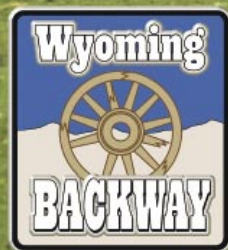


Wyoming's Mirror Lake Scenic Byway and Big Spring Scenic Backway



A guide for exploring the Scenic Byway that runs south of Evanston to the Utah state line; and the Scenic Backway that connects the towns of Kemmerer and Cokeville.

Exploring the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway

The Mirror Lake Scenic Byway runs from Evanston, Wyoming to Kamas, Utah through the western portion of the Uinta Mountains. It is reached by taking Wyoming Highway 150 south of Evanston off Interstate 80. After about 20 miles, Highway 150 reaches the Wyoming/Utah border and continues as Utah Highway 150 taking travelers into Utah's Uinta Mountains and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. Both Wyoming and Utah have designated this stretch of highway—approximately 78 miles—as an official state Scenic Byway.

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 Scenic Byways, the Indian Paintbrush will identify your route.



Fishermen practice their skills in the Bear River south of Evanston (right), Uinta Mountains provide a stunning backdrop to the Scenic Byway's numerous pastoral scenes. (cover).



Driving time in Wyoming is about 20 minutes while the entire Mirror Lake Scenic Byway can take two to three hours, depending on the interests of the visitor. All traveler services are available in Evanston and Kamas, Utah. The Wasatch-Cache National Forest operates 22 family-oriented campgrounds along the route.

The Wyoming section of the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway provides southbound travelers with a panoramic view of the Uinta Mountains. This Scenic Byway route peaks at an elevation of 10,620-feet on Bald Mountain Pass. The Uinta Mountain Range is the only major mountain range in the contiguous United States with an east to west axis.

Special Attractions

In Wyoming, Highway 150 takes travelers through an area rich in history but active today with ranching operations. As the Byway leaves Evanston, the route takes visitors through a diverse landscape of sagebrush flats and aspen and conifer forests. As it approaches Utah there are high mountains, grassy meadows, alpine tundra and numerous lakes, streams and wetlands. The mixed forest offers outstanding autumn color.

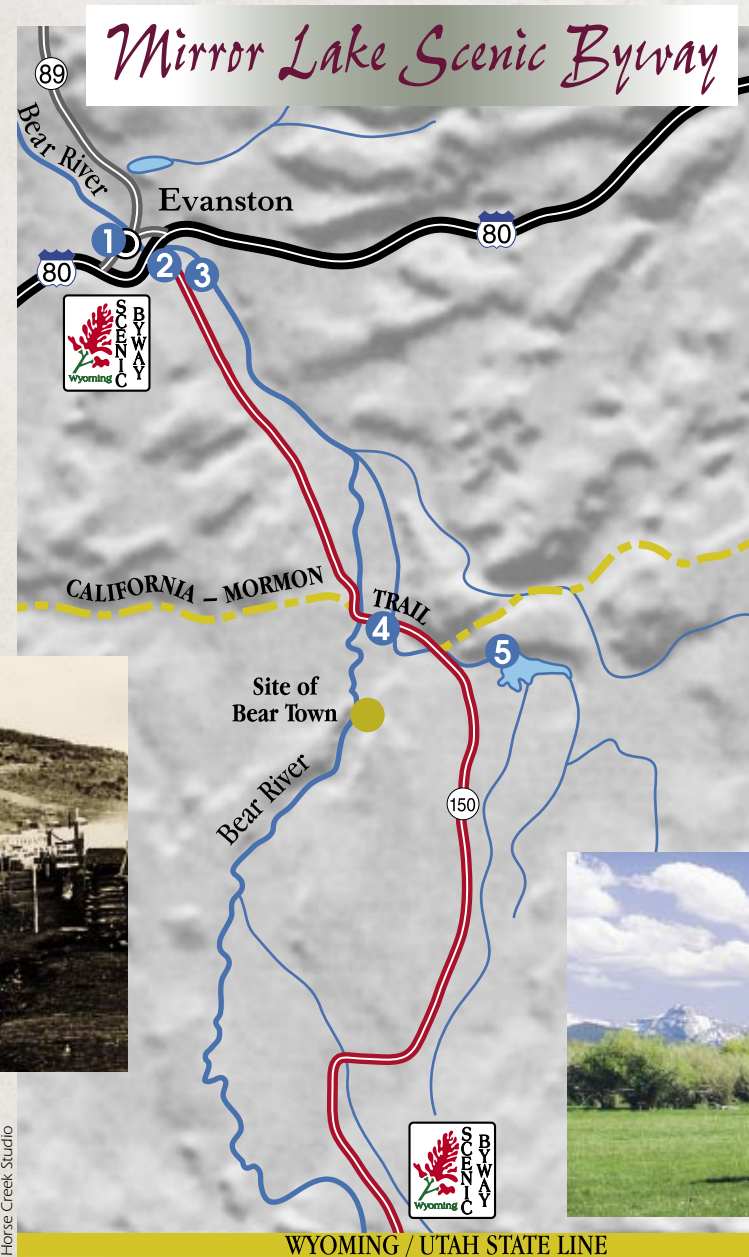
Springtime is the best time to see the variety of wildlife species that make the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway region their home. Mule deer and antelope are seen in the farmland fields and along the roadways, while cottontail rabbits, Uinta ground squirrels and mountain bluebirds



Bear Town circa 1868. Little remains today of the once infamous “end of the tracks” town except for interpretive signs and wind-swept hills.

occupy the area’s abandoned town sites. In winter, this southwest corner of Wyoming hosts elk coming down from the high country, and roosting bald and golden eagles can be seen in the cottonwood trees along the back roads leading off the Byway.

The Bear River originates in the Uinta Mountains and crosses the Scenic Byway six miles south of Evanston. It meanders through Utah, Wyoming and Idaho before emptying into the Great Salt Lake. It is one of the longest meandering inland rivers in the United States



Horse Creek Studio

without an outlet to an ocean. At Myers Crossing on the Bear River, an important stop on the Overland Stage Route was established in 1858. Later the site became the Bear River Pony Express Station, then a telegraph station on the Transcontinental Telegraph Route.

1. Evanston. The Mirror Lake Scenic Byway begins in Evanston, a town recognized as a leader within Wyo-

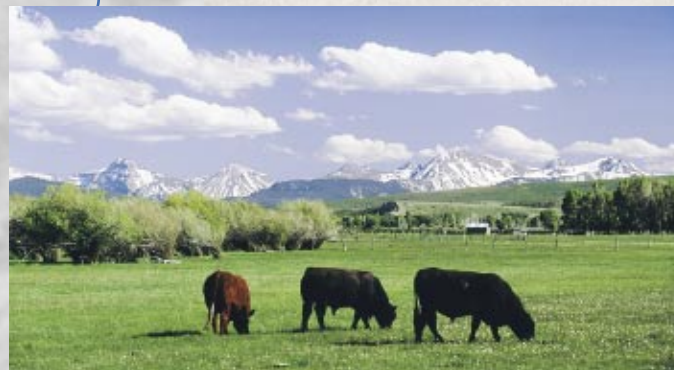
ming and the region for its historic preservation efforts. Discovering the downtown area and nearby attractions gives the visitor an in-depth look into the Byway’s rich history and offers an excellent educational opportunity. Brochures describing the Historic Downtown Walking Tour are available at the Chamber of Commerce in Historic Depot Square.

The **Uinta County Museum** offers outstanding exhibits with an insight into Evanston’s past.

The **Chinese Joss House**, erected as a lasting legacy to the Wyoming Centennial celebration in 1990, provides exhibits and information about the Chinese role in Evanston’s and Uinta County’s history.

The **Beeman-Cashin Building** and the **Union Pacific Depot** are architectural treasures and have been restored to their original condition. The nearby **Union Pacific Roundhouse** complex is one of the last remaining railroad roundhouses in the United States.

2. Bear Parkway. North of Historic Depot Square is a pathway that connects to Bear River State Park. The



The Bear River has created a classic western river valley as it winds north from the Uinta Mountains.

Historic Ice Ponds within the Parkway provide excellent fishing and recreational opportunities. A wetland habitat has been created that attracts a variety of waterfowl and non-waterfowl species. Interpretive signs are provided by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Geological Survey.

3. Bear River State Park and Visitors Center. Situated just east of Evanston, this State of Wyoming park and visitor center is headquarters for visitors to the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway and other destinations

Egret Communications



The Bear River State Park buffalo herd at rest in front of the Park’s Information Center.

in the Cowboy State. Travel counselors, printed information, rest rooms and RV facilities with adequate parking are available. As a bonus—an enclosed area on the Park contains a herd of buffalo and elk. Antelope, deer, moose and other wildlife are often seen at the Park. A Wildlife Interpretive Sign is posted and pathways are provided for year-round nature walks.

4. Bear Town State Historical Marker. 7.7 miles south of Evanston is a historical marker telling about long-gone Bear Town or Bear River City. The town was founded in 1867 and with the arrival of the Union Pacific Railroad a year later, came the usual “track followers”—a wild bunch made up of freewheeling track builders, gamblers, outlaws and other ill-reputes. Conflicts between the townspeople and this rogue element led to an uprising, a furious gun battle with 14 deaths and dozens more wounded resulting from the shootout. Soldiers from nearby Ft. Bridger rode in and finally restored order in true Hollywood fashion. Extension of the railroad track into Evanston and points west ensured the demise of Bear Town, but not its legacy.

5. Sulphur Creek Reservoir. Situated nine miles south of Evanston and within sight of the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway, Sulphur Creek Reservoir is a popular year-round recreation area for residents and visitors. Fishing, boating, wind surfing, skiing and snowmobiling are among the outdoor activities available.

Exploring the Big Spring Scenic Backway

The Big Spring Scenic Backway is a 68-mile route from Kemmerer to Cokeville in Wyoming's southwestern Lincoln County. The Backway criss-crosses historic emigrant trails, parallels willowed river valleys, and plunges deep into uncrowded forests of the Tump Mountain Range in the Bridger National Forest. Traveler services are available in Kemmerer, Cokeville, and Diamondville, and limited services are available at the Viva Naughton Lake Marina.

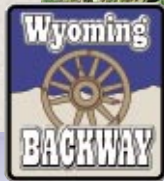
The easternmost stretch of the Backway begins with a two-lane paved road that takes the traveler as far as the northern end of Lake Viva Naughton. It then becomes oiled gravel, which becomes loose gravel at the Forest boundary. **Good tires are highly recommended when traveling this Backway. The Forest Service also recommends only high clearance vehicles westward from Kelley Guard Station.** Pavement resumes at Wyoming Highway 232 twelve miles east of Cokeville. Drive time for this Backway is a minimum of two hours not including time to stop and enjoy the scenery and recreational opportunities.

A Bridger-Teton National Forest Service map is available from the Forest Service office in Kemmerer and should be carried when traveling this Scenic Backway for help in confirming direction and road numbers. The road is not completely accessible during the winter and early spring, and travel is not advised in heavy rain or snow.

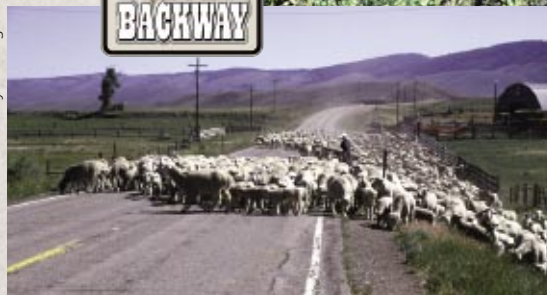
The Hams Fork River as it winds south through the Bridger National Forest toward Kemmerer. (inset) A common sight for travelers north of Cokeville is sheep and their herders along the Backway.



Horse Creek Studio



Clyde Douglass



Big Spring Scenic Backway

Special Attractions

Historic markers at both ends of the Backway in Kemmerer and Cokeville commemorate the pioneers who traveled this way on the Oregon-California Trail and its numerous cut-offs. More than 350,000 emigrants with loaded wagons crossed Wyoming headed toward Utah, Oregon, and California during the years 1841-68.

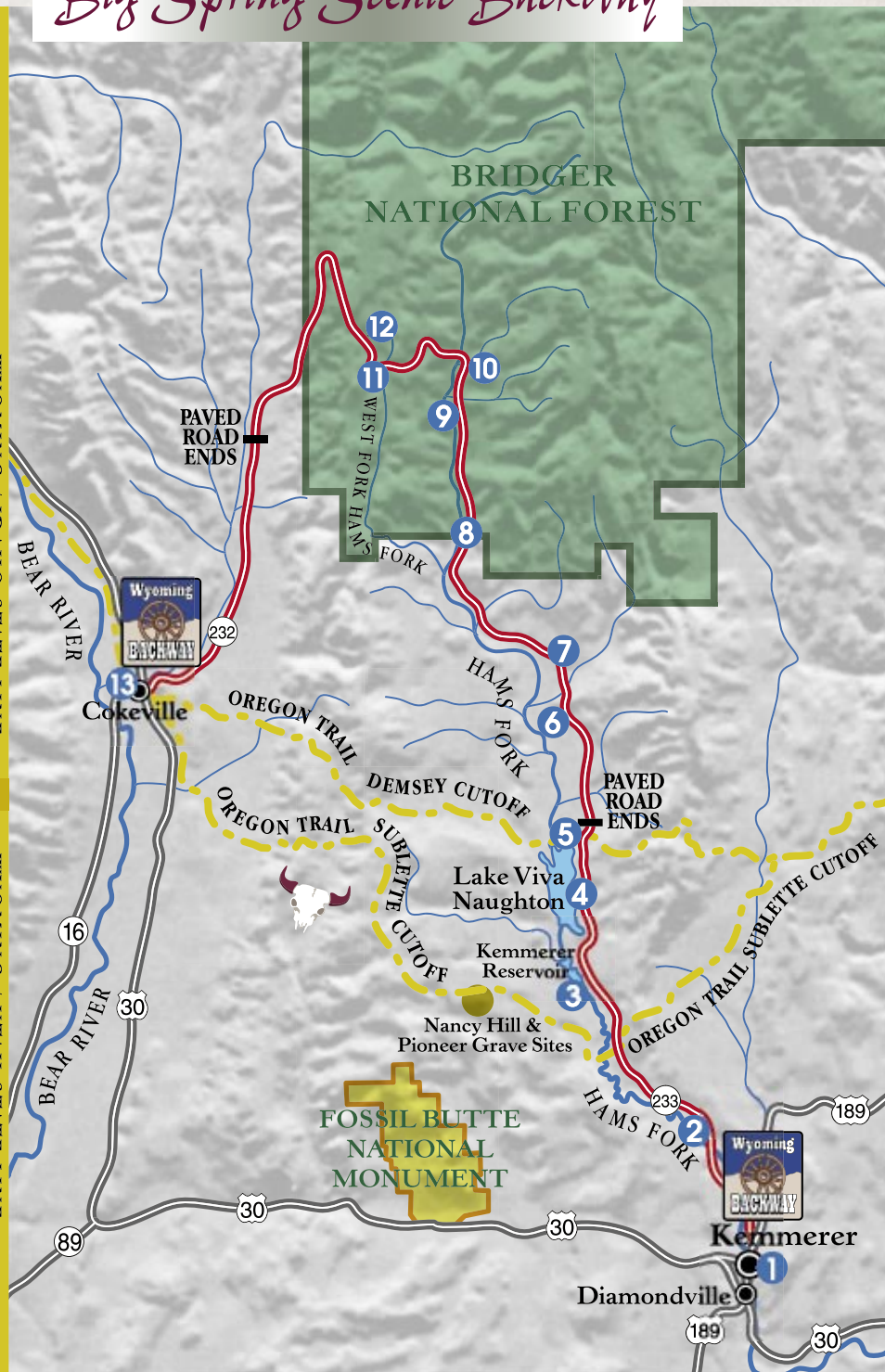
Two cutoffs from the main Oregon Trail cross the Backway, although their routes are not marked today. The Sublette Cutoff was incorrectly thought to have been discovered by mountain man William Sublette. Guidebooks carried by many emigrants contained this erroneous information, so 81-year old Caleb Greenwood, who pioneered the route in 1844, is mostly lost to history.

Another route that trimmed a few miles of the journey was the Demsey Cutoff. It was a dangerous trip across many miles of the Little Colorado Desert, where people and livestock had to survive without water.

Fossil Butte National Monument.

(Along U.S. Highway 30 between Cokeville and Kemmerer) This Monument and surrounding fossil basin represents a series of three lakes that existed from the late Paleocene to the late Eocene epochs, or from 57 to 39 million years ago. The Visitors Center provides information on this ancient water ecosystem, which was much like today's Florida Everglades.

Nancy Hill Grave. (On a BLM road about 17 miles NW of Kemmerer; inquire locally for directions) Nancy Hill's wagon train was apparently besieged and held up by local Indians for two to three weeks. After the



trouble seemed to be over, the party headed west. After only a few miles, she was stricken by cholera and died shortly afterward. **Alfred Corum and nearby pioneer memorials.** (About 1/2 mile from Nancy Hill Grave) Alfred Corum and his three brothers from Missouri reached the Hams Fork Plateau on July 3, 1849 and "layed over." Alfred had been sick for over a week and died July 4.

1. Kemmerer. Coal mining and ranching have been at the heart of this 3,000-resident town's prosperity since it was founded in 1897. The town's most famous resident was James Cash Penney, who opened his first retail store called "The Golden Rule" in 1902. His company eventually developed a national chain of JC Penney stores. The original store and his home still stand. The town boasts two museums. The Fossil Country Museum maintains historical archives, documenting 50 million years of local history. The Triangle Museum and Visitors Center highlights history and culture of the area, with an emphasis on activity along the emigrant trails.

2. Hams Fork River Access Area. This is the first of several fishing access points along this stretch of the Scenic Backway. Fishermen can find brown, brook, cutthroat and rainbow trout, and mountain whitefish inhabiting the Hams Fork River. From Kemmerer north to the Forest boundary, the Backway route passes through mostly private land. Written permission is required to enter these lands from the road.

3. Kemmerer City Reservoir. This lake is popular with pelicans and shore birds and offers year-round fishing for brown and rainbow trout, and mountain whitefish.

4. Lake Viva Naughton. Boating, camping, and fishing are popular at this lake in summer. In the winter it serves as a gateway to snowmobile and crosscountry ski areas.

5. Mayfield and Nugent Park Winter Sports Area. Numerous access points lead into the Tump Range, which is popular for snowmobiling and cross-



Horse Creek Studio



Horse Creek Studio



Clyde Douglass



Clyde Douglass

(top clockwise) The Backway road follows along the eastern shoreline of Lake Viva Naughton before reaching the Bridger National Forest. A cow moose lunches along the Hams Fork. Big Spring's bubbling waters rush down a series of rock steps and into the West Fork Hams Fork. And, one of the numerous abandoned homestead buildings to be seen along the Backway.

country skiing. Established trails extend over the mountains to Cokeville and also allow snowmobilers to travel all the way to Jackson Hole to the north. There are 100 miles of groomed trails and 150 miles of ungroomed trails in the area.

6. Old Settler Cabin. This is the first of several old homesteads visible from the Backway. They are remnants of the places where pioneers settled during the large-scale western migrations of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of these settlers eventually moved on to try their luck in other areas, but descendants of some of those early pioneers still live in the area.

7. Teddy Bear Corner. Area wildlife includes a few more species than in other Wyoming locations, due to the large collection of teddy bears and other stuffed man-made creatures found along side this bend in the road. One local legend has it that the first teddy bear appeared as a memorial marker to a small child who died at the spot.

8. Bridger National Forest. Large mammals such as moose are frequently visible, along with elk, fox, badgers, eagles and enormous sandhill cranes. The mixed conifer, lodgepole pine and aspen forest provides shelter for these creatures along with wonderful recreational opportunities for human visitors. From this point the Big Spring Scenic Backway continues for 37 miles on Forest Service Road 10062 before reaching Wyoming Highway 232 east of Cokeville.

9. Elk Creek Ranger Station. This rustic log cabin was used for many years by rangers on the Bridger National Forest. Built in 1914, it is now listed on the National Historic Register.

10. Hams Fork Campground. This quiet spot includes 13 drive-in campsites, drinking water, vault toilets, and plenty of opportunity for fishing and hiking.

11. Big Spring and Picnic Area. Big Spring bubbles icy cold water from deep within a rocky hillside to form a rackety waterfall, creating a perfect backdrop for recreation. Nearby picnic tables with fire grates and shade make this a wonderful spot to wile away an afternoon.

12. Kelley Guard Station. A trail off the Backway leads to this blue-roofed facility, which is still used by the Forest Service. It is also available for rent by the public

during fall and winter months, and is a popular overnight shelter for cross-country skiers and long-distance snowmobilers.

The Backway continues westward on Forest Service Road 10062. This is the newest Scenic Backway in Wyoming. At the time of the printing of this brochure in 2001, Backway designation signs had not been installed. Leaving the pristine forest, the Big Spring Scenic Backway offers spectacular, dramatic views of the Uinta Mountains of Utah and the Idaho border to the west. Descending the mountain, the Backway parallels Coal Creek. **Wyoming Highway 232.** The pavement resumes at this point and follows the Smith Fork River for the last leg of the journey into Cokeville.

13. Cokeville. In the 1890s Cokeville (population 500) was known as the “Sheep Capital of the World”



Horse Creek Studio



H.C. Studio

Overlooking the West Fork Hams Fork valley and the Tump Range of mountains. (inset) Wildflowers brighten the forest landscape.

due to the vast grazeable prairies that surround the town. Its proximity to the Utah and Idaho border gave long-ago rustlers and outlaws, including Butch Cassidy, a handy way to escape into neighboring jurisdictions.

Additional Information

Information and maps may be obtained at the U.S. Forest Service offices and Information Centers, in Evanston and Kemmerer, Wyoming and Kamas, Utah.

Additional Wyoming and wildlife information may be obtained from:

Tourism Division—Wyoming Business Council
I-25 at College Drive, Cheyenne, WY 82002
(307) 777-7777 or 1-800-225-5996

Bear River State Park Information Center
I-80 East at Exit 6, Evanston, WY 82930
(307) 789-6540

Evanston Chamber of Commerce
36 10th Street, Evanston, WY 82930
(307) 789-2757 or 1-800-328-9708

Evanston Ranger District
(307) 789-3194

Bear River Ranger Station
(435) 642-6662

Bridger-Teton National Forest
Kemmerer Ranger District
Hwy 189
Kemmerer, WY 83101
(307) 877-4415

Wasatch–Cache National
Forest Information Center
50 E. Center, Kamas
UT 84036



Horse Creek Studio

Indian Paintbrush,
Wyoming's State
Flower.

Produced by the
Wyoming Department of Transportation
with the cooperation of the
Wyoming Business Council
through a grant from the
Federal Highway Administration.

