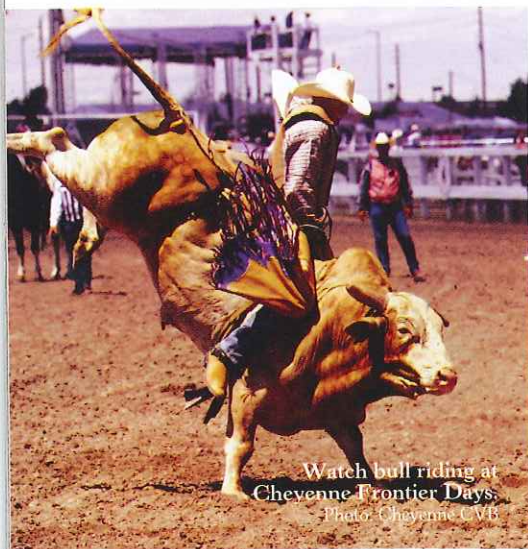


WESTERN ALLURE

Cheyenne, Wyoming, attracts groups with its Western flavor and proximity to National Parks. *By Rita Cook*



Watch bull riding at Cheyenne Frontier Days. Photo: Cheyenne CVB

Located just ninety miles from Denver, Colorado, and sitting at the major intersections of Interstates 25 and 80, Cheyenne, Wyoming, is the state capital and the perfect destination for group travelers looking for a truly authentic Western experience. In fact, even the name brings forth scenes of cowboys and rodeos, and its romantic Western allure has been ingrained for years in visitors either from watching old movies or returning to Cheyenne again and again.

Only a day's drive, too, from Mt. Rushmore, the Black Hills, Devils Tower, Yellowstone National Park, Grand Tetons National Park, and Rocky Mountain National Park, Darren Rudloff, Visit Cheyenne's Convention and Visitors Bureau's CEO says that group travelers usually spend one to two days in Cheyenne with the exception of Cheyenne's Frontier Days, the world's largest outdoor rodeo and Western celebration. This year marks the 115th year of Frontier Days, from July 22 to 31, when folks spend four days in the area to enjoy the festivities.

"Cheyenne is often a stop on a larger National Park/Monument tour that includes Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, Devil's Tower, and Mount Rushmore," Rudloff explains.

Folks tend to visit Cheyenne most often in the summer and fall. Once

in Cheyenne, Rudloff says the most popular activities, in addition to Cheyenne's Frontier Days, include the Cheyenne Depot and Cheyenne Depot Museum displaying a wealth of local history, exhibits, and interactive displays, the Wyoming State Capitol and State Museum, Big Boy Steam Engine and the Nelson Museum of the West, which is an 18,000-square-foot museum dedicated to the preservation of cowboy and Native American objects, as well as Western art including more than six thousand artifacts.

Specifically for summer, the Terry Bison Ranch, the Cheyenne Street Railway Trolley, and the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens located in Lions Park with a solar powered conservatory draws groups. Of course, lots of Western shopping is always on the itinerary, too, including the Wrangler and Wyoming Home with its unique Western furniture and artwork.

For a half-day itinerary, groups usually begin downtown at the newly restored Cheyenne Depot, now a national Historic Landmark. The depot has been restored to its original glory and is once again the center of activity in the community. While there, a tour of the art deco lobby and a visit to the Cheyenne Depot Museum, which chronicles the railroad and its relationship to Cheyenne, is in order.

The Cheyenne Street Railway Trolley provides a ninety-minute overview of

the community highlighting its history and attractions and includes stops at the Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum, the Nelson Museum of the West, Wyoming State Museum, Historic Governor's Mansion, Wyoming Capitol, and Cheyenne Botanic Gardens featuring the new Paul Smith Children's Village.

For a full day itinerary, groups then head south nine miles to the Terry Bison Ranch for either horseback riding or a train ride into the middle of the bison herd that calls the ranch home. Back in town, the Big Boy Steam Engine 4004 is on display and is the world's largest steam locomotive designed especially for the rugged Cheyenne to Ogden, Utah run.

There are a number of up-and-coming activities increasing in popularity with groups stopping in Cheyenne, but the one not to miss during a summer visit is the Bit-O-Wyo Horsebarn Dinner Theater, a music dinner show held in the beautiful mountains west of Cheyenne.

For the most part groups haul from all over the country, but Rudloff says that the strongest emphasis is still from the Midwest and Southern United States.

"We host all types of groups since we are located on two interstate highways and have several major national parks surrounding us," says Rudloff. "However, we don't have a solid number [as to how many groups], but it is substantial because of our interstate access, the power of Cheyenne Frontier Days and the national parks surrounding us."

Of course when it comes to Frontier Days, groups from every corner descend upon Cheyenne, enjoying pancake breakfasts, tours like the popular "Behind the Chute Tour" in Frontier Park, the rodeo, Indian Village, the daily carnival, parades, horse-drawn carriage rides, Gunslinger shows, and there's even some old fashion melodrama to be enjoyed at the Historic Atlas Theater downtown.

"Cheyenne is a great destination for several reasons," concludes Rudloff. "First, we are surrounded by amazing natural beauty and world-famous national parks. Second, Cheyenne and Wyoming are full of affordable all-American attractions that people of all ages enjoy." ■

Rita Cook is a freelance writer from Arlington, Texas.

CHEYENNE CONTACTS

Cheyenne CVB
307-778-3133
www.cheyenne.org

Cheyenne Frontier Days
800-227-6336
www.cfdrodeo.com

Cheyenne Depot Museum
307-632-3905
www.cheyennedepotmuseum.org

Wyoming State Museum
wymuseum.state.wy.us

Nelson Museum of the West
307-635-7670
www.nelsonmuseum.com

Terry Bison Ranch
307-634-4171
www.terrybisonranch.com

Cheyenne Street Railway Trolley
800-426-5009

Cheyenne Botanic Gardens
307-637-6458
www.botanic.org

Bit-O-Wyo Horsebarn Dinner Theater
307-638-6924
www.bitowyoranch.com

Historic Atlas Theater
www.cheyennelittletheatre.org

A CITY BRIMMING WITH ARTS

Visitors hoping to find Western art in Cheyenne won't be disappointed. Among the various galleries in Cheyenne are Manitou Galleries and Deselms Fine Art. Manitou Galleries feature Western and historic art, wood carvings, antiques, bronzes and other sculptures, cowboy and Indian collectibles, and more. Deselms Fine Art, which is located in one of Cheyenne's oldest homes, features original art by local and regional artists with national acclaim. Cheyenne Artists Guild hosts numerous art shows throughout the year. The historic Van Tassell Carriage House is the home of the guild, which was established in 1949 and is Wyoming's oldest continuously operating artists' association.

For performing arts, Cheyenne Little Theatre Players offers a year-round season of more than nine full-scale productions. It owns and operates the Mary Godfrey Playhouse and the Historic Atlas Theatre, built in 1887 and the permanent home for "The Old Fashioned Melodrama." This community theatre organization serves Cheyenne, the state of Wyoming, western Nebraska, and northern Colorado. Cheyenne even has its own symphony. Cheyenne Symphony Orchestra performs concerts at the Cheyenne Civic Center.