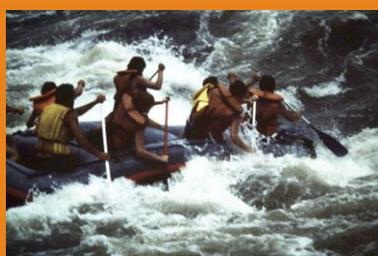




For Immediate Release



Located on the rim of the New River Gorge, the resort now features a pool, conference center, dining, accommodations and more.



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[Photos Available](#)

Adventures on the Gorge Celebrating 10-Year Anniversary

Merger Illustrates Challenges and Ultimate Successes to be Achieved in Fast-Evolving “Adventure Travel” Industry

The number of rafters in West Virginia peaked in the 1990s.

Rivermen archives.



In the early days of West Virginia rafting facilities were basic, and entertainment was generated by guides and rafters.

Class VI archives.



Rafting still leads the way.



After the merger, a conference center/group space was constructed in 2016.



The Kaymoor cabins opened in 2017 and feature modern comforts.

FAYETTEVILLE, W.V., Feb. 21, 2018 - Navigating a Class V rapid is best accomplished when capable paddlers work together as a team instead of as individuals, regardless of their experience, strength and abilities.

After close to 35 years of successfully building and operating whitewater rafting companies, three - and later a fourth - competing outfitters decided they would be best served by merging into a single resort and expanding their adventure offerings and customer conveniences.

It was 10 years ago when West Virginia's [Adventures on the Gorge](#) (AOTG) was created, and that decade has resulted in the leading resort of its kind and a case study on how to merge distinct company brands and cultures. In 1973 Mountain River Tours (MRT) opened for business and was just the second commercial whitewater rafting company in West Virginia [DH1]. Other outfitters, including Class VI River Runners, Rivermen and Songer Whitewater followed, and interest in rafting exploded with participation peaking in the mid-1990s.

Four companies become one

Shortly after the new millennium began, however, the number of rafters began dropping and that trend continued for several years. Outfitters either closed their doors, merged with others or looked for new ways to generate business from related revenue sources. In the case of MRT, Class VI and Rivermen, they merged their operations in 2008, named the new entity Adventures on the Gorge (AOTG) and embarked upon aggressive expansion plans. In 2011, Songer Whitewater joined the company.

"It wasn't easy taking four distinct and strong company cultures - we even argued over who made the best ice to put in the coolers - and getting them to head in the same direction together," said Dave Arnold, co-founder of Class VI (and AOTG). "But as Peggy Noonan wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* when describing West Virginia as a whole 'It's fun to see cultures collide, because that's one of the ways you know they still exist.'"

The new company consolidated on the Class VI campus on the rim of the New River Gorge just north of the town of Fayetteville. At the time, Class VI operated a restaurant, bar, retail operation, eight cabins and various campsites that were mainly frequented by guests who rafted during the day. Since then, the company has added the [Lookout Post Conference Center](#), a pool, 121 cabins, campgrounds, [TimberTrek Aerial Adventure Park](#), [TreeTops Canopy Tour](#), [BridgeWalk](#), [Gravity Zip Lines](#), [Buffler's Pizzeria](#), the [Rendezvous Lounge](#) and a second retail store.

While rafting is still the main draw as tens of thousands of people head to the New and Gauley Rivers to experience some of the world's top whitewater thrills, other activities such as rock climbing, mountain biking, stand up paddleboarding and lake sports are gaining in popularity. Rock climbing in the area, for those interested, is world-class.

Expansion plans meant there was plenty of work to go around, and the new entity found jobs for all employees. Arnold and Jeff Proctor of Class VI, Brian Campbell of Rivermen and Len Hanger of Songer Whitewater each accepted positions as senior managers and are still with the company.

"We look back fondly on the days when we were all out on the river during the day and living in tents at night, but the industry has matured and people expect more when they come here," said Arnold. "Fortunately, by consolidating our operations we can offer an unparalleled outdoor adventure experience combined with creature comforts, good food and entertainment. For us, that is just plain good business."



The resort features multiple aerial adventures, including TreeTops Canopy Tour.



TimberTrek Aerial Adventure Park is comprised of increasingly challenging courses.



CEO Dave Hartvigsen brings an extensive hospitality background to the resort.

Building a Consensus

One key to that good business approach has been to bring in a chief executive officer from outside the organization. In 2013 the company conducted a search for a CEO and hired hospitality executive Dave Hartvigsen. With 40 years of hospitality experience commercial hotels, destination resorts and adventure businesses, he has a true passion for the outdoors and an all-inclusive consensus-building approach.

“Today, we are all about living up to our vision statement of *Leading the World Outdoors*,” said Hartvigsen. “This vision is not only about our desire to be the very best in the adventure industry, but to primarily encourage our guests to get outdoors and experience the things that we love in nature and adventure. The beating heart of our company is still tied to the river culture, but the other adventures that we have introduced have broadened our offering tremendously.

“AOTG is a company with dynamic entrepreneurial leaders, loyal and highly capable teammates and an extremely bright future,” he added. “We face challenges like any other business or industry, but our main goal is getting everybody aimed at the same vision, paddling as one through the obstacles we face together.”

Hartvigsen saw an opportunity as an outsider to bring a new perspective to speed up the transition from rafting outfitters to more broad-based providers of adventure and hospitality.

Every year something new is in the works. The Lookout Post’s refreshingly natural setting is helping draw new guests to the resort and maximizing the indoor/outdoor setting atop the gorge. An executive chef was hired to upgrade food offerings, and weddings have become increasingly popular at the resort. AOTG has a wide array of lodging choices ranging from rustic structures with shared bathhouses to vacation homes offering luxurious amenities such as with state-of-the-art kitchens, hot tubs and outdoor decks and the like.

“All ideas are on the table,” said Hartvigsen. “We continue to refine and expand our operations so that our guests enjoy the finest adventure experience possible. More of that is coming in 2018.”

More about Adventures on the Gorge

In 2017, [Adventures on the Gorge](#) was named one of the top six adventure resorts in the country by [U.S. News & World Report](#). The resort is located on more than 250 acres along the rim of the majestic New River Gorge near Fayetteville, W.Va. and provides an array of outdoor experiences including whitewater rafting on the New and Gauley Rivers; an aerial adventure park, two zip line courses; rock climbing; rappelling; kayaking, stand up paddleboarding, fishing, mountain biking and hiking. There are also restaurants, bars and shops.

Travelers can find out more about Adventures on the Gorge [online](#), by calling 1-855-379-8738, or connecting on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Google+](#), [TripAdvisor](#), [YouTube](#), and [Vimeo](#) and signing up for AOTG [e-newsletter](#).

Related hashtags:
#AdventuresOnTheGorge
#GoToWV
#PlayWild
#StayWonderful

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