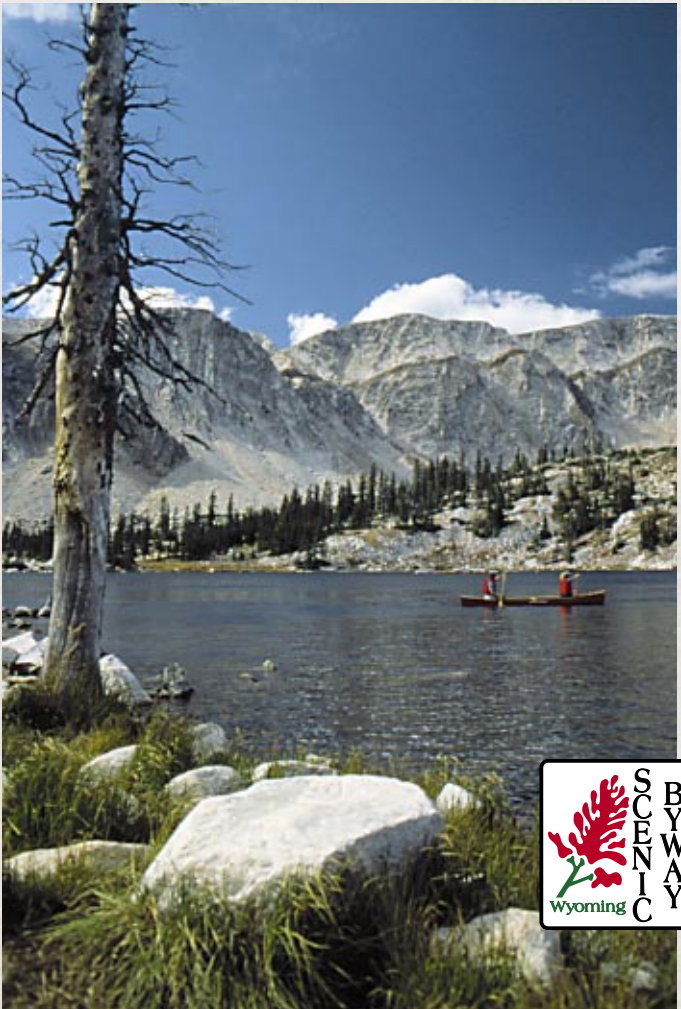


Snowy Range Scenic Byway



**A travel guide to enjoying
Wyoming's Snowy Range Scenic Byway.
For further information, stop by one
of the Visitor Centers located at the
east or west ends of the Byway.**

Exploring the Snowy Range Scenic Byway

The Snowy Range Scenic Byway crosses the Medicine Bow Mountain Range and includes the 27 miles of the Medicine Bow National Forest portion of Wyoming Highway 130. This Byway is located in southern Wyoming and can be reached by exiting Interstate 80 at Laramie or at Walcott Junction approximately 22 miles east of Rawlins.

Driving time along the Snowy Range Scenic Byway from one forest boundary to the other depends on the interests of the visitor. Driving straight through during the summer tourist season will take about an hour. Stopping to enjoy the magnificent scenery, the many points of interest, or adventures like camping and fishing can extend travel time by several hours or even days. Approachable from the west or east, the Byway route rises from 8,000 ft. on the valley floor to a height of 10,847 ft. above sea level. At Snowy Range Pass, nearby Medicine Bow Peak towers to 12,013 ft.

Special Attractions — The Snowy Range offers numerous opportunities for camping, fishing, hiking and lodging in resorts and cabins, with some offering dining facilities. There is even a downhill ski area. When driving this Byway, there are many opportunities to view wildlife, foliage, high alpine lakes and their associated ecosystems.

Wildflowers border the popular Gap Lakes Trail.

Canoeists enjoy the calm and splendor of Mirror Lake (cover).

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The region near Medicine Bow Peak is home to Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Yellow-bellied marmots and pikas are commonly found here along with blue grouse. The many lakes and streams in the area are home to rainbow trout, brook trout and Wyoming's only native trout, the cutthroat. Pine martens and beaver also live nearby. Wildflowers carpet the alpine meadows throughout the summer.

The Snowy Range Scenic Byway takes the traveler from sagebrush prairie to a high-altitude alpine environment including all of the major life zones in the Rocky Mountain west. Near the summit is an old-growth spruce-fir forest containing the unique krumholz trees, shaped by the blustering wind high atop the mountain. Here the abundance of large trees, an understory of young trees, an abundance of dead and dying snags and decaying logs furnish a home to the kinds of wildlife not found in abundance in younger forest stands. The pine marten, red-backed vole, ruby-crowned kinglet, northern three-toed woodpecker

and boreal owl are but a few of the species found in Wyoming's old growth forests.

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The Indian Paintbrush is Wyoming's state flower. The Wyoming Scenic Byway program adopted the Indian Paintbrush as its logo. As you tour Wyoming's Byways, the Indian Paintbrush will identify your route.



Leaving Lake Marie and Medicine Bow Peak behind on an early June Byway drive.

The highway over the Snowy Range is one of the shortest of Wyoming's scenic byways, both in length and in the number of months it can be driven. It is a two-lane highway, leading over the second highest mountain pass in Wyoming, and when open is driveable by passenger cars. Snow usually closes the highest section of the road about mid-November. Snowplows then traditionally open the road in May before the Memorial Day weekend. The east and west extremes of the Byway are driveable during the winter months because there is less snow accumulation at the lower elevations.

On this drive travelers are close enough to Medicine Bow Peak to feel the chill from its year-round glaciers. Even deep into summer it is easy to see how the Snowy Range got its name. Glistening white remnants of last winter's blizzards cap the 12,000 ft. peaks.

The land now known as the Medicine Bow National Forest has a long history, reaching back as far as 8,000 years when ancestors of the Plains Indians inhabited the area. The Northern Arapaho, Oglala Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, Eastern Shoshone and the White River Utes all frequented the area. The region was used by these tribes who took advantage of its wildlife bounty. They frequented the forest to gather the prime "mountain mahogany" wood they liked to use when making bows. The soothing mineral hot springs along the banks of the North Platte River provided a welcome place to "make medicine" to cure their ills and to hold ceremonial pow-wows.

Truly a "land of many uses," the Snowy Range today supports an active timber harvesting industry in addition to providing traditional livestock forage, watershed and outdoor recreation benefits.

All along the Byway are many active recreational opportunities, but there's nothing wrong with just sitting and watching the wildlife wander by. The Snowy Range area trout fishing is considered to be about the best in the West. The challenge is choosing between the countless alpine lakes or numerous streams. Watch for wildlife while driving this Byway because deer and elk and the

many other creatures that live in this forest may cross the highway at any time, especially in the early morning or late evening hours.

Byway Highlights

The Snowy Range Road was first used in the 1870s as a wagon trail, then in the 1920s highway construction began. After six years it was finished and became known as the “Great Skyroad.” It was widened and improved in 1980s and received U. S. Forest Service designation as a National Forest Scenic Byway (the nation’s second).

Services — The National Forest provides numerous places to stop – most places have wheelchair accessible restrooms – and there are many places to get out of the car and walk around and enjoy the crisp mountain air. Many of the dirt roads leading off the Byway may not be navigable without a four-wheel drive vehicle. Plan ahead because there are no service stations or retail stores along the route. Some services are available in the communities outside the Byway, and all services are available in Rawlins and Laramie.



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Libby Creek courses through stands of fir and golden aspen.

1. Visitor Center (east end). The U.S. Forest Service operates Visitor Centers at both ends of the Byway.

Just outside of the town of Centennial, at the eastern start of the Scenic Byway, the Visitor Center is open seven days a week during the summer and fall, and on a limited basis during the spring and winter. Visitors can obtain maps of nearby hiking trails and the entire forest, plus information about mountain wildflowers, wildlife, recreation and other things to see and do along the Byway.



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2. Barber Lake and Libby Creek.

The Barber Lake Road off the main Byway leads to several small campgrounds that can accommodate tent and RV campers, although there are no electrical hookups. Barber Lake offers

a nice spot to picnic and is one of the few places where only kids get to fish.

This side road takes the visitor along side noisy Libby Creek (nap time?) before it rejoins the Scenic Byway. Fall viewing is spectacular along this road, and during the winter it doubles as a cross-country ski trail. Taking the Barber Lake Road bypasses the entrance to the Snowy Range Ski Area (a popular winter destination for locals and nearby out-of-staters) and the turnoff for Sand Lake Road—a gravel forest road accessing trails on the north end of the Snowy Range.

3. Greenrock Picnic Area. Greenrock Picnic area is just west of where Barber Lake Road again intersects the main road. Heading west, Highway 130 now follows the Little Laramie River where marmots often sun themselves on the rocks near the road. Wild flowers are abundant here, especially the Indian Paintbrush, Wyoming’s Official State Flower. This is also the point where the road closes in the winter and becomes a mecca for snowmobilers. The Snowy Range is one of the most popular snowmobiling areas in Wyoming.

To Saratoga

To Riverside & Encampment



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Colorful Fall hillsides above Barber Lake Road.

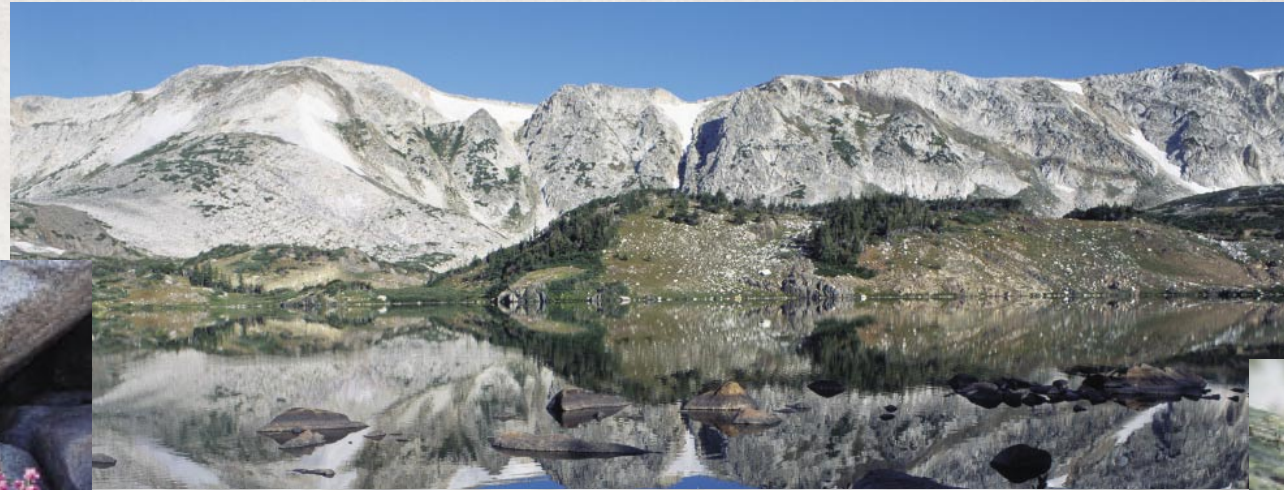
Annual road opening operations begin with snow removal in May.



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Medicine Bow Peak reflected in North Gap Lake.



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A marmot suns itself.

Medicine Bow National Forest Boundary



el. 7,835'

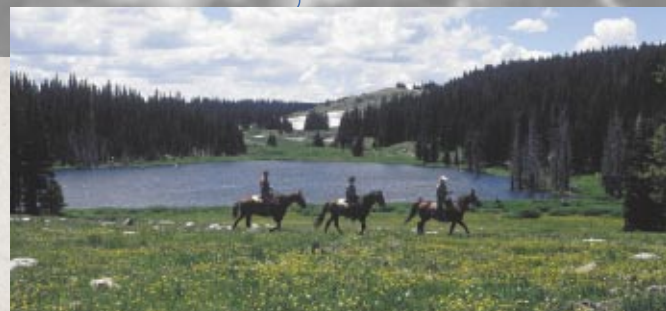


Centennial
el. 8,076'

To Laramie

Snowy Range Scenic Byway

- 1. Visitor Center (east end).
- 2. Barber Lake and Libby Creek.
- 3. Greenrock Picnic Area.
- 4. Brooklyn Lake Road.
- 5. Sugarloaf Recreation Area.
- 6. Libby Flats.
- 7. Red Mask Mine.
- 8. Lake Marie.
- 9. Silver Lake Road.
- 10. French Creek Interpretive Center.
- 11. Ryan Park. Ryan Park Campground.
- 12. Visitor Center (west end).



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Riders pass Little Brooklyn Lake on their way to the Brooklyn Lake trailhead.



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Red Mask Mine site below Libby Flats observation overlook.



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Wildflower displays peak in late summer.

Produced by the
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 and a grant from the
 Federal Highway Administration.



4. Brooklyn Lake Road. Just west of Greenrock Picnic Area is the turnoff for the paved Brooklyn Lake Road. This side trip leads to several lakes accessible by automobile. Other lakes can be reached via a network of hiking trails from this point. St. Albins, a small outdoor Episcopal chapel near Little Brooklyn Lake, is the site of frequent weddings and other ceremonies in warmer months.



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A fisherman enjoys the solitude of one of the areas many readily accessible alpine lakes.

5. Sugarloaf Recreation Area. Due to the altitude, a definite ecological shift in the vegetation marks the turnoff for the Sugarloaf Recreation Area and nearby Libby and Lewis lakes and picnic grounds. The gravel road ends at a trailhead which leads to numerous glacial lakes and the summits of Sugarloaf Mountain (11,398 ft.) and Medicine Bow Peak (12,013 ft.) – both popular destinations for hardy and adventurous hikers.

6. Libby Flats. At the summit of the Snowy Range Scenic Byway is the Libby Flats observation point, and the Medicine Bow Peak overlook. Libby Flats provides a breathtaking panoramic view to the south allowing the visitor to see as far as the Rawah and Never Summer Wilderness areas in Colorado.

7. Red Mask Mine. A short loop trail from the observation point leads to the Red Mask Mine (which operated in the 1920s), and a nearby miner's cabin. Interpretive signs describe these sites, and identify the sparse trees and ground-hugging flowers present at this place of high altitude, strong winds and precipitation coming mostly in the form of snowfall. If the view hasn't taken your breath away, use some caution. It may take some time to get used to the altitude. Some people need a few days to adjust to the thin air of the mountains.

8. Lake Marie. There's a bit more oxygen to be found down from the summit at Mirror Lake, or its sister, Lake Marie. Both glacier-fed lakes reflect the majesty of Medicine Bow Peak and are often visited by artists and photographers. During the early summer months, note the pink "watermelon" snow caused by bacteria that thrives on the year-round glacial snow. The quartzite peaks are estimated to be two billion years old, with even older rock existing beneath them.

Across from the Lake Marie parking area is a trailhead connecting several hiking routes on the south side of the Byway. Maps show access points to the French Creek Canyon trail and others leading down the mountain slope.

9. Silver Lake Road. After passing a few more highway turnoffs on the way down the mountain, the Silver Lake Trail head is on the left. This trail leads to the lake and the adjoining camp and picnic grounds. A pullout on the south offers a spectacular view of Silver Lake and the surrounding area.

West of Silver Lake, the Byway begins to descend in earnest, through spruce, fir, aspen and pine forest of the



lower and more moist elevation, past mountain parks and streams, and the Headquarters Park parking area. This trailhead and parking area provides access to the north and west sides of the Snowy Range and Medicine Bow Peak.

10. French Creek Interpretive Center. The French Creek fishing site features an accessible fishing pier over French Creek. Here the creek meanders slowly through willows and provides beaver with plenty of food and shelter. A nearby interpretive information site illustrates the beaver's world in human terms.

Keep an eye out for white-tail and mule deer, common inhabitants of the area. Occasional moose, bald eagles and Merriam's turkeys may also show themselves along the waterways in the area and in the lower lands outside the Byway.

11. Ryan Park. Ryan Park Campground is one of the largest on the Forest and was named after an historic internment camp, Ryan Park. The camp was built to house German prisoners of war during World War II and is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

12. Visitor Center (west end).

In the Brush Creek valley on the western slope of the Snowy Range another National Forest visitor center offers maps, information about the ecology of the area and an explanation of how weather affects both sides of the mountain in distinct ways. The forest boundary here is also the western boundary of the Snowy Range Scenic Byway.



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**Indian Paintbrush,
Wyoming's State
Flower.**

**Medicine Bow Peak viewed from
above Telephone Lakes.**

Byway Travel Tips

- ▶ The minimum driving time along the Snowy Range Scenic Byway is approximately one hour. Allow additional time to enjoy the many scenic features the Byway offers.
- ▶ The Snowy Range Scenic Byway is open from late May until closed by snow again in mid-November.
- ▶ This route traverses one of Wyoming's famous mountain ranges. Road grades do not exceed 6.5%.
- ▶ Wyoming Highway 130 is a modern, two-lane road and has a number of turnouts, picnic areas, and scenic views.
- ▶ Vehicles tuned for sea level may not perform as well at higher mountain elevations. Be prepared to pull over to allow faster traffic to pass if necessary.
- ▶ Medicine Bow National Forest maps may be obtained at the Forest Service Byway Visitor Centers or at the Medicine Bow–Routt National Forest Office, 2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, WY 82070.
- ▶ Additional Wyoming travel information may be obtained from:

Tourism Division—Wyoming Business Council

I-25 at College Drive

Cheyenne, WY 82002

PH: (307) 777-7777 or 1-800-255-5996

I-80 Summit Information Center

9 miles east of Laramie on I-80,

at Exit 6, Happy Jack Exit—Open Daily