

## **PINE BLUFFS: WYOMING'S BEST-KEPT SECRET.**

**History Comes Alive in this Legendary Town, Famous as a Frontier Crossroads, a Union Pacific Railroad Shipping Point, Indian Encampments in the Bluffs Nearby – and a Museum that Documents it all.**

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Wyoming! Jagged mountain peaks pointing at the sky; crystal clear glacial lakes teeming with fish; gently rolling plains speckled with antelope and mule deer. It's one of the most beautiful states in the Union.

### **TALE OF A TOWN**

Tucked into the state's southeastern corner, Pine Bluffs – known as “Pine” to its residents – is a well-kept secret. But the history of this picturesque town, founded when the Union Pacific Railroad extended its line there in 1865, is a fascinating tale.

### **HIGH PLAINS, STARK CONTRAST**

Pine is readily accessible by taking U. S. I-80, part of the Interstate Highway System created by President Eisenhower in the 1950s, west from Sydney or east from Cheyenne. Here, the vast high plains have taken over. Treeless rolling hills are covered by huge cattle, sheep and horse ranches, and farms yielding wheat, pinto beans and hay. In stark contrast to mountainous western Wyoming, the eastern prairie possesses a distinctive beauty all its own.

### **HISTORIC DISPLAYS IN THREE SITES**

In Pine the area's history is displayed at three sites; the High Plains Archaeology Museum, 211 Elm Street, the Windows on the Past Interpretive

Site, 1001 Muddy Creek Drive, and the Texas Trail Museum, 201 W. Third Street.

### **GO BACK 9000 YEARS**

It's only a short drive out Route 30 to Muddy Creek Road, location of the Windows on the Past Archaeology Site. Once inside, walk onto the deck and observe and converse with excavators at work during the summer months. The dig contains objects spanning 9,000 plus years to a prehistoric time when early American cultures thrived in the area. Paleo-Indian artifacts such as arrowheads, spearheads and scraping tools have been unearthed. Here and farther back in the bluffs, much has been learned about tribes that gathered to hunt Bison, at one time as many as the sands of the river bottom, or camped briefly to rest in this welcoming spot before continuing their migration east or west. Gaze at the bluff's tree-studded walls and imagine the Indian encampments set in nearby Lodgepole Creek's wooded bends; dozens of white teepees assembled a few yards apart, columns of blue smoke lazily rising from cooking fires tended by squaws, while children play and red men squat in groups planning the next day's hunt. Over 300 teepee rings have been found on the bluffs. At the dig, there's an exhibit displaying both ceremonial and other stone circle sites discovered in these encampments.

Next stop? The High Plains Archaeology Museum on Elm, to get a deeper understanding of the artifacts found at the Windows on the Past Interpretive

Site. On display here are historic and prehistoric items gathered throughout the area by archaeologists, dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and going back 9,800 years. There's also an exhibit of artifacts from abandoned Fort Howard, a training base for U.S. Cavalry in the late 1800s, thought to be the first army "boot camp" in America. Shell casings, bullets, cavalry belt buckles and boots, along with historic photographs from that era, can be examined.

### **CATTLE HERDS, STOCKYARDS AND RAILROAD CARS**

The Texas Trail Museum housed in the old Power Plant, is next. Here, the town's history as the place where vast herds of longhorns driven from far-off Texas were loaded aboard railroad cars and shipped to Eastern markets hundreds of miles away is preserved. Then as now, beef and hides meant money, and a cattleman back then with 20,000 head held a fortune in his hands. On the museum's lawn, a marker erected in 1948 says it all:

*"Over this trail from distant Texas, passed the greatest migration of men and cattle in the history of America."*

Browse the museum's collections of Indian artifacts, quilts and assorted barbed wire fencing dating to the 1800s, chronicling the types of wire farmers and ranchers used to fence their land over a century ago. Also displayed are antique cameras and old saddles employed by real people in a prior time.

Preserved at this site are two diesel-fired engines, which supplied Pine with power during the 1950s, the first schoolhouse in eastern Laramie County, opened in 1879, a Union Pacific Railroad caboose, a replica of a doctor's office

with old dental equipment, and Saint Mary's Catholic Church, built in 1908. The museum's hours? Monday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Memorial Day to Labor Day.

### **RIDING, ROPING AND BARREL RACING**

If you're in town on a Friday, spend your evening at the local rodeo, watching riding, roping and barrel racing by the best cowboys the area has to offer.

### **LARGEST SCULPTURE IN WYOMING**

Finally, before departing, visit the statue of Our Lady of Peace on Route 30, a stones throw from the Nebraska border. A Wyoming couple's dream, this beautiful Marian white marble statue by sculptor Robert Fida, stands 30 feet high and weighs 180 tons. The largest sculpture in Wyoming, it provides truckers and other travelers a pleasant place to stop and offer a prayer, or just rest before continuing their trek.

### **RELAX, RECHARGE, RECAPTURE**

If it's an interesting diversion you want, visit Pine Bluffs and experience a unique blend of Wyoming helpfulness and high plains history in a land of legendary cowboys and cattle drives, Indian encampments and homesteaders' lifestyles. Mayor Leonard Anderson, obviously proud of his town and its people, says: "Everything's here for a restful and informational time." So come, relax, recharge and recapture the spirit of the old west.