



SWEETWATER COUNTY WYOMING PRESS KIT

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Sweetwater County, located halfway between Yellowstone and Canyonlands National Parks in southwest Wyoming, is home to 10,500 square miles of pure, high desert adventure. Known as “Flaming Gorge Country,” the area is characterized by the 91-square-mile Flaming Gorge Lake, the famed Green River, expansive deserts and rugged mountains. Activities include camping, hiking, biking, fishing, golfing, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, hunting dinosaurs, shopping, and just plain getting away from it all. A perfect place to explore American history, Sweetwater County is also home to petroglyphs, pioneer trails and historical museums.

Website: www.tourwyoming.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sweetwater-County-Travel-and-Tourism/63344983318>

Twitter: @SweetwaterWY

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/sweetwatertourism>

Fact Sheet

Website	www.tourwyoming.com
How to reach us	Physical address: 404 N Street, Suite 304 Rock Springs, WY 82902 Phone number: (307) 382-2538
Location	Sweetwater County is conveniently located in southwestern Wyoming off the I-80 corridor and along the popular travel highways of 191 and 530 in Flaming Gorge Country. Sweetwater County is halfway between Yellowstone and Canyonlands National Parks, making it a convenient stopping point for visitors traveling to the national parks.
Getting Here	Drive: Sweetwater County is located on highways 191 or 530 off the I-80 corridor Fly: Salt Lake City International Airport – 2.5 hours Denver International Airport – 5 hours Rock Springs-Sweetwater County Airport – 7 miles east of Rock Springs
Attractions	Community Fine Arts Center: features a changing exhibition schedule of local, regional and national painters, sculptors, printers, photographers and fine artists Expedition Island: a National Historic Site located in the middle of Green River; recognized as the starting point for two expeditions down the Green and Colorado Rivers led by Major John Wesley Powell in the 1800s that led to the discovery of the Grand Canyon Flaming Gorge Lake: Part of Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, the 91-square-mile Flaming Gorge Lake boasts world-class fishing & is the largest reservoir in Wyoming. Flaming Gorge Country: located along the 91-mile Flaming Gorge Reservoir and the famed Green River; characterized by expansive deserts and rugged mountains. The Flaming Gorge-Green River Basin Scenic Byway showcases this area and the dramatic landscapes surrounding Lake Flaming Gorge. The landscape quickly evolves to high desert and open shrub vegetation as it leaves the mountains of Utah. This vast open country is home to large herds of mule deer, pronghorn antelope and bands of wild horses. Historic South Pass: a cornerstone in the history of U.S. westward migration in the 19th Century, this area houses more than 20 original structures, thousands of artifacts and the Gold Mining Interpretive Center Killpecker Sand Dunes: area's biggest sand dune field, which begins several miles east of the town of Eden; also home to a herd of rare desert elk found nowhere else in the U.S. Pilot Butte Wild Horse Scenic Loop Tour: offers opportunity to see the 2,500 wild horses living in the Rock Springs district, as well as other wildlife and scenic views Pioneer Trails: Sweetwater County has more miles of still-visible pioneer trails than any other area in the U.S. The Reliance Tipple: Constructed by the Union Pacific Coal Company in 1936; was one of the largest and most mechanically advanced coal tipples in Wyoming

Seedskafee Wildlife Refuge: established in 1965, the refuge encompasses more than 26,000 acres long the river between Fontenelle Dam and Green River

Sweetwater Events Complex & Speedway: named one of the top 10 small town barrel racing destinations by *Barrel Horse News* magazine, hosts events ranging from stock car racing to BMX races, moto-cross racing and rodeos

White Mountain Petroglyphs: more than a dozen panels display petroglyphs dating back 1,000 years

Activities

Camping	Jeeping/4-Wheeling
Cross-Country Skiing	Kayaking
Driving tours	Mountain Biking
Events	Museums
Fine arts	Shopping
Fine dining	Sightseeing
Fishing	Sledding
Golf	Snowshoeing
Hiking	Snowmobiling
Historic sites	Tubing
Hunting	Wildlife Viewing
Ice Fishing	

Photos: Available for download at <http://www.tourwyoming.com/adventure-gallery.html>

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About Sweetwater County (www.tourwyoming.com)

Sweetwater County, located halfway between Yellowstone and Canyonlands National Parks in southwest Wyoming, is home to 10,500 square miles of pure, high desert adventure. Known as “Flaming Gorge Country,” the area is characterized by the 91-square-mile Flaming Gorge Lake, the famed Green River, expansive deserts and rugged mountains. Activities include camping, hiking, biking, fishing, golfing, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, hunting dinosaurs, shopping, and just plain getting away from it all. A perfect place to explore American history, Sweetwater County is also home to petroglyphs, pioneer trails and historical museums.

History of Sweetwater County

Information courtesy of Sweetwater County Historical Museum

Sweetwater County's history began long before written records. In prehistoric times the landscape was swampy and inhabited by great dinosaurs. Some of the floral and fish fossils still visible today date back about 45 million years. Thousands of years later Native Americans, mostly Shoshone and Ute, claimed the land. Petroglyphs on White Mountain preserve the pictorial language of the prehistoric people from the region.

The first white men moving through the area with regularity were the mountain men. The first Rocky Mountain Rendezvous (an annual gathering held by a fur trading company at which trappers and mountain men sold their furs and hides and replenished their supplies), was held in Sweetwater County in 1825. A later gathering in 1834 is said to have been the largest rendezvous ever.

Several major emigrant trails passed through the county, including the Oregon, California, Mormon, Overland, and Cherokee Trails, as well as the Pony Express Trail, 1861 transcontinental telegraph line and Ben Holladay's Central Overland Express stage line. Today, Sweetwater County has more miles of still-visible pioneer trails than any other area in the United States.

Vitally important to the history of the county was the coming of the transcontinental railroad in 1868. This was instrumental in the creation and development of Sweetwater County's two major population centers, Green River and Rock Springs. Green River was the major railroad town due to the near proximity of a water supply, while Rock Springs became the coal mining center of the county.

- **Rock Springs Historical Museum:** The museum itself was built in 1894 and first used as the City Hall. The building is the museum's largest artifact.
- **Sweetwater County Historical Museum:** Established in 1967 to preserve and present the history of Sweetwater County, the museum is housed in a 1931 post office building.
- **Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC) Natural History Museum:** In addition to five dinosaur replicas, the museum displays several wall-mounted fossils of fish, huge leaves and reptiles that have been discovered in the area. The museum also houses interesting artifacts, such as prehistoric pottery, smaller fossils, and items associated with the earliest known humans who lived in the area.

Sweetwater County, Wyo., Invites Visitors to Discover Its Treasure Trove of History
-From pioneer trails to petroglyphs, historic sites and museums, traces of the past lie beneath a veil of geographical beauty in Sweetwater County-

Once the site of a great lake, the high-desert landscape of [Sweetwater County](#) is now a panorama of geographical and historical discovery. Visitors may follow in the footsteps of pioneers who went before them by blazing their own trail through the breathtaking landmarks of the county. For more studious history lovers, Sweetwater County's [three history museums](#) offer a comprehensive study of the area's fossils, photos and artifacts in a range of permanent and rotating exhibits.

From the open plains where Wyoming's wild horses run to the historical sites where their dinosaur predecessors are offered in hulking replica, the untamed spirit of the West beckons visitors to Sweetwater County to experience touches of the past.

Historic Sites

- White Mountain Petroglyphs: Art enthusiasts will enjoy the natural exhibit of petroglyphs on White Mountain, where the pictorial language of prehistoric people stands the test of time in the sandstone bedrock.
- Expedition Island: At this National Historical Site hikers and strollers can relive Maj. John Wesley Powell's expeditions to map the river system to the Grand Canyon at his original starting point.
- Historic South Pass: A museum, cemetery and old cabins mark this once-thriving mining town located just outside Sweetwater County. Set to become one of the flagship historic sites in the nation, this now-booming landmark offers prospectors the chance to pan for their own gold in streams, just like the olden days.
- The Reliance Tipple: The town of Reliance came into existence by the efforts of the Union Pacific Coal Company who built a coal tipple, which is still explorable today.

Natural Wonders

- Lake Flaming Gorge: The remnants of the area's prehistoric lake are found at Flaming Gorge where modern-day trophy trout fishing is top-of-the-line.
- Killpecker Sand Dunes – The product of ancient volcanoes, flat-topped buttes and spires provide wild horse lookouts, as well as four-wheeling fun.
- Pioneer Trails: Sweetwater County boasts more miles of still-visible pioneer trails than anywhere else in the country. Wagon wheel ruts on the legendary Oregon Trail are still visible and accessible by car and on foot.
- Rock Formations: Thousands of years of sandstone and shale erosion reveal six of Mother Nature's stunning rock formations – Castle Rock, The Palisades, Pilot Butte, Kissing Rocks, Tollgate Rock and Boar's Tusk – luring photographers and naturists alike.

Museums

- Rock Springs History Museum: Showcases its coal mining and multinational heritage, but the largest artifact is the building itself, constructed in 1894.
- Sweetwater County Historical Museum: Set on one of the few historical sites still preserved in the state, this museum offers snapshots of the county's history through its large photograph collection.
- Natural History Museum: Located at Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs this museum houses life-size dinosaur replicas, fish and plant fossils, pottery and other prehistoric artifacts.

Summer Activities

[Sweetwater County](#)'s backyard spans more than 10,500 square miles of rugged landscape and breathtaking scenery that includes the [U.S. National Recreation Area of Flaming Gorge](#). Comprised of desert, national forest, mountains and a canyon-walled reservoir, Flaming Gorge Country fosters endless recreation opportunities from mild to wild, especially in summertime. For family-friendly fun that won't break the bank, do summer the Flaming Gorge way.

- **Drive it.** There's nothing easier or more summer-appropriate than hopping in the car for a scenic road trip. Highways 191 and 530 encircling [Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area](#) are designated state scenic byways and stretch across high desert plains, mountains, forests and canyons. The [Flaming Gorge-Green River Basin Scenic Byway](#) is accessible from the towns of Green River and Rock Springs via Interstate 80. The 160-mile loop dips into Utah and takes just three hours.
- **Walk it.** For a more intimate encounter with Flaming Gorge Country, hiking means discovery. The simple grandeur of this western wonderland encourages travelers to slow down and take it all in. The opposed geography, diverse vegetation and roaming wildlife – mule deer, moose, bighorn sheep, elk, wild horses and more – inspire the outdoorsy, bookish and artistic alike. Diverse trails wind and loop throughout the area – some passable on bicycle – letting trekkers explore to their hearts' content. A full list of trails is available [here](#).
- **Catch it.** Known for some of the best cold-water fishing in the country, the Flaming Gorge Reservoir's record-worthy-fish – namely lake trout, rainbow trout and brown trout – beckon anglers of any level to drop a line. Other catches include Kokanee salmon, burbot, small mouth bass, and more. The Green River also lures anglers to fly fish their way to trophy trout in its world-renowned waters.
- **Float it.** Boating is arguably the best way to explore [Lake Flaming Gorge](#) and its 91 square miles of smooth, cool waters. However, 350 miles of shoreline afford plenty of playground and water access. Three full-service marinas offer all types of boat rentals, mooring and fuel; other facilities around the reservoir maintain paved boat ramps, in addition to boat camping grounds. The northern portion of the Green River runs through the town named after it and gives access at several points for kayaks, canoes, tubes and rafts.
- **See it.** Summer vacation calls for exploration, and Sweetwater County lets visitors experience Flaming Gorge Country through a variety of sights. Markers on the map such as the Killpecker Sand Dunes, Little Mountain big game haven, and White Mountain petroglyphs mark geographical, historical and scientific treasures. More structured attractions with educational opportunities include the historical site at Expedition Island, both the Rock Springs and Sweetwater Historical Museums, and the Western Wyoming Community College Natural History Museum that houses life-size dinosaur replicas.

For a full list of activities and attractions found in Flaming Gorge Country, visit www.tourwyoming.com. Check out the lodging and dining page to find accommodations in and around Sweetwater County, including the towns of Green River and Rock Springs.

Sweetwater County Announces 3 Ways to Celebrate National Great Outdoors Month

- The spacious majesty of [Southwest Wyoming](#) provides free outdoor exploration in June -

[Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism](#) invites travelers to celebrate National Great Outdoors Month in June – established by presidential proclamation in 2012 – by exploring Sweetwater’s wide open spaces. From California to the New York Island, this land was made to be explored, and Southwest Wyoming offers great American exploration like no other region!

- [Flaming Gorge Reservoir](#) – There's nothing more fitting than observing the month on National Recreation Area land and Lake Flaming Gorge. Stretching 91 miles long, Flaming Gorge offers a whopping 350 miles of shoreline for hiking, camping and taking it all in – made all the more feasible by boat. Camping is tranquil along the lake's many secluded beaches and canyons or easy with the amenities provided at the area's boat-only campgrounds. Short on time? Highways 191 and 530 encircling Flaming Gorge are designated [state scenic byways](#). Accessible from the towns of Green River and Rock Springs via Interstate 80, the 160-mile loop dips into Utah and takes just three hours.
- [Pilot Butte Wild Horses](#) – Born to be wild, horses have roamed the area since their introduction by the Spanish in the 1500s, exemplifying the hearty and untamed spirit of our nation's roots. The Pilot Butte Scenic Tour north of the town of Green River is only 24 miles long – about one or two hours of drive time. It presents numerous vistas and photo opportunities atop the rugged landscape where approximately 2,500 horses and other wildlife – including deer, antelope, elk, coyotes and eagles – play.
- [Historic Pioneer Trails](#) – History and the Wyoming landscape are sweetly intertwined in these parts of Wyoming. Sweetwater County boasts more miles of still-visible trails of American exploration than any other area in the country. Visitors can retrace the steps of the pioneers along the four National Historic Trails in one corridor— Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, California and Pony Express. Highway 28 conveniently parallels these trails and passes six significant sites, each with a story of their own.

Great Outdoors Month features an official Great Outdoors week, June 11-17, and an official Get Outdoors Day on Saturday, June 14. Plan ahead and double the fun by catching Sweetwater County's Flaming Gorge Days celebrating the first days of summer on June 26-28. The event features a number of great outdoor events including concerts, sports tournaments and a parade.

For more information on these and other attractions or to book a visit www.tourwyoming.com.

National Park Road Trippers Invited to Explore Sand Dunes & Petroglyphs in Sweetwater County, Wyo.
- [Southwest Wyoming travel destination](#) - great place to refuel, rediscover on tour of Wyoming's national parks-

[Sweetwater County, Wyo.](#), at the junction of Interstate 80 and Highway 191 in the southwest part of the state, is the perfect stopping point to refuel and rediscover as travelers make their way to or from the national parks of Wyoming. The [Killpecker Sand Dunes](#) and the [White Mountain Petroglyphs](#) are two area attractions that offer a quintessential Sweetwater County experience.

White Mountain Petroglyphs

Located about 26 miles northeast of the town of Rock Springs, the White Mountain Petroglyphs offer more than a dozen panels that showcase hundreds of figures etched into the sandstone bedrock. These incised petroglyphs were carved by the ancestors of present Plains and Great Basin Native American people.

The petroglyphs include drawings of elk, buffalo, horses, teepees and several kinds of human figures, including riders with feather headdresses. Many of the petroglyphs date to early historic times, about 200 years ago, as evidenced by the horse figures, which were introduced by the Euro-Americans. Other figures appear to be much older and are estimated by archeologists to be as much as 1,000 years old.

Killpecker Sand Dunes

A little further up the road sits the world's second-largest active sand dune field in the world. The Killpecker Sand Dunes encompass about 109,000 acres and stretch 55 miles wide from the Green River Basin across the Continental Divide and into the Great Divide Basin. An 11,000 acre open play area is a huge draw for dune buggies, dirt bikes, ATVs and other off-road vehicles. From flats to mammoth dunes soaring up to 100 feet high, the sandbanks offer something for off-roaders at every skill level.

The dunes are equally exciting for hikers who can hike to and around the sand formations on trails that trace through North Table Mountain, South Table Mountain, Black Rock, Spring Butte and Leucite Hills. Leucite Hills is also a great place to peer out onto the horizon for a glimpse of the county's herds of wild horses.

The rough and rocky terrain and numerous springs of fresh water located throughout this area make it perfectly suited for wild horses. But wild horses aren't the only rare wildlife one can see at Killpecker Sand Dunes. The area around the Killpecker Dune Field is also home to a herd of rare desert elk, found nowhere else in North America!

For more information visit www.tourwyoming.com.

Tip for Summer Road Trippers: Take a Pit Stop in Sweetwater County, Wyo.

- Southwest Wyoming, located between some of the country's best national parks, offers plenty of space to stretch out and recreationally recharge -

[Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism](#) invites summer vacationers who are taking a road trip to the most notable national parks – including Canyonlands, Yellowstone and Grand Teton – to make a pit stop in Sweetwater County to “fill up” on adventure, history, and cowboy spirit.

Conveniently located at the juncture of Interstate 80 and Highway 191 in Southwest Wyoming, Sweetwater County is the perfect pausing point on the drive to some of the U.S.'s greatest national parks. In the big, open country of Wyoming, people know it's more about the journey than the destination, and Sweetwater offers travelers several opportunities to spice up the “getting-there.”

Stop and stretch – Sweetwater uncovers the pioneer spirit in any road trip. With more miles of still-visible pioneer trails than any other part of the country, drivers can pull over almost anywhere and explore. The county's online trail map is helpful for planning a stop by specific trails like the Oregon and Mormon Trails. Vacationers looking to add an educational aspect to their stopover will find sightseeing opportunities like the White Mountain Petroglyphs and Reliance Tipple coal mining building right up their alley. Three museums also provide a cultural (as well as air-conditioned!) experience via photographs, fossils and dinosaur bones.

Stop and play – Adding recreational diversion to a long drive is Sweetwater's forte. Biking, fishing, golfing, boating and even a water park make it easy to shake off the car crankies. Hundreds of miles of bike trails will tempt mountain bikers of all skill levels. Cold-water lakes like Flaming Gorge lure fisherman to abundant trout-filled water. Three full-service marinas provide boat rentals and watery fun on Lake Flaming Gorge. The beautiful Green River accommodates kayaking and tubing adventures, while Evers Park's motion-activated splash area is a free option that keeps little ones entertained.

Stop and stay – Resting up in Sweetwater can be rustic, budget-friendly or posh. The cities of Rock Springs and Green River offer comfortable lodging close to highway routes. In addition campgrounds, RV parks, and hotels accommodate every style of stay. For discounts on lodging, overnights should check out the options at www.tourwyoming.com/specials-and-packages.

Smartphone users can also download the [High Desert Adventure app](#) for on-the-road access to dining, lodging, maps and activity information. More information is also available online at www.tourwyoming.com.

Sweetwater County, Wyo., Invites Travelers on a Scenic Drive-Thru

-Visitors may take in hundreds of miles of natural beauty in [southwest Wyoming](#) from the comfort of their car-

Road trip! It seems there's nothing that can't be done in an automobile these days, and that includes exploring the vast landscape of [southwest Wyoming's](#) deserts and canyons.

For city-dwellers looking for a temporary escape from the hubbub of the concrete jungle, the serenity of an expanding horizon, untouched wilderness, ancient history and roaming wildlife are just a steering- wheel's-reach away. For the perfect cold-weather getaway – that is exactly halfway between Yellowstone and Canyonlands National Parks – grab a comfy blanket, hot beverage, and a fully-charged camera and set the GPS for [Sweetwater County](#).

Highways 191 and 530 encircling [Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area](#) are designated state scenic byways. The [Flaming Gorge-Green River Basin Scenic Byway](#) is accessible from the towns of Green River and Rock Springs via Interstate 80. The 160-mile loop dips into Utah and takes just three hours – roughly equal to a trip to the movie theater – and is drivable year-round.

Day-trippers and horse-lovers in need of a quicker fix will find the [Pilot Butte Wild Horse Scenic Tour](#) north of Green River just enough at 24 miles – about one hour of drive-time. This trek is best made in a high-clearance vehicle and under drier weather conditions.

Nature lovers, historians, photographers and aspiring rubber tramps can step into the dramatic scenery of a real-life western rambling across the same high deserts and rugged mountains traversed in earlier times by Native Americans, mountain men, pioneers and outlaws. Scenic overlooks allow passengers to stretch their legs and capture screen shots of local wildlife. In addition to the notorious untamed horses of Wyoming, big game animals like moose, elk, deer, antelope and big-horn sheep also roam the national recreation area.

Road-weary travelers in need of some recreation of their own will find plenty of places to fish, hike and camp around Flaming Gorge. Activities such as cross-country skiing and snowmobiling also provide a refreshing change of pace on the long drive during cold-weather months.

Green River's new visitors center (1155 W. Flaming Gorge Way) is a great starting point that offers information and resources such as maps and directions. A [guided audio tour](#) is also available online. Smartphone users should check out the [High Desert Adventure app](#) for extras on what to do, where to stay and more in Sweetwater County.

Sweetwater County Shares Top 5 Fishing Spots

[Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism](#) invites visitors to sink a fishing line into its fresh, cool waters. The peaceful waters in and around the high-desert expanse of Southwest Wyoming lure fishermen and women.

Sweetwater County's combination of tail waters, reservoirs, streams and rivers make the area ripe for fishing frenzy. Four species of trout are native to the area, and populations of brook, brown, mackinaw and rainbow trout have increased over the years.

The county's top-cast hot spot is arguably Flaming Gorge Reservoir, where trout weighing more than 50 pounds have set records in Wyoming and Utah. The summer season is the best time to catch these trophy trout that have been gorging in the depths all year. Many prime locations throughout the county offer lots of space to set up and reel in some lunkers – and some relaxation.

- **Lake Flaming Gorge** – The 90-mile stretch of the Flaming Gorge Reservoir is home to brown trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, channel catfish, kokanee salmon and small mouth bass. Linwood Bay, next to the Lucerne Marina, is a reliable go-to for reeling in some big ones.
- **Green River** – The Green River, south of Fontenelle Reservoir, is home to rainbow and brown trout, as well as smallmouth bass and Snake River cutthroat. Anglers can access the lower Green River along Wyoming 372 and US 189.
- **Black's Fork River** – South of the Fort Bridger and Mountain View exits off Interstate 80, Black's Fork River delivers several different types of trout.
- **Fontenelle Reservoir** – A mere 40 miles north of Green River, Fontenelle has schools of kokanee salmon in addition to trout.

Other prime waterways for fishing include: Jim Bridger Pond, Boulder Creek, Hams Fork, LaBarge Creek and spots along the Green River like Daniel Junction, Warren Bridge and the New Fork River.

Fishermen looking for float action can visit one of three marinas on Flaming Gorge Reservoir for everything from boat rentals and fuel and chartered fishing trips. In addition to the marina, two main lodges also provide guided fishing services. For gear, bait and tackle, the towns of Green River and Rock Springs have all the right stuff – including cozy overnight accommodations.

For more information visit www.tourwyoming.com.

Sweetwater County Travel & Tourism Fishing Expert Offers Ice Fishing Tips - [*Southwest Wyoming travel destination*](#) a huge draw for four-season fishing -

[Sweetwater County](#), at the junction of Interstate 80 and Highway 191 in southwest Wyoming, is one of the region's most popular ice fishing destinations. Whether it's your first time out with an ice auger or you are a pro at reeling in the cold water catch, Sweetwater County's ice fishing expert and Director of the City of Green River Parks & Recreation, Allan Wilson, offers these tips and tricks for an incredible ice fishing outing.

Know the rules.

Wyoming Game & Fish Department provides an ice report and fishing regulations that are must-haves for any ice fisherman. This is also where anglers need to go to get a fishing license. Daily fishing licenses cost \$6 for residents and \$14 for non-residents. The [Flaming Gorge website](#) is another good tool to browse before you go out.

Pick your spot.

The Flaming Gorge Reservoir straddles the Wyoming/Utah border, and Wilson says the best fishing holes are on the Wyoming side of the lake. "When ice comes on, it starts at Fire Hole and then moves down the lake to Anvil Draw," says Wilson. "Fontenelle Lake is another good fishing spot right by the boat ramp and the dam," he adds. Finally, don't underestimate the power of local advice. "The locals in Sweetwater County are very friendly, and most will be happy to offer suggestions of their favorite fishing holes," suggests Wilson.

Know what you're fishing.

The Flaming Gorge is known for its big lake trout and rainbows, and in some years you can even get into kokanee. Fontenelle Lake offers good opportunities for brown and rainbow trout. Burbot – an invasive species that isn't native to the area but is very prolific in the waters – are also fishable from dusk to sunrise.

Gear up.

In order to safely ice fish you'll need apparel for cold weather (layers are recommended), as well as warm boots. An ice auger is needed to drill a hole in the ice – there are powered augers or hand-crank versions. An ice heater and icehouse are helpful. You also might consider a sled to carry your gear. And, of course, you'll need a rod and reel, bait and fishing jigs.

Put safety first.

Never go out alone, advises Wilson, no matter how much experience you have ice fishing. Use an auger or spud to test the ice thickness on the way out. Also, carry ice hooks that are connected to a rope that thread through the sleeves of your coat. That way, if you fall in, you can grasp the ice and pull yourself out. It's also a good idea to have some rope with you to use to throw out to someone that needs help.

Sweetwater County, Wyo., Reveals Top 3 Ways to View Wildlife & Foliage This Fall

[Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism](#) announces the top three ways to view wildlife against the backdrop of fabulous foliage this fall.

Sweetwater County, located in southwest Wyoming, is home to wild horses, rare desert elk found nowhere else in the United States, and a national wildlife refuge. The landscapes in Sweetwater County range from high desert plains to colorful canyons and majestic mountains, which become even more multi-hued in October. The blazing fall colors play against the plentiful wildlife in their natural habitats for a remarkable viewing experience.

Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge

Established in 1965, the Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge encompasses more than 27,000 acres. The name “Seedskadee” originated from the Shoshone Indian word “Sisk-a-dee-agie,” which means “river of the prairie hen.” The refuge is in an area that is an important migration route and nesting area for a variety of migratory waterfowl and passerine birds. Here, visitors can see a variety of bird species, deer, moose and other animals. The best viewing is on the auto tour route and river corridors.

Rich in historic and cultural resources, the area was once used by nomadic Indian tribes, fur trappers and early pioneers. Hundreds of thousands of pioneers crossed the Green River along the Oregon and Mormon Trails on what is now the Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge. Ruts of these trails can still be seen today in the refuge and other parts of Sweetwater County, which has more miles of still-visible pioneer trails than any other place in the U.S.

Wild Horses

The [Pilot Butte Wild Horse Scenic Loop Tour](#) – commencing from either Green River or Rock Springs – is the best way to catch a glimpse of the wild horses that call Sweetwater County home. The horses are living examples of the wide-open landscape and untamed frontier spirit that is a hallmark of southwestern Wyoming. The current herds are primarily decedents of the Spanish horses that were introduced into the area in the 1500s.

Watch for wild horses between Rock Springs and Fourteen-Mile Hill, and all the way across the top of White Mountain. Although this is a relatively dry area with seemingly little vegetation, it is home to a surprising array of wild creatures including wild horses, antelope, desert elk, deer, rabbits, coyotes, hawks, eagles and sage grouse, among others.

This route also offers several scenic overlooks of the area’s prominent features, such as Pilot Butte, Boar’s Tusk, Killpecker Sand Dunes, Steamboat Mountain, North and South Table Mountains, Leucite Hills, Aspen Mountain, Wilkins Peak, and the Overland Trail and Union Pacific railroad corridors. The Wyoming, Wind River and Uinta mountain ranges are in full, glorious view along the way.

Rare Desert Elk

The Red Desert of Sweetwater County supports an abundance of wildlife, despite its scarcity of water and vegetation. The largest migratory herd of pronghorn antelope in the lower 48 states and a rare desert elk herd, said to be the world’s largest, live in the desert of Sweetwater County. The best place to catch a glimpse of these herds is in the area surrounding [Killpecker Sand Dunes](#). While here, recreationists can hike and drive off-road vehicles.

For more information visit www.tourwyoming.com.

Signature Events

Burbot Bash, winter (Flaming Gorge Reservoir)

The Burbot Bash is an ice fishing derby aimed at ridding the Flaming Gorge of the predatory burbot fish, which has recently made its way into the reservoir and threatens the local fishery. There is \$7,000 up for grabs in prize money for categories like catching the most burbot, as well as the largest and smallest fish caught.

Crystal Classic, February (Green River)

This event showcases the artistic talents of professional, semi-professional and amateur ice sculptors who compete for \$11,000 in cash prizes.

Flaming Gorge Days, June (Green River)

The first days of summer are “Flaming Gorge Days” in Sweetwater County, which has ushered in summer with this festival since 1977. The city of Green River with the Chamber of Commerce presents three days packed with activities for the whole family including golf, dodge ball, volleyball and basketball tournaments, a festival in the park, evening concerts, children's entertainment, a parade and much more. For an updated schedule of events visit www.flaminggorgedays.com.

International Day, July (Rock Springs)

One day is almost not enough time to celebrate Rock Springs' diverse cultural heritage. Nicknamed the “Home of 56 Nationalities,” the town hosts this free event at Bunning Park. It features ethnic entertainment, kids’ activities, vendors and food booths.

National High School Finals Rodeo, July (Rock Springs)

The National High School Finals Rodeo is the largest rodeo in the world, exhibiting 13 performances over seven days. More than 1,500 young competitors from 41 states, Canada and Australia come to show off their skills for thousands of spectators. Buy tickets and reserve lodging well in advance for this popular event.

Sweetwater County Fair: “Wyoming’s Big Show,” July-August (Rock Springs)

The Sweetwater County Fair is really a *big* deal. Named one of the top 200 events in the nation by *Event Business News Magazine*, the county fair was also recognized as the top event in the whole state. Visitors will experience all the fun of a fair including rodeo action, carnival rides, a variety of food options, evening concerts and 4-H and livestock exhibits.

Blues n' Brews Festival, August (Rock Springs)

National blues bands and local and regional breweries come together to form one tasty and toe-tapping summer festival for live music and beer fans alike. Downtown Rock Springs turns Bunning Park into the coolest blues bar in the West with the Eric Jerardi Band headlining this year's music lineup. All profits and donations benefit the Urban Renewal Agency Main Street Program to foster economic and social vitality in downtown Rock Springs.

River Festival, August (Green River)

The city of Green River and Chamber of Commerce honor its watery namesake with yearly festivities. This year, the event will run in conjunction with Art on the Green which includes an art competition, silent auction and kids' activities. The festival brings back fan-favorites, including the Cajun Shrimp Boil, spaghetti dinner, Great Duck Race, annual marathon and fun run, car show, vendors and live entertainment. From food and music to dogs and cars, there is something for everyone!

Wyoming State NBHA Finals, September (Rock Springs)

The National Barrel Horse Association (NBHA) presents the Wyoming State Barrel Racing Finals at the Sweetwater Events Complex. Spectators at this event understand why Rock Springs was named one of the top 10 small town barrel racing destinations by *Barrel Horse News Magazine*. Participants from around the state will compete in various events with top finishers in each division earning cash and prizes.

Mountain State Circuit Finals PRCA ProRodeo, October (Rock Springs)

Rodeo and Sweetwater County go hand in hand. Each year the Sweetwater Events Complex, only five minutes away from downtown Rock Springs, hosts the Mountain State Circuit Finals PRCA ProRodeo. For three nights rodeo fans can cheer on their favorite cowboy or cowgirl in events like steer wrestling, bareback riding, bull riding and barrel racing, among others.

Sweetwater County Travel & Tourism Announces Dates for 11th Annual Run with the Horses Marathon & 13th Annual River Festival

[Sweetwater County](#), located in southwest Wyoming, will host the 11th annual **Run with the Horses Marathon** and 13th annual **River Festival** in the town of Green River this August. The River Festival, offering a little something for everyone, is Aug. 15 and 16. The marathon, half marathon and 10k will take place on Aug. 16 starting at 6:30 a.m.

River Festival (Aug. 15-16)

The action-packed River Festival is a celebration of the Green River, considered an oasis in the "High Desert Country" of southwest Wyoming. It's a family friendly festival that offers fun for everyone, right down to the four-legged members of the clan! Festivities include the Cajun Shrimp Boil, free kids games, the Great Duck Race, fireworks, the Lucky Horse Poker Run, a car show, a dog fetching competition and dog show. New additions this year include a river walk and a casting golf course that is being organized by Trout Unlimited.

For more information on this event contact the Green River Chamber at 307-875-5711.

Run with the Horses Marathon (Aug. 16)

This race starts bright and early at 6:30 a.m. and offers three options: a marathon, half-marathon and 10k race. The route takes runners by Sweetwater County's legendary wild horse herds. There is nothing quite as exhilarating and inspiring as seeing the manes of these beautiful beasts fly as their hooves pound the ground.

New this year: professional timers. For the run there are aid stations every two miles, unique finishing medals and tech t-shirts for all marathon and half-marathon participants. Additionally, there are discounts offered for "50 Staters" and "Marathon Maniacs." So runners can enjoy the course, there are no time limits.

Registration for the marathon is \$95 before Aug. 1 and \$105 after that, while the half-marathon costs \$65 for early registration and \$75 after Aug. 1. The 10k is \$20. Register online at www.runnercard.com/roadrace.

To learn more about this event visit www.runwiththehorsesmarathon.com.

Sweetwater County, Wyo., Rounds Up Visitors to “Cowboy Country”

[Sweetwater County](#) invites travelers to experience its lively cowboy culture at local events, landmarks and watering holes. Any time of year, visitors can find the spirit of the Old West blowing across the high desert plateau and through the area's red rock formations creating plenty of ways to catch the cowboy spirit around Sweetwater County.

- ***Cowboys play.*** Where there are cowboys and horses there are rodeos, and visitors will find a rodeo event happening somewhere in the county about every other week. A large part of Sweetwater's rodeo clout is due to the spacious facilities of the Sweetwater Events Complex near downtown Rock Springs. This premier venue hosts thousands of competitors and spectators each year for all kinds of cowboy skills and thrills, including bareback riding, steer wrestling, team roping, saddle bronc riding, tie-down roping, bull riding and barrel racing. July 25-27 the Red Desert Roundup – twice voted “The Best Mountain States Circuit PRCA Rodeo” – offers families rockin' rodeo fun plus activities to get out of the stands and into the excitement including special rodeo events, a 5K race and parade. The “world’s largest rodeo,” the National High School Finals Rodeo, runs July 14-20 and features more than 2,000 competitors.
- ***Cowboys roam.*** Sweetwater knows cowboys need space to wander, and the wide-open territory of Southwest Wyoming is frontier land. In fact, the area lays claim to more miles of still-visible pioneer trails in all the United States, including sections of the Pony Express Route. Wild ponies also traverse the land and can be spotted tossing their manes along the Pilot Butte Wild Horse Scenic Loop Tour. Venturing further out, wanderers will come across evidence of early Native Americans as surely as cowboys of the Old West did. The White Mountain Petroglyphs feature over a dozen panels bearing hundreds of figures etched into sandstone bedrock of the Eocene Bridger formation.
- ***Cowboys stay.*** All cowpokes need a place to lay their head, and there's nothing more authentic to cowboy life than [camping](#) out under the stars of the big Wyoming sky next to a glowing fire. For those with less grit [lodges](#) in Rock Springs and Green River offer modern-day comforts.

Visit the Sweetwater County website for activity information, as well as an events calendar, itineraries and other vacation planning tools.

Winter Activities

The fun doesn't end in Sweetwater County once the snow falls. Winter visitors are invited to experience amazing outdoor recreational activities, including snow sports, snowmobiling and ice fishing. Warm up by spending time at Sweetwater County's many fine cultural attractions.

Community Fine Arts Center: Located in Rock Springs, this cultural gem is a unique joint-effort of the City of Rock Springs, Sweetwater County and the local school district. The multi- arts center was founded by a local science teacher in 1965. The center includes more than 500 pieces of original works from well-known local, regional and national artists such as Norman Rockwell, Edward Chavez, Grandma Moses and Loren McGiver. In addition to a changing exhibition schedule of local and regional artists, the center also features national traveling exhibitions.

Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing: Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area is managed by the USDA Forest Service, Ashley National Forest and USDI Bureau of Reclamation. Here, there are more than 200 miles of trails to explore on cross-country skis or snowshoes.

Ice Fishing: The Flaming Gorge is renowned ice fishing destination for burbot, rainbow and lake trout. In general the fish get bigger toward the south end of the reservoir. The Firehole on the Green River arm, Halfway Hollow on the Black's Fork arm, and the Confluence area are all popular with ice fishermen in search of lake trout. Most of the burbot in Flaming Gorge are on the upper end of the reservoir in the Blacks Fork and Green River arms.

Rock Springs Historical Museum: The Rock Springs Historical Museum illustrates the town's historic past with many different exhibits on life in a western coal town. Many miners immigrated to Rock Springs from Europe to mine coal, making it one of the most diverse ethnic melting pots west of the Mississippi. Rock Springs was also home to the outlaw Butch Cassidy. The outlaw Calamity Jane is also reputed to have had a dugout on what is now M Street.

Scenic Drives: Scenic drives are an easy way to experience Sweetwater County's beauty. In fact one of the best ways to see the area's famous wild horses is to look right out your car window! Most of the county's highways are designated state scenic byways, including the Flaming Gorge Scenic Byway. Side trips, like the Sheep Creek Geologic Loop Tour, offer exciting views of bighorn sheep.

Another option – drive to the Reliance Tipple to see the influence of the mining and railroad industries on Wyoming's landscape. Built entirely by the Union Pacific Coal Company, the town of Reliance was founded in the first decade of the 20th Century. The railroad built a tipple – an apparatus used to unload coal – to handle the massive amounts of coal being mined in the area.

Sweetwater County Historical Museum: Discover the rich cultural heritage of southwestern Wyoming at the Sweetwater County Historical Museum in Green River. Established in 1967 to preserve and present the history of Sweetwater County, the museum is housed in a 1931 post office building and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Long- and short-term exhibits, a large photograph collection and local history materials trace the story of Sweetwater County from 1820 to the present.

Wildlife Viewing: Flaming Gorge Country provides the contrast in scenery for which the West is famous, from the rugged Uinta Mountains to the expansive Wyoming deserts. This spectacular combination provides a roomy habitat for a variety of big-game animals, including moose, Rocky Mountain elk, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and wild horses.

Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC) Natural History Museum: Dinosaurs reign at this museum that houses five life-size replicas of the beasts that thundered across the open space of Wyoming tens of millions of years ago. The museum also displays several wall-mounted fossils of fish, huge leaves and reptiles that have been discovered in the area. Prehistoric pottery and smaller fossils are also on display.

Sweetwater County Travel & Tourism Announces Dates for Signature Winter Festivals “on Ice”
- [Southwest Wyoming travel destination](#) hosts annual ice fishing derby, ice carving competition-

[Sweetwater County, Wyo.](#), at the junction of Interstate 80 and Highway 191 in the southwest part of the state, today announced the dates for its signature winter events. The Burbot Bash, a fishing derby with two prize-filled weekends and weeks more of prime fishing opportunities, starts Nov. 15. Sweetwater County’s other signature event, the Crystal Classic Winter Festival, has something for everyone to “love” and takes place Feb. 14-15.

Nov. 15-Jan. 26: Burbot Bash, Flaming Gorge Reservoir

The Burbot Bash fishing derby has been revamped and expanded this year to span more than two months. The event helps rid the Flaming Gorge Reservoir of the “ugliest fish in the West,” the invasive cod-like Burbot. The kick-off weekend is Nov. 15-17. During this time prizes will be given for the most Burbot, biggest Burbot and smallest Burbot. A closing weekend will be held on Jan. 24-26 with additional prizes in the same categories. All tagged fish caught between Nov. 15 and Jan. 26 are worth a “bounty” of at least \$200 in cash and gift certificates. Four of the 50 newly tagged fish will net prizes up to \$25,000! All Burbot Bash registrants are automatically entered to win a two-year lease on a brand new 2014 F-150 Ford truck. Fishermen and women must register to be eligible for prizes. Visit [this link](#) to sign up.

Feb. 14-15: Crystal Classic Winter Festival, Green River

This fun winter takes place at and around Expedition Island, a 7.1 acre community park in the town of Green River. The National Ice Carving Association (NICA) sanctions a portion of the ice carving competition, which features \$12,000 in cash prizes! Visitors line up to see the carvings that are created by professional and amateur artists from across the U.S. and Canada. Other activities include a soup cook-off, the human dog sled races, a pancake breakfast, s’ mores stations, kids’ games (including an ice cube hunt), the snow boot softball tournament, music, fireworks, and food. The Frostbite Crystal Classic 5K Run/Walk is on Saturday, and the race course gives participants an up-close view of the ice art. The entire event is free to spectators, though there is a registration fee for the softball tournament, ice carving competitions, and the 5K. For more information and to register call 307-872-0511.

For more information visit www.tourwyoming.com.

