

# AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

APRIL/MAY 2007

b e a u t y

## MEETS

WEST VIRGINIA'S  
NEW RIVER  
GORGE

## adventure

Article by Gwen Hagaman, Director of Marketing for North American River Runners, Inc.

Photography courtesy of North American River Runners, Inc.

Like visiting the Grand Canyon, there are two ways to enjoy the beauty of the New River Gorge in West Virginia – admire the breathtaking view from the top, or dive into world-class whitewater in the river below. Its balance of natural beauty and adventure activities makes the New River Gorge an exciting and memorable vacation destination.

The New River Gorge is a 1,000-foot deep canyon where the oldest river of the continent runs northbound joining the Gauley River to form the Kanawha

River, and eventually flowing into the Ohio River. The New River Gorge National River Recreation Area encompasses over 70,000 acres of land along the New River. It provides a Visitors Center overlooking the New River Gorge Bridge, the state's most recognized landmark, where displays of area history, wildlife and gorge geology may be studied.

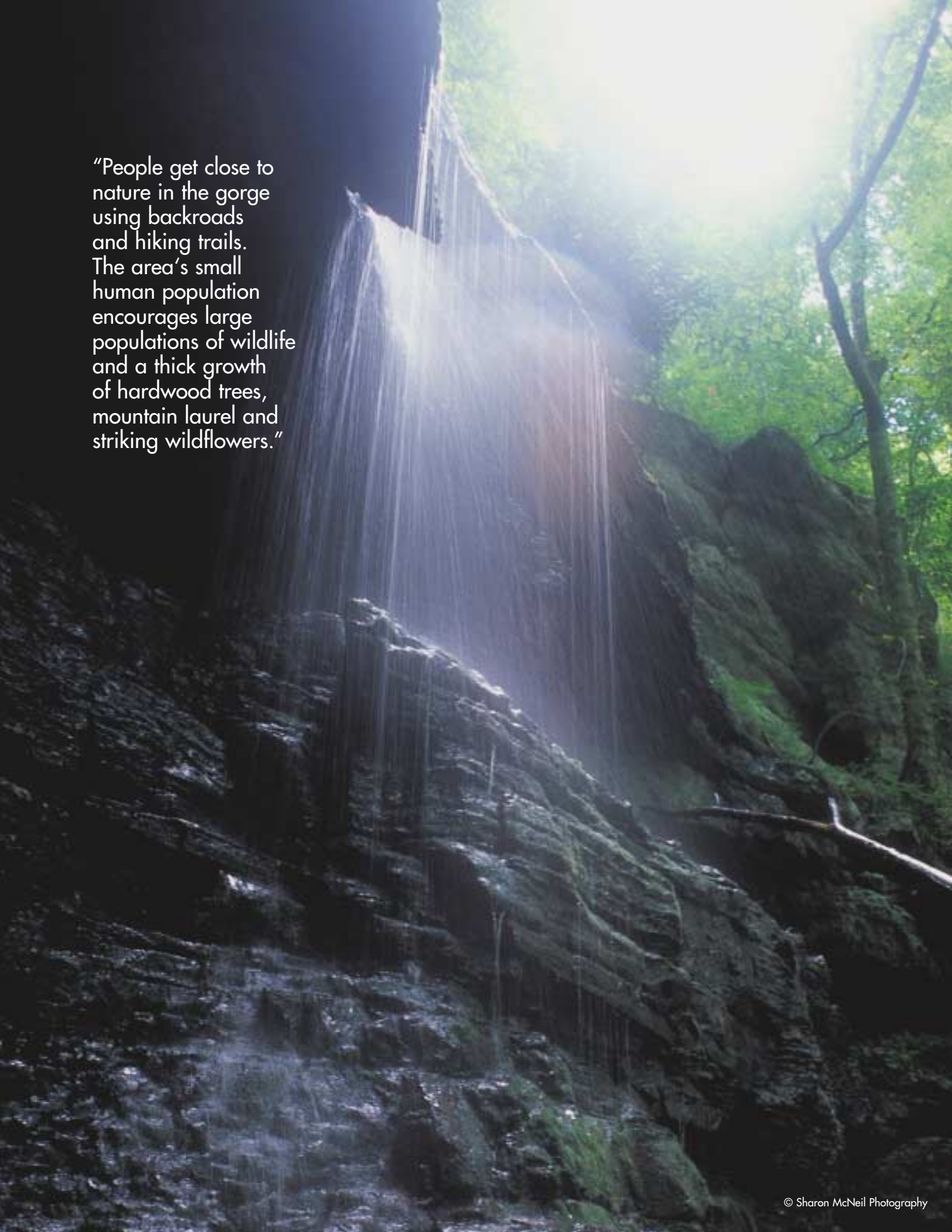
People get close to nature in the gorge using backroads and hiking trails. The area's small human population encourages large populations of wildlife

and a thick growth of hardwood trees, mountain laurel and striking wildflowers. It is not unusual to see deer, groundhogs, fairydiddles (chipmunks) and other creatures while walking nature trails.

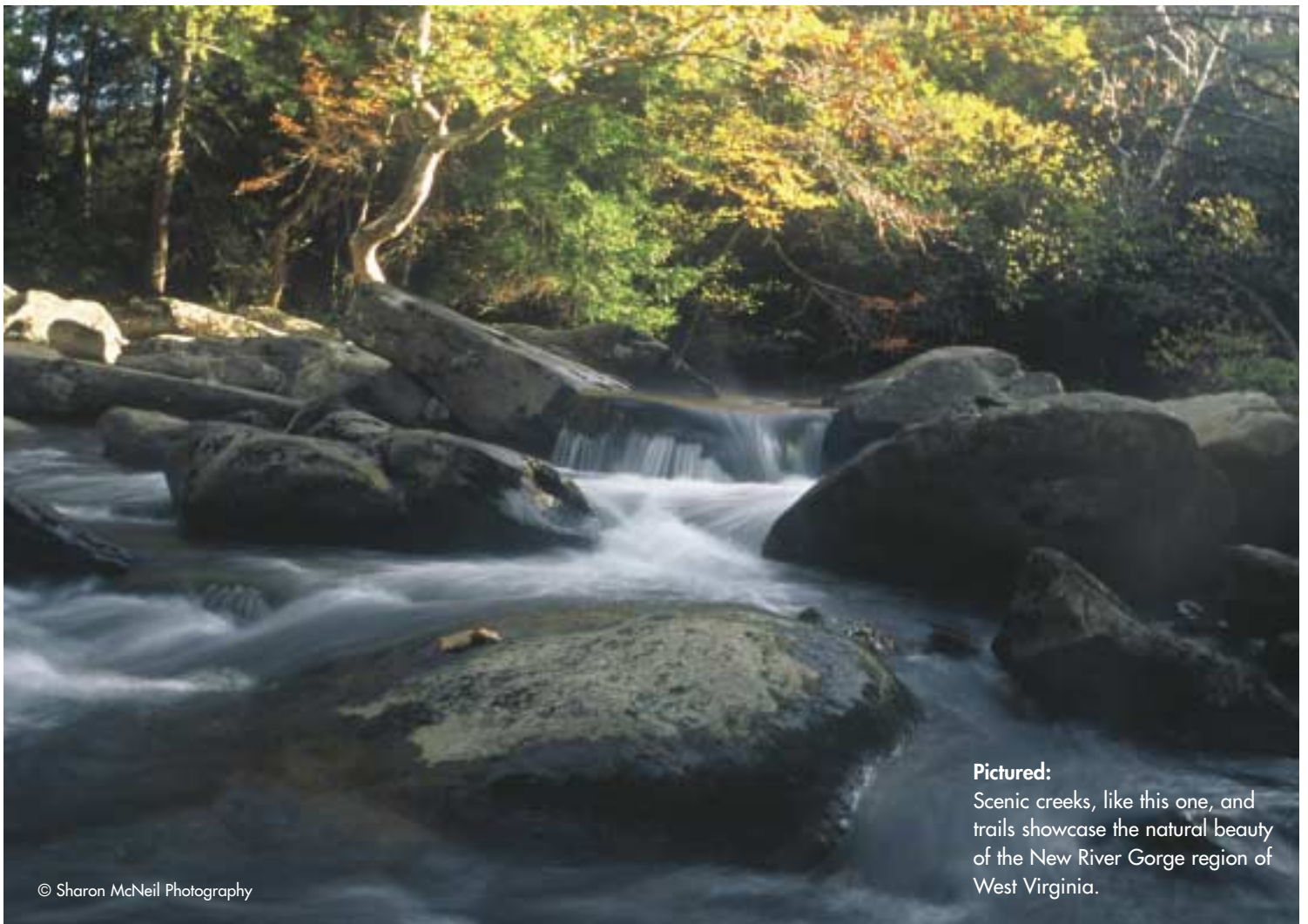
The New River is famous for whitewater rafting. The Upper Section is a gentle, relaxing float down a gorgeous canyon with dramatic rock cliff walls and hardwood forest. The rapids are easy and playful, giving a surprise splash here and there to keep its guests laughing.



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A photograph of a waterfall cascading down a dark, mossy rock face. The water is captured in motion, creating a soft, ethereal glow. The surrounding forest is dense with green foliage, and sunlight filters through the trees, creating a bright, hazy atmosphere. The overall scene is serene and natural.

"People get close to nature in the gorge using backroads and hiking trails. The area's small human population encourages large populations of wildlife and a thick growth of hardwood trees, mountain laurel and striking wildflowers."



© Sharon McNeil Photography

**Pictured:**

Scenic creeks, like this one, and trails showcase the natural beauty of the New River Gorge region of West Virginia.



© Whitewater Photography

**Pictured above:**

Inflatable kayaks, called “duckies” are very popular on the lazy Upper New River, especially with children. Holding one or two people, duckies are very maneuverable and easy to get in and out of to swim.

“The Upper New is a great choice for families with younger children or grandparents. Children as young as five years old are able to enjoy this rafting trip,” said Frank Lukacs, Founder and President of North American River Runners (NARR). “We stop at the old coal town of Thurmond, walk to some pretty creek falls, and play at Jump Rock.” Opened in 1975, NARR is one of the first commercial rafting outfitters in the New River Gorge region to offer river adventures to visitors.

A selection of river craft are available to make the trip fun and easy for seniors, friends who want to talk instead of paddling, and children who enjoy having control of their own boat. The most popular is a raft that holds up to eight guests and a professional guide.

Forming a crew, they all paddle down river as a team. Rafts equipped with an oar-rig allow the guide to power down the river with the passengers just riding along. This type of craft is good for older people or families with young children who are not physically capable of paddling during the whole trip. Inflatable kayaks, called “duckies” are very popular on the lazy Upper New River,

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Everyone travels downstream together, joining up for a delicious deli-style riverside lunch before completing the day’s trip down river.

The Lower Section of the New River steps the adventure level up a notch with more whitewater action. It’s a good trip for first-time rafters but is also exciting for experienced paddlers. “This is our post popular trip for good reasons,” explains Lukacs. “The Lower New River has a long season, dependable water and easy accessibility.”

With more than 25 Class II to Class IV+ rapids, the Lower New is a whitewater roller

**Pictured above:**

From early spring through the end of fall, the landscape is decorated with a wide variety of wildflowers.



Fishing guide Ellis Ryan shows off a sassy young smallmouth before releasing it back into the river.

## Catch Your Own Delicious Bass

### Smallmouth Bass Fishing

It’s easy to understand why those who love to fish also love the New River. The New has long been rated as one of the top ten smallmouth bass rivers in the country. From March through October, North American River Runners’ (NARR) expert fishing guides lead guests to remote smallmouth hot spots.

The smallmouth bass has a well deserved reputation for having more fight, pound-for-pound, than any other freshwater game fish. After a smallmouth strikes, it usually makes a sizzling run for the surface, tail walking with dazzling aerobatics, in an attempt to throw the hook – and then wages a dog fight in deep water.

NARR fishing rafts are specially outfitted to optimize smallmouth fishing and the trips may be customized to match guest preferences.

For more information call 800-950-2585 or visit [www.NARR.com](http://www.NARR.com). For information about West Virginia fishing regulations or to obtain a nonresident license visit [www.wvfish.com](http://www.wvfish.com).

coaster with enough thrills and adventure for any paddlesport enthusiast. "I love to share whitewater rafting with our guests," said Lukacs. "It's easy to see the thrill and delight on their faces at the end of the trip."

Calm pools between rapids allow time to swim or enjoy the scenery and wildlife. Historic coal mining towns, once booming and now abandoned, pepper the 800-foot gorge walls. NARR river guides share stories about people and events from the gorge's historic coal boom.

NARR's New River Overnight Trip is a nice mini-vacation. The first day is an Upper New river trip with an evening of riverside camping. When you arrive at the campsite, the tents are already set up and your extra clothes are inside. The smell of a gourmet dinner being prepared at the campfire teases your nose. Guests may spend the evening fishing, exploring trails, or just relaxing at the campfire, where the storytelling goes on into the night.

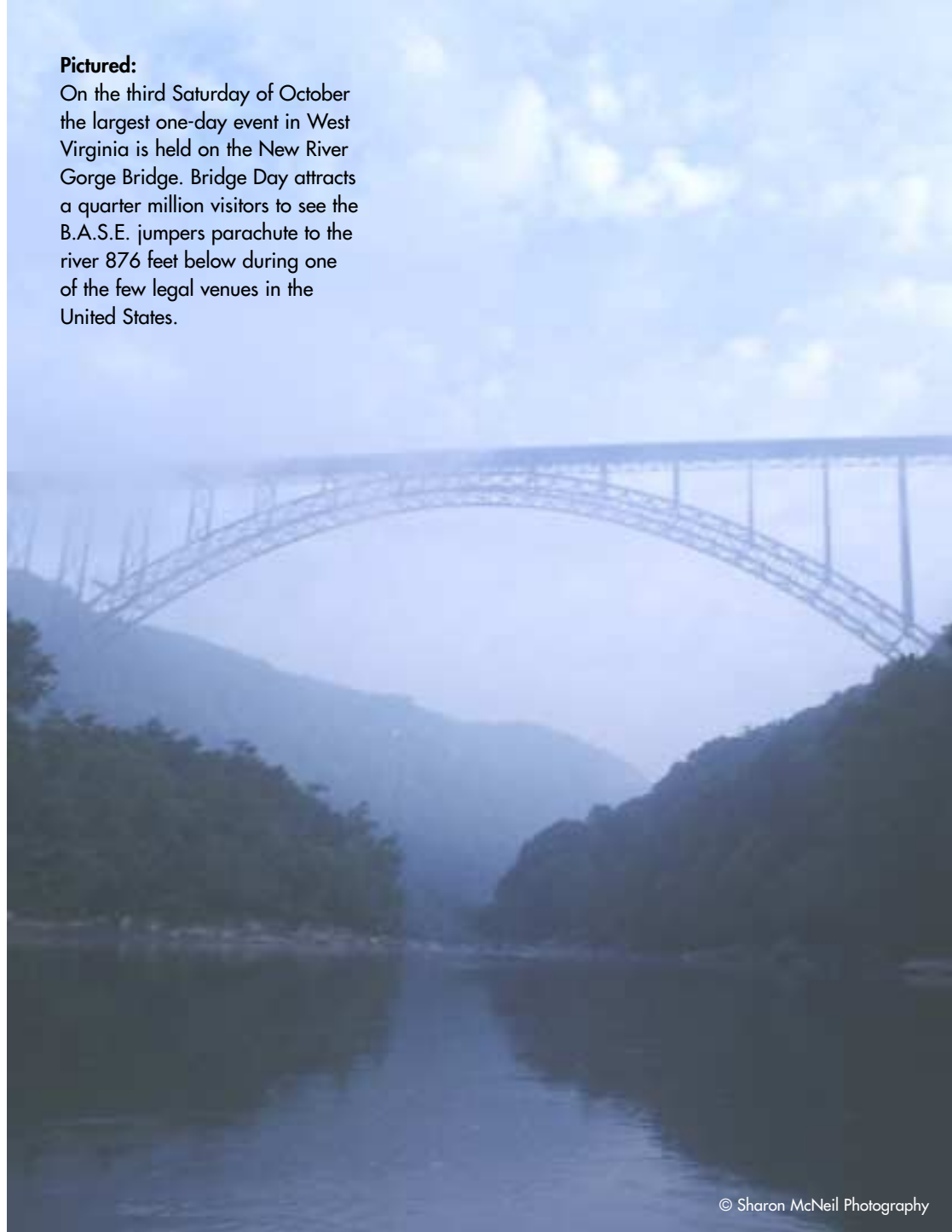
On the second day, guests continue down the Lower New, rafting some of America's most exciting whitewater. The New River is one of the largest volume rivers in the nation, ranked among its top ten whitewater rivers. At the end of your river trip professional photos and DVDs make it easy to share the excitement with friends back at home.

NARR's base in Hico, West Virginia offers a full-service campground, tent cabins, bathhouses, an outfitter store and a family-style restaurant called High Country Café.

Additional adventure activities offered by NARR include kayak instruction, guided fishing trips, rope challenge courses, a canopy course, a 40-foot climbing

**Pictured:**

On the third Saturday of October the largest one-day event in West Virginia is held on the New River Gorge Bridge. Bridge Day attracts a quarter million visitors to see the B.A.S.E. jumpers parachute to the river 876 feet below during one of the few legal venues in the United States.



© Sharon McNeil Photography

tower and a 2.5 acre paintball field. Guests also enjoy free play of basketball, sand court volleyball, horseshoes, and other games.

The area is dotted with small communities. Most have historic sites and beautiful older buildings in their downtowns. It's enjoyable and relaxing to spend a day antiquing, visiting Civil War sites, tasting local favorite dishes at restaurants, or attending plays and performances. The closest towns to NARR's base are Summersville to the

north and Fayetteville to the south, each a 10 minute drive on U.S. Route 19, a four lane highway. Both towns have a selection of hotels, bed and breakfasts, cabin retreats, campgrounds and RV facilities to from which to choose. (NARR reservationists are happy to book hotel accommodations for visitors.)

For more information about the New River Gorge and the adventures it offers, call North American River Runners at 800-950-2585 or visit them online at [www.NARR.com](http://www.NARR.com).

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## For the Love of Kayak



### Learning the Sport of Whitewater Kayaking

Kayak students at North American River Runners learn from champion paddlers. Shane Groves and Brian Jennings are two of the country's top freestyle kayakers. When the two are not competing, they are teaching beginner and advanced kayak clinics at the NARR Kayak School, the longest running in the State of West Virginia.

Winner of the 2005 Wave Sport Open, Groves is the lead instructor for the NARR Kayak School, the oldest in West Virginia. Jennings is NARR's river manager and teaches advanced kayak clinics. Additional instructors for beginner clinics have five or more years of river guide experience in both rafts and kayaks.

"I love kayaking," says Groves. "There's nothing better than introducing someone to the sport and

watching them develop the desire to improve." NARR's beginner clinics consist of two days on the water. Day one instruction is in a flat pool to learn the basics, such as the wet exit and proper paddle strokes. The second day is a river trip on the mild Upper New River where students learn how to run rapids and catch eddies.

Freestyle kayaking is both Groves and Jennings' specialty. NARR's advanced clinics are for kayakers who want to improve upon the skills they already have and to learn more advanced skills. "Teaching someone how to do tricks in big holes is very rewarding," Groves says. "They really appreciate and listen to everything you have to say." For more information call 800-950-2585 or visit [www.NARR.com](http://www.NARR.com).



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