: the Tale of the Drag-on, Hell Bender, the Rattler, and the breathtaking Blue Ridge Parkway. During one cruise, as the Minis climbed 6,053 feet to the highest point on the Parkway, they literally drove into the clouds. Was it the entrance to classic Mini heaven?

There is more to a CMU event than great drives each day. One night featured an ice cream cruise back through the Parkway to an old-fashioned ice cream parlour. The night drive was unforgettable with a train of Mini lights cutting through the mountains, forest and tunnels at spirited speeds. The following night was the event

party. It was time to step away from the Minis and catch up with friends. A swapmeet, catered barbecue dinner, beer tasting, music, and a silent auction started the night off. Evening highlights were the American Indian headdress contest and the CMU edited version of the classic movie *Blazing Saddles*, playing on the big outdoor movie screen. Surprise performers made the evening very special. The Moken couple, Shayne GeronoMoke and Celia Crazy Moke Williams formed a musical group, the Moke-A-Sins, just for this event. Equipped with an accordion, a bodhran (an Irish frame drum), and a voice that carried deep into the mountains, they performed original Mini songs while the lyrics were projected on the big screen. It was a great classic singalong!

On the final day everybody had the option to make their Mini adventure a little more adventurous with white water rafting. The brave souls that took on the cold water, raging rapids, and big rocks, with nothing more than a rubber raft and suit, left with memories to last a lifetime. Imagine a two-hour twisty cruise with 70-plus Minis, followed by white water rafting, then another unique twisty cruise back to the campground!

**Classic Minis United would like to thank its members and sponsors, Mini Sport USA, for their continued support. Find out more about Classic Minis united at: [www.ClassicMinis.org](http://www.ClassicMinis.org)**



Mini 53  
Classic Minis United  
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Event artwork by Bob Cox.



Andy and Dee Weymouth, from North Devon, representing England in festive style.



Rafting down the French Broad River.



The Moke-A-Sins performing a classic Mini sing-a-long before the movie.