

Greenbrier/Glade Springs, WV



Nobody will confuse the Greenbrier Valley Airport (twenty minutes away) or Roanoke Airport (eighty minutes away) with O'Hare or LAX. But the fact is that flying to the Greenbrier, the most popular tourist destination in West Virginia, is doable. Or if road tripping amidst drop-dead scenery is more your thing, fly into easier-to-access Pittsburgh, grab a National Rental Car, and take the four-plus hour drive. The West Virginia interstates rival anything one might see on a country road, a blue highway, byway, winding parkway or scenic overlook. Verdant-yet-starkly defined ridgelines, plunging gorges funneling to rushing rivers, and miles-long views abound on roadways throughout the state, making the journey itself as much of an attraction as the final destination.



The Greenbrier

In the southeast corner of the state, near White Sulphur Springs, is the venerable Greenbrier, one of the great historical hotels in the nation. The golf pecking order at the resort has flip-flopped in recent years. Years back it was The Greenbrier Course, the only resort course in the world to have hosted both the Solheim Cup and Ryder Cup, which was considered the premium experience. At that time Old White played second fiddle. But after a four-year closure and comprehensive renovation by architect Lester George, Old White, which celebrated its centennial in 2014, and currently hosts the PGA Tour's Greenbrier Classic, takes center stage. It was originally designed by Charles Blair Macdonald, the first-ever U.S. Amateur Champion back in 1895.



Old White

Old White's opening tee shot drops gently to a lush fairway, wide but tree lined. It's an inviting beginning to a fine parkland experience. Classic features have been reintroduced since the renovation. There's the Biarritz green with its massive swale at the par-3 third hole, and the Redan green at the par-3 eighth. Add in chocolate drop mounding covered with shaggy fescue and strategic cross bunkering throughout, and the end result is a challenging and interesting layout on a flattish piece of property.

The Greenbrier course is a classic Seth Raynor design dates from 1923, and was updated by Jack Nicklaus for the '79 Ryder Cup. Be sure to bring a solid tee game and some high caliber iron shots, on the wondrous par 3s in particular. Approach shots are tougher, and the greens more guarded than on Old White. There are five par 5s on the course, and big hitters can reach almost all of them in two.



The Greenbrier Course

Many of the greens are terraced at the Greenbrier course. Depending on the facility of one's iron game, there will be relatively short, flat birdie putts, or nightmare scenarios where the ball must staircase either up or down the terrain to the pin location.

The hotel itself is a vivid color riot, a crazy quilt of pastel wallpaper, black and white tile floors, imposing, magnificent chandeliers, and richly colored carpet.

However the history of the Greenbrier is even more colorful than the interiors. The property is several hundred years old, and at various times in the 20th century served as an army hospital and an internment center for foreign diplomats during the war years. The single most popular attraction on the property is the bunker, which for decades was a secret underground fortress built to house and safeguard key government personnel during the Cold War years. Then there is the world famous Greenbrier Spa, and the resort's latest addition, the elegantly understated casino, like the bunker, built entirely underground. However though the Greenbrier is at the zenith of West Virginia's resort options, it keeps some mighty fine company. For example, little more than an hour away from both the Greenbrier and the state capital of Charleston is the exceptional Resort at Glade Springs. Despite the fact it hosted the 2006 NCAA Men's Golf Championship it is perhaps the finest 54-hole facility that 98% of all golfers have never heard of. Owned by native son Jim Justice, the entrepreneurial titan who bought the Greenbrier in 2009, Glade Springs has more than two hundred lodging options: Rooms, suites, villas, lodges, and even larger manor houses. The golf is as varied as the accommodations and the other on-site amenities.



The Stonehaven Course

Their Stonehaven Course has spectacular elevation changes, as much as eighty feet per hole, gorgeous rock outcroppings, and a

serenely wooded setting. It makes a round feel as much a nature walk as a compelling golf experience.

Though housing is prevalent throughout, it's set back and tasteful, and in no way detracts from the atmosphere. Add to this gem the original Cobb Course from the 1970s and the newer Woodhaven Course, and the end result is a destination that could absorb and intrigue even the most fanatical traveling golfer for a long weekend's immersion.