

Wind River Canyon Scenic Byway

Echoes from the Canyon Floor



3 Days/2 Nights

Gateway City: Casper, Wyoming



Before the advent of aerial surveying and sophisticated cartography equipment, navigators had to make an educated guess about how the world was laid out and give names to places so others could locate them. Even though early maps were remarkably accurate, there were still a few places across the globe that people just couldn't quite figure out. One of these places lay deep in the heart of central Wyoming. Here the same river had two names: the Bighorn River and the Wind River. The Bighorn meets the Wind in a canyon thousands of feet below towering sandstone walls, within a mountain range that obscured the river's continuous path. Eventually it was discovered that the Bighorn flows from the north, while the Wind streams in from the south, joining together at the "wedding of the waters," a name given to the place where one river's journey ends and the other begins. This geographical curiosity is the star of the show on the Wind River Canyon Scenic Byway, a 34-mile route that slices through the rugged canyon land paralleling the rushing Wind River. Reservoir waters as blue as a sapphire contrast with striated rock walls protruding into the sky. Dip in and out of deep mountain canyons and listen for the echoed secrets on the Wind River Canyon Scenic Byway.



Touring the Byway

We recommend starting your journey in Casper, a picturesque town in the heart of Wyoming. Get up close and personal with life-sized dinosaur fossils at the Tate Geological Museum, turn your gaze up to the skies at the Casper Planetarium, and take an easy hike to a cascading waterfall on the iconic Casper Mountain. Spend your first evening relaxing at a local ranch.

On Day Two, it's time to begin the drive along the Wind River Scenic byway, at Shoshoni, a small town with big scenery. Heading north on WY-20, enjoy the views of Boysen Reservoir before stopping at Boysen State Park for wildlife viewing. Portions of the original 1908 Boysen Dam can still be seen. Then you'll be following the Wind River to Thermopolis, home of the world's largest mineral hot springs, where and you can hear stories of the region's people at the Hot Springs County Museum and discover one of largest fossil collections in the world at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center.

On Day Three, relax at Hot Springs State Park with a soak in those famous warm waters, stroll across the Bighorn River via a swinging suspension bridge, and if you're lucky, catch a glimpse of the state's resident bison herd.

From there, we wish you a safe passage if you're continuing your journey on another Wyoming Scenic Byway, or a safe and pleasant journey home.



DAY ONE



Casper

Casper, named for nearby Fort Casper, began when the tracks of the Fremont, Elkhart and Missouri Valley Railroad arrived in 1888. Soon after the railroad arrived the town became an important shipping point for cattle and wool, from the earliest buildings at A and McKinley streets. When the railroad platted lots further west, the center of town became the corner of Center and Second streets, where it is today. During the its first years, Casper was a rough-and-tumble town with numerous saloons and raucous culture. Early sheriffs worked to keep order among rowdy cowboys and celebrating sheepherders. Casper became an oil boomtown when the Salt Creek Oil Field was discovered in the 1890s. Originally planned as a stopping point on the expanding Wyoming Central Railway, Casper instead became the center of the region's petroleum industry. Today's Casper has great restaurants and unique retail shops, in a city surrounded with recreational opportunities.

Tate Geological Museum

The Tate houses a collection of over 6000 fossil and mineral specimens gifted by Marion and Inez Tate. Highlights include Dee the Mammoth, an 11,600-year-old Columbian Mammoth which lived in the American West during the Pleistocene, or Ice Age, the skull of Nicole the Torosaurus, the Mesozoic Marine, exhibits featuring the underwater world that existed in Wyoming during much of the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods, and the Hall of Minerals.

2332 Lisco Drive, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-268-2447, M-F 10AM-4PM, Sat 10AM-3PM



Werner Wildlife Museum

Founded in 1964 by Herman Werner, this museum at Casper College has grown from the original 36 exhibits to almost 400 birds, fish, and animals. The main focus on is wildlife native to Wyoming, complemented with wildlife from around the world The Lair is an interactive area for children, as well as a garden, bird feeding station, and picnic area..

405 East 15th Street, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-235-2108, M-F 10AM-4PM, FREE

Casper Mountain

Arguably the most iconic landmark in central Wyoming, Casper Mountain boasts dense forests, stunning vistas, abundant wildlife, beautiful trails, and stunning views of the basin and the waterfall. Hike the Garden Creek Waterfall Loop to watch the clear, rushing water cascade down the mountainside is one of nature's best offerings.

Garden Creek Road at the base of Casper Mountain, Casper, WY, 82601, M-Sun 7:30AM-9PM, Free



Casper Planetarium

Wyoming's oldest planetarium is now sporting the latest digital planetarium technology, with a virtual starship, time machine, and regular programming in a full-dome presentation similar to an IMAX theatre.

904 North Poplar Street, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-577-0310, Office M-F 9AM-5PM, Public Shows Tu-F 4PM & Sat 7PM, Gift Shop and Lobby Displays, M-F 2PM-5PM





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Red Butte Ranch, 8550 South Bessemer Boulevard, Casper, WY 82604, 307-472-3784 Nestled among the trees along the North Platte River, this authentic ranch stay comes with a short walk to an Oregon Trail historical marker, indicating where the first pioneer cabin was built in 1812.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Sherrie's Place 310 W Yellowstone Highway, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-235-3513 American restaurant serving hearty portions of breakfast and lunch classics.

Branding Iron 129 West 2nd Street, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-333-6804 An up and coming gourmet burger restaurant located in downtown.

Johnny J's Diner 1705 East 2nd Street, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-234-4204 Diner food including breakfast, served in a 50s-style setting.

Destination Distinctive Retail

Mustard Seed 120 West 1st Street, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-337-3301 Casper's best destination for distinctive gifts, one-of-a-kind clothing and decor, an indulgent bath and body collection, culinary tools, gourmet food items, and more.

Lou Talbert Ranch Outfitters 125 East Second Street, Casper, WY 82601 307-447-9378 Nine floors of western merchandise.

Floral Rhino 139 South Center Street, Casper, WY, 82601, 307-265-0063 A wonderfully eclectic ever-changing collection of a wide variety of items.

DAY TWO

Shoshoni

Named by the Shoshone, who live on nearby Wind River Indian Reservation, the area was first explored by Europeans in 1825. The town was established as a railroad and mining town in 1905. A tent city popped up which quickly grew to a town of 2,000 people. Two years later, a devastating fire destroyed most of the town's original structures. When mining subsided, ranchers moved in, and agriculture remains the main economic driver in the area.

Boysen Dam

The earth-filled dam on the Wind River, built by Asmus Boysen in 1908, provided power for mining and irrigation for region until 1925, when it was damaged by floods and threatened the safety of the railroad. The new structure was built further upriver in 1952 to provide better flood control and increased hydroelectric power. Boysen Marina sits on the northeast side of the reservoir.

Shoshoni, WY, 82649, 307-261-5671



Boysen State Park

Portions of the original 1908 dam can still be seen in Boysen State Park, which surrounds the Boysen Reservoir, created by the Boysen Dam in 1951. Enjoy wildlife viewing, geocaching, rockhounding, and a swimming beach.

120 Boysen Drive, Shoshoni, WY, 82649, 307-876-2796, Open 24 hrs, \$7 per day, per vehicle.



Destination Distinctive Dining

Boysen Marina Campground Bar & Restaurant 12 Boysen Marina Road, Shoshoni, WY, 82649, 307-876-2772 The marina includes a little cafe serving food and drinks.



Thermopolis

Find yourself in “hot water” in this town, whose name is literally Greek for “hot city” that hosts the world's largest mineral hot spring, appropriately named “The Big Spring.” The springs are open to the public for free as part of an 1896 treaty signed with the Shoshone and Arapaho Indian tribes. Dinosaur fossils were found on the Warm Springs Ranch in 1993, and the Wyoming Dinosaur Center was founded soon after. With the exception of being able to enjoy the hot springs at Hot Springs State Park, most of the hot springs in Thermopolis are for viewing rather than for soaking.

Hot Springs County Museum

Considered by some to be the best western history museum in Wyoming, Hot Springs County Museum tells the stories of the region's people, including the life of the Arapahoe and Shoshone, and pioneers who came to the region. The Wyoming Rural School Experience, a 3 ½ hour living history activity where visitors act as the pupils from the 1920s, dress in costume, sit at wooden desks, practice lessons on slates, and play a recess game in the historic one-room Middleton School, brings the pioneer frontier to life. Other exhibits include a bar frequented by Butch Cassidy and other outlaws, a model of early Thermopolis, an old country store, jail cell, photography shop, seamstress shop, and more. The main museum building was constructed as a garage in the early 1900s and over the years has housed a Coca Cola bottling plant, a bowling alley, and the Technical College of the Rockies.

700 Broadway Street, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-5183, M-Sat 9AM-4PM, Adults \$6



Wyoming Dinosaur Center

Providing outstanding hands-on geologic and paleontological experiences, WDC displays one of the largest and most unique fossil collections in the world. It is also one of the few dinosaur museums in the world that is near a rich fossil-bearing excavation site. The Thermopolis Specimen of Archaeopteryx, is the only real specimen of this genus outside of Europe.

110 Carter Ranch Road, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-2997, M-Sun
8AM-7PM, Adults \$12 and up





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Best Western Plus Plaza Hotel 116 East Park Street, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-2939

A historic hotel in a beautiful location in Hot Springs State Park next to the Big Horn River.

Destination Distinctive Dining

One Eyed Buffalo Brewing Company 528 Broadway Street, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-3555 An upbeat, friendly establishment serving fresh, fun food.

Black Bear Café 111 North 5th Street, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-3221 A home town café offering traditional breakfast, lunch, and brunch options.

Destination Distinctive Retail

Discover Thermopolis 541 Broadway Street, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-3921 Variety store where you can take home a unique piece of Thermopolis.

White Horse Country Store 180 U.S. Highway 20, South St, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-3047 If a cowboy needs it, chances are you'll find it here.

DAY THREE

Hot Springs State Park

Government Indian Inspector James McLaughlin negotiated a purchase price of \$60,000 for a 100-square-mile portion of the Shoshone reservation in 1896, but the hot springs portion was ceded through an agreement that allowed them to be open to the public. Hot Springs State Park also features a managed herd of bison (feeding usually at 8:30AM); a suspension foot bridge across the Big Horn River, a mineral terrace, flower gardens, and terraces made of naturally forming travertine caused by the flowing mineral hot spring. The springs flow at a constant temperature of 135 °F which is moderated to a therapeutic 104 °F in the State Bath House. 220 Park Street, Thermopolis, WY, 82443, 307-864-2176, Daily 6AM-10PM, Bath House 8AM-4PM, \$7 per day, per vehicle.



Legend Rock State Petroglyph Site

Also a unit of Hot Springs State Park, Legend rock is 29 miles northwest of Thermopolis. The rock itself is 1,312 feet long near a vertical cliff with more than 92 prehistoric petroglyph panels and over 300 petroglyph figures. It has been a sacred site for Native Americans for thousands of years. In order to preserve and protect the site, it was acquired by Wyoming and now encompasses a visitor center and interpretive trails.

Legend Rock State Petroglyph Site, 2861 Cottonwood Road, Thermopolis, WY 82443, 307-864-2176

