

New River Gorge

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Park and Preserve
West Virginia

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

Sunrise over New River

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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.



NPS / PATRICIA A. TOPPER

TALES OF THREE RIVERS

New River Gorge National Park and Preserve

For centuries this part of New River was inaccessible to most people. In 1873 the railroad arrived, making it possible to ship coal to the outside world. Towns like Thurmond sprang up and thrived.

In the last century people started to come to experience one of the nation's premier whitewater stretches—the elevation drops 750 feet in 50 miles. New River Gorge National River was established in 1978 to preserve this free-flowing waterway. Now millions of visitors enjoy the natural scenery and many activities. In 2020 it was redesignated a national park and preserve to further protect its many recreational opportunities and natural treasures.

The New River gorge is home to over 1,500 species of plants and animals. Virginia big-eared and Indiana bats are among the endangered species. In a world of dwindling natural habitats, migrating neotropical birds depend on this protected place for breeding.

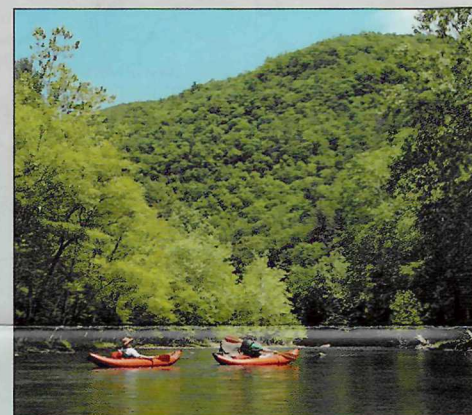


Taking on the Gauley

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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, hunting, camping, and picnicking. Next to the recreation area is Summersville Dam, which regulates the flow of Gauley River and causes its outstanding fall whitewater season.

Bluestone National Scenic River, established in 1988, is named for the deep blue limestone riverbed of its upper reaches. The river 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 logged the area, is now a trail that hikers, bikers, and horseback riders use to reach this undeveloped, remote park.



Floating the Bluestone River

NPS / WILLIAM STRASSER

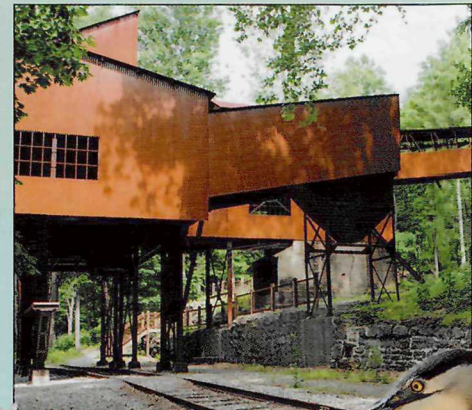


Sandstone Falls

NPS / MARK MIJSE



Thurmond Historic District



Abandoned mining structure in Nuttallburg

NPS / LOUISE MCCLAUGHLIN

Scarlet 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 to V difficulty. Outfitters run trips April through October. Visit the park website for details on logistics and conditions.

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

Climbing The New River gorge's hard sandstone cliffs range from 30 to 120

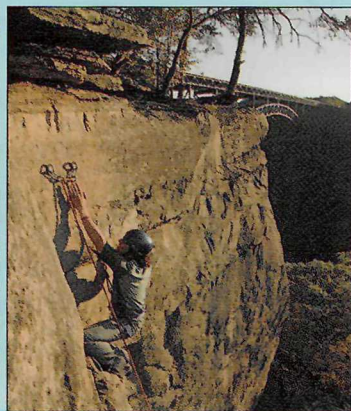
feet high. Most of the over 1,400 established routes are rated 5.9 or higher and require climbing expertise.

Hiking and Mountain Biking Trails range from 0.25 to 8.6 miles and vary in difficulty. Trail maps are available.



Biking Arrowhead Trail

ARI WILE / WELD STAFF PHOTO



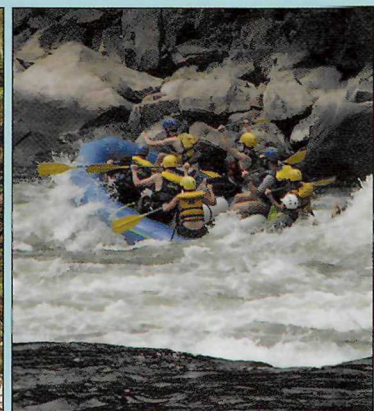
Climbing Bridge Buttress

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Hiking Turnpike Trail

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Rafting New River

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

