New River Gorge
Scenic Drives
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the
Interior
National River
West Virginia

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 82 (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, homes, and power plants.

At river level, Fayette Station Road runs directly through remnants of the townsite 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 Tunnel Humaker 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, riffle currents, and excellent fishing opportunities. Kayakers and rafters paddle through these wild waters and often stop 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 Spacer. 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 exposure of Fiery Wall, a rock climber's paradise, is clearly visible across the stream. 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.

Fayette Station Road Tour Map
Legend
- New River Gorge National River
- Much of the land within the Park remains private property. Please respect the owners' rights.
- Fayette Station Road Tour
- Interpretive Exhibits
- Roadside Pull-off
- Interpretive Exhibits
- Winding Arrow - indicates direction of Traffic Flow
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Hiking Trail
- River Access

Interpretive Exhibits
1. New River Gorge Scenic Drive
2. New River Gorge 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

New River Gorge National River
Canyon Rim Visitor Center
P.O. Box 246
Mount Hope, WV 25855
Fayette Station Road Tour Map
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New River Gorge Scenic Drive
- To continue south, take the Coal Heritage Trail and the New River Gorge Scenic Drive, turn right onto U.S. Route 19.

Other National Coal Heritage Sites (See Map on Reverse)
- Coal Heritage Trail
- Mount Hope
- Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine

New River Gorge National River Information
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For Fayettie Station Road Tour
- Begin at the Canyon Rim Visitor Center
- Beginning of Fayette Station Road Tour

For Fayette Station Road, turn right here
- For Fayette Station Bridge, turn right here
- For Fayette Station Road, take left fork

Canyon Rim Visitor Center
Begin of Fayette Station Road Tour
For Fayette Station Road, turn right here
New River Gorge Scenic Drive, continue north and turn right (south) on Hwy 60.

New River Gorge Bridge
CSX Railroad (No Trespassing)

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