

# NORTHWEST

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## Must-See Museums of Wyoming

BY SUSIE WALL

When you consider Wyoming's captivating history, rich fossil deposits and numerous natural wonders, it is no surprise that the state is packed with unique museums. Here is just a sample of these centers for education and curiosity that should not be missed as you travel around the Cowboy State.

The visually stunning **Brinton Museum** sits high on a hill overlooking the town of Big Horn. The museum complex is centered around the home of businessman Bradford Brinton and his Quarter Circle A Ranch. When Brinton died in 1936, his sister Helen preserved the property, along with Bradford's extensive collection of Western art, and dedicated it as a memorial to her brother with a mission of connecting people to the past, present and future of the American West. Visitors can tour the ranch house and lush gardens, walk the nature trail along Trabing Creek, and view Western and Indigenous art in the Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building before grabbing a bite on the bistro patio to admire the art of nature in the shadow of the Bighorn Mountains.

► [thebrintonmuseum.org](http://thebrintonmuseum.org)

The art of nature is the main focus of the **National Museum of Wildlife Art** in Jackson. Inside the museum, view stunning works by the likes of Georgia O'Keeffe and John James Audubon. Paintings and sculptures perfectly capture wildlife scenes found in nearby Grand Teton National Park where bison navigate deep snow drifts and far-flung lands where regal African lions preside over the Serengeti. Outside, wander the .75-mile Sculpture Trail, which overlooks the National Elk Refuge, admiring figures of pouncing foxes and bugling bull elk. Round out your visit with an edible form of art at Palate Restaurant. Savor elevated Wyoming cuisine with an elk meatloaf and pimento cheese wrap or a French onion grilled cheese dipped in a mushroom au jus as you take in sweeping views of the Gros Ventre Mountains.

► [wildlifeart.org](http://wildlifeart.org)



© Wyoming Office of Tourism

The delightful **Frontier Auto Museum** in Gillette celebrates all things Americana. Wander the 13,000-square-foot museum where dozens of colorful neon signs hang overhead. Cavernous rooms feature an enviable array of gleaming classic cars, pick-up trucks and close to 300 gas pump globes from a by-gone era. In the Relic Store, shop for antique toys and home goods, vintage comic books and classic candy. Grab a basket of fries and a milkshake at the Commodore Café before taking a seat at the indoor "drive-in theater" where "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" is a regular feature honoring the film's location at Devils Tower National Monument located just up the road.

► [frontierautomuseum.com](http://frontierautomuseum.com)

The small town of Casper alone is graced with three must-see museums, each one is run by dedicated staff passionate about sharing their unique treasures with visitors.

Learn the history of the four historic paths that converged in Casper at **The National Historic Trails Interpretive Center**. Hear the stories of intrepid emigrants driven by dreams of carving out their own slice of the vast western pie as they followed the Oregon, Mormon, California and Pony Express trails in the mid to late 1800s. Interactive exhibits allow visitors to feel what it was like to pull a heavy handcart over miles of rugged land and experience the jarring ride of a wagon as it crosses the North Platte River. The museum also does a thoughtful job of weaving the stories of the predominately white settlers with the stories of Native Americans whose way of life was forever altered by this influx of new arrivals.

► [nhctf.org](http://nhctf.org)

Over at Casper College, the **Tate Geological Museum** is a small but mighty collection featuring a variety of sparkling Wyoming minerals alongside fossils of the incredible creatures that once roamed the western landscape. Learn the fascinating story of Dee, the 11,600-year-old Columbian Mammoth, that looms over the exhibit hall. Marvel at the massive skull of Nicole the Torosaurus and make sure to examine her frill for evidence of bite marks likely inflicted by a ferocious T-Rex eons ago.

► [caspercollege.edu/tate-geological-museum](http://caspercollege.edu/tate-geological-museum)



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The **Nicolaysen Art Museum** in downtown Casper houses masterpieces by Salvador Dali and Henri Matisse while nurturing relationships with established contemporary artists such as Ezra Tucker. Dedicated gallery space is set aside for works by Indigenous contemporary artists as well as up-and-coming painters and sculptors of the American West. More than a place to admire great works of art, The NIC is a beloved partner in the community where local school children can proudly proclaim that their artwork hangs under the same roof as original works by Pablo Picasso.

► [thenic.org](http://thenic.org)

### Other museums in Wyoming that are well worth a visit

- **Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody**, [centerofthewest.org](http://centerofthewest.org)
- **Wyoming State Museum in Cheyenne**, [wyomuseum.wyo.gov](http://wyomuseum.wyo.gov)
- **Wyoming Territorial Prison Historic Site in Laramie**, [wyoparks.wyo.gov](http://wyoparks.wyo.gov)
- **For more information on these and many more Wyoming museums**, visit [travelwyoming.com](http://travelwyoming.com).