

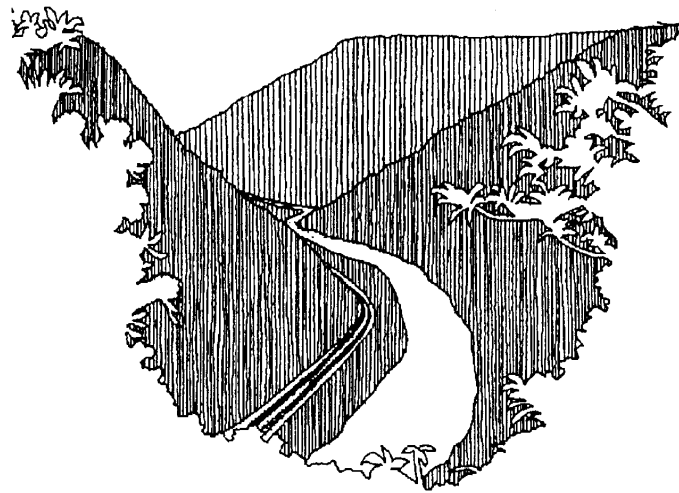
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



New River Gorge National River

# Grandview

## A Guide to the Grandview Rim Trail



*“Rock.” In 1924 that was what the lovely view at Grandview was called....At first we were afraid to get close to the edge so we just stood back and gazed at the beautiful scene before us.*

—Alma Carper

## **Welcome...**

The Grandview Rim Trail offers a moderate walk following the gentle contour of the rim of the gorge for 1.6 miles. Grand views and refreshing shade are some of the pleasures of this trail. The trail links three overlooks—it begins just down the flagstone walkway from the Main Overlook, a spur to the North Overlook, and ends at the Turkey Spur Overlook.

This brochure will guide you along the first 0.5 mile of the Grandview Rim Trail. Along the way, numbered stops will help you explore the river gorge, as well as the plants, animals, and people, past and present, that have carved a place here over time.

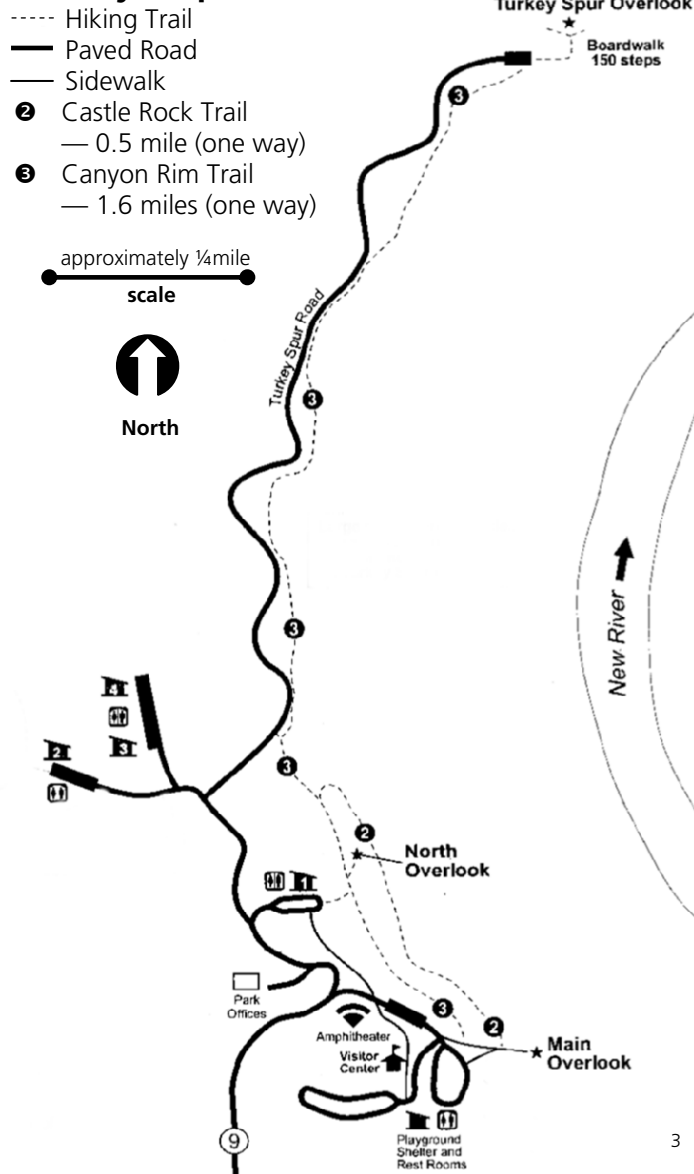
At the final stop, you may choose to return the way you came or to continue along the trail for another 1.1 miles, giving you a 3.0-mile round trip. You can also choose to return by way of the Castle Rock Trail—Grandview's most challenging trail.

**NOTE:** The Castle Rock Trail is not recommended for children because of uneven, rough footing and several drop-offs. Hiking shoes/boots are recommended.

# Carving a Place

*Water chisels away at rock and forms a gorge through the land. Plants take root in cracks, and animals find crevices where they can burrow and nest. People come. They clear and tunnel and cut. Each is carving a place from the land, and together they are creating the New River Gorge.*

## Vicinity Map



# 1 Hillside Homes

Forests cover the hillsides of the New River Gorge. A variety of trees grow in these natural communities. River birch and sycamore can be found near the river's edge, while tulip poplar and maple grow along the rich slopes of the gorge. These trees also grow along the ridge tops, along with oak and hickory trees, like the ones you are walking through now.



**Eastern Hemlock**  
*Tsuga canadensis*

## The Ridge Top Forest

Because of dry and exposed nature of the ridge top, the forest is more open than it is at lower elevations. Common trees include oak, maple, hickory, beech, black gum, locust, and hemlock. Woodpeckers, snakes, insects, skunks, and raccoons make their homes in the holes and hollows of these trees.

## Places for Plants

Wildflowers are not as profuse on the ridge top, but there are many unusual species. In spring and summer, look for orchids—lady's slippers and rattlesnake plantain, evergreens—like galax, and late-summer's, ghostly white Indian pipe.



**Indian pipe**  
*Monotropa*

## Pieces of the Forest

### 2 Red Maple, *Acer rubrum*

The red maple is common here. Its flowers tint the mountains red in the spring and its leaves add scarlet in the fall. Every part of the tree provides food for wildlife—songbirds eat the buds, chipmunks feed on the seeds, and near the river beaver strip the bark.



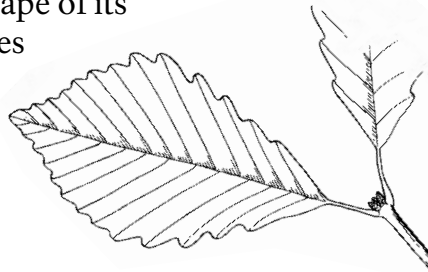
### 3 Pink Lady's Slipper, *Cypripedium acaule*



One of the treasured wildflowers of the woods, lady's slipper or moccasin flower, is rarely seen. This patch, which blooms in May, is spreading. Like all plants, this wildflower is protected in the park, so that everyone can enjoy its beauty.

### 4 Chestnut Oak, *Quercus prinus*

An upland tree, the chestnut oak can grow to over 60 feet tall and four feet around. This oak is named for the shape of its leaf that resembles the once-common American chestnut. Squirrels and turkeys depend on chestnut oak acorns for food.



## 5 Claiming a Space

### Rhododendrons

The rhododendron thicket you are walking through is small compared to the impenetrable stands that settlers called “laurel hells.”

Rhododendrons are in the heath family and are found here along the rim of the gorge. The waxy surface of their evergreen leaves

protects them from drought by slowing water loss. If you’re here during the winter or a summer dry spell, notice how the leaves curl, conserving moisture by reducing the exposed surface area. Look at the lower twigs and leaves. Have deer been nibbling them?



**Great rhododendron**  
*Rhododendron maximum*

### Southern and Northern Species

The rhododendrons around the Grandview parking lots were planted in the 1970s and are a southern species, *Rhododendron catawbiense*, with a pink bloom in May. The native species you see here, *Rhododendron maximum*—the great rhododendron, has a white bloom in late June.



**Catawba rhododendron**  
*Rhododendron catawbiense*

## 6 Becoming a Park

### A State Park

By the 1930s land here lost its usefulness to the coal and timber companies that had operated nearby since the late 1800s. However, people still loved its beauty. In 1939 the state of West Virginia purchased 52 acres to create Grandview State Park and protect this area. The nearby shelter and hearths were designed by the National Park Service and built around 1940 by the Civilian Conservation Corps for public recreation. With additional purchases of land, Grandview State Park expanded to 891 acres.

### A National Park

Approximately 62,000 acres of the New River Gorge became New River Gorge National River in 1978. Twelve years later, Grandview became part of New River Gorge National River when the State of West Virginia transferred it to the National Park Service.

## 7 A Heath Haven

Other heaths, in addition to the rhododendron, find places on this rocky rim. Within this small triangle of land are three other members of the heath family.



**Teaberry or wintergreen**  
*Gaultheria procumbens*



**Sourwood**  
*Oxydendrum arboreum*



**Mountain laurel**  
*Kalmia latifolia*

Follow the North Overlook signs.

7

## 8 Cutting Away

For millions of years, the Teays River flowed here as a meandering stream. From 225 to 65 millions years ago, the Allegheny Plateau uplifted and eroded many times. During these uplifts, the river began carving the gorge.

One hundred years ago, this seven- mile view was different as well, for this land was also changed by industry. Virgin trees were cut from the hillsides for timber, and coal was dug from the ground. The logs were hauled up and down the slopes by the trams and skidders of the J.R. Beatty Lumber Company. From 1891 to 1939, the Royal Coal and Coke Company mined coal in tunnels under where you now stand.

Communities grew along the river. Downstream (to your left), Royal was on this side of the river, with Quinnimont just across. Upstream, the towns of Glade and Hamlet thrived until around 1950.

Later, from the 1950s to the 1970s, mining left a mark still visible today, a cut one- fourth of the way down most of the surrounding slopes.



Quinnimont Depot—1935

As industry moved on and towns faded away, nature began to reclaim the gorge. Today the New River flows through forested slopes 1,400 feet below you, draining the land from Blowing Rock, North Carolina all the way to Gauley Bridge, West Virginia.

Return to the trail junction and turn right.

8



## 9 A Dying Forest



**American Chestnut**  
*Castanea dentata*

In places within the gorge we are seeing the loss of individual trees, or an entire tree species may be threatened. The American chestnut was virtually wiped out by a blight in the early 1900s. Today young saplings can be seen sprouting from old stumps, but they will likely never reach maturity. Now the flowering dogwood and eastern hemlock are under attack and threatened by disease.

Why are some tree species disappearing? The decline of some species can be attributed to human-caused factors, such as air pollution, timbering, and the introduction of disease as well as aggressive, non-native species.

The death of individual trees can also be from natural causes—damage from fire, drought, or ice—and is part of natural succession. Nature tries to fill empty places. As trees die, spaces open in the canopy and new trees reach for the light. The dead trees are homes for wildlife and the decaying wood turns into rich humus that nourishes new plants. It will take a long time, and the new forest may not be the same as the old, but nature will reclaim this ridge top.

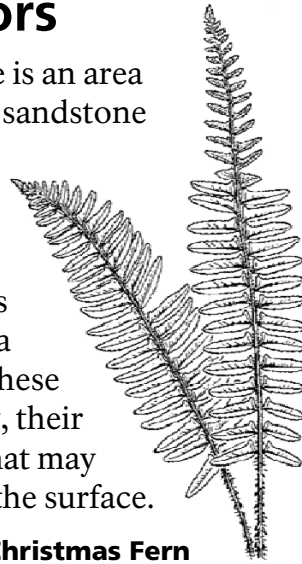


**Flowering Dogwood**  
*Cornus florida*

## 10 The Sculptors

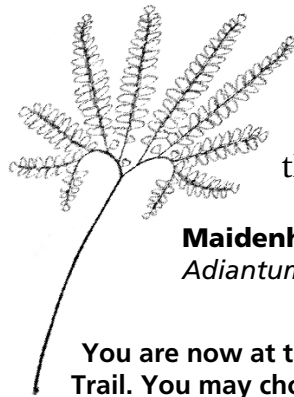
Below the rim of the gorge is an area of rectangular, castle-like sandstone cliffs. A narrow seam of coal is exposed at the base of the cliffs.

Lichens, mosses, and ferns are the first plants to gain a foothold in the cracks of these rocks. Other plants follow, their roots trapping moisture that may widen the crack or erode the surface.



**Christmas Fern**  
*Polystichum acrostichoides*

The mightiest sculptor is the New River itself. At work over millions of years, it carves an ever deeper gorge. Listen to the river as it creates the masterpiece that is the New River Gorge.



**Maidenhair Fern**  
*Adiantum pedatum*

You are now at the junction with the Castle Rock Trail. You may choose to return the way you came or continue along this trail for the remaining 1.1 miles, giving you a 3.0-mile round trip total. You can also choose to return by way of the Castle Rock Trail—Grandview's most challenging trail. It will take you to the Main Overlook in 0.5 mile, but is considered difficult. The Castle Rock Trail is not recommended for children due to its narrow paths, uneven terrain, and several large drop-offs. Be sure to wear appropriate hiking shoes when walking this trail.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Strausbaugh, P.D. and Earl L. Cole. *Flora of West Virginia—Second Edition*. Morgantown, WV: Seneca Books, Inc., 1978.

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