



Above: Meadow Lane Farm, one of the properties managed by Natural Retreats.
Below: Lake Moomaw is 3.6 square miles in Bath County. Photos by Loretta Sherwood.



Natural Retreats Outfitters is the only official guide service in the area, and their service is top-notch. Guides are knowledgeable, patient, and enthusiastic. They also have a hip retail shop, the Storehouse, on Main Street in Hot Springs. This is a great place to book outdoor adventures of all kinds. It also contains a cozy café serving Starbuck's coffee as well as sandwiches, salads, and fresh soups.

For geo-catchers, there are more than 10 caches in the area, even one on the island at the lake's center. Bath County Recreation also offers a skateboard park and shooting range.

Nearby Covington offers another gorgeous site, Humpback Bridge which runs over a crystal clear creek. It is the only arched, single-span covered bridge in the country as well as the oldest continuously standing bridge in Virginia. The setting is pic-

turesque and serene, the perfect spot for swimming, skimming rocks, and a picnic.

In addition to guide services, Natural Retreats Virginia Hot Springs offers many unique lodging options. They manage 20 private homes, inns, cabins, and cottages. There are accommodations for families of every size with a range from two to five bedrooms. The majority is located within the Homestead Preserve and some include access to amenities at the Homestead Resort. Their concierge service is extremely attentive before, during and after your trip.

Many Natural Retreats residences provide access to the nearby Old Dairy Community Center. This restored complex once served The Homestead resort's dairy needs. Today its nostalgic silo is a Bath County icon and a Virginia Historic Landmark. It now serves as a gathering place for Homestead Preserve guests with outdoor swimming pools for kids and adults, as well as a spa, fitness center, game room, and kids' club. The quaint retro Milk House Market is next door with prepared food guaranteed to satisfy any foodie.

If you are up for camping, there are lots of sites around Lake

Moomaw. While some are primitive, others are developed and include electricity. Even the most rustic locales have hiking and biking trails, as well as campfire and picnic areas.

Blowing Springs Campground is a popular choice in the nearby Bolar Mountain Recreation Area. There is an unusual geological phenomenon to observe - a natural duct that blows air nonstop from internal caves. It emerges via three holes at a constant temperature of 58 degrees. The adjoining Back Creek offers some great swimming holes, trout fishing, and the option of sunny or shaded sites.

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Libby Carty McNamee, writer, lawyer and mother, is hoping to swim in the clear waters of Lake Moomaw again this summer.

WANT TO GO?

For information on Natural Retreats lodging and guided activities worldwide, check out www.NaturalRetreats.com.

To learn more about Lake Moomaw, refer to www.virginia.org and www.recreation.gov.

To find your perfect camping spot in Bath County (or anywhere else), log onto www.ReserveAmerica.com.