

The Cathedral Cafe is the spot to find a shuttle or eat some award-winning carrot cake. Brian Jennings on the Gauley (below).



Paddler's Rating

After Work: ★★★★★

Weekends: ★★★★★

Vacations

Near Home: ★★★★★

Vitals

Pop: 2,655 (2006 est.)

Median Home Price (early 2007): \$65,000

Climate: January 38/22; July 80/61; Rainfall 45 inches

Who: Young boaters and climbers with a near total dedication to their respective sports.

Who Knew?: Tunney Hunsaker

was the police chief for Fayetteville when he took on Mohammed Ali, still Cassius Clay, in The Greatest's first professional fight.

Dirtdog Quotient: Get a job with one of the many rafting companies during the Gauley season and use their free lodging facilities, log on to the communal computers at the Cathedral Café to check water levels, bake gourmet Pizzas at Pies and Pints in the off season while paying just \$200-\$300 a month for rent.

2004 Presidential Election: 53% Kerry, 46% Bush, 1% Other

ing focus. Hughes chose Fayetteville for the nationally renowned play spots, its proximity to the East Coast competition circuit, and affordable real estate.

If you don't like the current water level, the rock climbing in the New River Gorge is as top shelf as the paddling, and locals don't have to drive far for excellent mountain biking and hiking trails.

THE PADDLING: The New River is a backyard run with a remote feel that's often called the Grand Canyon of the East. "The New is so lush, you feel like you're out there," says former professional kayaker and self-proclaimed

wannabe local, Tanya Shuman. The oldest river in the world offers runs with the world-class play of the New River Dries and enough whitewater to supply your gradient fix. When the flood sirens blare, local boaters are usually on the water fired up to score the Dries, and out-of-towners start googling airfare to Yeager Airport in nearby Charleston.

In the fall, when much of the nation is dried out, guides from all over converge on the Gauley for six weeks of dam-released, runnable Class V—and a few paychecks. It also brings Gauley Fest, the annual paddling fete that started as a grassroots protest of hydropower and now draws international acclaim. In '06 it boasted more than 5,000 attendees. Fayetteville's boating isn't just for Class V boaters and freestyle junkies.

Class II-III boaters moving there can join a very active community of novice and intermediate river-runners, too.

—Joe Jackson

FAYETTEVILLE, WV

THE TOWN: Monday night is wing night at Class VI Rafting Company. Tuesday night is all-you-can-eat night at Pies and Pints, and Wednesday is open-mic night. Thursday is the Songer open-mic night, and on Friday you have to rest, because there's work on the weekend. This is the Fayetteville "circuit" in the peak of summer as described by life-long local Brian Jennings, a manager at North American River Runners—one of the 10, consolidated from 18—outfitters in the area. Most of the nightlife in Fayetteville revolves around the rafting season, which also brings a majority of jobs into the area.

"In the rafting industry there are some pretty sharp folks so there is always work in the outdoors industry," says David Hughes, founder of the New River Academy, an exclusive high school with a strong kayaking and travel-

TOP PHOTO BY HARRISON SHULL; LOWER BY TANYA SHUMAN