

## Climb Safe

*“Climbing is pretty darn dangerous ... You can never eliminate the chances that you or someone close to you will be the victim of a climbing accident, but you can stack the odds in your favor by seeking competent instruction and exercising good judgement. No matter what happens, just remember that you—and only you—are responsible for your safety in the park.”*

- Jay Young, New River Gorge rock climber

Most of the routes in the New River Gorge favor the advanced and expert climber. The majority of routes are 5.9 and harder; most sport routes fall in the 5.10 to 5.12 range. Local climbing shops and National Park Service visitor centers offer climbing information and sell guidebooks.

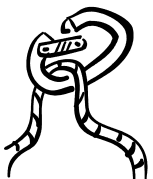


### In case of an emergency: call 911

Because of the remote nature of many climbing sites within the national park, rescue can be difficult and time-consuming.

### Area Medical Facilities:

- Oak Hill: Plateau Medical Center  
304-465-8600
- Summersville: Summersville Memorial Hospital,  
304-872-2891
- Beckley: Raleigh General Hospital,  
304-256-4100



Basic first aid is also available at Canyon Rim Visitor Center, near the climbing areas in the northern end of the park (see map). This visitor center is open daily, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

## Additional Safety Tips:

- Open cliffs can be an especially dangerous place to be during lightning storms; seek safe shelter away from the rim and tall trees.
- Take drinking water, and do not drink from streams or rivers.
- Hunting is allowed within this national park; wearing blaze orange is recommended during hunting season.
- Be able to identify West Virginia's two species of venomous snakes, the northern copperhead and timber rattlesnake.
- Be able to identify poison ivy; direct skin contact with this vine can result in a severe rash. *Leaves of three, let it be!*
- Respect wildlife and stay safe by observing animals from a distance; never feed wildlife, especially black bears.

*“Rock climbing’s popularity is growing every year. As our numbers increase, we are at risk of losing access to hundreds of crags across the nation unless we take better care of the land. We must be more careful to protect the natural beauty that exists at our climbing areas. I support the principles of Leave No Trace and invite you to do the same. Working together, we can protect the integrity of public and private lands, and our access to climb there.”*

- Lynn Hill, rock climber

**This brochure is a basic reference for private climbers in the park, not group usage. For park group climbing permits or information on local rock climbing guides/outfitters, contact the National Park Service at 304-465-0508.**

Portions of this text are printed with permission from Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. For more information on Center resources and programs: 800-332-4100 [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org)

For park information:  
New River Gorge National River  
P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846  
304-465-0508 [www.nps.gov/neri](http://www.nps.gov/neri)

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National Park Service  
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New River Gorge National River



## Climbing Information

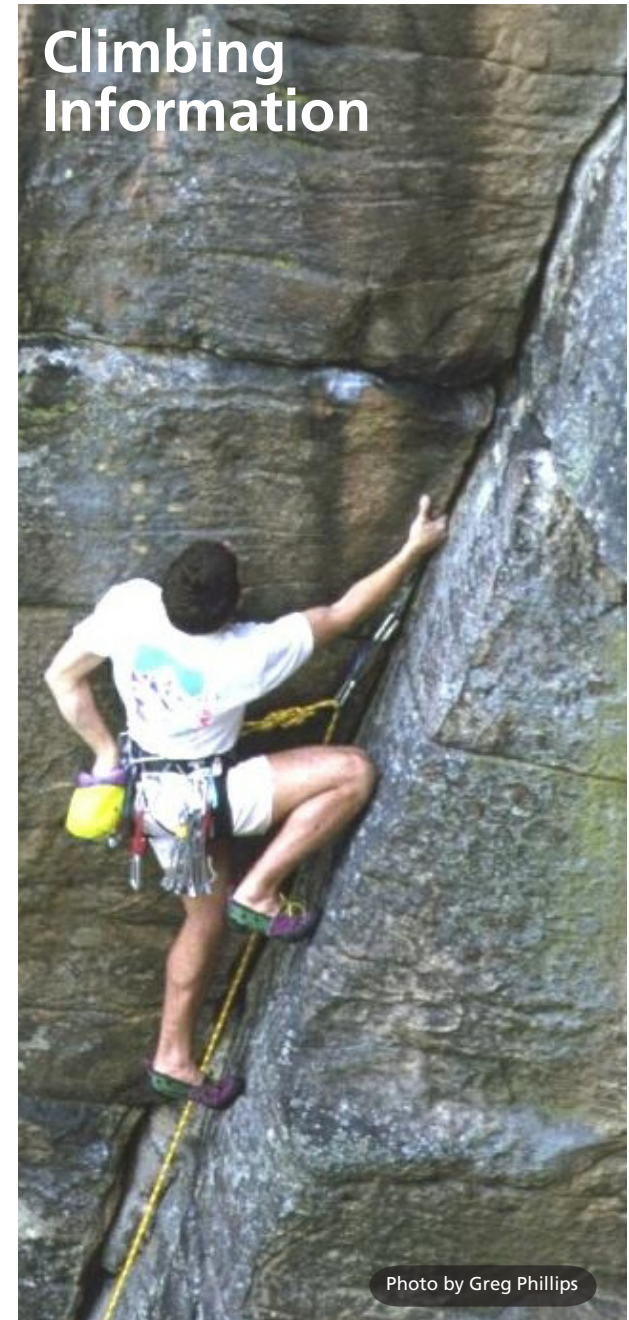


Photo by Greg Phillips

## New River Rocks

With over 1,400 established rock climbs, New River Gorge National River has become one of the most popular climbing areas in the country. The extensive escarpment that rims much of the gorge is composed of Nuttall sandstone, renowned among rock climbers as some of the finest quality climbing rock in America. These hard cliffs range from 30 to 120 feet in height, with an abundance of crack and face routes.



The National Park Service mission is to protect the park's natural and cultural resources for future generations, while providing opportunities for today's visitors to enjoy, understand, and appreciate these resources. The increased popularity of the park's climbing areas impacts soils and rock, fragile plant communities, and rare wildlife species. There are also problems with litter, human waste disposal, overcrowding, and damage to cultural resources.

To address these concerns, the National Park Service, in collaboration with the New River Alliance of Climbers, created the park Climbing Management Plan. The goal is to ensure the protection of national river resources while continuing to provide opportunities for a high quality rock climbing experience. Respect for the environment, wildlife, climbers, and other park visitors will go a long way toward assuring continued access and enjoyment of the area.

## Protect the Rock

Help protect park resources by following these rules and guidelines:

- The use of top anchors decreases impacts on cliff-top ecology. Tree trunks or other vegetation should not be used as anchors.
- Critical wildlife habitat can be destroyed when moss, lichens, leaves, and other natural materials are removed or "cleaned" from cliff tops. Please leave natural areas undisturbed.
- Leave the natural rock as you find it by not defacing, damaging, or altering these surfaces.



National Park Service photo.

- Drilling to install new anchors or replace unsafe bolts or anchors is only permitted to authorized personnel. Exceptions are decided on a case-by-case basis. For a drilling permit application, contact the National Park Service at 304-465-0508.
- Fixed hardware can only be removed by authorized personnel.
- Fixed draws and slings are prohibited.
- Use chalk sparingly.
- If it is feasible, after cleaning a route, rappel from the anchors instead of lowering.
- Report bad anchors, bolts, and other hardware online at the NRAC web site: [www.newriverclimbing.net](http://www.newriverclimbing.net).

## Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics

Historically, American climbers have had a high standard of environmental awareness and stewardship. As the popularity of this sport continues to grow, both social and environmental impacts are increasing. Many of these impacts can be prevented or minimized if people using the park know and practice Leave No Trace.

### Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:

- Use existing park trails; do not create new trails or use those that are just beginning. Travel on the most durable surfaces, such as rock and gravel.
- Camping is prohibited within 100 feet of parking areas, trails, water sources, and historic sites; and within 300 feet of any cliff top or bottom. Camping is also prohibited along Route 82 near Bridge Area Craggs in Lansing, West Virginia.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

### Dispose of Waste Properly:

- Pack it in, pack it out.
- When no restroom is available, deposit solid human waste in a *cat hole* dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet (70 steps) from water, trails, crags, and parking areas. Cover the *cat hole* when finished. Always pack out toilet paper (use zip-lock plastic bags.)








### Minimize Campfire Impacts:

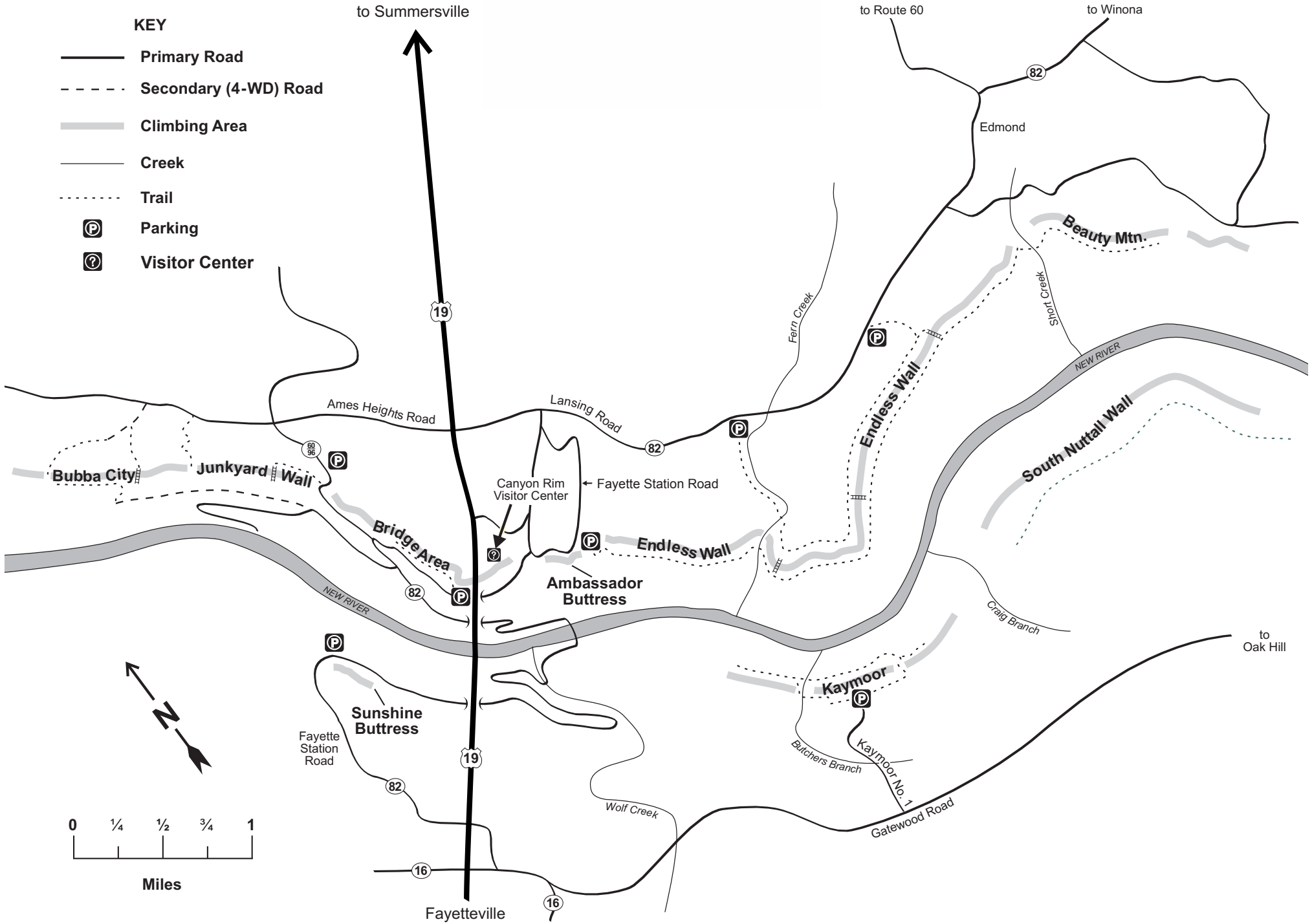
- Campfires can cause lasting impacts on the land. Use a light-weight camp stove for cooking and lantern for light.
- If you choose to build a campfire, use only established fire rings; keep fires small. Use only down and dead wood.
- The emerald ash borer has been found in this area. Do not move campfire wood in or out of the park.
- Never leave a fire unattended. Put out fires completely.



# Climbing Area Map

## KEY

-  Primary Road
-  Secondary (4-WD) Road
-  Climbing Area
-  Creek
-  Trail
-  Parking
-  Visitor Center



## Trail and Area Information

There are over 70 miles of trail within New River Gorge National River. Several trails provide access to climbers and hikers near the gorge rim (see map).

Park in designated parking locations. Be sure to hide or remove all valuables while climbing.

Many private campgrounds are located within easy driving distance from the climbing areas. There are also primitive campgrounds within the park. Primitive camping is allowed on park property, except where specifically excluded. Camping is prohibited within 100 feet of parking areas, water sources, and historic sites; and within 300 feet of any cliff top or bottom.

For more detailed area information contact the National Park Service. Here are a few more ways to make the most of your visit:

### Plan Ahead and Prepare:

- Know and follow all park regulations, plus any special concerns for the particular area you'll visit.
- Research climbing routes in advance of your visit; choose climbs appropriate for the abilities of you and your group.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use; keep group sizes small.

### Leave What You Find:

- Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.
- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.

### Be Considerate of Other Visitors:

- Always respect private property rights.
- Respect other visitors and the quality of their experience; be courteous.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.



## Species Spotlight: News on Those in Need

While enjoying the climbing resources in New River Gorge, please respect the natural resources of this fragile ecosystem. This region is home to a diversity of plant and animal life, which includes several rare and/or endangered species. Two species that may be impacted by rock climbing are the Allegheny woodrat and peregrine falcon.

The Allegheny woodrat is swiftly and severely declining in the northern part of its range. Researchers are working to determine the cause of this decline. Challenges facing this species may include habitat loss, food shortage, or parasitic infection. Loss of vegetation and ground cover at the base of the cliffs is a serious threat to woodrats.



Allegheny woodrat. National Park Service photo.

Peregrine falcons are once again flying above the gorge. An active peregrine falcon reintroduction and monitoring program is conducted in the park. Over 70 young birds have been released, or "hacked," into the gorge, with hopes that adult pairs will nest here. Human activities, such as rock climbing during the bird's critical, early spring courtship period, may be a contributing factor in the local challenges faced by this species.

In addition to these animals, some plants are also facing great challenges. The park's rimrock plant community, located at the top of the cliffs, is especially fragile. Insects are attacking two species of trees in the region, threatening their survival. The woolly adelgid looks like white fuzz on the



Peregrine falcon on a cliff edge. Photo by Gary Hartley.

needed branches of eastern hemlock, while the emerald ash borer is attacking ash trees. People can unknowingly contribute to the spread of the emerald ash borer and other forest pests when they move firewood, so **it is imperative that campers refrain from bringing campfire wood into the park.** Damage to and loss of habitat is an additional factor that impacts plants in the New River Gorge. Removing plants is also a problem. **Do not trim or cut any vegetation.**



Emerald ash borer.

The Allegheny woodrat and peregrine falcon inhabit the rocky slopes and cliffs of the Appalachian Mountains. Sharing the rock with native animals and plants is imperative when enjoying New River Gorge National River. Here's how you can help when you visit the home of these native species:

### Respect Wildlife:

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach wild animals.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, and raising young.
- Never feed wildlife. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predation and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing food and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.