

Bridger Valley Historic Byway/ Muddy Creek Historic Backway

Backroads to Historic Emigrant Trails



3 Days/2 Nights

Gateway City: Rock Springs, Wyoming



It's the place where the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails, the Pony Express, the first Transcontinental Railroad and the Lincoln Highway, America's first coast to coast road, all crossed paths. Today, the Bridger Valley is home to the Bridger Valley Historic Byway and the Muddy Creek Historic Backway, a combined total route of 45 miles. They lead to some of Wyoming's most historic neighborhoods filled with stories from America's westward movement. Jim Bridger, of mountain man fur trapper fame in more northerly Pinedale, arrived here in 1843 to build a trading post to serve emigrants, after he realized that beaver hats for which he provided furs, were going out of style. Mormon Thomas Bullock, writing in 1847 stated, "at three o'clock p.m. we crossed Muddy Creek, a beautiful clear stream of water with a pebbly bottom and camped on the west side after traveling three miles during the day ... we had a pretty campground... the brethren sang hymns for the President; it was a delightful evening." Bridger clashed constantly with the Mormons until he escaped capture by a US militia and finally they built their own supply fort nearby. Reconstructed Fort Bridger and other historic sites along the way introduce you to the stories of the hardy pioneers who made their way west in search of a better life for their families. It is truly the road less traveled, yet well worth the journey through unique landscapes while exploring the timeless history of the region.



Touring the Byway

We recommend starting your journey in Rock Springs, where you can visit the Rock Springs Historical Museum, Bunning Park and the Western Wyoming Community College exhibits of dinosaurs and other wildlife, before staying in one of the local hotels.

On Day Two, you'll be off to Lyman, the start of the Bridger Valley Historic Byway, where you can tour the Bridger Valley Heritage Museum, the University of Wyoming Experimental Farm Heritage Barn. After visiting Fort Bridger State Historic Site, you'll be catching Muddy Creek Historic Backway, traveling through the backroads east of Evanston, to visit the Muddy Creek Piedmont Kilns before heading for Evanston.

In Evanston on Day Three, you can take the historic walking tour and tour the Unita County Museum before visiting the Historic Roundhouse. From there, we wish you safe passage if you're traveling on another Wyoming Scenic Byway or a safe and pleasant journey home. All sections of the Bridger Valley Historic Byway are paved and included on the state highway system. Most of Muddy Creek Historic Backway is on gravel roads which are maintained in summer.

DAY ONE



Rock Springs

Named for a former spring that babbled throughout the town, this city, steeped in Western history was a popular stopping point for both early pioneers on their way to a better life and the outlaw gangs who roamed the lands in search of the tired travelers they could rob and swindle. Famous bank robber Butch Cassidy cut his teeth in Rock Springs while he worked as a butcher, the job that gave him his nickname, “Butch.” A center for Wyoming’s booming coal industry, people moved from all over the world in the late 1800’s to work in the Union Pacific coal mines that surrounded Rock Springs. Many of the mines closed by the mid 1900’s, but the town remains a vibrant, multi-cultural oasis in the high desert.

Rock Springs Historical Museum

Located in the original 1894 sandstone Rock Springs City Hall, the museum's building remains the only example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in southwest Wyoming. Discover what it was like to live in Rock Springs "in the old days" at this delightful historical museum that showcases the people and industries that developed Rock Springs from a dusty coal town into the thriving community it is today. Exhibits include artifacts, photographs, and displays on coal mining, the Union Pacific Railroad, and famous outlaws Butch Cassidy and Calamity Jane. A research library, bookstore, and gift shop are also available.

201 B St, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 307-362-3138 M-Sa 10AM-5PM.



Bunning Park

A popular and leafy city park with a playground, gazebo and picnic tables. The perfect spot to rest during a busy day of sightseeing or enjoy a concert at 7PM Wednesday evenings June 1-Aug 17.

J Street &, Evans Street, Rock Springs, WY 82901 Daily 7AM-9PM.

Western Wyoming Community College

This local community college features an impressive collection of artifacts and exhibits on display, including nearly 125 different mounted wildlife species in the Wildlife Museum, a Foucault pendulum that rotates in a 360-degree circle every 24 hours in the Solarium, an art gallery and natural history museum with rotating displays, 9-ton concrete replicas of Easter Island moai statues that line the college's walking paths, and 5 life-sized dinosaur skeletons, including a Stegosaurus, Triceratops, giant Plesiosaur, and a mighty T-rex.

2500 College Dr, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 307-382-1600. Hours may vary.





Destination Accommodations

Homewood Suites, 60 Winston Drive, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 307-382-0764 Spacious suites and free hot breakfast.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Cowboy Crepes & Cafe 1977 Dewar Drive G, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 307-362-6299 Breakfast, brunch, and lunch options in a casual and family-friendly setting.

Broadway Burger Station 628 Broadway Street, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 307-362-5858 A fun and entertaining 50's-style diner serving burgers and shakes, and a kid's menu.

Bitter Creek Brewing 604 Broadway Street, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 307-362-4782 Pizzas, pastas, and salads alongside an extensive list of in-house speciality microbrews.

Destination Distinctive Retail

Sidekicks Books and Wine Bar 507 Broadway Street, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 307-389-9727 Books, wine, appetizers and desserts.

Mack and Company Boutique, 623 Pilot Butte Avenue, Rock Springs, WY 82901, 37-371-0384, Locally owned artisan boutique.

DAY TWO

Lyman

You'll be exiting the Interstate at Lyman for the start of the Bridger Valley Historic Byway. Francis Lyman, an apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints settled here in 1898, laying out lots for the town and establishing an agricultural community in 1899. The first religious services were held early in 1900 in the newly built town hall.

Bridger Valley Heritage Museum

Originally known as the Trona Museum, after the minerals hidden deep in the earth in southwestern Wyoming, the focus of the museum was changed in recent years, to preserve and showcase the heritage of the Bridger Valley which residents felt was being lost.

100 East Sage Street, Lyman, WY 82937, 307-787-3525, 10AM-4PM Summer weekends



University of Wyoming Experimental Farm Heritage Barn

This magnificent 1915 structure, with rainbow roof construction that once held dairy cows, grain and hay was repurposed as a community center.

44054 Business Loop 80, Lyman WY 82937, 307-787-6595



Fort Bridger State Historic Site

Jim Bridger started Fort Bridger in 1843 with two double-log houses joined by a pen for horses. As it became a vital supply point for the Oregon, California and Mormon Trails that passed through the area, the fort was expanded. It also served as a Pony Express station. Mormons burned the fort in 1857 to prevent the US Army from using it, but the Army rebuilt the fort the next year and maintained a post here until 1890. Today's Fort Bridger State Historic Site encompasses 37 acres of grounds, 27 historic structures, and four historic replica structures. The park offers self-guided tours of the fort, living history demonstrations, open archeological excavations, museum exhibits, and a civilian cemetery. The Fort hosts the Fort Bridger Rendezvous every Labor Day weekend.

37000 I-80BL, 3 miles south of Exit 34, Fort Bridger, WY, 32933, 307-782-3842
Grounds open year round 8AM-Sunset, Buildings May 1-Sep 30 9AM-4:30PM
Daily, Closed Oct 1 - Apr 30.



Muddy Creek Piedmont Kilns

Now a ghost town, Piedmont was founded by the railroad as a railroad water station in 1869. Moses Byrne built the Piedmont Charcoal Kilns to supply charcoal for iron smelting in the Utah Valley. His town grew to include a mercantile and four saloons, yet when the Union Pacific Railroad built a tunnel through Aspen Mountain, it re-routed trains away from Piedmont and the town began its decline.





Evanston

Evanston was founded in 1868, when the Transcontinental Railroad began construction. It was 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 a 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.



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, 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 a 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 THREE

Historic Walking Tour

Enjoy a walking tour through downtown Evanston that includes more than 35 structures, some dating from the earliest days of 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 and 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 and renovated it as 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 still outfitted machine shop, a superintendent's office and washroom, and a renovated visitor center which was previously the Oil House, make up the rest of the complex. 1440/1500 Main Street, Evanston, WY 82930

