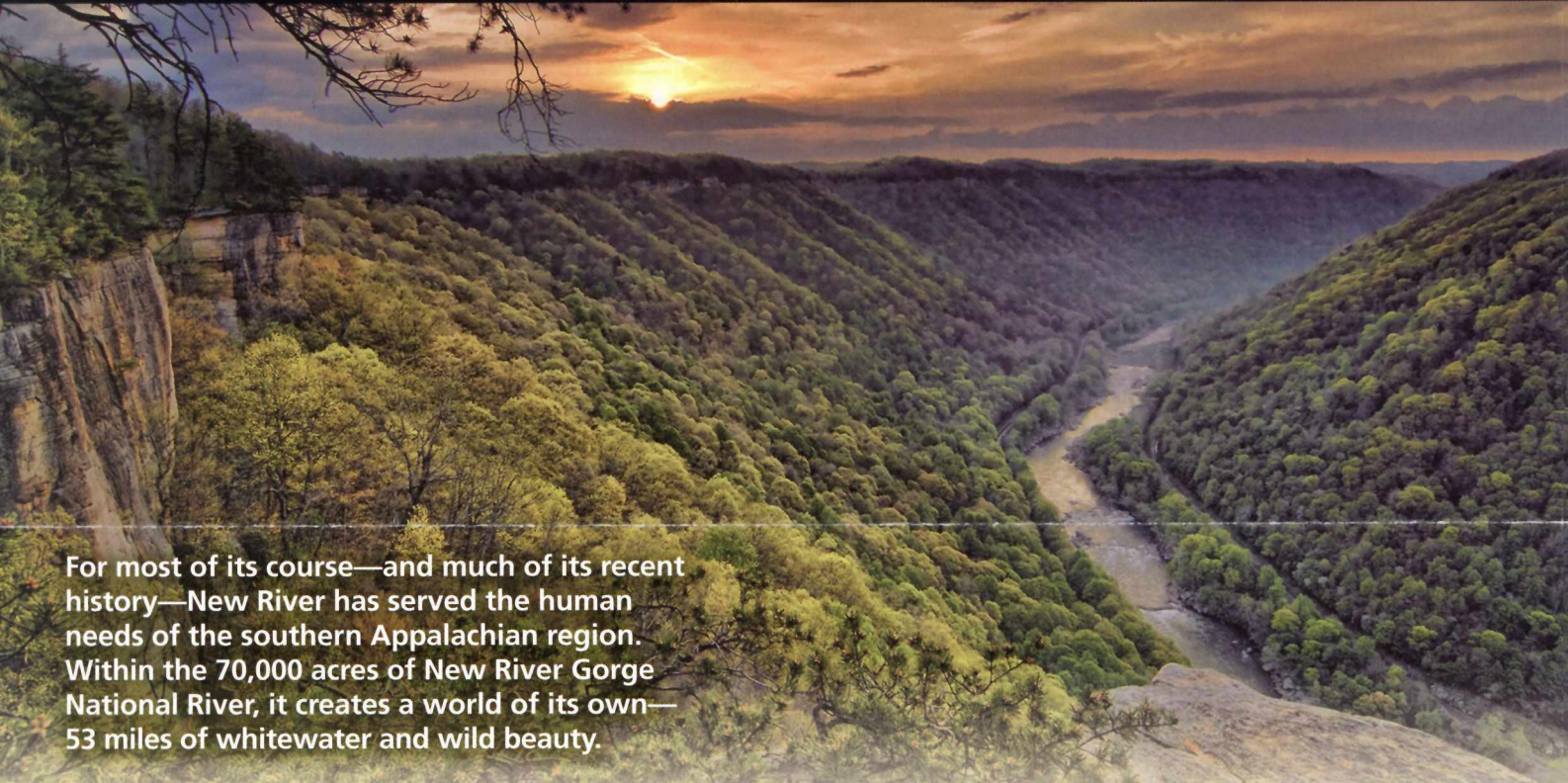


New River Gorge

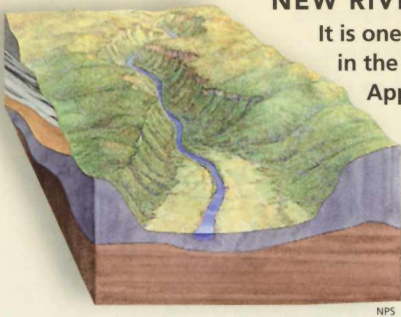
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National River
West Virginia



Sunrise over New River
ALL PHOTOS—NPS / GARY HARTLEY UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED

For most of its course—and much of its recent history—New River has served the human needs of the southern Appalachian region. Within the 70,000 acres of New River Gorge National River, it creates a world of its own—53 miles of whitewater and wild beauty.



NEW RIVER IS NOT NEW.
It is one of the oldest rivers in the world, older than the Appalachian Mountains themselves. Here at the gorge, the river cuts through the Appalachian Plateau. Some exposed rocks are as old as 330 million years.

Human history, wild habitat, and spectacular natural beauty converge in this protected stretch of New River and its extended family, Bluestone and Gauley rivers. Famous for sport fishing and whitewater rafting, the rivers and surrounding landscape offer hidden delights for those who venture off the beaten path—coal mines that fueled the age of steam, rails and roads that opened this remote country to industry, and trails that lead to a blanket of spring wildflowers or a limitless horizon.

TALES OF THREE RIVERS

New River Gorge National River
For centuries this part of New River was inaccessible to most people. In 1873 the railroad opened up this isolated part of West Virginia, making it possible to ship coal to the outside world. Mining boomed, and towns like Thurmond sprang up overnight near the coalfields and along the railroad.



JOHN DENGELER

In 1978 Congress established New River Gorge National River to preserve this free-flowing waterway. Every year millions of visitors come here for recreation and natural scenery. Within the park, New River's elevation drops 750 feet in 50 miles, creating one of the nation's premier whitewater stretches.

Gauley River National Recreation Area, established in 1988, includes 25 miles of Gauley River and 5 miles of Meadow River. Expert boaters rank Gauley among the best whitewater rivers in the world. Dropping more than 668 feet through rugged terrain, the river's complex stretch of whitewater has over 100 rapids with a steep gradient, technical runs, a high volume of water, and huge waves. Gauley offers whitewater boating, fishing, camping, hunting, and picnicking. Adjacent to the recreation area is Summersville Dam, which regulates the flow of Gauley River—the source of its outstanding fall whitewater season.

Bluestone National Scenic River, established in 1988 and named for the deep blue limestone riverbed of its upper reaches, has carved a gorge 1,000 feet deep near where it meets New River. Hundreds of species thrive in several diverse Appalachian habitats. Bluestone Turnpike, a riverbank road for those who farmed and timbered the area, is now a trail that hikers, bikers, and horseback riders use to reach this remote, undeveloped park.



Boaters float Bluestone River.
NPS / BILLY STRASSER

The forests and old buildings of New River Gorge National River are also home to some 1,400 plant species and a variety of animals, including the endangered Virginia big-eared and Indiana bats. In a world of dwindling natural habitats, migrating neotropical birds depend on this protected place for breeding.



Sandstone Falls
NPS / MARK MUSE



Thurmond Historic District



Abandoned mining structure in Nuttallburg
NPS / LOUISE McLAUGHLIN

Scarlet tanager
TANAGER—© TERRY SOHL



Great rhododendron



Great blue heron



ON AND OFF THE WATER

Boating New River is big and powerful but always runnable to experts. The Lower Gorge has some of the most technical rapids, from Class III–V difficulty. Licensed outfitters run trips April–October. For details on logistics and conditions visit the park website.

Fishing and Hunting Catch bluegill, catfish, and bass in New River's warm waters. Hunt turkey, deer, and squirrel in the forests. West Virginia fishing and hunting licenses are required.

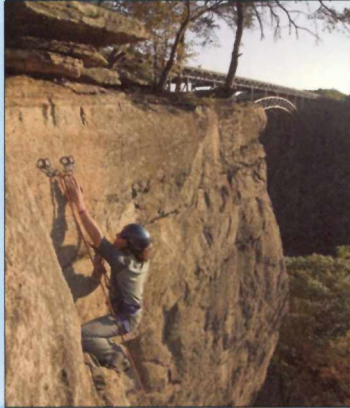
feet high. Most of the over 1,400 established routes are rated 5.9 or higher and require climbing expertise.

Climbing New River Gorge's hard sandstone cliffs range from 30–120

Hiking and Mountain Biking Trails ranging from ¼ mile to 7 miles vary in difficulty. Trail maps are available.



Biking Arrowhead Trail
ARI WILE / WELD



Climbing Bridge Buttress



Hiking Turnpike Trail



Paddling New River



Spanning New River near Fayetteville is New River Gorge Bridge. At 876 feet, it is the third-highest bridge in the US.

Trails Trails go to old coal towns, waterfalls, geological formations, and views of the gorge. Mountain biking and horseback riding are allowed on some trails.

State Parks Within or near the park are seven West Virginia state parks: Hawks Nest, Carniferry Battlefield, Babcock, Blount, Little Beaver, Camp Creek, and Pipestem Resort. Call the West Virginia Division of Tourism 800-CALL WVA (800-225-5982), or visit www.gotowv.com.

Stay Safe and Protect the Park
Federal law protects all natural and cultural features in the park. Do not disturb or collect wildlife or historic objects. • Beware of decaying structures and industrial remains. • Wear a life vest or personal flotation device (PFD) while on the water. • For a full list of park regulations, including firearms information, visit the park website.

New River Gorge National River, Bluestone National Scenic River, and Gauley River National Recreation Area are three of over 400 parks in the National Park System. For information visit www.nps.gov

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