WEST VIRGINIA

THE MOUNTAIN STATE *Became a state June 20, 1863 (35th)*

West Virginia is a state of steep green mountains, deep river gorges and thick forests. Its winding roads lead to steam trains, wild bogs and a few good secrets.



Why the Mountain State?

West Virginia is mountains from one end to the other. Its land averages about 1,500 feet above the sea, higher than any other state east of the Mississippi River. At Seneca Rocks, a layer of hard rock that once lay flat was pushed up on its edge. Its thin cliffs rise about 900 feet, and climbers come to scale them.



A Drive Cut to One Minute

Crossing the New River Gorge once meant a slow 40-minute drive on narrow mountain roads. In 1977 a steel arch bridge opened 876 feet above the river, and the trip took less than a minute. The bridge is 3,030 feet long. One Saturday each October it closes to cars for Bridge Day, when people cross it on foot.



The Secret Under the Hotel

Around 1960, workers built a hidden shelter under a wing of the Greenbrier hotel. It was a place where Congress could meet if Washington was ever in danger. One of its doors weighed more than 25 tons. The crew who looked after it said they were television repairmen. The secret lasted about 30 years, until a newspaper told the story in 1992.



A Lucky Apple Tree

In the early 1900s, an apple tree that nobody planted grew up on the Mullins family farm in Clay County. Its yellow apples were so sweet that a nursery company paid $5,000 for the tree. To keep it safe, the company built a tall wire cage around it and added an alarm. The apple was named Golden Delicious.



Engines Built to Climb

In 1901 a paper company founded the town of Cass and began a railroad to carry logs down from the mountains. The track was steep with sharp curves. Cass used Shay locomotives, which turn every wheel with gears and pull hard at slow speeds. The mill closed in 1960, but the Shays still climb, now carrying passengers.



A Bit of Canada in the Hills

High in the mountains, at about 3,400 feet, lie five small bogs called the Cranberry Glades. A bog is wet, spongy ground. When the last Ice Age ended, plants from the cold north stayed behind here. Cranberries grow wild. So does the sundew, a small plant that traps insects on its sticky leaves.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 1.8 million (39th most)
Size	About 24,200 square miles (41st largest)
Highest point	Spruce Knob, 4,863 feet
Counties	55
Neighbors	Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky

DID YOU KNOW?

- The first Mother's Day service was held at a church in Grafton on May 10, 1908.
- A baker in Fairmont is said to have sold the first pepperoni rolls in 1927. They were lunches for coal miners.
- Point Pleasant holds a festival every September for the Mothman, a winged creature from local legend.
- The New River Gorge Bridge is made of 88 million pounds of steel that never needs painting.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to Harpers Ferry?
3. What colors the water at Blackwater Falls amber?

Answers: 1. Charleston 2. Martinsburg 3. Hemlock needles