

# West Virginia

By Tom Kirvan

## THE MOUNTAIN STATE IS FILLED WITH HIDDEN CHARMS

Tucked in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains, West Virginia is a state defined by its rugged beauty, rich cultural traditions, and deep historical roots. Known as the “Mountain State,” West Virginia is a destination that offers scenic landscapes, outdoor adventures, and a warm sense of community. Whether you’re hiking through lush forests, exploring quaint mountain towns, or uncovering Civil War history, West Virginia offers an unforgettable journey through one of America’s most underrated treasures.

West Virginia is home to approximately 1.8 million residents, making it one of the smaller states by population. Despite its modest size – it’s the 41st-largest state – West Virginia boasts an incredibly diverse geography dominated by mountains, valleys, rivers, and forests. The Appalachian Mountains carve through the state, creating a dramatic and picturesque landscape that attracts both nature lovers and adventure seekers.

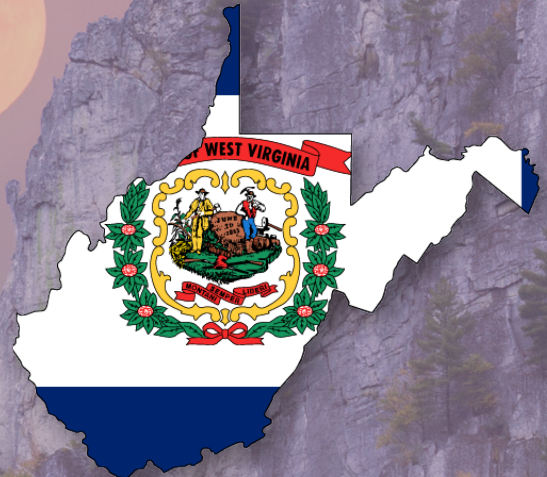
The state’s population reflects a rich blend of Appalachian heritage, with strong ties to coal mining, music, and crafts. Communities are tight-knit, but visitors often find themselves welcomed with genuine hospitality.

West Virginia holds a distinctive place in American history. It was formed during the Civil War in 1863, when it broke away from Confederate Virginia to join the Union, becoming the only state to form by seceding from a Confederate state.

The state’s history is closely-tied to the coal mining, railroads, and labor movements. The early 20th century saw numerous labor struggles, including the infamous Battle of Blair Mountain, one of the largest labor uprisings in U.S. history. West Virginia’s coal heritage continues to shape its cultural identity, even as the state transitions into a more diversified economy.

Historically, coal mining and logging were the cornerstones of West Virginia’s economy. While these industries remain important, the state has diversified in recent decades. Manufacturing, energy, healthcare, and education now play significant roles. Tourism, especially eco-tourism and outdoor recreation, is a growing sector thanks to the state’s abundant natural beauty.

West Virginia is also investing in renewable energy and technology sectors, aiming to revitalize areas affected by the decline of coal. Programs to promote small business growth, particularly in tourism and craft industries, are helping to reshape the state’s economic future.



## Fast Facts

Capital: Charleston

Population: 1.8 million

Highest Point: Spruce Knob (4,863 feet)

Motto: Mountaineers Are Always Free

**Primerus Member: Wharton Aldhizer & Weaver, PLC**

Wharton Aldhizer & Weaver, PLC, a full-service law firm located in Harrisonburg.



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Charleston, located in the southwestern part of the state, is both the capital and largest city of West Virginia. Nestled along the Kanawha River and surrounded by hills, Charleston offers a blend of government, commerce, and culture. Visitors can explore the West Virginia State Capitol, renowned for its gold-leaf dome, stroll through local farmers' markets, or enjoy performances at the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences.

Despite its modest size, Charleston serves as a cultural hub for the state, offering vibrant festivals, historic neighborhoods, and a burgeoning food scene.

## Five Must-See Destinations

- **New River Gorge National Park and Preserve:** Recently designated as the United States' newest national park, the New River Gorge is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Known for the iconic New River Gorge Bridge, one of the longest single-span arch bridges in the world, the park offers whitewater rafting, rock climbing, hiking, and breathtaking views. The annual Bridge Day draws daredevils and spectators alike for a day of BASE jumping and celebration.
- **Harpers Ferry National Historical Park:** Located at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, Harpers Ferry is steeped in Civil War history. It was the site of abolitionist John Brown's raid in 1859, a key event leading up to the Civil War. Today, the town is a beautifully preserved historic site with museums, hiking trails, and panoramic river views. It's also a key stop along the Appalachian Trail.
- **Seneca Rocks and Monongahela National Forest:** A mecca for rock climbers and nature lovers, Seneca Rocks rises nearly 900 feet above the North Fork River. It's part of the Monongahela National Forest, which spans over 900,000 acres of pristine wilderness. The forest offers countless trails, memorable camping spots, and scenic byways, making it a perfect escape into nature.

- **The Greenbrier:** Located in White Sulphur Springs, The Greenbrier is a luxury resort with a storied past. Known as "America's Resort," it has hosted presidents, royalty, and celebrities since 1778. Visitors can tour the once top-secret Cold War bunker, play a round of golf, or indulge in the spa. The resort's opulent decor and historic ambiance make it a standout destination.
- **Cass Scenic Railroad State Park:** Step back in time with a ride on the Cass Scenic Railroad, where restored steam locomotives take you up Cheat Mountain. Originally built to haul lumber, the trains now offers scenic excursions through some of the state's most beautiful highland terrain. The adjacent town of Cass has been preserved as a historical site, complete with company houses and a museum.