

# Gauley River

National Recreation Area  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Gauley River National Recreation Area

The Gauley River was added to the National Park System in 1988 in order to protect and preserve the scenic, recreational, geological and cultural resources along with the fish and wildlife.

The 25 miles of Gauley River and six miles of the Meadow River pass through scenic gorges

and valleys containing a wide variety of natural features. Dropping 26 feet per mile through a gorge that averages 500 feet in depth, the Gauley is noted for its outstanding whitewater and is one of the most technical rivers in the nation. The Meadow River gradient averages 71 feet per mile.

In developing the National Recreation Area, the National Park Service will provide land and water based recreational sites and programs. This will allow the visitor to experience the park's resources without impairing the natural, cultural and scenic values of the area.



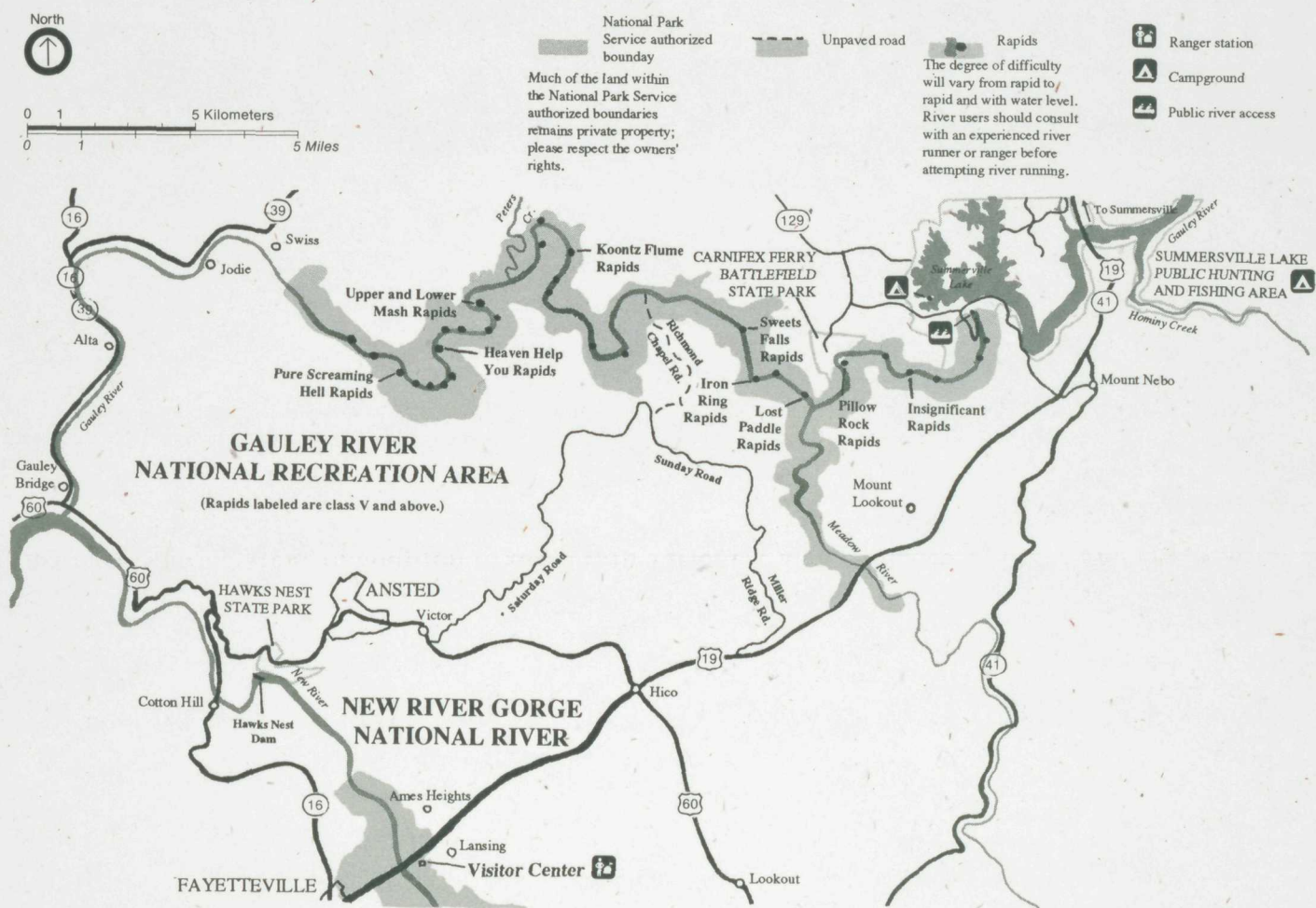
### New River Gorge National River

Park Headquarters  
P.O. Box 246  
Glen Jean, W.V. 25846  
(304) 465-0508

Canyon Rim Visitor Center  
P.O. 202  
Lansing, W.V. 25862  
(304) 574-2115







## History

The Gauley River historically has been both a corridor and a barrier to human activity. The first non-native settlement was established in the late 1700s at Peter's Creek. In the early 1900s railroads and lumber companies came to the Gauley River gorge to harvest the vast supply of timber.

The Civil War was a major event of significance along the Gauley River. Life was disrupted as disorganization and turmoil affected everyone living in the area. A major Civil War incident occurred on September 10, 1861, at the confluence of the Gauley and Meadow rivers. Union troops engaged the confederates and forced them to evacuate an entrenched position overlooking Carnifex Ferry. The site of this event is located two miles southwest of the Summersville Dam and is listed on the National Register of Historical Places as Carnifex Ferry Battlefield State Park.

## Nature

Many species of plants and animals persist in the Gauley River National Recreation Area. Ranging from the ridgetop varieties adapted to constant winds and rocky, dry soils to the mixed hardwood forests, the plant and animal types vary at different levels along the gorge.

The Gauley River also may have the largest population in the world of Virginia Spiraea, a rare plant species. Ten other rare plants and six species of rare animals are present in the initial studies of this park service area. In addition to these rare varieties, an abundance of other plants and wildlife live in the Gauley River gorge.

## Recreation

It is believed the first recreational use of the Gauley River began in the early 1900's in the community of Swiss. Here city dwellers were invited to enjoy a country retreat along the river. Local residents remember childhood adventures of riding railroad ties when flood waters created huge curling waves.

Today recreation along the Gauley and Meadow rivers is provided in a primitive setting, but not quite as primitive as floating on railroad ties. Whitewater rafters and boaters are thrilled by the exciting turbulence of the rapids ranging from Class I to Class V+. Rock climbers are challenged by the high cliff walls and hikers enjoy rustic trails and beautiful views. Fishing is permitted in accordance with federal and state laws and breeding areas are at a premium for smallmouth bass and walleye.