

Explore Wild West Virginia with Sarett Nature Center

October 19-25, 2020

The "Mountain State" is a fantastic destination for a fall color tour! Not only is the entire state hilly and mountainous, it has almost total forest cover. On this trip you will experience rushing streams and rivers, deep gorges, old growth forest, incredible vistas from atop the Appalachian Mountains, trails through tunnels of rhododendron, and renowned scenic byways.

Daily Itinerary

Monday, October 19..... After leaving the nature center at 8 a.m. we will drive across Indiana and Ohio arriving at Parkersburg West Virginia. This small city is located at the confluence of the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers. Founded in 1810 the city has an interesting historic district. Our accommodation for the night is the historic Blennerhassett Boutique Hotel.

Tuesday, October 20..... The "wild" part of the tour starts the moment we leave Parkersburg on Route 50. We will travel east through scenic country on route to Cathedral State Park. This park contains stands of towering Eastern Hemlocks and is designated a National Natural Landmark because of its virgin forest status. After a walk here it will be on to Blackwater Falls State Park where we will explore on trails leading to waterfalls, spectacular overlooks, and a deep gorge. During our time here we will eat lunch at the on-site restaurant. Lodging for the night will be at the nearby Canaan Valley Resort State Park Lodge.

Wednesday, October 21..... Today we'll journey south to Spruce Knob, West Virginia's highest point at 4,863 feet. There will be some walking here among the spruce trees more typical of boreal forests of Canada. There are several lookout spots around the summit. On the way to Spruce Knob there will be a visit to a place called Seneca Rocks. This site features tall spires of rock jutting out of part of a mountain. Another stop will be made for a walk in the giant Monongahela National Forest on the way to the community of Slaty Fork. We will stay the night at the nearby Elk River Inn. You will enjoy this place located in a backwoods mountain area. The property consists of a main lodge building, a renovated upscale farmhouse, and several cottages. Our group will occupy the farmhouse and the main lodge. We will be here two nights. A picnic lunch will be provided for you.

Thursday, October 22..... This morning we will enjoy a complimentary full breakfast. After eating, activities will include one of the most scenic short drives in the state with stops to walk on boardwalks through high elevation cranberry bogs. The Highland Scenic Highway is considered one of those must do things in the area. We will also walk alongside the beautiful Greenbrier River using the state managed Greenbrier River Trail. This trail was created after removal of the rail line in the 1970's. A picnic lunch will be provided for you. We will enjoy the Elk River Inn once more tonight!

Friday, October 23..... After breakfast and check-out from the inn we will enjoy a very scenic two-hour drive through mountains to the southern area of the state. This region near the town of Beckley offers many natural areas to visit including the New River Gorge National River, Babcock State Park, Pipestem State Park, Bluestone National Scenic River and Sandstone Falls. The New River Gorge is quite spectacular at 1,600 feet deep. We will get great views of the river from the edge of the gorge! The functioning grist mill of Babcock State Park is a famous attraction. During our time here we will walk trails, stop at visitor centers and do scenic drives. There will be a lunch stop at one of the towns in the area. Lodging for the night will be at the Beckley Hampton Inn.

Saturday, October 24..... Today's activities will include visits to previously mentioned natural areas around Beckley. A lunch stop will be made at a local restaurant. Lodging will again be at the Hampton Inn.

Sunday, October 25..... The day will be spent travelling back to Michigan with an estimated return of 5 p.m.

Accommodations:

Blennerhassett Hotel for one night: This fully restored hotel dates from 1889 and is registered as a national historic place. It features an on-site restaurant and well-appointed rooms with queen beds. Deluxe bathrooms have granite vanities, Italian tile floors and brushed nickel fixtures. A deluxe continental breakfast is complimentary. Coffee makers are in each room. There are no microwaves or refrigerators.

Canaan Valley State Park Lodge for one night: This place features a restaurant, a café, and a pub for eating. Spacious rooms feature queen beds, flat screen tv, coffee maker, microwave and refrigerator. You must buy breakfast.

The Elk River Inn for two nights: The 150-acre property with walking trails was once a mountain homestead. The inn building features a spacious lounge and outdoor decks. Rooms have private bathrooms with showers and offer single, double, queen and king beds. The fully renovated, five-bedroom farmhouse has three bathrooms with showers, a large living room, and a front porch only feet from the Elk River. Beds are a mix of single, double and queen sizes. Our group will have exclusive use of the farmhouse, and possibly the inn, if enough people go on the trip. Free Wi-Fi is available. We are served a complimentary full breakfast each morning. A dinner will also be provided. This has been included in the cost of the trip.

Hampton Inn for two nights: Rooms feature two queen beds, coffee maker, microwave and refrigerator. Enjoy a free hot breakfast.

Food: Five dinners, three lunches, and one breakfast are at your expense.

Cost: \$ 1,175.00 /person based on double occupancy. You may pay by credit card (Visa, Mastercard, Discover) or by check. Make checks payable to Sarett Nature Center, and mail to 2300 Benton Center Rd, Benton Harbor Michigan 490222. The cost includes:

- Lodging for six nights
- Round trip Sarett Nature Center van transportation
- Two picnic lunches
- Services of nature center naturalists
- Five complimentary breakfasts
- All state park, national park and national forest entry fees
- One dinner at Elk River Inn

Deposit: You must pay a \$100 non-refundable deposit to sign up for this trip.

Cancellation Policy: Every attempt will be made to refund any recoverable costs.

Final Payment: This is due September 1, 2020.

Responsibility: Sarett Nature Center reserves the right, at their sole discretion, to make changes in the itinerary should that become necessary, and is not responsible to any person for expenses, loss of time, money, or happenings, resulting from a change of tour scheduling. Sarett Nature Center reserves the right to accept, decline, or retain any person as a member of the tour, and is not responsible for any losses or damages of personal property, injuries, expenses, or damages incurred or claimed by any tour member.