

## Wyoming High Spots As You Circle The Divide

By Bernice Karnop

Wyoming perches high on the continent, even when you don't see the mountains. The Continental Divide snakes through Yellowstone National Park and across the Wind River Mountains to South Pass where it splits to create the Great Divide Basin. It comes together again south of Rawlins and continues into Colorado.

On a Wyoming tour that meandered over and around this significant geography, we hit high points of a different kind: historic trails, native plants and animals, museums, colorful characters, art, food, and more. Called the "Circle the Continental Divide Driving Tour," it is listed as one of the Top Ten Scenic Drives in the Northern Rockies. ([www.DriveTheTop10.com](http://www.DriveTheTop10.com).)

According to Lori Iverson, Education and Visitor Services Director at the National Elk Refuge in Jackson, the last two weeks of August are an ideal time for visitors from neighboring states to come because the summer crowds at Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks have thinned out. So dig out a Wyoming map, pack up your gear, and see what's new in Wyoming.

From a plethora of must-see stops, I narrowed it down to a few of the high points, arranged in the order we encountered them. See how they stack up to what you would put on your own list.

### Jackson, elevation 6,209

- **The National Elk Refuge** - Step out onto the viewing platform at the Jackson Visitor Center and you'll see not only elk but songbirds, waterfowl, eagles, coyotes, bison, and other residents who share the national wildlife refuge. The visitor center is shared by the National Forest Service, the Park Service, Wyoming Game and Fish, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Elk Foundation so you can pick up anything you need for your visit to nearby attractions as well. If you are there in the winter, take the unforgettable horse-drawn sleigh or wagon ride out among the elk.

- **Museum of Wildlife Art** - Enjoy Jackson's galleries but don't miss the \$35 million Museum of Wildlife Art just north of town. It is an inspiring piece of architecture and inside you will be surprised at the historic and modern paintings and sculptures. Grandchildren will be delighted with this summer's display of Maurice Sendak's Animal Kingdom drawings (until September 19, 2010) and with the hands-on opportunities in the children's art area.

- **Million Dollar Cowboy Steakhouse** - Treat yourself to your favorite cut of bison, cooked to perfection.

### Moose, elevation 6,440

- **The Craig Thomas Discovery Center** - This is the first new visitor center in Grand Teton National Park in 30 years and I was impressed. The building design and landscaping are beautiful and ecologically friendly. The 30-foot windows provide stunning views of the mountains and the hands-on displays include information about how people interact with the landscape. The most unusual feature is a series of 15-foot-long video river walkways underfoot.

- **Jackson Lake Lodge** - Built by Laurence

Rockefeller in 1955, this lodge was remodeled two years ago. Instead of buying everything new, they refinished, reupholstered, and recycled things. Take some great photos of the Tetons from the deck, and eat a sunset dinner in the Mural Room. Ask about grizzly activity before you take to the trails. Elk Island tours, which can include a steak and trout fry on the island, leave from Coulter Bay. Levi Thorn, Director of Sales and Marketing, says the scenic rides down the Snake River are for people of all ages and ability levels. The lodge is open from late May until early October.

### Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks

These are premiere places on the planet for anyone to visit. The Circle the Divide tour takes you into the parks but we will save comments on the scenery, geysers, mud pots, wildlife, and all the rest of the wonder for another article.

### Cody, elevation 5,016

- **The Buffalo Bill Historical Center** - These five interconnected museums cover Buffalo Bill, Greater Yellowstone Natural History, Plains Indians, Western Art, and Historic Firearms. The museums have undergone major upgrades and you will enjoy seeing each with your grandchildren. Kid-friendly activities include a computer where you click and drag items into a picture and an area where you can draw a postcard the old fashioned way and mail it. Look for C.M. Russell paintings and sculptures, Deborah Butterfield's driftwood horse, and Rudy Autio's glazed stoneware horse. We bought lunch at the museum's Mustang Grill and ate it beside the colorful Sacagawea sculpture in the courtyard.

- **Old Trail Town** - This is more than a collection of old buildings. The cabins demonstrate how many ways logs were put together to make a structure, and each one has a story of the family or business it originally housed. Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, and fellow desperados holed up in one of them, and their Hole in the Wall gang relaxed in the Rivers Saloon, relocated from the Meeteetse area. The bullet holes they left behind are a reminder of their raucous good times. Several notables were buried or reburied here including Jeremiah "Liver Eating" Johnson.

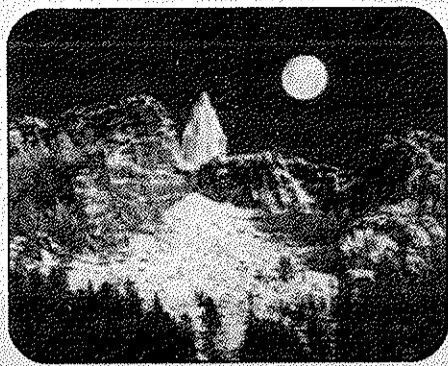
- **Cody Downtown** - Six blocks of Cody's downtown are on the National Register of Historic Places. The Irma, a hotel Buffalo Bill named for his daughter, is known for gunfights out front and unbeatable prime rib inside.

- **Dan Miller's Cowboy Music Revue** - The Cody Theater, across the street from the Irma, hosts this fun Branson-style show six nights a week. Cody has a rodeo every night as well.

### Meeteetse, elevation 5,797

- **The Meeteetse Chocolatier** - The first surprise is that he is a cowboy on the side. The candy maker, Tim Kellogg, got his start selling truffles from his grandma's recipe for money to buy a new saddle. Now his chocolates are famous far beyond Wyoming borders. Try the dipped chocolates in a host of unusual flavors - mint, sage, and Coors. Coors? Yes, and Jack Daniels, too. ISI

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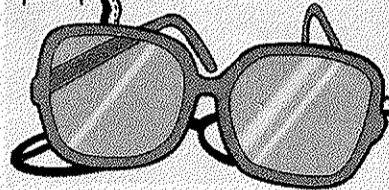
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