

South Charleston

“The Chemical Capital of the World.”

Scenic and Natural – Little Creek Park and Kanawha River

Recreational - Rock Lake Putt-Putt Golf and Games, Little Creek Park, South Charleston Memorial Ice Arena, and South Charleston Community Center

Historical - South Charleston Museum

Archaeological - Adena Indian Mound

Cultural - Rock Lake Pool and South Charleston Museum

Industrial Heritage - Dow Chemical

The South Charleston Adena Mound, the second largest Native American burial mound in the state, is situated directly on the Midland Trail Byway and provides the centerpiece for downtown South Charleston.

The Adena culture existed 1000 B.C. to 500 A.D. The Adena tended to be less transient and established villages and gardens. The Smithsonian Institute excavated the South Charleston mound in 1883 and 1884. Archaeologists found skeletons, jewelry, and weapons, all of which are today maintained at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. (See Archaeological Quality for more info).

South Charleston is a unique blend of past and present, urban and rural – a diverse and friendly town. Although South Charleston is an active city of commerce and industry, its residents and visitors enjoy nature and recreation in a variety of settings.

Little Creek Park is comprised of over 300 acres of scenic, hilly woodlands. Its Trace Fork Canyon Trail is an island of wilderness in an urban setting.

Birders can identify eight species of wood warblers. In winter, kinglets, pine siskin, and other winter birds find shelter in the hemlocks. The trail boasts 240 species of plants, five species of salamanders, two species of toads, and numerous mammals.

Little Creek Park also has West Virginia's only lighted Soap Box Derby Track, which hosts several races and events Spring through autumn.

Rock Lake Putt-Putt Golf and Games offers fun for the young and young at heart with three 18-hole courses, go-cart racings, arcade games, and Laser Storm on the site of the former Rock Lake Pool, which was converted from a rock quarry in the 1930s.



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The South Charleston Memorial Ice Arena, a newly opened state-of-the-art facility, has an arcade, heated seating area for 500, an official size rink for both hockey team play and figure skating clubs, plus public skating.

One of the largest city-owned recreational facilities, the South Charleston Community Center, houses a 25-meter indoor swimming pool, two racquetball courts, basketball courts, tanning beds, and a health club. The gym has seating for 1500 and is open daily.

While serving the present, South Charleston also values the past. The South Charleston Museum is housed in the historic Art-Deco style, LaBelle Theatre.

The museum actively seeks new acquisitions relating to the history of the South Charleston and the Kanawha Valley. It currently holds collections of photographs and written material, chemical and industrial histories, and Native American artifacts. The city's ability to provide these opportunities is possible because of its long relationship with the chemical industry. South Charleston was once known as the chemical capitol of the world. Union Carbide Corporations/West Virginia Operations, a wholly owned subsidiary of Dow Chemical Company since 2001, has two operations in South Charleston: the South Charleston manufacturing site and the South Charleston Technology Park.

The South Charleston manufacturing site produces approximately 400 million pounds of different chemicals and plastics for a variety of product applications. It has made historic contributions to the chemical industry as well, first with the South Charleston Technical Center,

dedicated in 1949 and currently with the 651-acre South Charleston Technology Park, a campus-like setting home to more than 381 labs, as well as chemical pilot plants, a computer operations center, and an engineering center.



The newly restored LaBelle Theater will adjoin the planned South Charleston Mound Midland Trail Interpretative Center, scheduled to open in 2006 and funded by the U.S. Federal Transportation Administration's Transportation Enhancement Program through WV Division of Highways.



Charleston

Charleston, one of America's most beautiful capital cities, is easily recognized by its gold domed WV Capitol Complex, standing like a temple of democracy on the banks of the Great Kanawha River. The Midland Trail follows the Great Kanawha through Charleston, with the MT National Scenic Byway joining the State Scenic Byway at the front steps of the State Capitol.

Scenic and Natural - Views of Kanawha River, Elk River, and mountains

Recreational - Charleston Power BallPark, Daniel Boone Park, Cato Park, Haddad Riverfront Park, and Magic Island Nearby: Coonskin Park

Historical - WV State Capitol Complex and Holly Grove Mansion, East End Historical District, Craik-Patton House, Ruffner Log Cabin, downtown buildings, Historic Shrewsbury Street with significant African-American historical sites, and Spring Hill Cemetery

Cultural - Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences WV, WV Cultural Center, Vandalia Gathering, Mountain Stage, Craik-Patton House, Ruffner Log Cabin, and University of Charleston's Erma Byrd Gallery

Routing

In Charleston, the Midland Trail Byway follows the Great Kanawha River from Daniel Boone Park along Kanawha Boulevard, in front of the Capitol Complex, through downtown, and the west side. At Pennsylvania Avenue, the Byway crosses the juncture of the Elk River and the Kanawha River. The Byway continues to follow the Kanawha as it crosses the river at Patrick Street and turns west towards South Charleston and St. Albans. Access the Charleston Historic Loop from Kanawha Boulevard (pages 5.21-5.24). The Byway is quickly accessed from I-64, I-77, and I-79.



View Thanks to Southwings Aviation



Charleston

Charleston's Riverfront

Charleston, began as Fort Lee in 1788-95 with thirteen houses and a fort, and became West Virginia's largest city, its state capital, and a capital for arts, industry, shopping, and entertainment.

The mountains close around the Kanawha River in the Kanawha Valley, making for postcard-like scenery at the West Virginia State Capitol and along the Kanawha River. The Byway follows the river through town.

The University of Charleston stands on the opposite bank of the Kanawha across from the Capitol, adding to the view. In 2004, UC opened the Erma Byrd Gallery, the first art gallery dedicated to WV's Women Artists. The WV Symphony gives an outdoor concert on the grounds each year.

The Kanawha River also provides recreational opportunities. The City of Charleston maintains two city parks along the Byway. Haddad Riverfront Park is located along the river in downtown Charleston. The renovated levee has docking available, as well as a 2500-seat amphitheater.



Nearby, at the confluence of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers, is Magic Island. Magic Island's walking track, sand volleyball courts, and large grassy areas are a quick walk from the downtown area.

Charleston's Historical East End

Also on the MT Byway, at Greenbrier Street and Kanawha Boulevard and adjacent to the Governor's Mansion, stands Holly Grove Mansion, one of only three remaining structures from the Ruffner salt family. Daniel Ruffner constructed Holly Grove Mansion in 1815 on what was then a plantation just east of Charleston. Holly Grove is now maintained as part of the State Capitol Complex.

The East End Historical District includes Kanawha Boulevard, Virginia Street, and Quarrier Street. Many of these homes remain private residences. Most were built between 1895 and 1925. Many styles of architecture can be seen: Greek Revival, late Victorian, Queen Anne, Richardson Romanesque, Colonial, Georgian, Spanish Colonial, Italianate, and Renaissance.

Charleston's Spring Hill Cemetery, established in 1870, overlooks the city and the Byway. It bears the remains of many of Charleston's founding fathers, several governors, and other notables. Today, it has over 80,000 lots.



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Charleston



Charleston

5.20

Charleston

Charleston's Capitol Complex

Considered by many to be one of the most beautiful capitol buildings in the Union, the West Virginia State Capitol greets the visitor with a grand, resplendent gold dome. The majestic Italianate Rotunda contains marble from Vermont, Tennessee, and Italy; and a two-ton chandelier crafted with Czechoslovakian crystal.

Eminent master architect, Cass Gilbert, designed this stone and marble wonder, as well as Washington, DC's Treasury and Supreme Court Buildings. Completed in 1932, the Capitol holds the state Legislative bodies in separate wings, the Supreme Court, and the Governor's Office. Other state offices are in the adjacent buildings of the complex.

The West Virginia Cultural Center, opened in 1976, houses the State Museum and State Archives.

Located on the grounds of the Capitol Complex, it also hosts fairs, festivals and exhibits. The Vandalia Gathering, held each Memorial Day Weekend, is a three-day festival celebrating traditional arts and folk heritage. Multifest is another three-day festival held in early August to celebrate the music, food, and culture of the many ethnic groups found in West Virginia.

The Cultural Center is home to West Virginia Public Broadcasting's Mountain Stage, a two-hour live radio show featuring stylistically diverse national and international acts. Most shows are taped before a live audience in the Cultural Center Theater and then broadcast around the world.

