

Overview of West Virginia

As the only state contained entirely within the Appalachian Mountain range, West Virginia is as beautiful as it is secluded. Its solitary steep wooded mountains, hidden valleys and solitary rivers transform a scenic drive into a balm for the soul. In the past, this rugged terrain tended to isolate West Virginians, who were forced to rely on small subsistence farms and cottage industries. Aspects of this lifestyle have been exaggerated in pop culture and are often the subject of jokes involving moonshine and backwoodsmen.

But the West Virginian way of life has produced countless cultural gems, including a mastery of Appalachian folk music, particularly bluegrass; unparalleled craftsmanship in furniture making, quilting, and glass-blowing; and inventive culinary treats such as the famous West Virginia sausage roll. These features, combined with its slower pace of life and small-town hospitality, make the Mountain State an inviting and restorative getaway.

West Virginia's Hatfield-McCoy (two feuding clans intrinsic to American folklore) stereotype has not deterred wealthy urban professionals from buying up property in resort areas such as Canaan Valley. But this ski destination, along with others such as Snowshoe Mountain and Timberline, has not undergone a glitzy transformation with increased tourism. On the contrary, visitors to West Virginia tend to be those in search of escape and simplicity, who are content with evenings in front of fireplaces, enjoying the arts in restored country playhouses and shopping at local farmers markets.

It's a haven for outdoorsmen, who often head straight for the Potomac Highlands in the east, which are covered by the Monongahela National Forest and popular with skiers, hikers, hunters and mountain bikers. In the south, the New and Gauley Rivers offer unmatched white-water rafting and the area's extensive cave system attracts the most intrepid spelunkers. Geocaching, an adventure sport in which GPS users hunt down hidden caches, is increasingly popular.

In this region, the profound impact of the state's controversial coal mining industry, on both West Virginia's heritage and its environment, is evident. Visitors may tour coal mines with former miners, and witness the effects of mountaintop removal, a method of mining in which hundreds of vertical feet are literally blasted away. Fortunately, West Virginia's natural beauty seems incapable of being quashed, as illustrated by the serenity of the central mountain lakes region and the rolling country of the eastern panhandle.

For those visitors who might grow weary of one scenic vista after another, West Virginia does have its busier spots, including the state capital of Charleston in the south, a heavily industrialised city that also hosts the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra. But the best of West Virginia's cosmopolitan life lies in the many unique towns found throughout its mountains. There is Berkeley Springs, with its calming mineral baths and rows of antique shops; Shepherdstown, with its university scene and creative buzz; Hinton, a quintessential rail town with a collection of historic buildings; and Harpers Ferry, a must for history buffs. Situated along the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, Harpers Ferry, which played a pivotal role during the Civil War, is the most visited tourist destination in West Virginia.

Key Facts

Language:

English is the most common language spoken but Spanish is often heard in the south-western states.

Passport/Visa:

It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. A visa is required for short visits unless travellers qualify for entry under the Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables citizens of certain countries to travel to the US for a stay of up to 90 days without a visa. Visitors under the VWP need to register online three days before travel and have an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). This allows the US government to screen all visitors before travel. Visitors entering the country under the VWP must have a machine-readable passport (MRP) that has a barcode on the photo page. Travellers under the VWP must have passports that include biometrics if they wish to enter the country without a visa, which means that passports must contain unique personal data such as fingerprints or iris details. All passports must contain a digital photo image in order to travel visa-free. All visitors to the USA have a photograph and two fingerprints taken by an inkless scanner on arrival, including those travelling visa-free under the VWP. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA, a valid passport is required by immigration authorities. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official

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Currency:

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. Plugs are mainly the type with two flat pins, though three-pin plugs (two flat parallel pins and a rounded pin) are also widely used. European appliances without dual-voltage capabilities will require an adapter.

Travel to West Virginia

Climate for West Virginia

Officially classified as humid subtropical, West Virginia has four distinct seasons. In the low-lying areas and valleys, summers, between June and August, can be quite hot and humid, particularly in the southwestern and eastern panhandle areas; average summer temperatures are around 67F (19C) along the North Branch Potomac River and 76F (24C) in the western part of the state. These two areas often experience milder winters, though throughout the rest of the state, winters are cold. Average winter temperatures in West Virginia, between December and February, range from 26F (4C) near the Cheat River, to 41F (5C) along sections of the border with Kentucky. In areas of higher elevation, snowfalls are significant, which makes this season popular with skiers and other winter sports enthusiasts. Autumn is a pleasant time of year, and West Virginia boasts spectacular fall foliage. West Virginia can be cloudy and rainy at any time of the year, with heavy fog in the valleys. However, severe weather such as tornadoes is uncommon.

Health Notes when travelling to United States of America

There are no specific health risks associated with travel within the USA. Medical facilities are excellent, but expensive. Only emergencies are treated without prior payment and treatment can be refused without evidence of insurance or proof of funds. Good medical insurance is essential. Visitors must be fully vaccinated with the primary series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine to travel to the United States by plane if they are non-U.S. citizens.

Safety Notes when travelling to United States of America

Travel within the United States is generally trouble-free, though travellers should be aware that the US shares with the rest of the world, an increased threat from terrorist incidents. Security has been heightened, particularly at airports. Restrictions on hand luggage apply and travellers are advised to check on the latest situation with airlines in advance. Travellers should also be alert to the dangers of car and street crime in cities and should use common sense and take basic precautions. Hurricanes are common between June and November, putting the southern USA, including the Gulf Coast and the eastern US at risk. There is a risk of wildfires in many dry areas in the US, particularly on the West Coast from March to November.

Customs in United States of America

Laws vary from state to state, including speed limit, fines and punishment. The age at which alcohol may be legally bought and consumed is 21 years.

Duty Free in United States of America

Travellers to the United States who are returning residents of the country do not have to pay duty on articles purchased abroad to the value of \$800 provided their stay was longer than 48 hours and their duty-free allowance was not used in the 30-day period prior. For passengers arriving from Samoa, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, a duty-free allowance of \$1,600 is allowed. The following items are included in this: 50 cigarettes and 10 cigars and 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages or 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of perfume containing alcohol. Restrictions may apply to goods from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Angola, Liberia and Sudan. It is prohibited to import Cuban cigars from any country.

Travellers to the United States who are non-residents do not have to pay duty on the following items: 50 cigars or 200 cigarettes and gifts to the value of \$100 provided their stay in the USA is not less than 72 hours and that the allowance has not been used in the preceding six-month period.

Prohibited items for residents and non-residents include meat or meat products, poultry, narcotics, absinthe, plants, seeds, vegetables, fruits, soil, live insects and other living plants or animal pests. Fish is prohibited unless it carries disease-free certification. Wildlife and animals or their by-products carry restrictions. Dairy products and eggs from specified countries are not allowed. Firearms and ammunition are not allowed without the necessary license and permit.

Doing Business in United States of America

In such a large country, filled with so many diverse groups, business practices may differ according to each state, however rarely to any large degree. The East Coast is traditionally more formal than the West Coast, though in states such as California, dress code and conservative appearance are as common as they would be in New York. Punctuality is important throughout the country and it is considered rude to be late for a meeting. Gift-giving is uncommon as it may be construed as bribery. Appropriate titles (Mr, Mrs, Ms) are used upon introduction and until otherwise stated. Americans favour politeness and greetings of 'Hello' and 'How are you?' are often expressed with sincerity. Business hours may vary in each state, but an 8am start and 5pm finish Monday to Friday is the most common with an hour over lunch.

Status and age are not necessarily indicative of seniority, nor do they carry much weight in themselves. Those doing business in the States should be mindful of this fact; foreigners should never make assumptions about someone's position or rank. Best practice is to be respectful to all parties. That said, the US upholds a hierarchal business structure, in which 'the boss' is the ultimate decision-maker. Senior leaders have the power of the last word, and can go against the grain just as easily as they can follow popular opinion. Foreigners should concentrate on winning over this individual, even if the greater group seems unsupportive. Americans value a direct style of communication. In this fast-paced, consumer culture 'time is money', and small-talk is viewed as unnecessary and wasteful. It's best for foreigners to get to the point quickly, speak about issues in a frank and open manner, and to avoid taking offence if someone questions or challenges them outright.

Communication in United States of America

The international country dialling code for the United States is +1. Mobile networks cover most of the country, especially all urban areas, and WiFi is widely available.

Tipping in United States of America

A 15 percent tip is expected by taxi drivers, bartenders, hairdressers and waiters, but travellers shouldn't tip in fast-food or self-service restaurants. In expensive restaurants or for large parties, the tip should be 20 percent of the bill. It is normal to tip staff such as valets and porters in hotels; this is discretionary, although a minimum of \$5 is expected. Most services are customarily tipped if the service is good.

Passport/Visa Note

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Airports in West Virginia

Yeager Airport (CRW)

Yeager Airport

www.yeagerairport.com

Location: Charleston West Virginia The airport is located four miles (6km) from downtown Charleston.

Time: GMT -5 (GMT -4 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

Contacts: Tel: +1 304 344 8033

Getting to the city: There is no bus or train service to Yeager Airport. Many local hotels provide free shuttle services to and from the airport, and taxis and rental cars are available.

Car rental: Car rental companies at the airport include Avis, Enterprise, Hertz and Budget. Rental counters are located in the baggage claim area.

Airport Taxis: Taxis provides service to the airport, as well as ride-hailing apps such as Uber and Lyft.

Facilities: Facilities at the airport include a gift shop, ATMs, restaurants, a bar, a cafe, lounge areas, charging stations at each gate, shoe-shine service and a games room.

Parking: Short-term parking is free for the first hour, and costs rise by about \$1 every four hours up to a daily maximum of \$10. The daily rate for long-term parking is \$10 for as many days as needed. There is a free lot with a 20-minute time limit located across the street from the main terminal.

Charleston West Virginia

Charleston is the capital and largest city in West Virginia, exuding small town charm and friendliness. Located at the confluence of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers, many pioneers made their way to Charleston from their early settlements after the American Revolutionary War, migrating towards the western part of Virginia to capitalise on its resources.

Charleston is brimming with plenty of urban attractions and amenities to cater to travellers' every need. It's conveniently located just a short drive from spectacular mountain scenery, making it a great travel base. Visitors can take a leisurely stroll along the water's edge past Capital Complex on the Kanawha River, expand their mind at the Clay Center, head to the Cultural Center to check out live performances or admire the Georgian, Queen Anne and Greek Revival architecture in the East End Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places and one of Charleston's most popular sights.

Nature lovers should visit the Kanawha State Forest, explore the trails peppered across the Greenbrier River Trail or take a drive along the Midland Scenic Trail where the 120 miles (193km) of breath-taking scenery provides plenty of photo opportunities. The New River Gorge Bridge area features a few great state parks where visitors can immerse themselves in activities such as hiking, kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing and mountain biking.

Getting around in Charleston West Virginia

Kanawha Valley Regional Transport Authority operates around 24 fixed bus routes seven days a week, though some of these routes do not run on public holidays and Sundays. Schedules vary, but the system runs from about 4.30am to 1am. Visitors can also use the Amtrak Railway to get in and around Charleston. Taxis are available in Charleston but must be booked by phone as they are difficult to find on the street. Uber and Lyft both operate in the city; hiring a car is a good idea for those planning to explore outside of the city centre.

Climate in Charleston West Virginia

Charleston has a humid subtropical climate with four distinct seasons. Its elevation means its temperatures tend to be slightly warmer than the rest of West Virginia. Summers are hot and humid, with average highs of 85F (29C) in July. Winters are cool, with average temperatures dropping to 23F (-5C) in the depths of the season and regular snowfall in January and February (though it can occur any time between November and April). Spring weather is often unpredictable, with sudden rain showers and large swings in temperature. Autumns are pleasant with cool and crisp evenings and mild afternoons. Summer is arguably the best time to visit as the weather is warmest, despite being rainy.

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Harpers Ferry

The historic Harpers Ferry is the most visited tourist town in West Virginia, welcoming thousands of travellers each year. Located at the junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, the town is named after the ferry that landowner Robert Harper established across the Potomac River in 1761. The ferry became the marker of the starting point for settlers traversing the Shenandoah Valley and western United States.

Harpers Ferry is best known for abolitionist John Brown's raid on the Armory in 1859, when he started a liberation movement among enslaved African Americans at a time when assisting fugitive slaves was illegal. He was eventually tried for treason against the state of Virginia, as well as the murder of five proslavery Southerners, and was hanged.

During the early 1900s, Harpers Ferry was a fashionable weekend getaway destination for high society who came by train from Washington D.C. and Baltimore. Socialites enjoyed lazy days bowling, picnicking and relaxing in the scenic country town, while lovers frequently eloped here to be married at the Ferry by the toll-taker, who happened to be a retired parson. Newlyweds traditionally enjoyed their first few days of matrimony in the Hilltop House Hotel, where famous guests such as Mark Twain, Carl Sandburg and Alexander Graham Bell stayed. But after the depression, the tourist trade in Harpers Ferry faded and by 1944 most of the town became part of the National Park Service.

Today, Harper's Ferry is an outdoor enthusiast's paradise famed for its national park, which makes up the southern portion of the town, and marks the start or end of many travellers' hikes on the Appalachian Trail, one of the most famous hiking trails in the world. Travellers can enjoy the dramatic scenery while white-water rafting, canoeing or inner-tubing along the rivers in the Harpers Ferry National Park. They can also hook a smallmouth bass on a fly on the Potomac or Shenandoah River, or even trout while fishing in the streams of the nearby George Washington and Jefferson National Forests.

Currency

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

Exchange rate for 1 USD - U.S. Dollar

0.00 BMD Bermudan Dollar	0.93 EUR Euro	0.80 GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	152.99 JPY Japanese Yen	1.37 CAD Canadian Dollar	0.91 CHF Swiss Franc
1.52 AUD Australian Dollar	39.40 UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	443.91 KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	93,075.00 LBP Lebanese Pound	4.86 LYD Libyan Dinar	6.86 BOB Bolivian Boliviano
0.00 NPR Nepalese Rupee	0.00 OMR Omani Rial	0.00 QAR Qatari Rial	1.35 SGD Singapore Dollar	10.82 SEK Swedish Krona	0.00 TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
0.00 VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	58.11 DOP Dominican Peso	0.00 HRK Croatian Kuna	16.95 MXN Mexican Peso	610.53 XOF West African CFA Franc	0.00 PGK Papua New Guinean kina
0.00 BSD Bahamian Dollar	0.00 FJD Fiji Dollar	0.00 HNL Honduran Lempira	133.87 DZD Algerian Dinar	0.00 MMK Myanma Kyat	0.00 BWP Botswana Pula
3.72 PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	938.44 CLP Chilean Peso	386.84 AMD Armenia Dram	23.29 CZK Czech Koruna	17.63 MDL Moldova Lei	139.89 ISK Icelandic Krona
12,582.40 UZS Uzbekistan Sum	3.72 ILS Israeli New Sheqel	0.71 JOD Jordanian Dinar	0.00 KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	38.15 UYU Uruguayan Peso	0.00 MUR Mauritian Rupee
0.00 NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	10.88 NOK Norwegian Krone	4.03 PLN Polish Zloty	3.75 SAR Saudi Riyal	0.00 LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	36.79 THB Thai Baht
3.66 AED U.A.E Dirham	5.09 BRL Brazilian Real	4.63 RON Romanian New Leu	7.81 HKD Hong Kong Dollar	610.53 XAF Central African CFA Franc	25,405.70 VND Vietnamese Dong
878.36 ARS Argentine Peso	0.00 XCD East Caribbean Dollar	0.00 GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	10.06 MAD Moroccan Dirham	0.00 BHD Bahrain Dinar	1.00 PAB Panamanian Balboa
1.70 AZN Azerbaijan Manat	3,920.00 COP Colombian Peso	88.42 KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	362.00 HUF Hungarian Forint	10.89 TJS Tajikistan Ruble	16,073.70 IDR Indonesian Rupiah
47.95 EGP Egyptian Pound	1,358.84 KRW South Korean Won	7,456.52 PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	4.74 MYR Malaysian Ringgit	508.31 CRC Costa Rican Colón	1.67 NZD New Zealand Dollar
277.87 PKR Pakistani Rupee	91.39 RUB Russian Rouble	18.51 ZAR South African Rand	3.13 TND Tunisian Dinar	0.00 BBD Barbadian Dollar	1.82 BGN Bulgarian Lev
32.33 TRY Turkish Lira	57.28 PHP Philippine Peso	32.31 TWD New Taiwan Dollar	1,164.84 NGN Nigerian Naira	0.00 XPF CFP Franc	0.00 GHS Ghanaian Cedi
0.00 JMD Jamaican Dollar	0.00 ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	0.00 BND Brunei Dollar	108.90 RSD Serbian Dinar	7.24 CNY Chinese Yuan	6.94 DKK Danish Krone
3.49 TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	83.42 INR Indian Rupee				