

West Virginia: 150 Years of Statehood
Chapter 2: The Regions of West Virginia– Quick Notes

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Chapter 2

The Regions of West Virginia

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Section 1

Geographic Regions of West Virginia

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are the four geographical regions of West Virginia?

How are the four geographical regions different?

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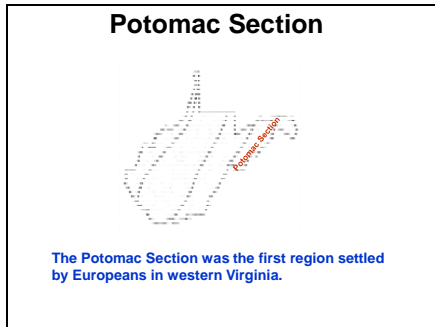
From east to west, the four geographic regions of West Virginia include the



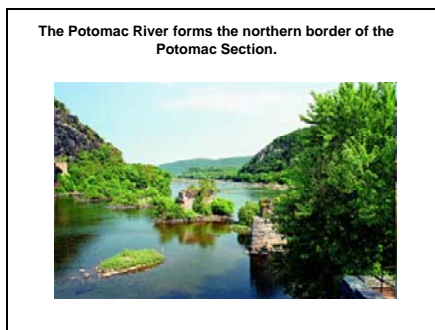
The map shows the outline of West Virginia with four regions labeled: Ohio River Valley (green), Allegheny Plateau (orange), Appalachian Highlands (blue), and Potomac Section (red).

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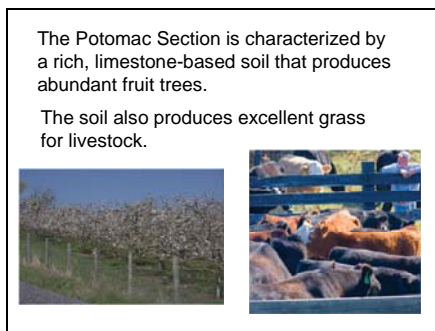
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A unique feature of the Potomac Section is its warm springs, which maintain a constant temperature of 74°F.



A historical marker for Berkeley Springs Baths. The marker is a white rectangular sign with a decorative top and a circular seal. The text on the marker reads: "BERKELEY SPRINGS BATHS. One of oldest spas in South, with mineral spring waters first used by Native Americans for reputed healing powers. Frequently visited by George Washington. Land granted to Virginia by Lord Fairfax in 1776. Not used as a health resort since 1794. Now a state park. It ranks among nation's oldest resorts. Mineral water, 74.1° F. fed from numerous nearby springs at nearly 1,000 gallons per minute." The marker is mounted on a stone wall.

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Allegheny Highlands




The Allegheny Highlands gave West Virginia its nickname "the Mountain State." The region forms the dividing line between eastern and western Virginia.

A map of West Virginia with the Allegheny Highlands region highlighted in red. The text "Allegheny Highlands" is written in red across the highlighted area.

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The Allegheny Highlands has some of the highest mountains found in the state.



A landscape photograph showing a view of the Allegheny Highlands. The foreground is filled with green trees and foliage. In the background, there are rolling mountains under a clear blue sky.

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The highest point in the state—**Spruce Knob**— is located in the Allegheny Highlands.



From atop Spruce Knob you can get a glimpse of the beauty of the highlands

A photograph showing a view from the top of Spruce Knob. The foreground is a grassy slope with some green plants. In the background, there are rolling mountains under a clear blue sky.

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Many of the natural wonders of West Virginia are located in the Allegheny Highlands.

- Peter's Mountain
- Pinnacle Rock
- Smoke Hole Caverns
- Seneca Caverns
- Lost World Caverns

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- Dolly Sods**, a unique area with one-sided spruce trees, is also found in this region.



Photo by Mark E. Lanney


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Helvetia, an immigrant community located in the region, is the Latin name for Switzerland. Helvetia maintains a number of old world traditions.



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Allegheny Plateau




West of the high mountains lies a region of more or less level land.

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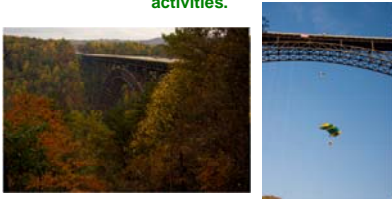
Gorges and canyons, formed from fast-flowing rivers, are found in this region. The New River Gorge is found here.



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The New River Gorge Bridge allows people to cross the gorge on a modern highway.

The Bridge also offers a number of recreational activities.



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The prehistoric New River, which formed the gorge, is a haven for whitewater rafting.



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The Allegheny Plateau contains a variety of natural resources, including limestone, sandstone, shale, coal, oil, natural gas, and salt.




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The two largest cities in West Virginia are located in this region.



Huntington



Charleston

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The Ohio River Valley
The Ohio River Valley lies along the Ohio River.





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The **Ohio River** helped the region to become a major manufacturing area. Glass, steel, and electric power are three of the industries found here.



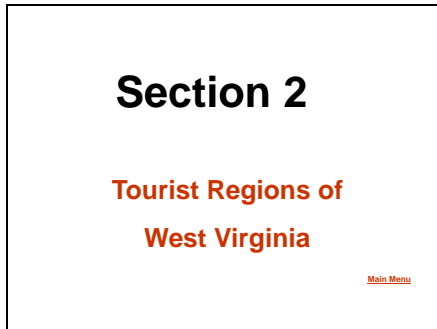
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Although the first iron furnace west of the Alleghenies was located in Hancock County, it was not until improvements in transportation made it possible to import iron ore from Minnesota that the manufacture of steel became profitable.

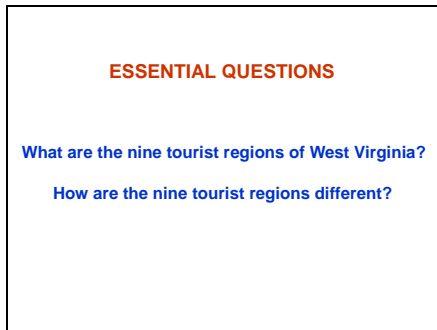


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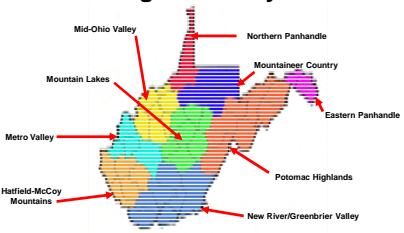
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Some tourists enjoy attending fairs and festivals that celebrate the state's culture, history, and economic development..



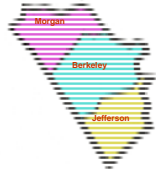
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West Virginia is divided into nine tourist regions. They include



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The Eastern Panhandle includes three counties.




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West Virginia's history began in the Eastern Panhandle.

There are interesting historic sites throughout the region, including Berkeley Springs, Martinsburg, Harpers Ferry, and Charles Town.

Berkeley Springs, in Morgan County, was originally called Bath in reference to the healing mineral waters that are found there. People first began traveling there over 200 years ago to lie in the warm waters. These warm waters still attract tourists today.




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Other Morgan County tourist attractions include

[The Berkeley Castle](#) Cacapon and [Berkeley Springs](#) state parks



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Visitors to [Martinsburg](#) may visit historic houses from the Revolutionary War period

Or, from the Civil War period

[Adam Stephen House](#) [Belle Boyd House](#)



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They may also visit the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad roundhouse which was important during the Civil War



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Visitors to [Charles Town](#) may visit the site of John Brown's trial and hanging.



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Visitors to **Harpers Ferry** may visit the site of John Brown's raid in 1859.



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POTOMAC HIGHLANDS

Southwest of the Eastern Panhandle lies the Potomac Highlands. The eight counties that are included in this region are




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The Potomac Highlands is especially attractive to outdoor adventurers.

This region contains some of the finest ski slopes in the eastern United States

The region's rock formations, including Seneca Rocks and Spruce Knob, provide challenges and excitement for serious climbers.



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Tourists who are interested in history may visit the restored town of **Cass** where they may ride a train powered by an antique, coal-burning engine.

Tourists interested in trains may also travel to **Romney** where they can ride the *Potomac Eagle* through the scenic Trough.




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The Potomac Highlands also features a number of opportunities to learn more about the culture of West Virginia. These include

- [The Augusta Heritage Festival](#)
- [The Mountain State Forest Festival](#)
- [A visit to Helvetia](#)

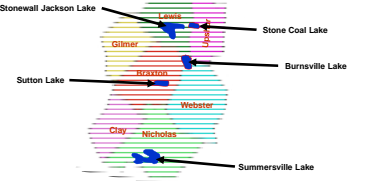


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MOUNTAIN LAKES

Mountain Lakes, located in the center of West Virginia, contains seven counties, including

The lakes that are located there give the region its name.

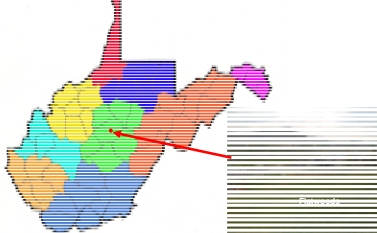


Counties shown: Boone, Lincoln, Wayne, Putnam, Cabell, Boone, Lincoln, Wayne, Putnam, Cabell, Boone, Lincoln, Wayne, Putnam, Cabell.

Lakes shown: Stone Coal Lake, Burnsville Lake, Summersville Lake, Sutton Lake, Stonewall Jackson Lake.

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An area near Sutton, in Braxton County, is the geographical center of West Virginia.



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The economy of the Mountain Lakes region has helped create a number of tourist attractions, including

Visits to local glass factories



Appalachian Glass

[Woodchopping Festival](#)



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Stonewall Jackson, a famous Civil War general who was born in Harrison County, grew up in Lewis County. The presence of Stonewall Jackson in the area is well documented and visitors may travel to see

His boyhood home at Jackson's Mill A state park which bears his name.

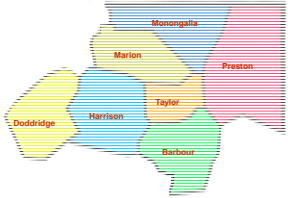


There are eight wildlife management areas in the region, including the [West Virginia Wildlife Center](#) in Upshur County. This center is home to [French Creek Freddie](#), the groundhog who predicts the end of winter each year on February 2.

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MOUNTAINEER COUNTRY

Mountaineer Country contains seven counties, including




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Tourists interested in history can find a number of places to visit, including



[The International Mother's Day Shrine in Taylor County](#)



[The Phillipe Bridge in Barbour County](#)



Fort New Salem, in Harrison County, and [Prickett's Fort](#) in Marion County

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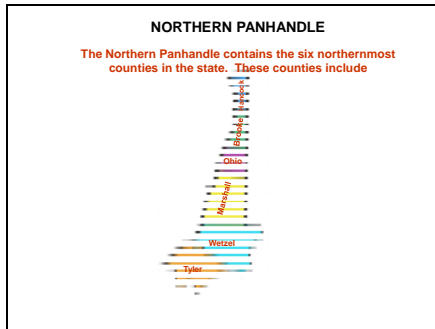
Mountaineer Country is also home to the state's largest university.



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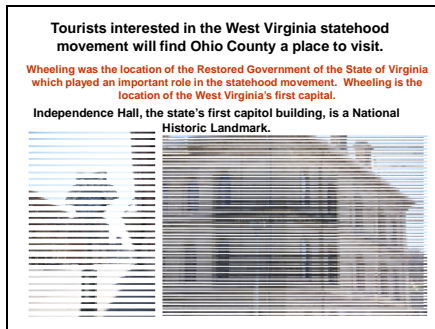
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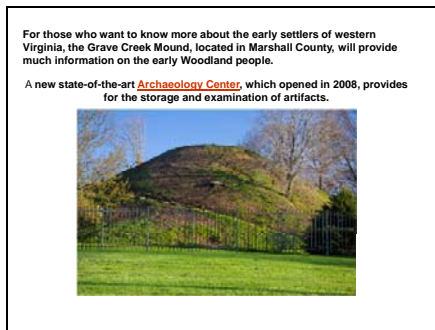
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A number of fairs and festivals attract visitors to the Northern Panhandle.

Wheeling hosts the annual Festival of Lights which provides lighted Christmas displays over the 300-acre Oglebay Park.

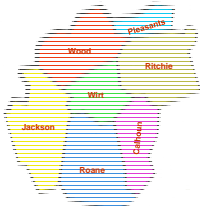


Sistersville, in Tyler County, hosts the West Virginia Oil and Gas Festival to commemorate the importance of oil and natural gas in the region.

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MID-OHIO VALLEY

The Mid-Ohio Valley contains seven counties. These counties include



Jackson
Roane


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There are a number of tourist attractions which focus on the economic development of the Mid-Ohio Valley region.

Visitors can visit such places as



The Mid-Atlantic Glass Company in Ellenboro



The Oil and Gas Museum in Parkersburg





Halls Chocolates in Vienna

The Fenton Glass Company in Williamstown

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Those who are interested in history can take a ferry to Blennerhassett Island State Park, located in the Ohio River.

On the island they can visit the Blennerhassett Mansion, built by Harman Blennerhassett in 1800. The original mansion was destroyed by a fire in 1811 and was rebuilt by the state of West Virginia. The restoration was completed in 1991

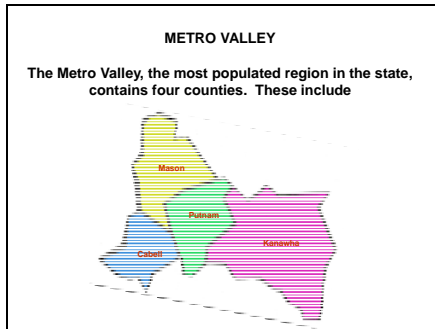


Take a virtual tour

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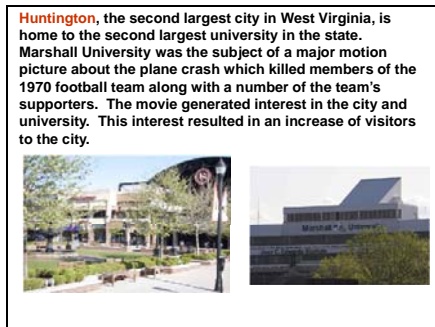
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The home of **John McCausland**, a Civil War general
Riverfront murals which depict the early life of the Native Americans who lived in the area



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One of the biggest tourist attractions in Point Pleasant is **Mothman**.
A twelve-foot statue, made of stainless steel, has red eyes made by Blenko Glass.



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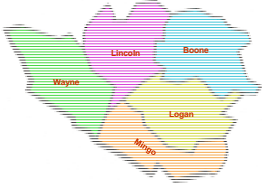
Putnam County also has a number of historical attractions. The Buffalo Academy, which was established in 1849, was once attended by General John McCausland.



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HATFIELD AND MCCOY MOUNTAINS

The Hatfield and McCoy Mountains is the newest designated tourist region in West Virginia. The region, which at one time was included as part of the Metro Valley, contains five counties.





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Coal is king in the Hatfield and McCoy Mountains. The focus on coal is seen in many communities, including Williamson, in Mingo County



Madison, in Boone County

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Perhaps the most popular tourist attraction in the Hatfield and McCoy Mountains is the **Hatfield and McCoy Trails**, an off-highway vehicle trail system used by dirt and mountain bikers, hikers, horseback riders, and ATV enthusiasts.




[Video](#)

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NEW RIVER/GREENBRIER VALLEY

The New River/Greenbrier Valley region contains eight counties. These counties include



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The New River/Greenbrier region also has a long history with coal. Reminders of the importance of coal in the region can be found in **Bramwell**, a small town which was once home to a number of millionaire coal owners.




Bluefield is the location of the **Eastern Regional Coal Archives**. This archives houses an extensive collection of records from the West Virginia mining industry.

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Beckley is the location of an **Exhibition Coal Mine**. This facility gives tourists a look at the early days of mining as well as an opportunity to go into a mine.




Coalwood, a coal camp, has been memorialized by Homer Hickam in three books about his hometown. The October Sky Festival is held each year to commemorate the history of the town.

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One of the features that most defines the New River/Greenbrier region is the New River Gorge. The area attracts visitors to

the River. Whitewater rafting is a popular outdoor adventure on this second-oldest river in the world.


the Gorge. The unique geographical features of the gorge provide popular photo opportunities as well as rock climbing.



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The Bridge

Bridge Day attracts adventurous visitors who jump and parachute from the New River Gorge Bridge.



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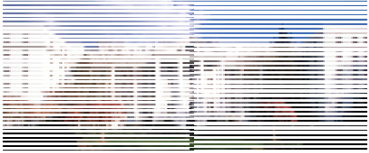
Those with an interest in history may visit **Lewisburg**, in Greenbrier County. Visitors may take a walking tour which takes them past old homes, slave quarters, the **Old Stone Church**, and a Confederate cemetery.



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West Virginia's best-known resort, the **Greenbrier**, is also found in this tourist area. "Tourists" began visiting the Greenbrier as early as 1774; however, a hotel was not built on the property until 1858.



Bunker
