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The New River Gorge quickly became known for its whitewater rafting.

Fifty Years (And Counting) of Epic Whitewater in West Virginia's New River Gorge

To understand how [Adventures on the Gorge](#) has evolved to becoming the premier such business in the industry, it is necessary to go back to when West Virginia's New River was not so well-known, enthusiasm for whitewater rafting was increasing, and several young men from Ohio and Pennsylvania found themselves making a splash as river rafting outfitters.

The origins of whitewater rafting in West Virginia can be traced back to the mid-1960s when college-aged adventurers took Army surplus rafts and taught themselves how to navigate the New River. The nearby Gauley River offered even more challenges with plenty of big rapids, and it was not unusual to see a dedicated group pulling out of the river to scout the rapids and determine the best routes in which to navigate them.

Early trips were conducted for fun with friends and family. As the word got out, however, the rafting enthusiasts began selling river trips, and a fledgling industry was born.



Early gatherings were very casual.

In 1969 Mountain River Tours (MRT) opened for business and was just the second commercial whitewater rafting company in West Virginia. Owner Paul Breuer is credited with being the first person to offer commercially guided trips on the Gauley River.

Later, Dave Arnold and his childhood friends Jeff and Doug Proctor from Cincinnati discovered West Virginia rafting, worked for MRT and then broke off to form their own rafting company, Class VI River Runners. Before long, the friends were part of a growing industry featuring many rafting outfitters near the town of Fayetteville. Among those companies was Rivermen operated by brothers Steve and Brian Campbell (also from Cincinnati) as well as Songer Whitewater which was created by a doctor and a businessman from Pennsylvania.

These outfitters - and several others near the New River Gorge - entered a period of solid growth with interest in rafting exploding and peaking in the mid-1990s.

Less than 10 years after the new millennium began, however, the number of rafters had dropped considerably. Outfitters closed their doors or looked for new ways to generate business. In the case of MRT, Class VI and Rivermen, they merged their operations in 2008, named the new entity Adventures on the Gorge (AOTG) and embarked upon aggressive expansion plans. In 2011, Songer Whitewater joined the company.

More about the National Parks of Southern West Virginia

The country's newest national park, [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve River](#) encompasses more than 70,000 acres of land along 53 miles of the New River from Bluestone Dam to Hawk's Nest Lake. A rugged, whitewater river flowing northward through deep and spectacular canyons, the New River is actually among the oldest rivers on Earth. Here in southern West Virginia, the New River has carved and continues to carve the deepest and longest river gorge in the Appalachian Mountains.

The [Gauley River National Recreation Area](#) includes 25 miles of the Gauley River, known as one of the best whitewater rafting rivers in the world. The river is particularly challenging and popular during the months of September and October, when water is released from the Summersville Dam, creating incredibly fast water and huge rapids, including nine Class V rapids.

The [Bluestone National Scenic River](#) includes a 10.5-mile section of unspoiled and protected river that is a haven for a vast array of plants and animals. The river is named for the deep blue limestone streambed.

About Adventures on the Gorge

Named one of the top six adventure resorts in the country by [U.S. News & World Report](#), Adventures on the Gorge is located on more than 250 acres along the rim of the majestic New River Gorge near Fayetteville, W.Va. The resort provides an array of outdoor experiences including whitewater rafting on the New and Gauley Rivers, aerial adventures, rock climbing, rappelling, kayaking, stand up paddle boarding, fishing, mountain biking and hiking. There are also restaurants, bars and shops as well as a small-group conference center. Visitors can choose from a variety of [accommodations](#) and [vacation packages](#).

Adventures on the Gorge has several options for early vacation planners. Accommodations booked online are 10 percent off the regular rate. The resort also offers a variety of [rafting and adventure passes](#); [all-inclusive packages](#) with lodging, adventures and meals; and adventure combo packages such as the [Lower New River Rafting and Mountain Biking Package](#). Kids under 12 always [raft free](#) when accompanied by an adult.

Travelers can find out more about Adventures on the Gorge [online](#), by calling 1-855-379-8738, or connecting on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Google+](#), [TripAdvisor](#), [YouTube](#), and [Vimeo](#) and signing up for AOTG [e-newsletter](#).

Media Links (please credit Adventures on the Gorge)

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[Scenic fall winter](#)

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[New River Gorge Bridge](#)

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