

## From the Caves to Carnegie Hall: What to Do in Lewisburg

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They say that the best things come in small packages, and at just over four square miles, Lewisburg, West Virginia, proves the point. Tucked into a quiet corner of the Allegheny Mountains, Lewisburg boasts an unexpectedly eclectic mix of offerings—restaurants, bakeries, boutique shops, galleries, and a vibrant arts scene—all snuggled into a petite package of cozy mountain charm.

## 1. Carnegie Hall



June through August, Carnegie Hall's summer concert series—Ivy Terrace—provides free music on the lawn (photo courtesy of Greenbrier County CVB)

You don't have to brave the chaos of the Big Apple to stand on the steps of Carnegie Hall—just take a drive down Highway 60, pass the Stonehouse General Store, and hang a left on Church. One of four remaining Carnegie Halls in use today, Lewisburg's monument to the late steel tycoon's philanthropy was built in 1902 to house the Lewisburg Female Institute and—thanks to a collective of cultural enthusiasts in the '80's—survived the chopping block to become the epicenter of the little town's vibrant arts scene. With galleries, workshops, live performances, and even an independent film series, Lewisburg's Carnegie Hall brings art to life for over seventy-five thousand patrons a year.

## 2. Greenbrier Valley Theater



The Greenbrier Valley Theater offers a wide range of productions throughout the year (The Cherry Orchard, 2014 Joe Murray\*, Desiree Baxter\*, Courtney Susman, Kermit Medsker\* and Kenneth Noel Mitchell\*. Photo by 84 Agency Courtesy of Greenbrier Valley Theatre. \*Denotes Members of Actors' Equity Association)

If the best art is born of struggle, then it should come as no surprise that the folks at the Greenbrier Valley Theater have become such masters of their craft. Begun almost fifty years ago, the company spent the first three years of its existence performing in a tent beside the Greenbrier River, and the next twenty-one in a volunteer-built barn on a piece of borrowed property. Today it's settled in an abandoned department store in the center of Lewisburg, where it offers an eclectic mix of professional plays and grassroots productions, musical performances from bluegrass to opera, and writers' workshops from poetry readings to literary teas.



### 3. Old Stone Church



During the Civil War, Old Stone Church was temporarily converted into a hospital for both Union and Confederate soldiers (photo courtesy of Greenbrier County CVB)

The South has no shortage of old churches, but even among these, few have borne witness to as much American history as Lewisburg's Old Stone Church. With the exception of a brief repurposing as a hospital for both sides of the fight during the Civil War, the Old Stone Church has been in continuous use as a house of worship since 1796. It has since expanded beyond its original forty-four square feet, though no one who runs their hand along the original limestone walls, walks along the balcony that once accommodated parishioners' slaves, or moves among lichen-spotted gravestones that flank the building, can deny that centuries-old building still breathes with history.



#### 4. Over the River and Through the Caves



Lewisburg's Greenbrier River Trail is the perfect spot to catch the seasonal display of West Virginia (photo courtesy of Patrick Mueller)

Though the four square miles that make up downtown Lewisburg pack in a plentiful supply of entertainment, it would be a shame to visit West Virginia without taking a moment to step outside of the streetlamps' glow. Fortunately, Lewisburg offers a number of ways to enjoy the state's famously beautiful landscape—both above the ground and below it. On the surface, Greenbrier River Trail provides a seventy-eight-mile, sun-dappled meander through some of the state's most breathtaking scenery: gentle hills sown with the thick patchwork of hardwood forest, a long stretch of uninterrupted, impossibly blue West Virginia sky, and the white-tipped rush of the path's namesake river. Dip just below the surface—120 feet or so—and you'll find Lewisburg's Lost World Caverns and a wealth of other-worldly terrain to explore, including a winding, half-mile journey among the glistening arcs, towers, and unearthly undulations of Lewisburg's caves.



## 5. First Fridays after Five



Friday's After Five showcase Lewisburg's vibrant downtown community (photo courtesy of Greenbrier County CVB)

If you're lucky enough to be in Lewisburg on the first Friday of the month, be sure to stick around until after five: twelve months out of the year, downtown businesses ring in the beginning of the month with an epic community celebration. Shops, galleries, restaurants, bakeries, and any other local businesses who want to get in on the fun throw open their doors to the cool evening air and welcome friends, neighbors, and visitors to a healthy dose of mountain hospitality. With live entertainment, complimentary refreshments, and a slew of eclectic arts events, Lewisburg's First Fridays after Five foster a sense of community that makes the little town of Lewisburg feel much bigger—and yet, somehow, much smaller at the same time.

**See More Photos for What to Do in Lewisburg Here**



















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