

visit SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA



PRESS KIT 2021








**HOME TO THE NEW RIVER GORGE
NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE**

Designated America's 63rd National
Park on December 27, 2020

Lisa Strader
Executive Director

Sam Brackenrich
Marketing and Group Tours

Visit Southern West Virginia
1408 Harper Rd
Beckley, WV 25802
phone: 304.252.2244 or 800.847.4898
fax: 304.252.2252
lisa@visitwv.com
sam@visitwv.com

-  visitwv.com
-  facebook.com/visitwv
-  instagram.com/visitwv
-  twitter.com/visitwv
-  youtube.com/visitwv



Bridge Butte,
New River Gorge

STORY IDEAS

Mountain State Adventures

WITH MILES OF BIKING, HIKING AND ATV TRAILS,

it's no surprise that Southern West Virginia is an outdoor enthusiast's dream destination. Add on some world-renowned whitewater adventures, and the Mountain State is a mecca for adrenaline junkies.

- > But, you don't have to be a thrill seeker to enjoy a trip to West Virginia. Sweeping scenery, breathtaking vistas and iconic gorges — Southern West Virginia has unparalleled beauty. Escape the hustle and bustle of your busy day with a hike through the mountains or unwind with an overnight fishing trip. Discover everything Southern West Virginia has to offer.

WHEATWATER ADVENTURES

- > Boaters come from around the world to take on the Southern West Virginia rivers.
- > The infamous Gauley River, also known as "The Beast of the East," attracts professional boaters and sponsored kayakers who want to challenge the "Big 5" Class V rapids.
- > Depending on which section of the New River you choose, the ride can be more mild or wild. Tackle the Lower New River with Class V rapids or enjoy a leisurely float trip on the Upper New River with your family.
- > Whitewater rafting wouldn't be nearly as entertaining without your raft guide. Every year, men and women flock to our region to spend their summers on the water guiding visitors down the rapids. These guides are adventurers for a living and bring an added flair to the area.

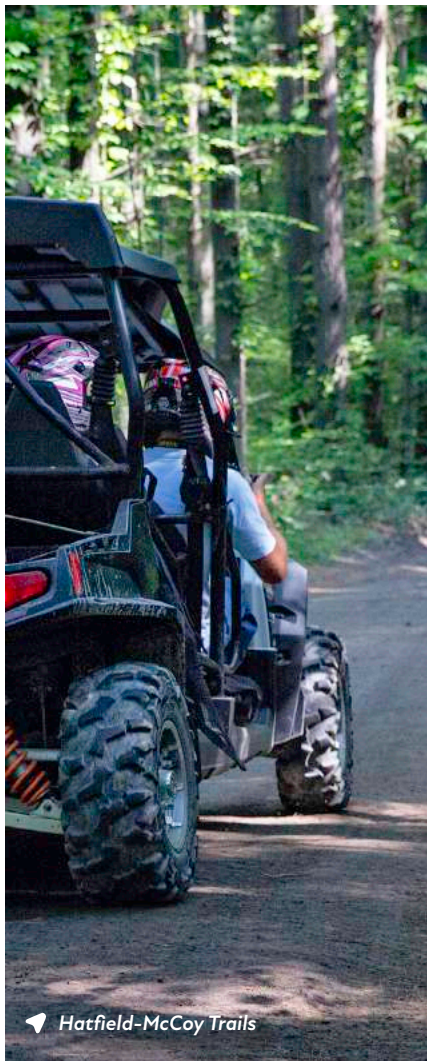
MOUNTAIN BIKING/HIKING

- > A mountain biking destination, Southern West Virginia has cross-country, singletrack and downhill trails for every skill level.
- > Whether you enjoy a leisurely stroll along a rail trail or a challenging trek through the woods, our area has hundreds of miles of trails perfect for hiking and camping.

OFF-ROADING

- > With 700+ miles, the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System is perfect for dirt bikes, ATVs and UTVs.
- > Explore some of the most remote areas in the state and travel from town to town to see what makes Southern West Virginia truly unique.
- > Take your Jeep or truck for a rousing ride along the trails at Burning Rock Off-Road Adventure Park.

Mountain State Adventures (cont.)



▼ Hatfield-McCoy Trails

ROCK CLIMBING

- > The sandstone cliffs of the New River Gorge attract climbers from around the world who dare to scale the daunting rock formations. With the New River Gorge Bridge in the background, the views can't be beat. For beginners, experienced guides are ready to help you tackle your first climb.

WINTER WONDERLAND

- > Southern West Virginia is a four-season destination, with outdoor recreation for every time of year. In the colder months, visitors flock to Winterplace Ski Resort, which features 25+ ski and snowboard trails and the largest snow tubing park in the state.

ZIPLINING AND CANOPY TOURS

- > Go on an aerial adventure! With the longest zipline on the East Coast and treetop canopy tours, visitors can see the sights from new heights.

RALEIGH COUNTY

- > In Raleigh County, Grandview, part of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve; Little Beaver State Park and Lake Stephens are destinations for scenic views as well as outdoor activities like hiking, fishing, paddle boating and SUP.

FAYETTE COUNTY

- > A hot spot for whitewater, rock climbing and hiking, Fayetteville has been named one of the "Top 10 Coolest Small Towns" by *Budget Travel* and the "Best River Town" by *Blue Ridge Outdoors*.



▼ Winterplace Ski Resort



📍 Downtown Hinton

Heritage

RICH IN HISTORY AND HERITAGE,

Southern West Virginia's roots run deep. Cultural Appalachian traditions are cherished and well-preserved in each historic town.

The flourishing coal industry came in with a boom, flooding the state with new jobs and families moving in. But, the pop-up coal towns disappeared just as quickly as they came. Coal remains a strong industry in Southern West Virginia, with remnants of the original coal boom still visible today.

From the towering coal tipples to the hollow mouths of coke ovens, you can still stroll through ghost towns like Nuttallburg and Sewell.

HINTON

Hinton is a historic rail town with scenic rail tours and an annual Railroad Days festival.

BECKLEY EXHIBITION COAL MINE

The underground abandoned coal mine offers a look into the past. Daily tours, given by former coal miners, are offered from April 1-November 1.

NATIONAL COAL HERITAGE TRAIL

Six of the 13 counties that make up the National Coal Heritage Trail are located within the region covered by Visit Southern West Virginia. These counties are full of coal history and stories.

BRAMWELL

Bramwell was the site of the most millionaires per capita in America in the 1800s. Coal baron mansions can be seen on "Millionaire Row," and are open to the public for tours twice a year. Arrangements for private, guided tours can be made.



📍 Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine

◀ Kirkwood Winery



Food, Brews and Spirits

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AFTER A LONG DAY ON THE RIVER OR TRAILS, there's nothing better than kicking back at your favorite restaurant to enjoy some good local food and drinks. Southern West Virginia's quickly emerging "foodie" culture is making it a destination for one-of-a-kind meals that you can't find anywhere else.

Eat like a local. Venture into each Southern West Virginia town and you'll find a hidden gem. From pepperoni rolls and craft brews to mouth-watering steaks and fine dining, Southern West Virginia is making a name for itself. Enjoy independent eateries with farm-to-table flair.

BREWERIES

The brewery scene is exploding in Southern West Virginia. Bridge Brew Works, Weathered Ground Brewery, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Co. and Dobra Zupas all offer unique takes on classic brews.



FAYETTEVILLE

Fayetteville has a surprising amount of independent eateries for such a small town, all with a local, fresh focus. And they're far from traditional! Each menu stands out for an offbeat culinary cuisine.

LEWISBURG

Home to Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, Smooth Ambler Spirits, Hawk Knob Hard Cider & Mead and a number of unique restaurants, Lewisburg is known as one of America's Coolest Small Towns.

COFFEE HOUSES

Quirky cafes with a great cup of coffee — Southern West Virginia's coffee houses serve up mugfuls of artisanal blends, paired with tasty treats. Cathedral Cafe, Chocolate Moose Roasted Coffee and Wood Iron Eatery offer beverages that are the perfect start to your morning.



Stops

WEST VIRGINIANS are known for their hard work ethic and pride in the state's history and heritage. That pride has bred entrepreneurial spirit which can be seen through the number of locally owned and operated markets, specialty shops and culinary creations bursting with distinct personality.

TAMARACK MARKETPLACE: THE BEST OF WEST VIRGINIA

Full of hidden gems, Tamarack is filled with artwork, sculptures and crafts, all from local WV artisans.

CHEESE 'N MORE STORE

A quaint shop with the air of an old-time general store, Cheese 'N More is stocked with an assortment of cheeses, deli meats, candy, nuts, spices, jams, relishes and other foods as well as hand-made outdoor furniture.

WATER STONE OUTDOORS

Started by Maura and Gene Kistler and Kenny Parker, climbing pioneers of the New River Gorge, Water Stone Outdoors is the "climber's climbing shop." With the biggest shoe selection on the East Coast and some of the most knowledgeable staff, Water Stone is a Fayetteville landmark.

THREE RIVERS AVIAN CENTER

A rehabilitation center for more than 150 native bird species, the center focuses on educational programs/community outreach and conservation.

MYSTERY HOLE

A nod to the quirky roadside attractions of the past and a West Virginia icon, see the laws of gravity defied in the mysterious chambers beneath this roadside gift shop.





KEY EVENTS

📍 Bridge Day

Spring

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LEWISBURG CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL

More chocolate concoctions that you can even imagine! The Lewisburg Chocolate Festival has decadent truffles, fluffy pastries, creamy mousses and sweetly blended alcoholic drinks for sampling. Test your taste buds with a mousse eating contest or bake-off.

FEAST OF THE RAMSON

The wild onion is distinguishable by its strong scent, which gives a hint of its powerful flavor. Try the bold, traditional delicacy for yourself come harvest time, when trash bags full of the veggie are sizzled up along with other regional dishes and desserts. Fully immerse yourself in Appalachia with classic Southern West Virginia entertainment before the wild onion feast!



NEW RIVER BIRDING FESTIVAL

Search the Mountain State for more than 100 native birds, from rare species to hummingbirds and fierce raptors. Hit the trails and the rivers on an expedition to find, band and learn about West Virginia's diverse wildlife from expert guides and educational workshops.

📍 New River Birding Festival

Summer

APPALACHIAN MAKER'S MARKET

West Virginia culture is filled with a love for music and the arts. This festival brings the best of Southern West Virginia together! Feast your eyes on the colors, feel the textures and appreciate the love and care that went into making every piece. West Virginia is abundant with talent, and this festival features daily musical entertainment by local musicians. Enjoy everything from Celtic music to bluegrass!

HONEY BEE FESTIVAL

Learn how to raise bees, taste and purchase local honey, see a live honey bee demonstration and browse information displays during the Honey Bee Festival. The event features food vendors, music, special children's activities at the Youth Museum and tours of the Exhibition Coal Mine.



Appalachian Maker's Market

Fall

GRAPE STOMPING FESTIVAL

Jump into the vat and squish some fruit through your toes! While that juice is not used to make the 30+ wines you can sample at the festival, it is a nod to the longstanding tradition of grape stomping. Enjoy folk dancing to the mountain music and raise your glass to the Appalachian crafters. Kirkwood Winery specializes in bottling wild and wonderful flavors from local dandelions and wild ramps!

HINTON RAILROAD DAYS

An annual tradition in Summers County, Hinton Railroad Days attracts thousands of visitors to the small town. Attendees can take a tour of the Railroad Museum, watch as the famed Autumn Colors Express pulls into the station from Huntington or Charleston, admire the fall foliage, browse dozens of food and craft vendors, listen to music and more.

BRIDGE DAY

From BASE jumpers leaping 800+ feet from the iconic New River Gorge Bridge to the riverbed below, to rapellers dropping down the lines from the catwalk, Bridge Day is an epic event. Held for more than 40 years, Bridge Day is the largest, longest-running extreme festival of its kind in the world. Join tens of thousands of spectators or get in on the action: ride down the highline zipline or take a tandem leap.

SOMETHING TO DISCOVER

A DRIVE BACK IN TIME

Driving through Monroe County is a surreal look back in time. Traces of time-honored traditions can be seen around every corner. The Heritage Quilt Trail will lead you from one traditional design to the next, through age-old mountain artistry and history.

UNDER THE BRIDGE, THE RIVER BELOW

One of the most compelling views of the New River Gorge was illegal to access for decades, but since Bridge Walk was founded in 2009, visitors are able stroll the steel beams of the iconic New River Gorge Bridge from the catwalk below.

FRESH FROM THE FARM

For fresh, locally-grown flavors, look no further than Southern West Virginia. From picking your own berries at Sunset Berry Farm, the state's "sweetest strawberry patch," to perusing the produce at local farmers markets, the region is ripe with agricultural delights.

BECKLEY—THE HEART OF SOUTHERN WV

Situated between two major interstates and on the edge of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, Beckley is known as the "Heart of Southern West Virginia." Explore the historic downtown and stop by Raleigh Playhouse for a show. Or head over to the Historic Black Knight for a round of golf. The Historic Black Knight is open to the public and offers a golf course, swimming, dining and banquet services in an atmosphere of casual elegance.

CRAFT BEVERAGES

Along with its booming beer scene, Southern West Virginia has its fair share of award-winning wineries and distilleries (and even a whiskey barrel manufacturer). Sample the varietals at Kirkwood Winery and Daniel Vineyards; visit Hawk Knob Hard Cider and Mead, the state's first cidery or savor the view and wine and mead at Old World Libations. Prefer whiskey? Take a tour of Smooth Ambler or Isaiah Morgan distilleries and see how their products go from grain to glass. Whatever your beverage of choice, find something to sip on in Southern West Virginia.

SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA FACT SHEET



2,500+
LODGING OPTIONS
Including hotel rooms, vacation/
cabins rentals
and B&Bs

10 STATE
PARKS

4 WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT
AREAS

2 STATE
FOREST



304,687
POPULATION
In our 9-county region



in 2017
5.9% ↑
IN VISITOR SPENDING
30% higher than the
national growth rate



Visit Southern West Virginia is the
Destination Marketing Organization for 9
southern WV counties:

- Raleigh
- Fayette
- Nicholas
- Wyoming
- Monroe
- Summers
- Mercer
- McDowell
- Greenbrier

visit
**SOUTHERN
WEST VIRGINIA**



Since 1978, Southern West Virginia has been home to the New River Gorge National River. On December 27, 2020, the **70,000+** acre park and 53-mile stretch of the river was redesignated as the New River Gorge (NRG) National Park and Preserve. The approximately 7,000 acres that make up the National Park are located in four areas: Sandstone Falls, Grandview, Thurmond and the Lower New River Gorge. The preserve portion of the National Park and Preserve encompasses the remaining 65,000 acres.



The New River Gorge Bridge in Fayette County is 3,030 feet long, making it the fourth longest steel single-span bridge in the world. It towers 876 feet above the New River. Every third Saturday in October, the bridge closes to vehicle traffic to host Bridge Day, WV's largest one-day festival.



The Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine is a unique history and heritage attraction where people can ride a "mine trip" car through what was once the operational Phillips-Sprague Mine, which closed in 1953. The property features several restorations of buildings typically found in a coal camp.



Southern West Virginia is within a day's drive of **60-70%** of the United States population.



Southern West Virginia is the home to the newest high adventure base of the Boy Scouts of America, The Summit Bechtel Reserve. The Reserve hosted the World Scout Jamboree in 2019 and is the permanent home of the National Scout Jamboree.