



North Central Byways & Backways

Once used as a lush hunting ground for the Mingo and Delaware tribes, north central West Virginia has been known as a source of natural abundance for centuries. With many rich deposits of coal and natural gas, vast tracts of timber, and glass-quality sand, the Morgantown-area became a magnet for industry. Three roads: the Cheat River Byway, Old Route 7, and the Northwestern Turnpike came from humble beginnings as hunting trails to become toll roads and railroad access roads. As time progressed, these roads grew to become major thoroughfares before the age of highways. Today, the history of these roads is still celebrated as the area continues to grow with new industry and the ever-expanding West Virginia University.

Old Route 7

As you pass through Star City on Old Route 7, make a stop by Gentile Glass Company and watch as artisans wow crowds with beautiful hand-blown glass. After you've browsed the aisles at the outlet store, you can then head down to L.G. Glass Company to check out the large collection of West Virginia glass. Further east, the West Virginia University campus is home to more than 20,000 students every year. West Virginia's largest university is well known for its rigorous academics and outstanding Mountaineer athletic teams. Down the road, Arthurdale was the nation's first New Deal community during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. Today, the New Deal Homestead Museum showcases artifacts and archives from the Depression era, as well as a restored homestead. Heading east to Terra Alta, the Alpine Lake Resort is perfect for business seminars

with its numerous conference rooms, a golf course, and other outdoor activities. In the winter, the surrounding countryside is ideal for cross-country skiing with over nine miles of trails.

Cheat River Byway

Running perpendicular to Old Route 7, the Cheat River Byway follows along the boulder-laden Cheat River. Several whitewater rafting companies run this wild river, which is well known for its 30 technical rapids, perfect for kayaking. During the spring thaw and rainy season, the Cheat's rapids rank in the Class II-IV range with maybe a Class V following really heavy rains. Across the river, permit-carrying hunters love the Briery Mountain Wildlife Management Area and its many deer, grouse, squirrel, and turkey.

All along this 14-mile stretch of roadway, motorists can see the remains of an industrial past. Quarries, lumber mills, mines, railroads, and a cement factory dot the landscape in Mountaineer Country. During the Civil War, the battle for the three viaducts over the creeks beside the Cheat River was quite fierce. Union forces held off vastly superior numbers of Confederates to protect these vital transportation routes. Today, the cannons used to defend Rowlesburg are still on display and the viaducts are still in use and are easily visible from the roadway.

Northwestern Turnpike Byway

After you've spent a weekend rafting and sightseeing on the Cheat River Byway, you can reach the Northwestern Turnpike at Macomber. Don't worry, this is a *former* turnpike built in 1838; nowadays, this companion to the National Road is toll-free U.S. Route 50. Grafton, on the western part of the byway, is home to the Mountain State's first national cemetery and is also the resting place of the Civil War's first casualty. This hallowed ground is close to historic Grafton's B & O rail station and repair shop. Today, visitors can learn about the wonderful beginnings of Mother's Day at Grafton's Mother's Day Shrine. Nearby Tygart Lake State Park

offers boat rentals, hiking, camping, and a restaurant. Pleasant Creek Wildlife Management Area has many hiking trails, camping, and hunting.

Further east, Cool Spring Park has a wide collection of antique industrial machines, as well as a restaurant and gift shop. Visitors and the occasional grazing sheep, love to see the antique steam engines and old locomotive. For a glimpse of some of Mother Nature's colossal creations, head to Cathedral State Park and see the amazing 500-year-old Centennial Eastern Hemlock. Thought by many to be the oldest hemlock on the East Coast, this venerable tree resides in one of the last virgin hemlock forests east of the Mississippi River.

But giant trees and wild rivers are only two reasons to travel the North Central Byways. Visitors could easily spend an entire week rafting the Cheat, then touring the old railroad sites, then hiking and boating in Tygart Lake State Park. The raw and untamed beauty of this region helps keep motorists coming back year after year. After all, isn't a breathtaking break from bumper-to-bumper traffic what you want in a scenic road?