

Don't bypass Fayetteville, West Virginia, or you'll miss a real charmer

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By Gretchen McKay, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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FAYETTEVILLE, W.Va. -- It has a history dating to the great coal boom of the late 19th century, not to mention a gorgeous Romanesque Revival courthouse that's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And the handcrafted pizza at Pies & Pints a few blocks south of the Queen Anne-style Morris Harvey House B&B -- one of the first residences in town with running water -- is almost good enough to die for.

Yet get a green light at Tudor's Biscuit World on Route 19 in this quaint little town near the New River Gorge and you just might blow past it, completely unaware of its homespun charms.

Most who travel here for an outdoor adventure rest up at the familiar chain restaurants and motels. Downtown Fayetteville, which this month made Outside magazine's Best Towns 2010 list (runner-up for whitewater playgrounds) and is just a couple blocks off Route 19 at that intersection, is another option.

The town (population: 2,677) is probably best known for its proximity to the 3,030-foot-long bridge that spans West Virginia's most famous river; with several outfitters, it's also a hit with the 20-somethings who work as river guides during the rafting season. I'd argue Fayetteville is a destination in itself, even if all you have time for is a quick meal before heading home after an afternoon of zip-lining or mountain biking.



Take the menu at Pies & Pints. You're not going to find marinated pulled pork or Thai curry sauce among the toppings at Pizza Hut. Nor will you find a variety of imported and craft brews. Ethnic eateries include Gumbo's Cajun Restaurant on South Court Street (closed Mon.), makers of authentic Cajun low country cuisine, and Diogi's Mexican Grill and Cantina on North Court Street, home to a Cinco de Mayo burrito-eating contest and \$4 happy-hour margaritas. For breakfast or lunch, head to Cathedral Cafe, a favorite local gathering spot and post-trail hangout (the whole-grain pancakes and French toast are awesome). It's in a turn-of-the-century church with cathedral ceilings and high-speed Internet access.

If you're able to linger, there's plentiful shopping. Trillium Gifts (128 S. Court St.) sells handmade glassware, pottery and jewelry made by West Virginia artisans. So does Studio B Gallery & Wine Shop (309 Keller Ave.) along with local and organic wines. New River Antique Mall, next to the post office at 100 High St., is an antiquer's delight, housing 34 vendors selling sports memorabilia, furniture, antiques and other collectibles.

Rather take in a play? Historic Fayetteville Theatre, the town's original movie theater, offers live theater. Evening performances begin at 8 p.m. and cost \$10 for adults and \$7 for seniors and children 12 and under. Find a schedule at historic-fayettetheatre.com.

Lodging includes tent and RV camping and cabin rentals at New River Gorge Preserve (newrivergorgepreserve.com) and quaint bed and breakfasts. Furnished with antiques, the lovingly restored 1902 Morris Harvey House (morrisharveyhouse.com) was once a parsonage for Methodist ministers. The 22-room Historic White Horse B&B (102 Fayette Ave., historicwhitehorse.net) was built in 1906 for Fayette County Sheriff E.B. Hawkins using prison labor.