



BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST



PARK OVERVIEW:

BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST IN NORTH-CENTRAL WYOMING MAY APPROXIMATE NEW YORK'S LONG ISLAND IN SIZE, BUT THE COMPARISONS STOP RIGHT THERE. THE NAMES GIVEN TO THE FOREST'S LANDFORMS TELL YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW: CANYONS CALLED DEVIL AND CRAZY WOMAN, AND PEAKS DUBBED BLACK TOOTH AND CLOUD. THIS IS A WILD, HIGH, RUGGED PLACE.

Deep canyons formed by powerful thrust faults penetrate both the eastern and western edges of the forest. Jagged peaks jut to 13,000 feet and above. Forests of lodgepole and ponderosa pine mantle the lower reaches.

For such a remote location, Bighorn has seen an outsized share of American history played out within its borders. Some of America's most famous pioneers explored this mountain wilderness, including Jim Bridger, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and Buffalo Bill. Its land is held sacred by the Cheyenne, Crow, Sioux, Arapaho, and Eastern Cheyenne Indians—a land of spilled blood on which Native Americans fought some of their most desperate battles against the U.S. military.

PARK HIGHLIGHTS:

Recreation is a major activity in the 1.1-million-acre Bighorn National Forest. Outstanding scenery and a mild climate combine to provide an unforgettable outdoor experience year-round. The forest contains 32 campgrounds, more than 1,500 miles of trails, two developed ski areas, and three National Scenic Byways. There's also no shortage of wildlife, as moose, elk, mule and White-tailed deer, Bighorn sheep, black bear, bobcat, red fox, and coyotes are known to roam the forest. And for the angler, brook brown, cutthroat, golden, and lake rainbow trout can be caught in almost any stream or lake in the forest.

There are several not-to-be-missed sights in and around the Bighorn National Forest. The drive along Highway 14 leads you through **Paintrock Canyon** on a descent through the mountains past miles of red shale. **Shell Falls**, a cascading waterfall and interpretive center of the same name, is also on Highway 14. Off Highway 14, on a spur called 14A, sits

the curious **Medicine Wheel**, a rock formation believed to have been built by prehistoric tribes, though its purpose remains a mystery. And that's just a small section of the forest. Here's a quick tour of the rest...

Robert Frost never ventured here, but there are plenty of less-traveled trails for day hikers to sample. The three-mile **Bucking Mule Falls Trail** (# 053) is just the ticket; it sees few hiking boots and is an easy to moderate hike. Take FR14 to the end, and you'll find the trailhead. Another lonesome trail is the two-mile **Black Mountain Lookout Trail** (# 011), which delivers you to a scenic fire lookout. Get there via FR16, or, if you've got a 4WD jalopy, try FR222. If you've got the time, consider hiking the 53-mile **Solitude Loop** (# 038), which circumnavigates the Cloud Peak Wilderness. It should take you five to seven days to complete. Unlike the others, this trail sees heavy hiking traffic.

Most of **Cloud Peak Wilderness** is above timberline, so expect a rocky landscape of jagged peaks, echoing cirques, alpine lakes, and U-shaped canyons. The wilderness is home to black bear, mountain lion, elk, and mule deer. Numerous trails penetrate the wilderness and can be accessed at the Battle Creek Trailhead and the West Tensleep Lake Trailhead. If you're not quite ready for an extended stay in the backcountry, Cloud Peak Wilderness also offers semi-primitive hiking areas in Bighorn.

Tangle with trout on the North Tongue River, where the waters host rainbow, brook, brown, and Snake River cutthroat. The South Tongue is also good fishing, but you won't hook any Snake River cutthroat. Or try the Little Bighorn River for an honest chance at landing Yellowstone cutthroat, along with the brook, brown, and rainbow. For



BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST ESSENTIALS:

- Address:** 2013 Eastside 2nd Street Sheridan, WY 82801
- Season:** Open year-round, though campgrounds and visitor centers are generally open from mid-May through September.

VISITOR INFORMATION:

- Web site:** <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/bighorn/>
- Phone:** (307) 674-2600
- TDD:** (307) 674-2604





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added incentive, pack a frying pan, a small vial of cooking oil, and a few cloves of garlic. You'll have a river-side dinner in no time.

The **Cloud Peak Skyway** (Highway 16) is 45 miles of nonstop, intoxicating views of the southern Bighorn's snowy crags that will delight the most jaded scenery buff. Begin in either the town of Buffalo or Tensleep—the vistas are spectacular in either direction—and pull over at Hospital Hill, Powder Pass, Meadow Lark Lake, and Tensleep Canyon to soak in the vistas. Other great motoring includes the 25-mile **Medicine Wheel Passage** (Highway 14A) from Big Horn Basin to Burgess Junction, and the 45-mile **Bighorn Scenic Byway** (Highway 14), which links Sheridan and Greybull, Wyoming.

For the winter visitor, **Antelope Butte**, just off Highway 14 near Dayton, offers 19 downhill runs with easy beginner runs like Mickey Mouse, Thumper, and the Enchanted Forest, along with daredevil double-black diamonds like Buffalo Jump and The Falls. Skinny-ski enthusiasts can escape into the forest's four cross-country ski areas. Snowboarders may want to head over to **Bighorn Mountain Resort** located off Highway 16, where they can board on half-pipes, tabletops, rails, snowboard cliffs, and a terrain garden.

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