

Must Do's While Visiting South West Virginia

Explore Nature and History at Natural Tunnel State Park, Duffield, Virginia

Thrill the kids with a short but fun chairlift ride down to the rock tunnel that gives [Natural Tunnel State Park](#) its name. The lift is open daily between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends (weekends only in April, May, and October). The Carter Cabin, one of the oldest structures in the park, is a short walk from the tunnel view. Next, head to the **Wilderness Road Historical Area** to learn about westward expansion in the 1700s. The recreated Anderson Blockhouse was a stopping place on the migration trail to Cumberland Gap.

Bike the Virginia Creeper Trail

The Virginia Creeper Trail is one of the most beautiful bike trails in Virginia and a member of the [Rail-Trail Hall of Fame](#). Cyclists who bike the full 34.3-mile trail will cross 47 wooden trestles and bridges on their journey between the end points in Abingdon and Whitetop Station. The Creeper Trail has 10 access points so it's easy to customize a ride that's right for your group.

Hike with Ponies at Grayson Highlands State Park, Mouth of Wilson, Virginia

Our hike to the shaggy-maned wild ponies who live at [Grayson Highlands State Park](#) was one of our favorite things to do in Southwest Virginia. Park at the Massie Gap Trail, then follow the Rhododendron Trail one mile uphill for the best chance to see ponies. We encountered two groups of ponies on our hike—right on the Appalachian Trail, which crosses the mountain here, and near a big pile of boulders. Grayson Highlands wild ponies do not seem to mind people standing nearby, but be sure to maintain a safe distance.

Hike Part of the Appalachian Trail Appalachia, Virginia

Challenging four mile run or pleasant excursion to Little Stone Mountain located in the Jefferson National Forest. Little Stone runs along the northern side of the Powell Valley with peak elevation of 3934' and provides the backdrop for the town of Big Stone Gap. The Powell Valley begins between Powell Mountain and Little Stone Mountain where the waters of the Powell River flows down from these rugged Wise County Mountains.

Appalachia Loop Trail offers panoramic views of Stone Mountain. Black Mountain and views into Kentucky are possible on clear days. The trail can be rocky and difficult at times with an elevation of 2,300 feet. Directions from Appalachia, VA: When approaching the intersection of U.S. 58A and Rt. 68 from the south, turn right onto Cold Springs Drive. (You will cross a small bridge.) The trailhead is located at the end of Cold Springs Drive.

Birthplace of Country Music Museum, Bristol, Virginia

Immerse yourself in the beginnings of American music at the [Birthplace of Country Music Museum](#) in Bristol. This Smithsonian affiliate explores the 1927 Bristol Sessions and their impact on American bluegrass and mountain music. The Carter Family—A.P., Sarah, and Maybelle—were among the musicians “discovered” during these 12 days of recording sessions, which sparked the growth of country music in America.

Carter Family Fold, Hiltons, Virginia

Every Saturday night, country music fans flock to the Carter Family Fold for live mountain music and bluegrass performances. The location, at the base of Clinch Mountain in Poor Valley, was the family home of the Carter family. Jeanette Carter hosted host music sessions in her store to honor her parents, A.P. and Sarah Carter. Today, shows are held in an 850-seat music shed built into the hill. Rita Forrester, the granddaughter of A.P. Clark, continues the family tradition. Carter Family Fold shows are held every Saturday, year-round. The family-oriented venue is also popular with impressively energetic cloggers and flatfoot dancers of every age. Doors open at 6:00; the music starts at 7:00; and admission is \$10, \$2 for kids 6 – 11.

Barter Theater, Abingdon

Enjoy top notch productions in an historic building at the [Barter Theater](#), the State Theater of Virginia. The theater opened during the Great Depression with the motto “Trading Ham for Hamlet” as it accepted bartered goods in exchange for tickets. The longest continuously running theatre in the country has a permanent company of actors, set designers, and management staff.

Clinch River Trail St. Paul, Virginia

Enjoy eight miles of maintained trails along the Scenic Clinch River, the Sugar Hill Loop Trail and Oxbow Lake that start at the Oxbow Dam in St. Paul, Virginia. Dozens of tree species are identified along the trails. The Sugar Hill and Clinch River Trails have been nominated as state birding and wildlife viewing trails because of the wide variety of flora and fauna found along the way.

Devil’s Bathtub Trail Fort Blackmore, Virginia

This 3.6 mile hike takes you over more than 15 water-crossings to see a series of small waterfalls and swimming holes. The main scenic draw of this hike is the visit to the Devils Bathtub – a beautiful sandstone formation in the streambed.

Spearhead Trails St. Paul, Virginia

Spearhead Trails is known for uniquely different, challenging off-road experiences, but not just the motor-driven type. Whether your pleasure is hiking, biking, horseback riding, or OHV, there is a trail ready to be explored. There are many equestrian trails from High Knob to Wilderness Road... from Pine Mountain to the Scott County Horse Park organized trail rides. For all things outdoor adventure, there's no question that Heart of Appalachia is YOUR destination of choice.

High Knob Norton, Virginia

At an elevation of 3,800 feet, High Knob Recreation Area is the highest campground in the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest. The main attraction at the site is High Knob Lake, a 4 acre cold water lake with a 300 ft. sand swimming beach. A small amphitheater

is located on a hillside behind the beach house. The lake is stocked and fishing is permitted with a Virginia license and a Forest Service Stamp. Several trails can be accessed from the campground. Camping area includes 14 sites for tents and recreational vehicles (up to 16 feet long) with picnic tables, bath house with showers, and flush toilets.

Harry W. Meador Coal Museum Big Stone Gap, Virginia

Museum features exhibits and objects collected by the late Harry Meador Jr., an executive with a local coal company. Museum property once served as the study of John Fox Jr, author of "Trail of the Lonesome Pine". The founder of the museum, Harry W. Meador, was an advocate of the coal mining industry. During his career, he rose from a union laborer to the Vice President of Coal Development for a local coal company. Once part of the John Fox, Jr. estate, the house was a two-room building that served as a library and study. Later a wing was added and the building served as a community center for dances and other activities. Various displays exist in the museum, including a collection of photographs, mining equipment and tools, office equipment, coal company items, and a small dentist office from the early 1900's.

Cave Springs Recreation Area Norton, Virginia

As one of the largest campgrounds in the Jefferson National Forest, Cave Springs offers a small lake for swimming that is fed by a spring that originates in the mountains above in a cave. Hiking trails developed in the area include one that leads to the cave and stone overlook and loops back to the parking lot. Another trail leads to the Stone Mountain Trail that follows the crest of the mountain for 14.3 miles and ends at Roaring Branch, near Appalachia, VA. There are 41 camping sites with electrical hookups at 21.