

Adventures on the Gorge

News Release

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2009 statewide rafting usage released by West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

Adventures on the Gorge reports strong 2009 visitor, financial statistics

Charleston WV (February 2010) Adventures on the Gorge (www.adventuresonthegorge.com), the Lansing, WV, outdoor adventure destination that features Class VI River Runners, Rivermen and Mountain River Tours, completed 2009 with strong guest visitations for whitewater rafting and a 33 percent increase in revenues over the previous year. Adventures on the Gorge is the largest adventure company in West Virginia, hosting almost 35 percent of the state's 2009 whitewater rafting guests, according to the 2009 report issued by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

"With our first full year as an outdoor adventure destination on one campus, we saw positive visitor responses to our \$4 million capital investment that translated into strong financial returns and numbers of guests" said Paul Buechler, president and CEO of Adventure WV, LLC, the holding company that operates Adventures On The Gorge. "We've found that our guests enjoy the quiet of the winter 'secret' season as much as the excitement of spring, summer and fall, so we're challenging ourselves to be innovative and even more guest-oriented year-round."

For the 2009 whitewater rafting season, Class VI-Mountain River and The Rivermen combined to host a total of 48,283 whitewater rafting trips, or almost 35 percent of the total rafting trips on the New and Gauley rivers, according to the annual report by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. The companies hosted almost 14,000 guests on Gauley River trips and more than 34,000 guests on New River trips.

"Our combined guest numbers are the highest for all outfitters included on the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources whitewater rafting commission report," said Buechler. "We're pleased that our long-time guests and new guests are finding that our partnerships offer even more of the quality service and outdoor recreation activities that they enjoy with all three partners."

"Any attraction that is up 33 percent in this economy is doing something right!" said Judy L. Randall, president and CEO of Randall Travel Marketing. "Kudos to Adventures on the Gorge for recognizing what it takes to offer the services and hospitality that today's travelers look for." Randall has more than 20 years of marketing experience and her company focuses on market research, strategic and marketing planning, consulting and trend analysis solely for the travel and tourism industry.

In a 2009 business outlook survey by America Outdoors Association, the national association for whitewater rafting outfitters, only 1.4 percent of respondents expected their revenues to be up more than 30 percent and only an additional 6.9 percent expected to see revenues increase between 15 and 30 percent. The survey reinforces outfitters concerns that the economy would have a negative impact on 2009 travel. David Brown, America Outdoors Association executive director, said, “2009 was the year when flat was up for outfitters around the country.”

“Many outfitters who participated in the survey saw decreases in reservations and expected to cut expenses and hire fewer staff,” said Dave Arnold, managing partner for Class VI River Runners. “Working together, we bucked the trend, increasing guest numbers and staff hours. We are very proud that in 2009 we saw an increase of more than 45% in working hours for staff; in these tough times that number really helps the economy of a small rural area like Fayette County.” The companies employed 638 full-time and seasonal employees in 2009, according to Arnold.

The TreeTops Canopy Tour, opened in May 2009, added more fun for guests of Adventures on the Gorge and was highlighted in *Popular Mechanics*, *Wall Street Journal* and several online travel sites. Thousands of guests took the 3-1/2 hour zipline tour on scenic New River Gorge property on the Adventures on the Gorge campus. Originally conceived as a three-season (spring-summer-fall) adventure activity, the tour is popular during winter months as well.

In 2010, Adventures on the Gorge will continue to expand with new cabins, new adventure products and a new guest check-in center.

New outdoor activities will include Bridge Walk on the New River Gorge Bridge walkway and rental pontoon boats for Summersville Lake. Tracks Mountain Bikes, a new onsite service, will offer mountain bike tours on and off Adventures on the Gorge campus. The kayaking school, Rolling Waters, will expand its services and operate an outfitters store.

New cabins and tent rental properties will open in spring 2010 as will an expanded registration and guest services office and a small meetings conference center.

Guests can enjoy the best barbeque in southern West Virginia at Bufflers, the newest restaurant at Adventures on the Gorge. The destination now has three restaurants and three bars.

Adventures on the Gorge is an outdoor adventure destination operated by Adventure WV, LLC. The destination includes Class VI River Runners, Mountain River and The Rivermen and offers a diverse selection of outdoor adventure activities including whitewater rafting on the New and Gauley rivers, TreeTops Canopy Tour, Bridge Walk, kayaking, fishing, mountain biking, hiking, mountain climbing and paintball. Its lodging options include tent and cabin selections from rustic to luxury and the campus includes three restaurants. Located on the New River Gorge at Lansing, West Virginia, the adventure destination borders three miles the New River Gorge National River. The campus, which includes Adventures on the Gorge and Wild Rock, includes more than 1,000 acres. Class VI River Runners was selected one of the best adventure travel companies on earth in a 2009 National Geographic Adventure survey.