

# Big Spring Scenic Backway

*A Wild Mountain Drive*



3 Days/2 Nights

Gateway City: Evanston, Wyoming



Plunging deep into western Wyoming’s Bridger-Teton National Forest for 68 mountainous miles, the Big Spring Scenic Backway traverses the landscape where prehistoric creatures roamed the earth, crisscrosses historic wagon trails, parallels willowed river valleys, and winds past mountain overlooks dotted with wildflowers. This backway is Wyoming’s wildest road through a very rugged landscape, yet amazingly, the ground you will be covering is well worn. More than one hundred and fifty years ago, thousands of pioneers took the arduous journey over these same mountains while hauling wagons loaded with all their possessions in search of a better life. Their abandoned homesteads and wagon wheel ruts can still be seen along the way. But the pioneers were not the only beings traveling this rugged terrain. Today, the Tump Mountain Range is home to more animals than people, and as you meander the roads up here, you can often spot the “Bridger Big Five” in one day – moose, coyote, bobcats, bighorn sheep, and black bears. Even though the road is unpaved in places along the route, traveling the Big Spring Scenic Backway immerses you in a wild world untouched by modern hands. Prepare well and enjoy this completely unique route.



### **Touring the Byway**

We recommend starting your journey in Evanston, nestled in the Bear River Valley, where you can explore the Uinta County Museum and view bison in their natural habitat at the Bear River State Park. Spend your first evening relaxing in an inn surrounded by 15 acres of mountain scenery. On Day Two, visit Kemmerer, a coal mining town that was the site of major paleontological finds. Learn the history of the area at the Fossil Country Frontier Museum, visit the home of J.C. Penny department store founder James Cash Penney, try your luck on a fossil dig at American Fossil Quarry, and explore one of the world's largest collections of freshwater fish fossils at Fossil Butte National Monument.

On Day Three make sure you gas up the car before leaving Kemmerer to drive the Big Spring Scenic Backway heading north on WY-223, through the scenic Tunp Mountain Range. Bear left as WY-223 turns into CR-305/Hams Fork Road and then CR-204/Pine Creek Road, and twist your way around Lake Viva Naughton, 8,890-foot Coke Mountain, passing dozens of pristine mountain creeks and

streams. The backway ends in Cokeville, a small town that was once the sheep capital of the world. Pause at the Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, home to one of the highest densities of nesting waterfowl in the state, before making your way back to Evanston. 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



### **Evanston**

Evanston was founded in 1868, when the Transcontinental Railroad began construction. It is considered such an important part of the town, that when the streets were laid out, they were oriented toward the railroad tracks instead of compass points. The first establishment in town was created when early entrepreneur Harvey Booth opened the original saloon and restaurant in a tent. Construction of the railroad machine shop and stone roundhouse gave Evanston a sense of permanence. Ultimately, Evanston became a major stop on the Lincoln Highway, the first coast to coast road in the United States (today's Bear Drive). An oil boom and recent drilling for natural gas have revitalized the area's economy.

## **Historic Walking Tour**

Enjoy a Walking Tour through Downtown Evanston that includes more than 35 structures, some dating from the earliest days of the town. The first stop on the tour, the 1906 Carnegie Library Building, is the current home of the Uinta County Museum. The building was the first in Historic Depot Square, now also comprised of the Union Pacific Depot and Plaza, Wing Family Chinese Gazebo & Garden, the Joss House Museum, the Beeman-Cashin Building, Columbo Hall railroad building, Martin Park, and the heritage gazebo. The site also contains basketball courts, a water fountain, public restrooms, a Lincoln Highway marker, a statue of “Albert the Bison,” a tribute to those lost on September 11, 2001, and an English phone booth. The in town portion of the Walking Tour ends at the Historic Roundhouse and Railyards.



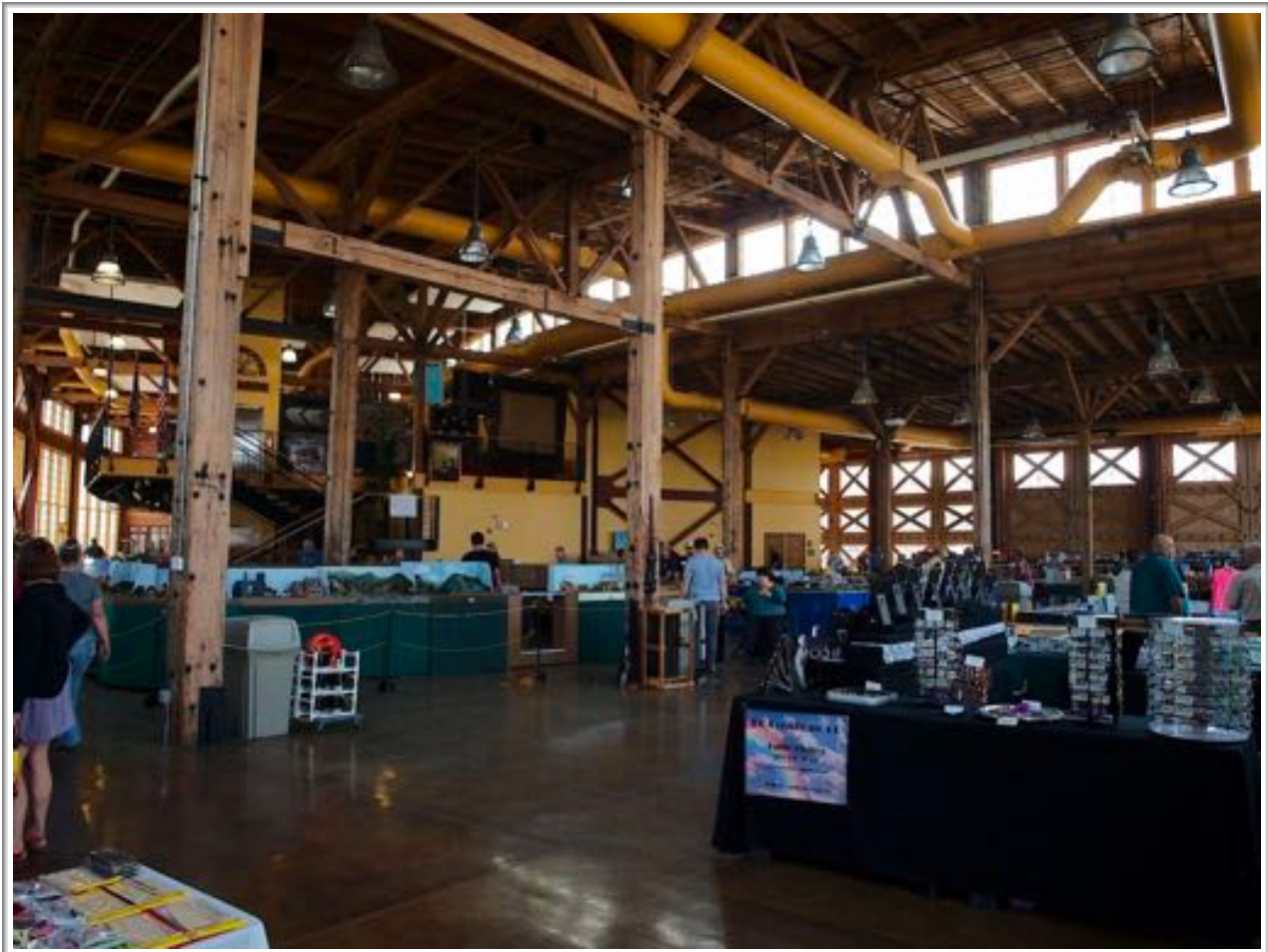
## **Uinta County Museum**

Located in the 1906 Classic Revival Carnegie building, the museum holds nearly 5,000 artifacts, photographs, and archival records, with about 20% on exhibit at any given time. Explore the heritage of the region in Trails, Rails, Ranches, and Rigs, and learn how the Lincoln Highway impacted the local landscape when it came through in 1913.

1020 Front Street, Evanston, WY, 82930, 307-789-8248, M-F 9AM-5PM Sat  
10AM-4PM

## **Historic Roundhouse and Railyards**

Here you can tour one of the last intact roundhouses in the Union Pacific Railroad Line. Constructed in 1912, the city adopted the structure, rehabilitated and renovated it into a public use facility while keeping much of the historic character. The original Machine Shop still stands across the Plaza. The turntable, used to change the direction of train engines in the Roundhouse, is still operational, the machine shop still outfitted, a superintendent's office and washroom, and a renovated visitor center which was previously the Oil House, make up the complex. 1440/1500 Main Street, Evanston, WY



### **Bear River State Park and Visitor Center**

This 324-acre day-use park with several miles of trails, is home to small herds of bison and elk. The Visitor Center features numerous wildlife displays showcasing a small portion of Wyoming's impressive array of wildlife. The bison herd can be viewed year round.

601 Bear River Drive, Evanston, WY, 82930, 307-789-6547, May 1-September 30, M-Sun 8AM-10PM, \$7 per day, per vehicle







### **Destination Distinctive Accommodation**

**Best Western Dunmar Inn** 1601 Harrison Dr, Evanston, WY, 82930, 307-789-3770 A full-service hotel featuring an on-site restaurant and lounge, and friendly service.

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Main Street Deli** 1025 Main Street, Evanston, WY 82920 307-789-1599 Sandwiches, soups, salads and baked potatoes.

**Bon Rico Steakhouse** 925 Front Street, Evanston, WY 82920 307-789-1713 Homestyle freshly prepared dinners.

**Jody's Diner** 260 Bear River Drive, Evanston, WY, 82930, 307-789-8550 American comfort foods dished up in retro diner.

**Dang Good Smokehouse & Bar-B-Que** 161 Bear River Drive, Evanston, WY, 82930, 307-679-1003 Offering smoked brisket, pulled pork, chicken, and ribs, all rubbed with Dang Good rub.

### **Destination Distinctive Retail**

**Wild Things Treasures and Gifts** 927 Main Street #100, Evanston, WY, 82930, 307-466-3007 Steampunk, BOHO, Tattoo Art, rendezvous, and very unique gifts and home décor.

## DAY TWO



### **Kemmerer**

Even though explorer John Frémont discovered coal in the area during his second expedition in 1843, the town of Kemmerer was not organized until 1897 and incorporated in 1899 when Mahlon Kemmerer developed coal mines in Uinta County. There were active mines in the region until the 1960s, served by the Oregon Short Line Railroad that parallels Interstate-80. Without the railroad to move the coal, it would have been of limited value. As you travel in the area, you'll still see a few ghost towns with evidence of the mining and ranching.

### **Fossil Country Frontier Museum**

Exhibits featuring the history of Kemmerer and Diamondville include an early 1900s dining room, a replica coal mine, an assortment of coal mining equipment, bootlegging stills, wine presses, a Hadrosaurid footprint, information on the mountain men who trod the area, and more.

400 Pine Avenue, Kemmerer, WY, 83101, 307-877-6551, Th-Sat 10AM-5PM

## **J.C. Penney House and Museum**

James Cash Penney, the founder of the J. C. Penney department stores' lived here between 1904-1909 when he developed a formula for a successful dry goods store. The Kemmerer J.C. Penney "Golden Rule" Mother Store is still in operation. It is complemented with a museum filled with historical artifacts, including the pulley system used to deliver cash receipts. Curators are generous with their time describing the features and heritage of this National Historic Landmark.

722 JC Penney Drive, Kemmerer, WY, 83101, 307-877-3164, M-Sat  
10AM-4:30PM, Sun 11AM-4PM



### **American Fossil Quarry**

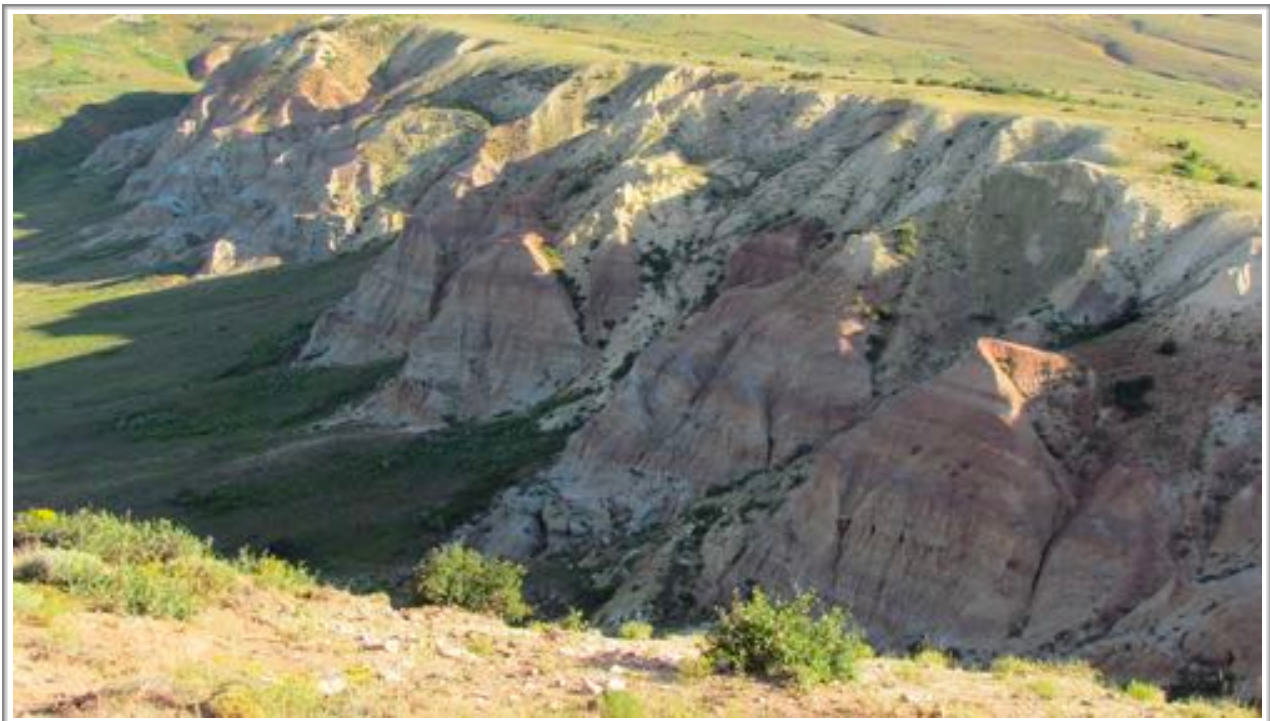
Visit this fossil rich quarry that was once under an ancient lake to dig for fossils. You never know what you'll be able to take home. So far, the site has turned up a complete 3-toed horse, stingrays, shrimp, gar, paddlefish, amia, pike, diplomystus, knightia, and even turtles, crocodiles, bats, birds, ancient rhinos and more.

South Farm Field Road, Kemmerer, WY, 83101, 801-836-7269, Adults 2hr Dig \$49

### **Fossil Butte National Monument**

Fossil Butte National Monument encompasses Fossil Lake, an ancient lake that hosts the largest collection of fish fossils in the world. Watch paleontologists collect fossils from the monument's dig site and view over 300 fossils, including 10 species of mammals and 15 species of reptiles, at the visitor center. Ranger talks provide a great opportunity to learn more about the area's history and Fossil Butte's ecosystem.

864 Chicken Creek Road, Kemmerer, WY, 83101, 307-877-4455, Visitor Center Hours, Memorial Day - Labor Day Daily 8AM-5:30PM, Free





**Destination Distinctive Accommodation**

**Best Western Plus Fossil Country Inn and Suites** 760 Highway 189/30, Kemmerer, WY, 83101, 307-877-3388 Comfortable beds and a complimentary full breakfast, satellite TV, coffee maker, microwave, refrigerator, and high-speed internet access.

**Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Place on Pine** 919 Pine Avenue, Kemmerer, WY, 83101, 307-877-2982 Family-run restaurant for 20+ years.

**El Jaliciense of Wyoming** 1433 Central Avenue, Kemmerer, WY, 83101, 307-877-2948 Stewed steaks, roasted chicken, chicken enchiladas, tasty flans, delicious margaritas and good Mexican beer.

## DAY THREE



### **Cokeville**

The first inhabitants in the area were the Shoshone, followed by settlers in 1869. By 1873, Tilford Kutch had opened a trading post and was running a ferry across Smiths Fork. The railroad arrived in 1882, and the town was incorporated in 1910, after which sheep ranching earned the town the “Sheep Capital of the World.”

## **Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge**

Encompassing a 20-mile stretch of the Bear River Valley's wetlands and uplands, the Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge supports one of the highest densities of nesting waterfowl in Wyoming, while providing an excellent habitat for migratory birds. Species at the refuge include white-faced ibis, black tern, sage grouse, mule deer, elk, and pronghorn sheep.

21618 US Highway 30, Cokeville, WY, 83114, 307-875-2187



Enjoy lunch in Cokeville, or loop back to Evanston, to end your trip there.

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Gold Buckle Grill** 10501 US-30, Cokeville, WY, 83114, 307-279-2900 Good food in a family atmosphere.

**Down Home Eatery** 7436 Highway 89 North, Evanston, WY, 82930, 307-679-2002 Southern down home cooking.