



## Western Heritage

16 Days/15 Nights

The region offers not only spectacular natural scenery and wildlife, but a glimpse into the cultural and historical features of the American West, both the old and new, where cowboys still rope and ride and Native Americans still practice their heritage.

**Day 1:** Fly into the Official RMI Gateway City of **Denver**. Tour **Denver**, with its outstanding collections of museums as well as excellent shopping in **Cherry Creek Shopping Center** and **Larimer Square**, **Buffalo Bill's Grave & Museum**, tasty microbreweries, a restored section of Victorian Denver filled with quaint old buildings, gas lamps, courtyards and gardens, and legendary **Red Rocks Park & Amphitheatre**. Explore Denver to your hearts content until your flight departure. If you're not ready to return home, spend some extra time taking in all that Denver and the surrounding area has to offer.

*Overnight in Denver*

**Day 2:** Start the day by heading north to **Cheyenne**, where the **Terry Bison Ranch** offers a new RV park, chuckwagon dinner and tours of their large buffalo herd. Visit the **Old West Museum** to learn about **Frontier Days**, one of the oldest annual rodeos in the country. Other options include the **Cheyenne Depot and Depot Museum**, the **Wyoming State Capitol**, the **Big Boy Steam Engine** or **Downtown Cheyenne**.

*Overnight in Cheyenne*

**Day 3:** Start the day at **Ft. Laramie National Historic Site**, a preserved landmark settlement on the Oregon Trail, the first road west for pioneers.

Heading into South Dakota, stop by the **Mammoth Site** to experience an active dig site that contains the world's largest concentration of Columbian Mammoths. Make a stop at **Wind Cave National Park**, which contains the world's sixth longest cave with amazing boxwork, frostwork and popcorn formations. **Custer State Park** is the second largest state park in the nation and is home to approximately 1,500 bison and gorgeous granite outcroppings. The park received its name in honor of General George Armstrong Custer who discovered gold in the Black Hills in 1874, which subsequently spawned the settlement of the area. Nearby **Jewel Cave National Monument** is the world's second longest cave and features dramatically different geological formations than its nearby sibling.

*Overnight in Custer or Custer State Park*

**Day 4:** Take US-Highway 385 north in the morning toward **Crazy Horse Memorial**, a gargantuan mountain sculpture in progress in honor of the great Lakota Sioux warrior who dedicated his life to preserving the culture of his ancestors. Spend ample time at the memorial as well as exploring the expansive **Indian Museum of North America**.

Continue north on US-386 toward America's Shrine of Democracy, **Mount Rushmore National Memorial**. This American centerpiece is most famously known for the laborious efforts of the brave workers who painstakingly

carved the effigies of Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln into Black Hills granite in the 1920s & 30s.

Depart Mount Rushmore for a short drive to **Rapid City**, the largest city in western South Dakota and serves as the gateway to the Black Hills. Rapid City is home to a number of wonderful museums such as the **Journey Museum** and the **Museum of the American Bison** that illustrate the significant elements and history of Western culture, as well as a newly-revamped downtown scene that is home to a number of wonderful places to eat and drink. Be sure to check out **Prairie Edge Trading Co & Galleries** for a wide variety of Western gifts and souvenirs.

#### *Overnight in Rapid City*

**Day 5:** Travel east on Interstate-90 toward the small town of **Wall**, the hometown of world-famous **Wall Drug**, a once small, locally owned drug store that got its fame by offering free ice water to Black Hills-bound travelers during the Great Depression. Also located in Wall is the **Wounded Knee Museum** and **Lakota Ways**, which offers visitors the unique opportunity to participate in traditional Native American craftwork. Lakota Ways also offers educational tours to the **Pine Ridge Native American Reservation** and the **Wounded Knee Massacre Site**.

Head south toward **Badlands National Park**. **Badlands National Park** offers awe-inspiring views of other-worldly terrain, whose erosive qualities makes the park one of the richest fossil beds in the world. Visit the **Ben Reifel Visitor Center** to learn about the parks prehistoric past or walk one of the many hiking trails located throughout the park.

Return to Interstate-90 and travel east toward the small town of **Murdo**. Murdo is home to **1880 Town**, where visitors can walk among more than 30 historically restored buildings authentically furnished with thousands of relics. For more modern Americana, stop by **Pioneer Auto**, which features 42 buildings covering 10 acres that house more than 250 vintage vehicles and other memorabilia.

Continue east on I-90 toward **Chamberlain**. This small Missouri River town is home to the **South Dakota Hall of Fame** and the **Akta Lakota Museum and Cultural Center**, which offers visitors an experience with a living lesson on the Native American way of life - both past and present.

#### *Overnight in Chamberlain*

**Day 6:** Depart for the South Dakota capital city of **Pierre** in the morning via SD-34. This stretch of highway makes up a portion of the **Native American Scenic Byway** which stretches from southeast South Dakota all the way to the Canadian border in North Dakota. A recommended stop on the way to Pierre is the **Buffalo Interpretive Center** seven miles east of Fort Pierre on the byway. The Center offers guests a glimpse into the life and traditions of the Lakota, past and present, and features a gift shop with items from local artisans.

Upon arriving in **Fort Pierre**, stop by the **Casey Tibbs South Dakota Rodeo Museum** to learn about the South Dakota state sport and cross the Missouri River into Pierre and visit the **South Dakota State Capitol Building** and the **South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center** which houses numerous artifacts showcasing South Dakota's Western heritage.

Depart for the twin cities of **Bismarck-Mandan, North Dakota** in the afternoon. Bismarck is the capital city of North Dakota and lies on the banks of the Missouri River that divides the city into Bismarck-Mandan. Go back in time at the newly renovated **North Dakota Heritage Center**, visit the **Native American Earth Lodges in Mandan** and walk in General George Armstrong Custer's footsteps at **Fort Abraham Lincoln**.

#### *Overnight in Bismarck*

**Day 7:** Travel west on Interstate-94 toward **Medora**. Located 130 miles from Bismarck-Mandan, **Medora** is a small community that lies just south of **Theodore Roosevelt National Park**.

Spend the day exploring pristine **Theodore Roosevelt National Park**. These sprawling badlands are fittingly named after Theodore Roosevelt, the US President notorious for his conservation efforts. Return to **Medora** for

the nightly **Medora Musical** that takes place nightly during the summer and features the dynamic landscape of the park in the background as well as a unique **Pitchfork Fondue** dinner!

#### *Overnight in Medora*

**Day 8:** Start the morning with a drive on US-385 S toward the Old West town of **Deadwood, South Dakota**. For a short detour, take a beautiful drive through the spectacular **Spearfish Canyon**, which features windy roads, towering limestone cliffs and a number of roaring waterfalls. Arrive in **Deadwood** in the early afternoon. Famously known for the HBO series, Deadwood is a rough and tumbled town where the legends of Wild Bill Hickock and Calamity Jane live on.

Spend the day walking the historical downtown area, visiting museums such as the **Adams Museum and House** and the **Days of '76 Museum**. Take a stroll or a tour of **Mt. Moriah Cemetery**, the final resting place for many notorious Western figures.

#### *Overnight in Deadwood*

**Day 9:** Depart for **Wyoming** in the morning. Stop by **Devils Tower National Monument**, the nation's first national monument, before heading to **Buffalo** or **Sheridan** for the night. Located in the foothills of the **Bighorn Mountains**, these communities are the epitome of Western culture. Stay at a ranch for a couple days for a truly authentic Western experience or go on a half-day horseback ride. The **Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum** in Buffalo provides a thorough overview of the local history while the **Historic Occidental Hotel** gives visitors a taste of authentic 1880s architecture. Popular heritage sites in **Sheridan** include the **Sheridan County Museum**, **King's Saddlery and Museum**, **Trail End State Historic Site** and **Fort Phil Kearny State Historic Site**.

#### *Overnight in Buffalo or Sheridan*

**Day 10:** Depart for **Billings, Montana** in the morning via Interstate-90. Stop by the **Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument** on the way to learn about the fateful day in June where General George Armstrong Custer and his men met their demise at the hands of the Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors.

Arrive in Billings in the early afternoon. Billings is the largest city in Montana and is settled on the banks of the Yellowstone River, which feeds into the larger Missouri River in North Dakota.

Billings also boasts a bustling downtown with a number of delicious eateries and microbreweries all within walking distance as well as a unique distillery offering finely-crafted cocktails. Explore nearby **Pompey's Pillar**, which contains the only physical evidence of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, or check out **Pictograph State Park** which features pre-historic cave drawings. Head back downtown and spend the evening enjoying this fine Montana community.

#### *Overnight in Billings*

**Day 11:** Begin the morning by continuing your exploration of Billings. Grab a late breakfast and head west on Interstate-90 toward **Livingston**. This spectacular interstate drive takes you by the beautiful **Crazy Mountains**. Visit the **Yellowstone Gateway Museum**, which documents the early history of **Yellowstone National Park**. The **Depot Museum** exhibits Livingston's railroad history. After visiting these two museums, depart for **Bozeman**.

**Bozeman, MT**, the home of **Montana State University**, is a relatively large community that has attracted residents from all over the country. The result is an eclectic cultural mix that maintains its Western heritage. Popular sites in Bozeman include the **Museum of the Rockies**, the **Gallatin History Museum** and the numerous local art galleries and shops that line **Main Street**.

Take a short trip to the Old West mining towns of **Virginia City** and **Nevada City** have been restored to reflect the boom days when settlers and miners migrated to Montana in the late 1800s. Return to Bozeman for the night.

#### *Overnight in Bozeman*

**Day 12:** Get an early start in the morning for the nation's first national park, **Yellowstone National Park**. This awe-inspiring landscape covers an expansive 2,000,000 acres and visitors need ample time to explore the park. Drive through the park's north entrance, going under the famous **Roosevelt Arch**. Popular sites in Yellowstone include **Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone Lake, Old Faithful, Lamar and Hayden Valleys** and the **Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone** with its inspirational view of **Lower Falls**. Spend the day and evening exploring the park and keep an eye out for wildlife! Enjoy a decadent meal at **Lake Hotel**, which lies on the shores of Yellowstone Lake before returning to your lodging for the evening.

*\*Note: lodging in Yellowstone National Park fills up fast so be sure to make reservations months in advance.*

*Overnight in Yellowstone National Park*

**Day 13:** Spend the morning exploring Yellowstone before exiting through the park's East Entrance toward **Buffalo Bill's Cody**. Stop by Buffalo Bill's Historic lodge at **Pahaska Teepee** in the **Shoshone National Forest** before reaching Cody. Located just 50 miles east of Yellowstone National Park, **Cody** is a town built by the legendary Old West showman Buffalo Bill Cody. Visitors can lose themselves for literally hours in the expansive **Buffalo Bill Center of the West**, which is a complex of five thematic museums. Other options in **Cody** include **Old Trail Town**, the live shootout performances in front of the **Irma Hotel**, which was built by Buffalo Bill Cody himself, the daily **Summer Cody Nite Rodeo** or a vast selection of outdoor recreation opportunities.

*Overnight in Cody*

**Day 14:** Get an early start for **Riverton** in the morning. Located near the towering **Wind River Range**, **Riverton** is home to the **Wind River Heritage Center** and the **Wind River Casino**. From June through August, visitors can enjoy the **Northern Arapaho Experience**, which takes place just outside the casino.

Continue your journey to **Jackson Hole**, which features wooden sidewalks, elk antler arches and shops that range from the chic to the traditional. Enjoy a **Wildlife Safari** or visit the **National Elk Refuge** to view some majestic Rocky Mountain wildlife; ride a tram to the top of a mountain ridge and view the expansive valley below; hit the **Snake River** on a thrilling whitewater excursion; saddle up at the **Million Dollar Cowboy Bar** or visit the world-famous **Silver Dollar Bar** located in the **Wort Hotel**.

*Overnight in Jackson*

**Day 15:** Begin the morning by traveling south of Jackson to the small community of **Pinedale**. Nestled in the foothills of the Wind River Mountains, is home to the **Museum of the Mountain Man**. Explore Pinedale and grab a quick lunch before continuing to **Laramie**.

**Laramie**, home of the **University of Wyoming**, is another Western town whose heritage runs deep. Nature enthusiasts can explore the nearby **Medicine Bow National Forest, Snowy Mountain Range** or **Vedauwoo** while history enthusiasts can visit the **Wyoming Territorial Prison** and **Old West Park** and the **University of Wyoming Geological Museum**.

*Overnight in Laramie*

**Day 16:** Depart Laramie in the morning and head for Denver via Cheyenne. Return to Denver and check any remaining sites off your list before heading to Denver International Airport for departure.

*Departure*