

Coal Heritage Trail

Wind through mountains and valleys showcasing America's remarkable industrial heritage. The region commemorates the history and culture of the coal industry and the impact it has had on the physical and social environment. Numerous resources line the corridor, including coal company towns, tipples, railroad structures, and reclaimed mining lands.



Local Information

Coal Heritage Highway Authority
304-256-6941

Length: 97.56 miles / 156.1 km
Time to Allow: Take three hours to drive this byway.

Visitor Services

Fees



There are no fees for driving the byway.

Accessibility



The Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine Visitor Center, the Fayetteville Convention and Visitors Bureau, the New River Convention and Visitors Bureau in Oak Hill, and Canyon Rim Visitor Center are universally accessible. Structures and sites within the proposed extension were constructed before universal accessibility became a widespread construction practice. Visitors should contact venues beforehand to determine what assistance is offered for special needs.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities



Because of the topographical constraints present in this portion of the state, bicycle and pedestrian activity is not encouraged adjacent to the road.

Camping



Several places along the byway have camping sites.

Food



There are places to buy food along this byway.



Gasoline

Gasoline is available.



Information

The Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine Visitor Center offers interpretive exhibits about the region and life in coal camp communities, restrooms, and a gift shop. It is open daily from 10 am to 6 pm, from the beginning of April to the end of October. Canyon Rim Visitor Center offers interpretive exhibits, visitor amenities, and views of the New River Gorge. It is open year-round from 9 am to 5 pm. Tamarack in Beckley off I-64/I-77 offers visitor amenities, shopping and films about the region's offerings.



Lodging

There is overnight lodging along this byway.



Restrooms

There are toilet facilities along this byway.

Special Considerations

Slower speeds are recommended because the road is narrow and has numerous curves. Drivers may also encounter large coal trucks using the road in some areas.

Restrictions

There are no seasonal accessibility limitations. However, be sure to allow extra driving time during inclement weather.

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

The byway is best experienced during the spring, summer, and fall months.

Map and Directions



Legend:

Point of Interest	Campground	Featured Byway	Water	State Border
Park	Picnic/Rest Area	America's Byways	Wildlife Refuge	Urban Area
Mountain	Interstate	Other Byway	Wilderness Area	Tribal Nation
City	U.S. Highway	Other Road	Other Federal Lands	Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

Driving Directions

- The southern terminus of the byway starts at the border of West Virginia and Virginia, and it travels north along US52 until the road turns into SR16.

- Take SR16 in a curving path north to where the byway ends in the town of Beckley, at the junction of SR16 and I-77.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby cities

Charleston, WV (60 miles / 96.56 km, 1 hour 5 minutes)

Start: ⊙ Brooke St. On-ramp to I-77 Southbound
N 38.351° W 81.624° [?]

Directions:

- Take I-64/77 south to Beckley.
- Get on WV-16 and go southwest to Crab Orchard, where the byway begins.

Junction with byway: * Intersection of Midway Rd and WV-16
N 37.741° W 81.230° [?]



Charleston, WV (59 miles / 94.95 km, 1 hour 5 minutes)

Start: ⊙ Brooke St. On-ramp to I-77 Southbound
N 38.351° W 81.624° [?]

Directions:

- Take I-64/77 south to Beckley.
- Take the Harper Road exit and turn left onto Harper Road/Route 3 at the end of the exit ramp.
- Drive approximately 2 miles south on Harper Road/WV 3 and turn left onto Ewart Avenue.
- Drive approximately 0.5 mi. and turn right into the Exhibition Mine complex.

Junction with byway: * Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine, Beckley
N 37.785° W 81.197° [?]



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Roanoke, VA (111 miles / 178.64 km, 2 hours 5 minutes)

Start: ● I-581 northbound, Roanoke, VA
N 37.267° W 79.938° [?]

Directions:

- Take I-581 north to I-81.
- Follow I-81 southwest to Wytheville, VA.
- Merge onto I-77 and go north to West Virginia.



- Get on US-52 heading southwest into Bluefield, WV where the byway begins.

**Junction
with
byway:** * Intersection of Princeton Ave and Federal St,
Bluefield, WV
N 37.270° W 81.223° [?]

Road Trip: Architecture and Built Environment Tour

Departure: Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine and Visitor Center, West Virginia

Destination: The New River Gorge Bridge, West Virginia

Time to allow: 1 day

This Architecture and Built Environment itinerary includes stops at all significant examples in the built environment along the Coal Heritage Trail extension. Expect to see several authentic and one recreated company store, a recreated coal camp, buildings and sites on the National Register of Historic Places, examples of bank architecture, railroad centers, and, lastly, a monumental testament to engineering, the New River Gorge Bridge.

Day 1

- **Start: Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine and Visitor Center**

The Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine Visitor Center offers an excellent opportunity for you to orient yourself before the journey ahead. You'll find an overview exhibit of the Coal Heritage Trail, as well as interpretive information on coal mining life. Take a tour of an authentic underground mine and an above-ground coal camp, which includes a superintendent's house, school building, church, bachelor's shanty, and family house. Touring the structures that form the coal camp portion of the complex is one of the best ways to experience a coal camp, since many coal camps have been abandoned or fallen into disrepair over time.



- **Stop 1: New River Company Cranberry Store**



From previous stop: 15 minutes / 4 mi (6.4 km)

Directions: From WV 16/Robert C. Byrd Drive, turn left at the sign for Cranberry.

Suggested time at this stop: 15 minutes

Step out of your car to get a better look at the New River Company Cranberry Store, an excellent example of a brick company store built by the New River Company. Perhaps because the store is constructed of brick it remains standing, while many of the wood company stores have been removed, burned, or fallen into disuse.

- **Stop 2: Mount Hope Historic District**



From previous stop: 15 minutes / 7 mi (11.2 km)

Directions: Mount Hope is adjacent to the byway off of WV-16.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

Arrive in Mount Hope, and you'll find an urban park with interpretive information explaining how this community evolved and how it functioned. Read the signs on a self-guided walking tour or simply drive through this town in which the business of coal mining was conducted, as opposed to a coal camp, where the focus was mining the coal itself.

- **Stop 3: Bank of Glen Jean**



From previous stop: 10 minutes / 4 mi (6.4 km)

Directions: Follow WV 16 northbound from Mount Hope to reach Glen Jean.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

Pull up to the Bank of Glen Jean, which you'll find to be an important stop for several reasons. First, the structure is one of few remaining from the Glen Jean-Thurmond empire overseen by Thomas McKell and his son William. As a depository of money gained from the efforts of thousands of workers, it exemplifies the great wealth held by some in the region. As an example of architecture, the bank exemplifies high standards of masonry construction made possible by immigrants from Europe who brought artisan skills such as stone-cutting to this remote region and whose influence is still seen today.

- **Stop 4: Thurmond Historic District**



From previous stop: 15 minutes / 8 mi (12.8 km)

Directions: Follow WV-16 to Glen Jean, then from Glen Jean, take WV-25 east bound to Thurmond.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

While most visitors reach Thurmond by car, some visitors stop in on passenger trains traveling between Chicago and New York. Exploring the town further, you can see how its river access and railroad hub, accounted for its reputation as a thriving center of commerce.

- **Stop 5: Whipple Company Store**



From previous stop: 30 minutes / 13 mi (20.8 km)

Directions: From Thurmond, return to WV-16 via WV-25. From WV-16, travel to WV-612.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

The Whipple Company Store is the only extant example of the original four uniquely conceived company stores. The company store is an important sub-theme of your itinerary experience, as several company stores can be found in the Coal Heritage Trail. Elements of company stores throughout the region formed the design basis for the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine (dedicated as the Rahall Company Store in June 1998). But to see architecture unlike any other company store, or any other built structure, for that matter, take a look at distinctly different Whipple Company Store exterior.

- **Stop 6: Oak Hill Downtown Commercial District**

From previous stop: 5 minutes / 1.5 mi (2.4 km)

Directions: From Whipple, take Scarbro Road to Maple Avenue, and then turn left on WV 16.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

Although Oak Hill's downtown commercial district has coal heritage in its past, today the town has evolved into a full-service commercial center. The town was never a coal camp, but instead was a center for farming and subsequently railroads and commerce.

Visit the Oak Hill Railroad Depot at the corner of Virginia and Central Avenues to see a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the only example of a period railroad depot which, while not in use, remains intact. Stroll along the paved White Oak Rail-Trail to follow the route of the railway.

- **Stop 7: Fayetteville Historic District**



From previous stop: 15 minutes / 8 mi (12.8 km)
Directions: Proceed north on WV 16 from Oak Hill.
Suggested time at this stop: 2 hours

Although it's a community known for its outdoor recreation, Fayetteville also contains a wealth of structures and buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of the imposing stone and brick edifices remain as examples of the Italian and other stone mason immigrant populations.

As the seat of Fayette County, Fayetteville has a grand courthouse on a square in the center of the downtown. Check out the downtown area, and see how this town functions as both a county seat and as a center for outdoor enthusiasts.

While you are here, grab lunch or dinner from one of several unique restaurants in Fayetteville.

- **Stop 8: Hawk's Nest State Park**



From previous stop: 20 minutes / 11 mi (17.6 km)
Directions: From Fayetteville, visitors will travel via WV 16 north to Chimney Corner. At Chimney Corner, they will turn right onto US 60 (the Midland Trail National Scenic Byway) to Hawk's Nest State Park on the right.
Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

For some of the best views of the new river, stop at Hawk's Nest State Park. Not far from the Hawk's Nest mine disaster you'll find a special lookout point. This sort of effort is what is meant by the "built environment" referred to in the title of the tour, as well as the many CCC-era stone structures that remain on the park grounds.

• **Stop 9: Halfway House (Tyree Tavern)**



From previous stop: 5 minutes / 2 mi (3.2 km)

Directions: From Hawk's Nest State Park, visitors should proceed east on US 60 to the community of Ansted.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

As you drive through the community of Ansted, you'll see several nationally recognized historic sites; the Halfway House, which is also known as Tyree Tavern, is one such historic home. Standing along the Midland and Coal Heritage Trails, the house is important because its tavern use pre-dates the byway's coal heritage speaking instead to the byway's role as a major east-west transportation corridor.

Ansted is also home to structures, including the Page-Vawter House, that show that some coal barons chose to live here in Fayette County, rather distant from the coal mining camps and industry. If you have an extra bit of time, stop by the the Ansted Culture and Heritage Museum and the Blue Smoke Salsa Company for a taste of the region.

- **Stop 10: Canyon Rim Visitor Center**



From previous stop: 15 minutes / 12 mi (19.2 km)

Directions: From Ansted, visitors will proceed on US 60 east to the intersection of US 60 and US 19. At this intersection, turn right and proceed on US 19 south to Canyon Rim Visitor Center on the left.

Suggested time at this stop: 3 hours

You saw the New River from the lookout at Hawk's Nest State park, but here at the Canyon Rim Visitor Center, you'll find interpretive information about the New River Gorge and the role it has played in developing the landscape and culture.

When you're ready to depart the visitor center, take a drive along Fayette Station Road, which is accessible from the visitor center parking lot. Along the way you'll find more views and interpretive exhibits that explain the once viable and thriving communities that line the banks of the river. This road also offers fantastic views of the under side of the New River Gorge Bridge, the next point on this itinerary.

- **End: The New River Gorge Bridge**

From previous stop: 2 minutes / 0.1 mi (0.2 km)

Directions: From the Canyon Rim Visitor Center, visitors will turn left onto US 19 and proceed south passing over the New River Gorge Bridge.

A truly magnificent example of “built environment,” the New River Gorge Bridge is a byway highlight you should not miss. Drive across this epic span (stopping on the bridge is not allowed) to complete your byway experience.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 70.6 miles / 113.0 km

Total Travel Time: 2 hours 27 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 11 hours 15 minutes