

*The Charms of Carnegie Hall, Confederates, and Caves***LEWISBURG****West Virginia**

Ask a passerby in Lewisburg how to get to Carnegie Hall, and you won't be told to "practice, practice, practice." Instead, you'll be directed to Church Street, where in 1902 philanthropist Andrew Carnegie donated the funds

for a white-columned classroom building for a women's college that was later transformed into a performing arts center in 1983, just one of many surprises in this historic community of cool, tree-canopied streets. One of the prettiest towns in the state, Lewisburg is a 236-acre National Register Historic District set amid the lush, rolling Greenbrier Valley, with good antiques, live theater, and art galleries. All mighty impressive for a town of 3,800 folks, making it a favorite weekend getaway for people from Washington, D.C., and beyond.

Check in for a stay at the family-owned General Lewis Inn, a 1929 addition to a home constructed in 1834. Its 25 rooms are decorated with antique spool and canopy beds, chests of drawers, and old prints. The inn's restaurant is known for its fine country cooking—golden, crispy fried chicken and fresh caught local rainbow trout, but don't miss the freshly baked cornbread and cobblers, always served warm. Work off the calories hiking and biking on the 78-mile converted rail trail known as the Greenbrier River Trail; its scenic southern end starts near town.

Lewisburg annually attracts 180,000 people to the State Fair of West Virginia. With all the funnel cakes, carnival rides, and stage performances you can stand, it's a large ten-day fair with a healthy dose of agriculture—strong on livestock shows, draft-horse pulls, and competitions for the best garden vegetables, flowers, and baked goods—that's a lot of Americana.

Lewisburg is right on the historic Midland Trail, which leads to nearby White Sulphur



Lewisburg's Carnegie Hall is one of four buildings of the same name still in continuous use in the world.

Springs, home to the legendary Greenbrier Resort (see p. 285) and America's first organized golf club, the 9-hole Oakhurst Links. Recently purchased and operated by the Greenbrier, golf is played here with sand tees, hickory-shafted clubs, and gutta-percha balls (made of hard natural latex from Malaysia), just as it was when the course was laid out in 1884.

Set aside a day of one-stop shopping for handmade West Virginia arts and crafts some 50 miles west at Tamarack, whose striking fire-engine red roofline calls to mind the Statue of Liberty's crown. Half a million visitors a year come here to buy rigorously juried crafts—blown glass and wood carvings alongside sock monkeys and miniature outhouses. Resident artisans sit at work in glass-walled studios while live music, theater, dance, and storytelling invite you to linger.

WHERE: 80 miles northwest of Roanoke, VA. *Visitor info:* Tel 800-833-2068 or 304-645-1000; greenbrierwv.com. **CARNEGIE HALL:** Tel 304-645-7917; carnegiehallwv.com. **GENERAL LEWIS INN:** Lewisburg. Tel 304-645-2600; generallewisinn.com. *Cost:* rooms from \$110; dinner \$35. **GREENBRIER RIVER TRAIL:** greenbrierrivertrail.com. **STATE FAIR OF WEST**

VIRGINIA: Tel 304-645-1090; statefairwv.com. *When:* 10 days in Aug. **OAKHURST LINKS:** White Sulphur Springs. Tel 304-536-1110; greenbrier.com/oakhurstlinks. *Cost:* greens fees \$75. *When:* May–Oct. **TAMARACK:** Beckley. Tel 88-TAMARACK or 304-256-6843; tamarackwv.com. **BEST TIME:** Apr for Lewisburg Chocolate Festival.

A Million Untamed Allegheny Acres

"THE MON"

West Virginia

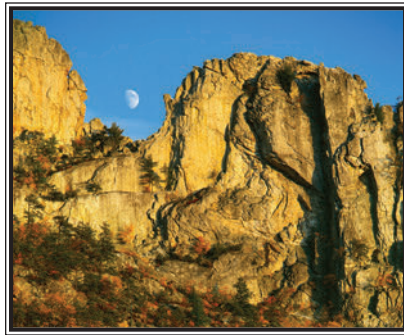
One of the East Coast's largest wilderness areas and best-kept secrets, the Monongahela National Forest is a 919,000-acre backcountry behemoth extended over ten counties in West Virginia, offering 1.3 million

backpackers, birders, berry pickers, mountain bikers, rock climbers, cross-country skiers, canoers, kayakers, and anglers more than enough Allegheny outback to explore without crossing each other's path.

Running roughly 130 miles along the crest of the Allegheny Mountains and protecting the watershed of the Monongahela River (thought to be a Delaware phrase that means "river of falling banks"), the "Mon" includes 800 miles of backwoods hiking trails, 23 camping

grounds, and eight federally designated wilderness areas—Otter Creek, Dolly Sods, Laurel Fork North, Laurel Fork South, Cranberry (see p. 282), Big Draft, Roaring Plains West, and Spice Run. The Spruce Knob–Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area encompasses some of the forest's most dramatic scenery. At 4,863 feet, Spruce Knob is the highest point in West Virginia, which you can reach via an easy half-mile hike past thickets of mountain laurel, rhododendron, and fire azaleas (all bloom in June and July) to commanding 360-degree views. Seneca Rocks, a magnificent formation of craggy Tuscarora quartzite rising nearly 900 feet above the North Fork River, is beloved by rock climbers for its challenging mapped routes (more than 375 of them), but less daring folks can hike a switchback trail to the top.

The mountain town of Elkins (population 7,200) is the Mon's largest gateway city and a destination in its own right thanks to the Augusta Heritage Center, where Appalachian folkways are kept alive through intensive week-long workshops on fiddling, quilt-making, clogging, tinsmithing, storytelling, rag-weaving, and accordion repair. The heart of the season



The white and gray quartzite Seneca Rocks are one of the best-known landmarks in West Virginia.