



BRIDGE DAY FESTIVAL

The engineering marvel of the New River Gorge Bridge is now the scene of one of Fayette County's and southern West Virginia's most popular festivals. It is a unique day when man's Technology is studied and nature's beauty is enjoyed.

The festival is held on the second Saturday of October each year. It is the only day when pedestrians may legally walk across the bridge, when one side of the bridge's traffic lane is closed. For safety purposes the bridge is closed to pedestrian use the rest of the year.

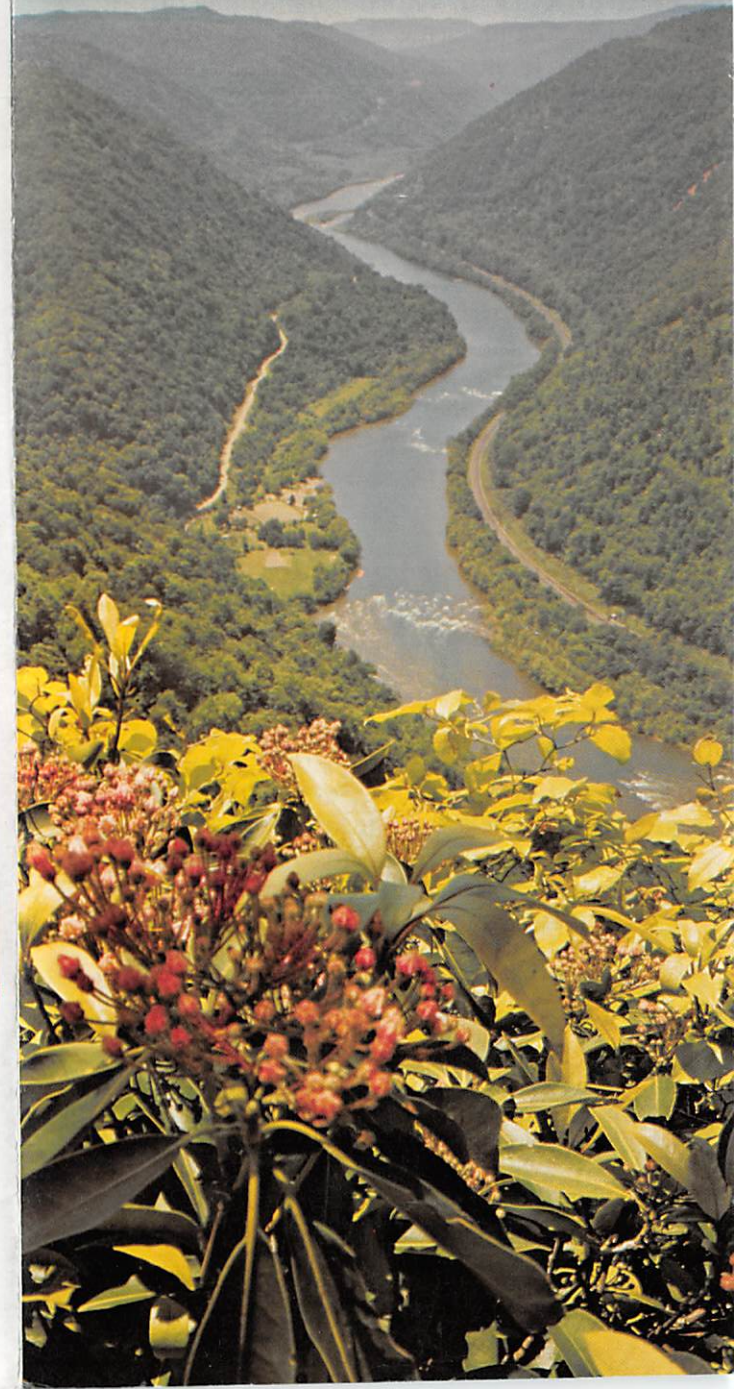
The view of the deep-v-shaped gorge from atop the bridge is breathtaking. This tremendous open space of the gorge is impressive with its colorful fall foliage, rolling hills of the Fayette Station country, and the roaring, rushing water of the New River. It is the ideal place for the nature lover, painter, artist, or for those who just enjoy a casual, carefree day in a festival atmosphere.

The festival entertainment is among the best in southern West Virginia. Almost 100 booths are manned providing home cooked meals, arts and crafts, ceramics, jewelry, needlecrafts, etc. Whitewater rafting is a major activity in Fayette County and on this day visitors may experience the thrust of the New River by taking mini-raft rides.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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NEW RIVER COUNTRY



EARLY HISTORY OF THE GORGE

The New River is part of the ancient Teays River system which covered the central part of North America during the Mesozoic Era. The geological changes that occurred left the steep walled, meandering gorge which is 700-1300 feet deep, averaging one mile in width, and cuts through several formations. The New River is reportedly the second oldest river in the world, only the Nile being older.

As early as 1812 the New River was studied as a possible transportation route from Virginia to the western markets. The upper river had been used but the deep V-shaped gorge in West Virginia hindered transportation, particularly crossings.

The most dramatic transportation change through the gorge was the completion of the railroad in 1873. Coal was available in the gorge and now it was accessible to markets of the world. As development progressed, the character of the gorge changed as coal mining structures such as tipples, head houses, conveyors and later coke ovens were erected. A large labor force was needed and immigrants from several nations became miners as well as blacks, mainly from Alabama and Virginia. Of necessity, coal operators built homes, company stores and other facilities for this labor force near the mines. Thus, within the gorge, near the numerous mines there were towns with colorful names such as Fire Creek, Rush Run, Dimmock and Elverton. In 1901 a hospital was built for those engaged in hazardous occupations such as mining, lumbering, and railroading - practically the only jobs available. Three of these hospitals were built

throughout the state and this one was known as the McKendree Miners Hospital No. 2. These mines, town and even the hospital are gone and only an occasional chimney, or pile of ruins, remind us of the prominent role coal mining, lumbering and railroading, played in the gorge's history.

The New River Gorge is also well known for its scenic beauty and abundance of plant life. Natural features and historic resources abound. A 50-mile segment from Hinton to Fayetteville is now a unit of the National Park Service. The New River Gorge National River is in the developmental stage and most land in the National River is in private ownership. Please respect property rights.

NEW RIVER GORGE BRIDGE

When completed on October 22, 1977, after three years of construction, the bridge measured 3,030 feet long. Arching gracefully over the New River, it has the world's longest steel arch span at 1,700 feet with a rise of 360 feet. The bridge is the second highest in the nation at 876 feet above the New River and 325 higher than the Washington Monument. The highest bridge in the nation is at Royal Gorge in Colorado.

The final cost of construction was nearly \$37 million. The contractor was the United States Steel Corporation. Cor Ten steel was used which does not require painting.

Scenic overlooks on the north side present a fine view of the bridge and the gorge. Restrooms and picnic facilities are available. An information station is manned during the summer months.

FALL FOLIAGE

The gorge is similar to mountains when the trees began to turn their colors. The top of the mountain or the rim of the gorge is the first to change. Then the beautiful yellows, reds, browns and gold colors march slowly down to the river. The variety of the fall foliage, the river, and the blue sky as a background make for a photographer's dream. Fall is an ideal time to visit southern West Virginia with its crisp but warm fall days and cool nights. It's not crowded and a leisurely visit will reward you with unsurpassed beauty of nature's fall coloration through late October.

APPROXIMATE MILEAGE TO THE NEW RIVER GORGE BRIDGE

Charleston, WV	42	Lexington, KY	226
Charlotte, NC	246	Louisville, KY	248
Cincinnati, OH	260	Nashville, TN	439
Cleveland, OH	309	Philadelphia, PA	492
Columbia, SC	340	Pittsburgh, PA	238
Covington, VA	83	Raleigh, NC	288
Harpers Ferry, WV	275	Richmond, VA	290
Harrisburg, PA	390	Roanoke, VA	150
Indianapolis, IN	356	Washington, DC	327
Knoxville, TN	270	Winston Salem, NC	170

This folder was produced through the cooperation of Fayette Plateau Chamber of Commerce, New River Travel Council, New River Gorge National River and the West Virginia Governor's Office of Economic and Community Development, Travel Division.