New River Gorge
Scenic Drives

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National River
West Virginia

Fayette Station Road circa 1920

Fayette Station Road Tour

To travel Fayette Station Road is to travel back in time before the modern New River Gorge Bridge was built in 1977. This one hundred year-old road of hairpin turns winds down to the bottom of the gorge, across a narrow bridge, and up the other side. Visible along the way are vistas of the river and bridges, a hardwood forest, and a few remnants of the New River Gorge communities that once teemed with activity.

More than forty coal mining towns lined the gorge between 1875 and 1950, when coal mining dominated the economy and social structure of the state. Today, the New River Gorge is known for its outstanding natural and scenic beauty. The many remains of the once vibrant towns, mines, and homes that filled the gorge are now mostly hidden beneath layers of native vegetation. Along Fayette Station Road, however, some remnants of the area's coal mining and railroad heritage prevail.

After leaving the parking lot of the Canyon Rim Visitor Center, the route makes a loop around the town of Lansing. Near stop #2 (see map below), as you descend into the gorge, several exposed coal seams can be seen in the cliff walls. In late fall and winter, glimpses of the gorge may be seen through the trees. Exhibits at pull-offs along the road interpret the heritage of the area, which reflects the unique synergy between the coal industry and the railroad in the New River Gorge.

In 1873 the C&O Railway opened this rugged wilderness and carried coal out of the gorge to ports in Virginia and cities in the Midwest. By 1905, thirteen towns had sprung up between Fayette Station Road and Thurmond 15 miles upstream, about one per mile. Between the 1870s and the 1950s, West Virginia coal contributed significantly to the industrialization of the United States as it fed the nation's trains, factories, fleets, and power plants.

At river level, Fayette Station Road runs directly through remnants of the townsites of Fayette and South Fayette. The two towns on opposite sides of the river were connected in 1889 when Fayette Station Bridge was completed. Over the years, the two communities grew together as one, although Fayette maintained its identity as a mining town, while South Fayette was a railroad center. Several community facilities were shared by both, including the post office, school, saloons, and the jail.

The establishment, growth, and ultimate demise of the towns of Fayette and South Fayette represent the general life cycle of a town in the gorge. A landowner or mining company would open a coal mine and build company-owned houses and a store, creating a company town. Decades later, when the coal seam was exhausted or the mine closed because of changes in the marketplace, people moved away and the town ultimately became deserted. The foundations of the Blume Company Store and the railroad tracks on the northeast side of the river are remnants of the town of Fayette.

Today vehicles cross the river on the reconstructed Fayette Station Bridge, which reopened in 1998 as the Tunney Hunsaker Bridge. To enjoy views from the bridge as well as the sights and sounds of the river, drive to the parking area, located at the first right turn after crossing the river, and walk back to the bridge. The river is widely known for its whitewater rapids, swift currents, and excellent fishing opportunities. Kayakers and rafters paddle through these wild waters and often end their trips at Fayette Station. Anglers use the area around Fayette Station to access one of the best warm water fisheries in the state.

After leaving Fayette Station, the road winds, first across Wolf Creek and then through a narrow section called the Squeeze. At the next hairpin turn is the Wolf Creek Trailhead and the start of the Kaymoor Trail, a two-mile hike that leads to the remains of Kaymoor Mine.

Unobstructed views of the opposite side of the gorge are easily seen during the ascent from the river. The expanse of Endless Wall, a rock climber's paradise, is clearly visible across the river. Overhead, the New River Gorge Bridge buttresses support 88,000 pounds of concrete and steel.

From a distance, the gorge appears as a pristine, natural environment. Like all environments, however, it is continually changing. The most drastic change occurred when the railroad, mines, and people all converged in the gorge in the late nineteenth century. Then within one hundred years, the activities of industry had ceased, and nature slowly began to cover up most of the evidence of human occupation.

The National Park Service is dedicated to preserving the natural and historical resources of New River Gorge National River. You may wish to explore additional park resources by following some of the other routes described in this brochure.

Legend

North

0 0.25 Kilometers
0 0.25 Miles

New River Gorge National River

Much of the land within the Park remains private property; please respect the owners' rights.

Fayette Station Road Tour
Canyon Rim Boardwalk

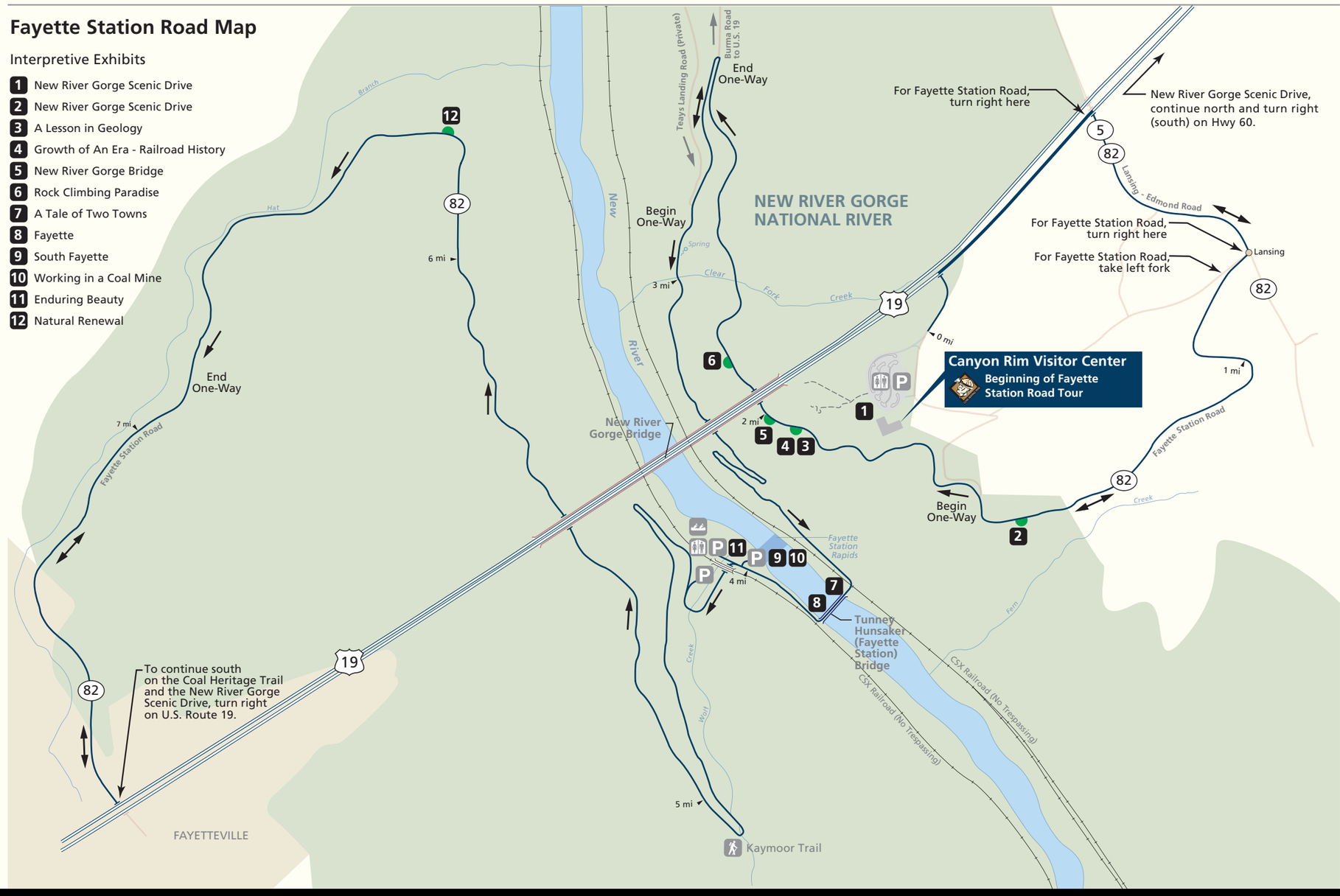
Roadside Pull-off
1 Interpretive Exhibits
Arrows Indicate Direction of Traffic Flow

Parking
Restrooms
Hiking Trail
River Access

Fayette Station Road Map

Interpretive Exhibits

1. New River Gorge Scenic Drive
2. New River Gorge Scenic Drive
3. A Lesson in Geology
4. Growth of An Era - Railroad History
5. New River Gorge Bridge
6. Rock Climbing Paradise
7. A Tale of Two Towns
8. Fayette
9. South Fayette
10. Working in a Coal Mine
11. Enduring Beauty
12. Natural Renewal



Other National Coal Heritage Sites (See Map on Reverse)

Coal Heritage Trail

Traversing five Southern West Virginia counties between Fayetteville and Bluefield, this 146-mile route features many historic sites associated with coal mining. The Coal Heritage Trail is the story of resilient men and women who spent generations mining coal through harsh times and perilous conditions. Their communities helped industrialize the United States during the early 1900s. Coal mining remains an important West Virginia resource industry.

Mount Hope

Travel the loop road through the town of Mount Hope, which was once the home of the New River Coal Company. The large buildings and stadium of Mount Hope stand as reminders of the wealth that coal once brought to the town and region. A coal seam and mine portal are visible at the outskirts of town. Turn left on Rt. 16 then right on Rt. 61 to continue on the Quinnimont Connector.

Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine

Veteran miners lead electric tram tours through horizontal underground mine tunnels. This late 1800s mine features low-seam coal mining from its earliest manual stages to modern mechanized operation. Several coal camp houses, the school, a church, and the mine are open April to November; call 304-256-1747 for information.

New River Gorge National River Information

Canyon Rim Visitor Center 304-574-2115
Sandstone Visitor Center 304-466-0417
Park Headquarters 304-465-0508
P.O. Box 246
Glen Jean, WV 25846 www.nps.gov/neri

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New River Gorge Destinations and Points of Interest

Exploring the Park

The New River and its gorge are the essence of New River Gorge National River. The park protects 53 miles of the New River and encompasses over 72,000 acres. The river and the many creeks and streams that flow into it have carved the landscape over time. The gorge, cut as deep as 1400 feet, has proven to be a barrier to travel. At the same time, at the bottom of the gorge, both the river and the railroad have provided a transportation corridor.

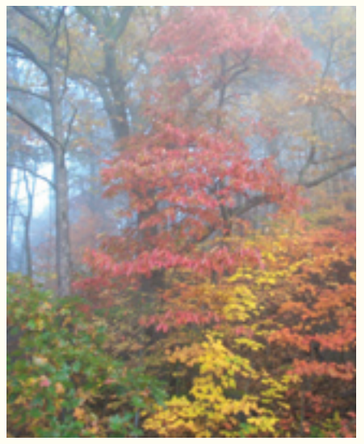
Visiting New River Gorge National River by vehicle is an up-and-down experience. While some roads travel along the rim and some along the river, others wind up-and-down between the two. Vistas along the rim offer views of the sandstone walls of the gorge and the river below. At the bottom of the gorge along the river there is relatively little flat land, but it provides an opportunity to view the New River and its plants and animals.

Life is diverse and abundant within the park. Vultures soar over the gorge, salamanders hide in the damp forest, great blue herons stand at the river's edge, and deer browse the slopes. Spring with its wildflowers and fall with its tapestry of colored leaves are special times for a gorge visit.

Hidden by the forest, but equally abundant are traces of the past…foundations, ruins, abandoned roads, coke ovens, and cemeteries. The gorge once held dozens of towns whose inhabitants built railroads, logged trees, and mined coal.

The roads that parallel and cross the gorge afford glimpses of the past and an appreciation of the present.

New River Gorge Scenic Dive



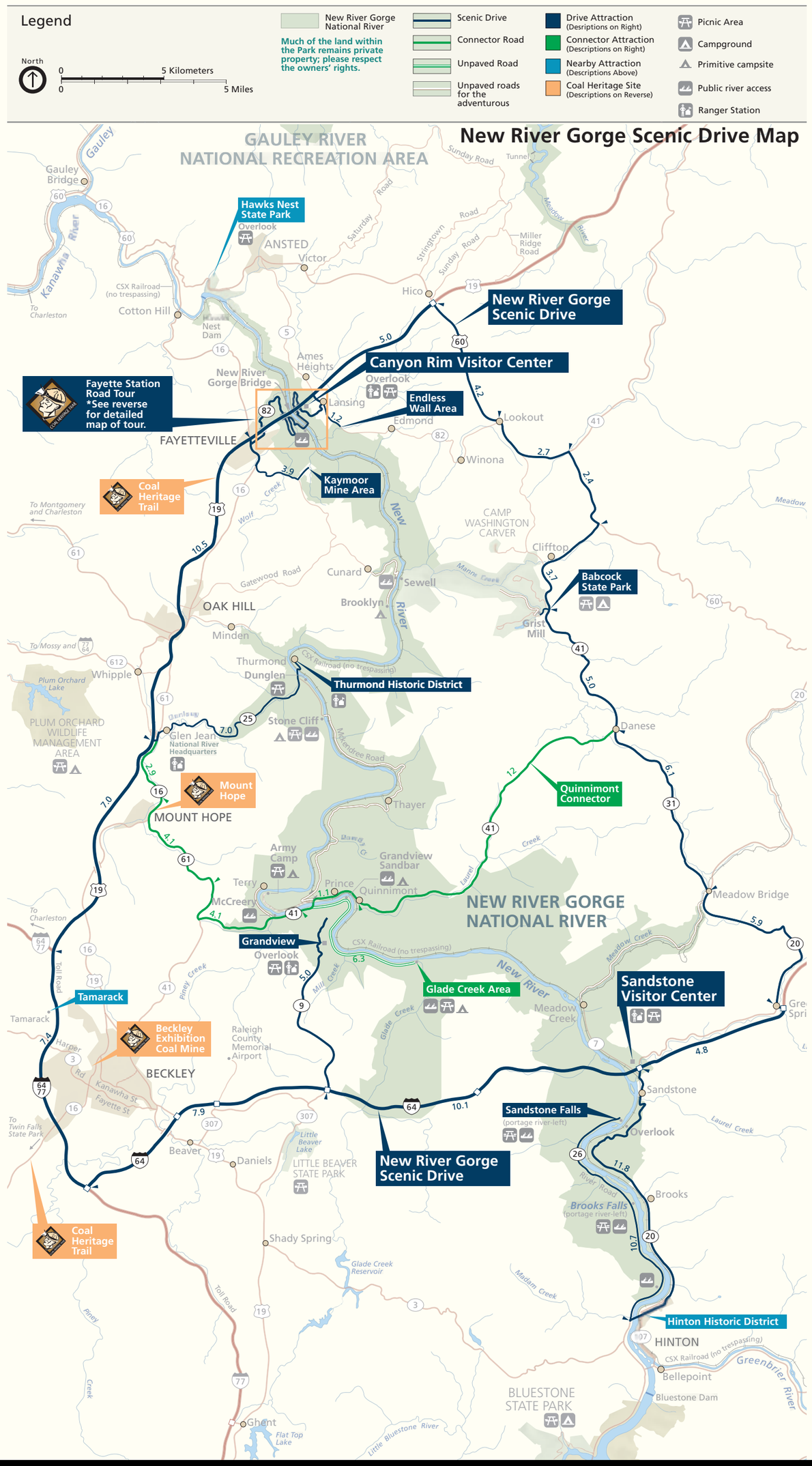
Encircling the heart of New River Gorge National River, the scenic drive is an estimated three-hour trip. The 83-mile route includes interstates, divided highways, and two-lane roads. The scenic drive is an opportunity to experience the park—its gorge and its river. Along the way are broad vistas as well as small glimpses of both the past and the present. Two park visitor centers, Canyon Rim and Sandstone, supplement the tour with interpretation of the natural and historic resources of the park.

Three Nearby Attractions

Hawks Nest State Park Long known for its rustic Civilian Conservation Corps-constructed roadside overlooks, Hawks Nest State Park borders the New River just north of the park. Hawks Nest offers a lodge, restaurant, gift shop, museum, aerial tramway, and river marina with paddleboats and jet boat excursions.

Tamarack Featuring "the best of West Virginia," Tamarack offers a large collection of juried handcrafts and fine art under its circular roof. Five artisan studios, an art gallery, a theater, and a food court contribute to showcasing the state. Tamarack also serves as a conference center and is open daily.

Hinton Historic District The Historic District includes buildings dating from the late 1800s when Hinton was a railroad center with a roundhouse and extensive rail yards. The downtown Summers County Visitors Center and Hinton Railroad Museum provide visitor services, exhibits, and walking tour information.



Scenic Drive Destinations

Canyon Rim Visitor Center
Approximate Distance:
0.1 mile from US 19

Canyon Rim Visitor Center is located on the rim of the gorge near the New River Gorge Bridge. Open daily, the center offers interpretive exhibits, a slide show, bookstore, and photographic views of the New River Gorge. Fully-accessible walkways lead to overlooks, which provide views of the river, its gorge, and the bridge that has spanned it since 1977.

Fayette Station Road
Approximate Distance:
0.1 mile from US 19
The 7.5 mile loop drive begins at the Canyon Rim Visitor Center.

The Fayette Station Road is a mostly one-lane loop road that winds down under the New River Gorge Bridge, and is a spur of the National Coal Heritage Trail. Roadside exhibits describe the history of mining, transportation, and life in the gorge. A parking area affords views of Fayette Station Rapid, and often of rafters and kayakers ending their whitewater trips.

Kaymoor Mine Area
Approximate Distance:
3.9 miles from US 19 on Gatewood Road
Estimated Travel Time:
15 minutes (One Direction)

One of the largest coal mines of the gorge, the Kaymoor Mine prospered for sixty years, closing in 1962. From a parking area at the rim of the gorge, the Kaymoor Miners Trail descends steeply 1/2 mile to the abandoned mine. Reaching the remains of the tipple at river level requires an 820-step descent along the haulage and then a strenuous return climb.

Thurmond Historic District
Approximate Distance:
7 miles from US 19 at Glen Jean Exit
Estimated Travel Time:
20 minutes (One Direction)

Following Dunloup Creek for seven miles, narrow Route 25 leads to the restored Thurmond Depot on the far side of the river. Open daily in the summer, Depot exhibits interpret the town and railroad operations. A short walk to "downtown" Thurmond offers a look at this once-thriving community. CAUTION, the railroad line is active; keep off the tracks. Picnicking, fishing, and hiking trails are nearby.

Quinnimont Connector
Approximate Distance:
24.2 miles from Glen Jean to Danese
Estimated Travel Time:
45 minutes

Route 61 leads to a turn onto Route 41, which follows Piney Creek to descend into the gorge. McCreery offers a close-up view of the New River. After crossing the bridge, note the Stretcher's Neck railroad tunnel, the train depot, and then search for the Beury Monument behind the old post office in Quinnimont before following Laurel Creek out of the gorge to the town of Danese.

Glade Creek Area
Approximate Distance:
6.3 miles from Rt. 41
Estimated Travel Time:
30 minutes (One Direction)

Just before the bridge that crosses the New River is a gravel road that leads to Glade Creek. Known as the Royal Road, it passes the scattered foundations of the town of Royal 1/4 mile down the road. One mile down is Grandview Sandbar with picnicking, camping, and river access. Five miles further down is Glade Creek with a small campground, river access, and trailhead.

Grandview
Approximate Distance:
5.0 miles from I-64 at Exit 129
Estimated Travel Time:
15 minutes (One Direction)

The overlooks at Grandview, the highest in the park, offer broad views of the land cut by the New River and its many tributaries. Rhododendrons frame the view in mid-May and fall color adds to the panorama in October. Grandview offers trails, picnicking, a summer-season visitor center, and outdoor summer evening performances by Theatre West Virginia.

Sandstone Visitor Center
Approximate Distance:
0.1 miles from I-64 at Exit 139

A large inlaid floor map, a brief video, a bookstore, and a native plant landscape are features of Sandstone Visitor Center, which is open daily. Interactive exhibits and touch-screen computers interpret the rich resources of the New River watershed, and describe ways that individuals can lessen their impacts on the environment.

Sandstone Falls
Approximate Distance:
22.5 miles from I-64 at Exit 139
Estimated Travel Time:
45 minutes (One Direction)

Route 20 climbs Chestnut Mountain to an overlook of Sandstone Falls before descending to Hinton. After crossing the New River, narrow Route 26, River Road, follows the river for ten miles. A stop at Brooks Falls offers views of river ledges and a river "hole." At Sandstone Falls, the largest waterfall on the New River, a fully-accessible boardwalk leads to an island and its observation decks.

Babcock State Park
Approximate Distance:
0.5 mile from Rt. 41 (One Direction)

Babcock State Park, one of the oldest parks in West Virginia, is located within the boundaries of New River Gorge National River. A feature of the 4,000-acre park is a widely-photographed grist mill. Within the park are log cabin accommodations, hiking trails, a stable, a lake for fishing and boating, and campsites.

Endless Wall Area
Approximate Distance:
1.2 miles from US 19 on Hwy 82 (Lansing-Edmond Road) north of Canyon Rim Visitor Center

From the Fern Creek parking area, the 2.5-mile Endless Wall trail winds through the hemlock forests and rhododendron thickets. The long sandstone outcrop is favored by rock climbers. Rewards are the views from vantage points above Endless Wall at Fern Point and Diamond Point. To protect peregrine falcon nesting habit, comply with the voluntary closure of this area from mid-February through the end of April.