

## **NEW RIVER**

Guide: *Mark Lewis*

Length: *16 miles in spring; 10 miles in summer*

Season: *April to October*

Rapids: *Class II-IV*

Location: *Fayetteville, WV*

Entrenched in the rugged terrain of the Mountain State, winding through a massive 1,000-foot gorge known as the "Grand Canyon of the East." West Virginia's New River provides one of the most scenic rafting experiences in the Southeast. With wide borders in the deep canyon setting, rafting the New feels a lot like the Colorado River and other Wild West waters.

"It's just so big. In the springtime at high water it's the only place east of the Mississippi that you can see big Western water," says Mark Lewis. With more than 24 years under his belt as a guide, Mark Lewis has learned the eddies and currents of the New as well as anyone. Lewis quickly rattles off his favorite rapids: "Double Z," "The Keeneys," and "Surprise."

Though its roaring rapids can be intimidating, the New caters to all ages. Guides take children as young as age 5 on the Upper New and as young as 12 on the Lower New. In between crashing rapids, its calm pool intervals are great for swimming or for sighting flowers and wildlife. The New also provides a glimpse back in history as it passes through many historic coal-mining towns. Paddlers can opt to tackle the river over two days and camp for the night beside the New, ironically enough one of the oldest rivers in the world.

Spring is the best season to experience the New, as water levels decrease in the summer months, turning thundering rapids into rock gardens.

### **Blue Ridge Outdoors**

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