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Photo by Jeff Adkins

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Experience Casper

Get ready to explore what this standout Wyoming city has to offer • *By Kelly Rogers*

Situated right in the heart of Wyoming, Casper is undeniably appealing, thanks to its unique blend of natural beauty and vibrant culture. As you explore this charming city, you'll find yourself captivated by its unique personality and diverse attractions. Here are seven must-visit experiences in Casper:

1) Platte River Whitewater Park

Along the Platte River Parkway, adventure-seekers are spoiled for choice with such an abundant supply of outdoor recreation. The Platte River Whitewater Park features a championship golf course, and adjacent to it is a thrilling half-mile, man-made whitewater course. Whether you're tubing, kayaking or testing your skills against challenging rapids, this park promises an exhilarating experience.

2) College National Finals Rodeo

For over two decades, Casper has been home to the College National Finals Rodeo (CNFR). Witness the world's elite college rodeo athletes and animals competing for glory. It's not just a rodeo – it's a celebration of athletic excellence and traditions of the American West. Over 400 contestants from 100 universities compete for individual event championships and national team titles.

3) Hogadon Basin Ski Area

Perched atop Casper Mountain, Hogadon Basin Ski Area offers breathtaking panoramic views of the city and the Bighorn Mountains. Owned and operated by the City of Casper, this small slice of mountain paradise is open year-round, gets 22 to 35 inches of snow each winter and includes 28 ski runs for varying levels of expertise.



Downtown Casper

4) Garden Creek Falls

At the base of Casper Mountain, Garden Creek Falls in Rotary Park is a true natural gem. Though the base of the waterfall itself is a short walk from the parking lot, more ambitious hikers can traverse the 5-mile Bridle Trail Loop, which offers a different view and perspective.

5) Downtown Casper

Downtown Casper is a captivating blend of old-world charm and contemporary vibrancy. Explore unique architecture and fading painted ghost signs on historic brick buildings. And don't miss David Street Station, an outdoor gathering spot and family fun hub that includes a splash pad in the summer and an ice rink in the winter. The Station hosts numerous community events year-round, including festivals and movie nights.

6) Lou Taubert Ranch Outfitters

At the heart of downtown, you can't miss the eye-catching sign for Lou Taubert Ranch Outfitters, a 100-year-



old family-owned store. Named one of the nation's top Western wear outfitters, it boasts nine floors of inventory and over 10,000 cowboy boots in stock. Experience the spirit of the West as you browse its vast collection of boots, hats and Western clothing for the whole family.

7) Tate Geological Museum

Delve into the geological wonders of Wyoming at the Tate Geological Museum. Located on the Casper College campus, this museum features over 6,000 fossil and mineral specimens. It's a real treasure trove for anyone interested in earth sciences, mineralogy and paleontology. 🦕

Casper, *the Friendly City*

Enjoy the best of both
mountain moods and
city convenience





Casper has a lot to offer, from pristine paths and fun festivals to stunning waterfall views, and quaint downtown shops and eateries.



PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: RIGHT: VISIT CASPER (1); JEFF ADKINS (2-4)



Thanks to its world-class fly fishing and location at the foot of the Laramie Mountains, Casper is well-known as one of the most desirable cities in the Mountain West for hunters, hikers and other outdoorsy folks. And while residents can be in the mountains in mere minutes, they also have access to a growing community with career opportunities, a revitalized downtown and an affordable cost of living.

The Outdoor Lifestyle

“I moved to Casper three years ago, just because I could,” says Sam Seeton, a relative newcomer to the area. His employer at the time had offered him a remote job, and the Colorado native decided he needed to make a change.

“Colorado has gotten so crazy with its influx of people, and I’m a big outdoorsman,” he says. “I was figuring out what the best place

would be in my eyes in terms of proximity to hunting, fishing and biking.”

Seeton was familiar with Casper – he’d been visiting for years by that point – so he bought a home on 40 acres outside of the city. While the property was a big step up in terms of size (he’d previously resided in Aurora, Colorado, an eastern suburb of Denver), it wasn’t much of a stretch on his finances.

“Downtown Casper has indeed been evolving. The city has been actively working to rejuvenate the downtown area, and we’ve seen some fantastic additions that have revitalized the community.”

– Copper Mack, longtime Casper resident



“When I was working in Aurora, I was living in a 1,500-square-foot house in a neighborhood in the outskirts of Aurora,” he says. “My mortgage was \$26 cheaper than my mortgage now on a 2,900-square-foot house with two barns and water rights.”

While Seeton enjoys everything outdoorsy, he says his all-time favorite pastime is fly-fishing.

“In my opinion, this area has the best trout fishing outside of Alaska,” he says.

He can reel off a list of nearby spots he particularly enjoys: Alcova Reservoir, Miracle Mile and Grey Reef. But he admits he doesn't even have to leave downtown Casper to bring in a catch.

“I can walk outside our office in the middle of town to catch world-class trout or drive 30 minutes,” he says.

Copper Mack, a longtime Casper resident, moved here when she was just 18, and has had years to discover local hiking trails.

“Personally, I love visiting the waterfall and exploring the beautiful outdoors that Casper and its surroundings offer,” she says.

That waterfall, Garden Creek Falls, is located a quick drive from Casper's downtown in Rotary Park, which also offers miles of trails that provide scenic views of the city.

The Buzzing Business Scene

As the social media marketer for the Bourgeois Pig, a coffee shop and art gallery in downtown Casper, Mack has seen plenty of change come to the business district.

“Downtown Casper has indeed been evolving. The city has been actively working to rejuvenate the downtown area, and we've seen some fantastic additions that have revitalized the community,” she says. “There's a thriving music scene and a growing number of culturally relevant events.”



Fly fishing is an extremely popular activity in Casper.

NEARBY FUN DESTINATIONS

For those who prefer urban living, but also love the outdoors, you'll be happy to know that from downtown Casper, you can easily drive to any of these attractions. See how close you are to having a day filled with fun:

2

miles to Platte River Parkway

6

miles to Edness K. Wilkins State Park

7

miles to Garden Creek Falls

11

miles to Hogadon Basin Ski Area

13

miles to Casper Mountain

36

miles to Alcova Reservoir



Locals and visitors alike can enjoy craft beverages and great dining options in downtown Casper.

The Pig itself hosts live music and dance parties, banned book club meetings, and other fun ways to gather together.

Mack is also a big fan of local museums, and the city has plenty: the Nicolaysen Art Museum, Tate Geological Museum and historic Bishop House, among them.

“Just since I’ve been visiting for the better part of a decade, a ton has changed recently, specifically downtown,” Seeton says.

“I’m in the office looking out the window at Three Crowns golf course, which used to be an oil refinery. ... Recently I was driving through town with my wife, and it was totally different than it used to be. It wasn’t that oil city with a rough downtown. It’s changed a lot, and all for the better. A lot of remote tech people have started moving in, so there is more diversity; it’s not just oil and gas businesses.”

Part of that draw is because Wyoming doesn’t levy a state income tax. That’s beneficial to businesses like the Pig, Mack adds.

Seeton agrees; thanks to Casper’s lower cost of living, he was able to quit his day job and become the full-time CEO of the company he co-founded, Infinite Outdoors.

“My pay decreased,” he says, “but my quality of life increased.”

He also shouts out Casper’s thriving breweries and shopping.

“The brewery scene is really, really good,” Seeton says. “And Casper is one of the only places in Wyoming that you’ll also find big chain stores, if you want any of those big-city feels.”

– Amy Antonation

find more online

Learn more about living and working in Casper by visiting livability.com/wy/casper.

Welcome HOME

Residents have many attractive housing options

The city of 58,000+ residents offers enough big-city amenities but maintains midsize community conveniences, such as easy commutes and lots of open spaces. The cost of living in Casper is 94.8% of the U.S. average, and median home values (\$276,000 in November 2023, Zillow) are less than 80% of the national average and significantly less than cities including Denver, Colorado, and Billings, Montana.



Casper residents have a number of options for beautiful neighborhoods. In the Wolcott Historic District, the majority of homes were built between 1910 and 1924 and feature several architectural styles. Most homes have price tags under \$300,000. Another part of the city

with reasonable housing costs is Centennial Hills, known for being family friendly, safe and well maintained. Yet another highly regarded and affordable neighborhood is the tree-lined Valley Hills, which is billed as clean and quiet.

By Kevin Litwin

PHOTO: JEFF ADKINS



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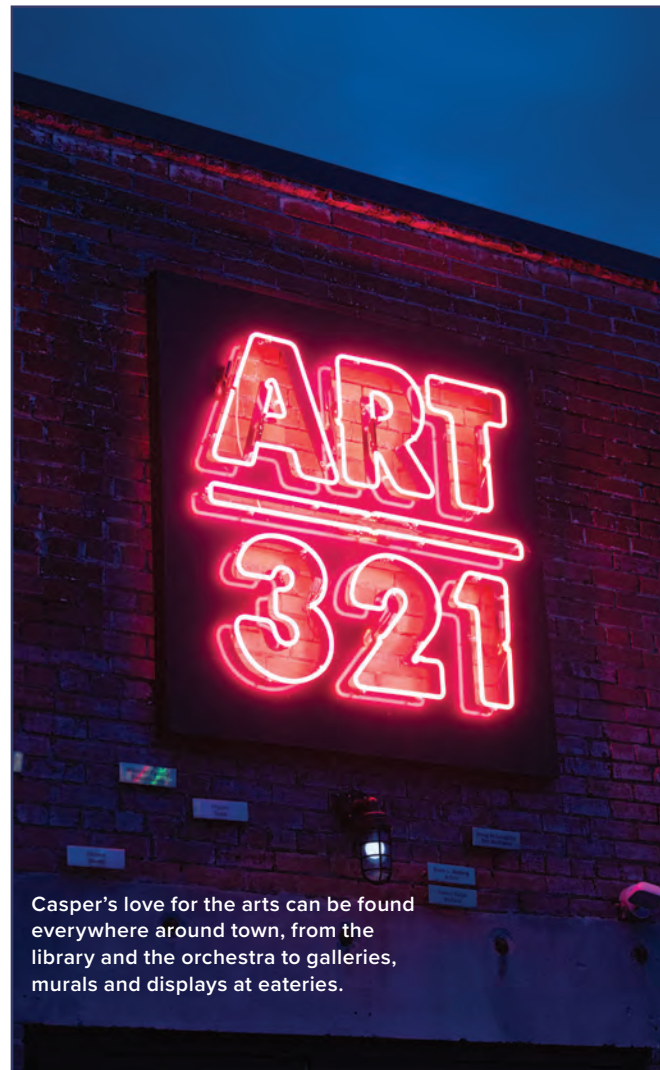


PHOTOS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: VISIT CASPER (1,5); ART 321/CASPER ARTISTS' GUILD (2); KRISTIN SCHAEFER/WYOMING SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (3); JEFF ADKINS (4,6)



TYPES

*A thriving arts
community colors
Casper's culture*



Casper's love for the arts can be found everywhere around town, from the library and the orchestra to galleries, murals and displays at eateries.

Casper's vibrant arts scene has drawn both artists and lovers of the arts. Whether you're a working artist or just an admirer of all things visual, the city offers a prime platform for creatives. Its numerous music venues, art galleries and cultural centers use various mediums to celebrate the region's rich Western history and love for visuals.

BRUSHES WITH GREATNESS

Casper's premier museum, the Nicolaysen Art Museum, is a major asset to the creative community and the city's cultural hub. It displays both traditional and contemporary Western art and offers community events for residents of all ages.

"The Nicolaysen strives to be the cultural anchor here in Casper. We do so by offering a wide variety of

programming, educational classes and exhibitions," says Allison Maluchnik, executive director. "We try to have an inclusive and eye-opening experience for everyone when they come through here, and we're the only contemporary art museum in Wyoming."

Their biggest event of the year is NIC Fest, held in June, which incorporates live music from performers from all over the country and works from



The NIC



COLLAGE PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: VISIT CASPER (1-2); TOWNSQUARE MEDIA CASPER (3); CASPER COLLEGE (4)

about 80 different artists, as well as activities for families and food trucks. Maluchnik calls it the museum's love letter to the community.

The NIC also hosts other events throughout the year, including partnerships for Chinese New Year and Native American Heritage Month with the local dual language school.

Other smaller, yet unique, venues for artists include Scarlow's Art

and Coffee, The Nest Artist Co-Op, Casper Artists' Collective and ART 321 - Casper Artists' Guild, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2024. In addition, the Casper Mural Project promotes expression in the form of public art, and the Casper Art Walk is a free monthly event with a similar mission of encouraging residents to support local artists.

"That's the most fun part about Casper's art community - we're all

in it together, and we know that's important," Maluchnik says. "Casper is entering its own renaissance of art here, and it's going to be very interesting to see where we are in a couple of years."

LIVE MUSIC MOMENTS

For a city its size, Casper boasts some major cultural attractions and numerous venues in which people can listen to live music.



Beartrap Summer Festival



Casper College Theatre and Dance Department



4 TRAILS COLLIDE
Interpretive Center highlights Pony Express and three other national trails

With its slogan "Come Along for the Ride," the \$10 million National Historic Trails Interpretive Center showcases exhibits, programs and special events related to four well-known trails that converge in Casper. The city is the only spot in the nation where the Pony Express Trail, Oregon Trail, California Trail and Mormon Trail collide and then continue to run through Wyoming.

The 11,000-square-foot center, situated along Interstate 25, opened in 2002, sitting high above the North Platte River to give visitors panoramic views of the four famous historic trails along with Casper itself.

Open seven days a week, the center features hands-on exhibits intended to capture the hardships and triumphs that 400,000 West-seeking pioneers experienced as they followed these trails between 1841 and 1868.

The facility operates through a partnership between the City of Casper, Bureau of Land Management and the National Historic Trails Center Foundation. For more information, visit nhtcf.org.

By Kevin Litwin



“We’re very lucky to bring these world-class artists to play here.”

– Rebecca Hebert, Wyoming Symphony Orchestra

The Wyoming Symphony Orchestra, for instance, is a professional regional orchestra that traces its roots to the 1920s, when a group of local musicians wanted to come together to put on concerts.

“We have four masterworks concerts every season, a holiday concert, a summer Pops in the Park concert, and we bring in guest artists,” says Rebecca Hebert, executive director of the Symphony Orchestra. “We’re very lucky to bring these world-class artists to play here.”

The Gaslight Social, which opened in 2017, also contributes to the city’s music scene.

“Summer is our prime season, with three to four larger concerts a month, but the other seasons are also busy as we focus on featuring many local bands,” says Kaila Tobin, manager at The Gaslight Social. “We have fun here. We even have occasional disco nights.”

PHOTO: KRISTIN SCHAEFER/WYOMING SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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CREATE



CONNECT



Scarlow's Art & Coffee

Learn what's brewing at this gallery and cafe

The venue has indoor and outdoor stages and serves pub food, along with a wide selection of beer taps, cocktails and liquors.

"With social media and our success, we are drawing crowds from all over Wyoming, as well as Montana, Colorado and South Dakota," Tobin says.

The Ford Wyoming Center is another venue with an even larger audience. Or, for a full day of tunes, consider being in the crowd at Beartrap Summer Festival.

TRUE COMMUNITY THEATER

When it comes to performing arts, Casper residents can watch local talent take the stage at Stage III Community Theatre, Casper College's Theatre and Dance Department, Casper Theater Company, Artcore and Casper Children's Theatre.

"Stage III is Casper's community theater, and we've been around for 43 years. We put on six live performances per year, ranging from comedies to dramas and musicals," says Kris Kontour, general manager.

Stage III relies on volunteers, so performers are all members of the community. They average roughly 70 attendees for each performance. Performances are chosen by a committee that reads upwards of 30 plays a year.

Each performance has roughly 10 actors, plus volunteers who oversee backstage operations like costumes, props, scenery, lighting and moving things onstage.

"Casper is lucky in that we are quite flooded with performing arts," Kontour says. "We have eight active theaters in town – there are a ton of opportunities for audience members to really soak up art."

– Rebecca Treon

Learn more about the vibrant arts scene in Casper and Natrona County at livability.com/wy/casper.



Casper is emerging as a surprising place for creatives to call home, with a thriving community of organizations and small businesses supporting the arts. One such place is Scarlow's, a coffee shop and gallery in the heart of downtown. Owner Claire Marlow, who moved to the area from Seattle, shares her take on the local arts scene.

What can you share about Casper's art scene?

Casper has a great art scene. Everyone thinks that Jackson is the place to buy good art – because it's the town that everyone knows – but Casper has a fantastic art scene. It was kind of quiet downtown when I first got here, but over the years, people have put time and money into it, and it's vibrant today. We have David Street Station, which has a

concert stage for live music, and we have the Art Walk every month, which I started with a couple of other artists. When I bought the business, I saw that people weren't connecting within the art scene, and I thought that was a cool opportunity for my business – sell the supplies, show the artwork and meet all the artists. I thought it would be a neat way to integrate everybody, by creating a social space for art.

How does Scarlow's support local artists?

The gallery gives artists a place to go to see other people's art, even if they're not showing with us, while the coffee shop has become a place where creatives come together and do business. We also host events like yoga classes and workshops where people can be surrounded by artwork.

"Casper has a great art scene."

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Live Like a Local

A TRANSPLANT'S GUIDE TO LIFE IN CASPER • By Amy Antonation

Angie Volzke's first visit to Casper wasn't the easiest: She and her husband arrived in the midst of an October snowstorm. Still, the Minnesota native and longtime South Dakota resident wasn't deterred. "We could see the potential in the city and the people," says Volzke, who's now the creative coordinator at Visit Casper.

And after living here for over two years, she makes a bold claim: "Growing up with 'Minnesota nice' is nothing compared to the folks I've met here. People will strike up conversations with you while standing in line at a food truck or compliment your outfit while walking down the street." Here's Volzke's guide to Casper, from one transplant to another.

What's your favorite place to grab a bite or a drink?

My favorite place to grab a drink is Backwards Distilling Company. Not only do they make their own spirits, but the drinks they craft with them are truly amazing. Plus, they switch up their menu with the seasons so there is always something new to try. I also *love* the Saturday doughnuts from Grant Street Grocery and Market; they truly make your weekend start with a smile and skip in your step!

What's your favorite outdoorsy thing to do around Casper?

My husband and I were never very outdoorsy people, but we decided to act like locals and try a few things. In the winter we picked up snowshoeing, which was never even



Angie Volzke, her husband and their dogs.

a thought in my mind to try because I dislike the cold so much – but it's absolutely beautiful on the trails in the winter! You can easily park at the Casper Mountain Trail Head and take a route at your level.

This summer, we picked up a few paddleboards to take down the North Platte River. There are various locations to get on and off at, but we put our boards in at Robertson Road because it's close to our house and do a two-hour float to Morad Park. After our first float, we were hooked and can't wait to bring our friends and family when they are visiting.

What are your favorite not-so-outdoorsy things in town?

I'm an artsy person, and living in a community that supports the arts is big for me. Luckily, Casper has

everything from the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra to Broadway and ballet shows at Ford Wyoming Center, to the Nicolaysen Art Museum. The art scene is amazing here, and there are so many talented people. If you're an artist, be sure to enter your work in ART 321's many different shows.

What is a can't-miss event in Casper?

Casper is always having something fun going on, but the one event you cannot miss out on is the College National Finals Rodeo. Watching the college athletes compete in an event center full of excited fans is something everyone should experience. It's a weeklong competition, so it's easy to go on a day that's convenient to you, but the final night is electric. 🤠

“I'm an artsy person, and living in a community that supports the arts is big for me.”

PHOTO: COURTESY ANGIE VOLZKE



“IT IS MORE THAN WHAT YOU THINK”

Casper/Natrona County International Airport Is Flying High

When pondering an airport, the mind often conjures images of small private planes, business jets and the familiar scenes of parents jetting off for work or reuniting with grandparents during holidays. Yet, the Casper/Natrona County International Airport transcends these conventional notions, unfolding as a multifaceted nexus of history, commerce and service.

To truly grasp the essence of the airport today, one must journey back to its inception in 1942 as the Army Air Base, Casper. Functioning as a training ground for B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers during World War II, the base ceased operations in 1945, eventually

transitioning to civilian use under Natrona County’s auspices in 1949.

Sprawling across 5,150 acres, with nearly half dedicated to agriculture – primarily grazing and haying – the airport is an integral supporter of Wyoming’s agrarian economy. Facilitating aerial applications that encompass seeding, fertilization and crop protection, it plays a crucial role in sustaining the state’s agricultural endeavors.

Astonishingly, remnants of the airport’s wartime past endure, with 115 original WWII-era buildings still standing proudly. Among these are the base theater, four bomber hangars, an original fire department, the hospital

district and the enlisted man’s club – now home to the Wyoming Veterans Museum. Recognized as the best-preserved WWII Army Air Base, the site earned its place on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

Beyond its historical significance, the airport is a bustling hub of activity, supporting over 40 businesses. While some, like car rental agencies and the Federal Aviation Administration, align with typical airport functions, others – Inter-Mountain Pipe and Threading, Sage Truck Driving School, Wyoming Precast Products, XPO Logistics, and VRC Casper – operate in less conventional realms. Together, the airport supports 1,203 jobs in Natrona



It is not merely an airstrip; it is a dynamic entity weaving together history, commerce and service to fulfill an expansive role in the life of Central Wyoming.

County, generating an annual economic impact of \$145,879,000.

Whether directly utilizing the airport or not, its influence resonates throughout Central Wyoming. Boasting the cutting-edge Wyoming Regional Aircraft Fire Fighting training center, the airport trains aircraft firefighters from across the Rocky Mountain West. Annually, over 100 firefighters participate in live aircraft fire exercises conducted in Casper.

Serving as Wyoming's sole designated port of entry, the U.S. Customs office at the airport clears more than 500 aircraft annually, including business executives, celebrities, politicians and vital equipment supporting the state's economy. Casper welcomes aircraft direct from countries as diverse as Austria, Belgium, England, India, Japan, Romania, Saudi Arabia and Switzerland.

The airport's significance extends to the realm of cargo, with operations from UPS and Amazon, and a central role as a FedEx hub. Sorting packages daily from Memphis, Tennessee, FedEx dispatches them by truck or aircraft to communities across Wyoming, Nebraska and Colorado. Furthermore, as the operator of the Foreign Trade Zone 157, the airport facilitates the duty-free import, storage and manufacturing of goods from other countries.

In a continual evolution, the airport is in the process of constructing a new Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) and Large Air Tanker (LAT) base for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service. Additionally, it supports Very Large Air Tankers (VLATs), such as DC-10s, when required.

The airport's commitment to community well-being is evident in its association with Wyoming Life Flight, a vital lifeline with fixed-wing and rotor-wing (helicopter) operations. Conducting three to five daily flight operations, Life Flight responds to emergencies and facilitates hospital transfers, including journeys to Children's Hospital in Colorado.

Operating tirelessly, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, the Casper/Natrona County International Airport transcends conventional perceptions. It is not merely an airstrip; it is a dynamic entity weaving together history, commerce and service to fulfill an expansive role in the life of Central Wyoming. The airport embodies the mantra – it is more than what you think.



CAST Away

It doesn't take a deep dive to appreciate the allure of fly fishing in the Casper region

The biggest traffic jams in the Casper region take place in the water. That is where as many as 8,000 fish per mile congregate year-round, which lures anglers from throughout the world to participate in the sport of fly fishing.

Casper is an ideal fly-fishing location for several reasons. First, the North Platte River flows directly through downtown, providing easy access to the water. Then

“You can go out every day for two or three weeks and fish a different chunk of water each day.”

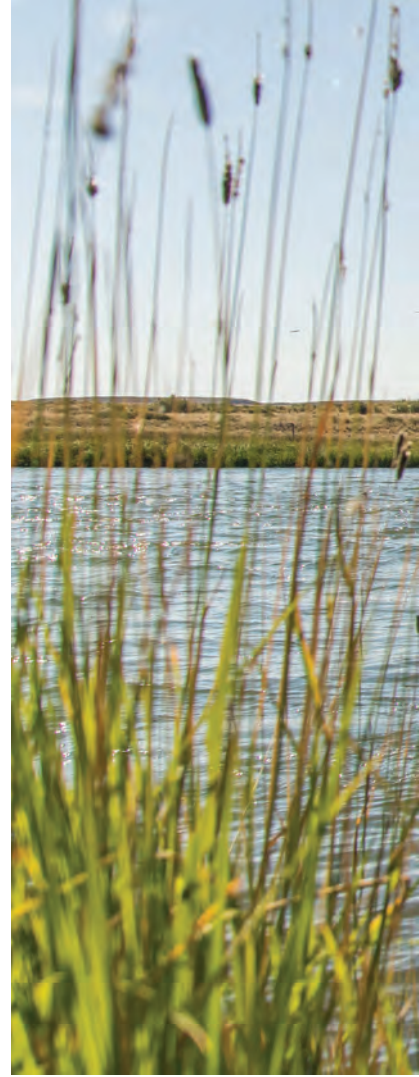
– Riley McDowell, Fat Bear Fishing

a series of dams and reservoirs along the river helps produce consistent water flows and temperatures. All of which creates the conditions for fish – in this case, numerous species of trout – to thrive, with clear sections of water that make them easier to catch.

“The water temperature gives an abundant food supply for those trout, and the reservoirs give them a place to hang out and grow and get big,” says Riley McDowell, who offers guided fly and ice fishing trips through Fat Bear Fishing. “And because the river is split up by these reservoirs, the water rarely gets dark and murky after a heavy rainfall.”

More than 100 river miles are fishable around Casper, McDowell says, so even if one section of water isn't clear, there is generally always somewhere to go to have a good day of fishing.

“It all boils down to the fact we just have a lot of big fish around here, and





Fly fishing is a popular activity in Casper, as there are over 100 river miles that are fishable.

PHOTOS: FROM LEFT:
VISIT CASPER (1-2); JEFF ADKINS



Ugly Bug Fly Shop

a lot of different places to try to catch them,” he says.

GET GEAR AND FIND FISH

Casper is truly a fly-fishing favorite, having been named as the top “Big Fish Destination” in the Lower 48 states by American Angler magazine. As a result, several shops in the area can help anglers gear up, as well as commission charters that will take you to where the fish are biting.

Both the Platte River Fly Shop and Ugly Bug Fly Shop have been in business since the 1980s, offering all manner of rods, reels, lines, wading gear and, of course, fishing flies.

Then when it comes time to hit the water, Wyoming Fly Fishing Guide Service, Crazy Rainbow Fly Fishing and Wyoming Anglers are among the outfits that provide guided fishing trips as well as lodging.

The options for where to go fishing are plentiful. The North Platte River is the spine of fly fishing in the Casper region, with several connecting sections where the trout traffic is tremendous.

Prime fishing spots in the Casper region include the “Miracle Mile” (a stretch between Kortez Dam and Pathfinder Reservoir), Fremont Canyon (a popular spot for wade fishing a few miles from Pathfinder Dam), the Alcova Reservoir (which



PHOTOS: VISIT CASPER



Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing

covers nearly 2,500 surface acres approximately 30 miles southwest of Casper) and the nearby Grey Reef reservoir (where 10-pound fish are not uncommon).

“We have so many different options, you can always be exploring new water,” McDowell says. “You can go out every day for two or three weeks and fish a different chunk of water each day. And the great thing is, you don’t have to be an expert by any means to enjoy fly fishing. It’s relatively easy and quick to pick up for just about anybody.”

SOCIALIZATION AND CAMARADERIE

While fly fishing can be a peaceful solo sport, its relaxing nature also is a good way to create community. That is one of the goals of the Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing organization, a program designed to provide therapeutic outdoor recreation for wounded military service members, using fly fishing as a rehabilitation tool.

“It’s a very rewarding program,” says Bruce Chandler, a Vietnam veteran

who leads the Casper chapter of PHWFF. “We do fishing outings, both day and overnight, which promotes friendships among the service members. And a lot of those friendships then extend out to the Casper community and the wonderful support we get from the town.”

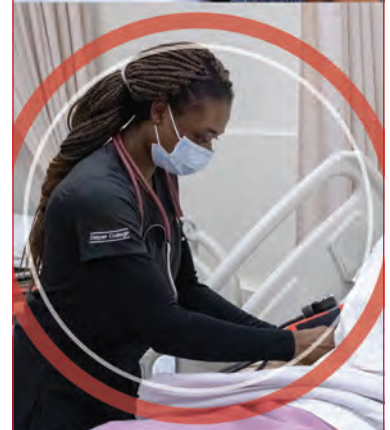
PHWFF was formed in 2005 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center outside Washington, D.C., for returning combat vets in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It has since expanded to nearly 300 programs across the country, though Chandler says Casper is the perfect place for such a fly-fishing organization.

“We have a wealth of waters to fish fairly close to the city,” Chandler says. “We’re just very fortunate to have access to all these great waterways around Casper for fly fishing.”

– Cary Estes

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Economic Profile

EDUCATION LEVEL

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| High school grad or higher..... | 94.7% |
| Bachelor's degree or higher..... | 27.4% |



LOCAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- » Casper College
- » University of Wyoming at Casper
- » WCA (Wyoming Contractors Association) Regional Training Center

TAXES

5%

Sales tax
(county and state combined)

Sources: Census Reporter, Advance Casper, Wyoming Small Business Development Center, Casper-Natrona County International Airport

INCOME

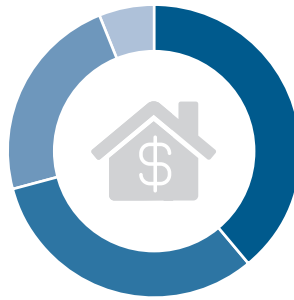
\$37,057

Per capita income

\$50,000

Median household income

HOUSEHOLD INCOME



| | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| ■ \$50,000 and under | 39% |
| ■ \$50,000-100,000..... | 32% |
| ■ \$100,000-200,000 | 23% |
| ■ \$200,000+ | 6% |

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

(number of employees)

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Banner Health Wyoming | 1,121 |
| Unit Drilling Co..... | 471 |
| Walmart Supercenter..... | 400 |
| Casper College..... | 387 |
| Wyoming Medical Center East Campus | 243 |
| Shepherd of the Valley..... | 240 |
| Wyoming Machinery..... | 230 |
| Natrona County Jail..... | 220 |
| Wyoming DOT | 206 |
| Power Service Inc. | 200 |

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Flying into the FUTURE

Casper's aerospace industry is growing



With an international airport nearby, a thriving business community and a robust talent pipeline, Casper's aerospace and defense industry is poised for growth.

In 2023, Casper hosted the Aerospace and Defense Industry Conference, which helped statewide manufacturers and technology companies get on the government's radar.

One aerospace manufacturer based in Casper is Wickman Spacecraft & Propulsion Co., a sister company of CP Technologies that works with NASA and the Department of Defense.

While many of the projects are highly classified, one involved a cutting-edge propulsion system developed by the company for an Air Force satellite for maneuvering in space. Hardware made at the Casper facility went into orbit at an altitude of over 22,000 miles.

Casper was the right choice for his company, says John Wickman, president.

HIGH-TECH INNOVATORS

"It may be hard for people in Casper to understand how important this is, but having local officials work with a company and not against it is a big thing," Wickman says.

"After being in California, where the local government was working against us, it was so refreshing to have city and county officials working with us as our business established operations here and expanded."

Wickman says he recently had an engineer from General Dynamics remark that he was amazed the company was located at the airport.

Rising Wings Aviation flight school has four aircraft and a fully staffed flight instruction department to meet every student's flying schedule.



“I told him they were very supportive of us and had helped us out on several occasions,” Wickman says. The variety of local businesses that can support the company’s material and machine shop needs is also an advantage, he says. The businesses that support the oil and gas industry dovetailed nicely for supporting many of its government contracts, such as machining large pieces for rocket chambers and nozzles.

Wickman says his company will continue working with larger contractors and universities to support its projects. In regards to the growth of the aerospace and defense industry in the Casper region, Wickman is not surprised.

“There has been this mistaken belief that Casper cannot be a

high-tech business area, particularly in aerospace,” he says. “We worked with the state to help establish the Wyoming Phase 0 program to support businesses getting into government contracting with NASA and the Department of Defense. It has been a very successful program and was actually copied by other states.”

The Aerospace and Defense Industry Conference held in Casper in 2023 helped the sector in the region, says Wickman, adding that the city is attractive for prospective aerospace employees, especially when compared to the current locations of other aerospace companies around the nation.

“I have had several engineers, from major contractors and government agencies, remark on how nice Casper

was and how they could picture themselves living here,” he says.

Casper College is preparing students to work on those high-tech businesses Wickman mentioned.

“We offer programs that lead to many jobs in the industry, including everything from STEM to the trades,” says Christopher Lorenzen, Casper College’s public relations director.

ASPIRING PILOTS

In addition, the college offers an aviation program that complements the Rising Wings Aviation flight school located at the airport.

The program aims to provide educational opportunities that could lead to future employment in commercial aviation.

Rising Wings Aviation offers a fleet of four aircraft, which includes one technologically advanced Cirrus Aircraft that is equipped with an airframe parachute system for ultimate flight safety, as well as a fully staffed flight instruction department to meet every student’s flying schedule.

Academic coursework takes place through Casper College. Full-time students in Casper should be able to complete the program at a lower cost than competitor flight schools in four semesters and be prepared for employment as commercial pilots.

“Casper College’s aviation program is a great way for students to begin a career as a pilot, allowing them the opportunity to not only gain a college education but also to become an FAA-certified commercial pilot,” Lorenzen says.

Casper-Natrona County International Airport is the site of Foreign Trade Zone 157 and the only international airport in Wyoming, offering flights through United Airlines and Delta, with nonstop destinations to Salt Lake City, Utah, and Denver, Colorado.



“It was so refreshing to have city and county officials working with us as our business established operations here and expanded.”

– John Wickman, Wickman Spacecraft & Propulsion

Glenn S. Januska, airport director, says the facility is working with its air carrier partners to bring larger planes to service passengers. In addition, he says the airport is continuing to develop infrastructure for the aerial firefighters. The airport is home to the Wyoming Regional Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) Training Facility, which offers classroom and hands-on training.

“The facility serves as the preeminent ARFF training facility in the Rocky Mountain region, if not the entire country,” Januska says.

— Kim Madlom

find more online

Looking for a great landing spot for your career? Find out why Casper and Natrona County may be the right fit: livability.com/wy/casper.



Casper College Aviation

PHOTO: COURTESY CASPER COLLEGE

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LAUNCH DESTINATION

In-town style and out-of-town serenity offer unique opportunities for entrepreneurs in the hospitality business

In downtown Casper, ALMA is where Old West meets New West.

“The building was an old brothel, and when I walked through it, I thought it was the perfect place to house my design business,” Lauren Griffith says.

Named after Griffith’s great-grandmother, ALMA offers home goods, furniture and gifts. Upstairs, Griffith turned the madam’s quarters into an Airbnb.

“It’s cheeky Western décor curated with antiques I have collected for years, even some of my great-grandmother’s pieces,” she says.

Griffith, who has run her own company for a decade, says she always has had a love of design.

“I see inspiration in the landscape, nature, the seasons – everywhere if you take the time,” she says.

And she finds the heart of Casper to be an ideal location, a place she



says is “fun to experience,” especially with the addition of David Street Station and the adjacent restaurants and shops that have popped up.

Rustic Yet Relaxing

Just 15 minutes from town, Ruth Romp saw promise in the rough, too.

“The place was pretty much a dump. Glass and pipes were everywhere,” she says of what she found 20 years ago that has evolved into the Red Butte Ranch. “Time and money, you never have enough of either. It’s been one room at a time.”

She started by first creating a cottage and then adding a bed and breakfast and a five-bedroom lodge. Her ranch is surrounded by mountains, including the stunning namesake Red Butte.

“It’s all about the home away from home feeling,” she says. “There are views of the mountains and river wherever you look.”

The river is the North Platte, considered a “Blue Ribbon” river for trout. Many of Red Butte’s guests are fly fishers as well as hunters and travelers. The resort also hosts events such as weddings and even knitting circles and counseling groups. “We are a peaceful place to rest or work,” she says, “It’s a cozy, rustic and comfortable place to rejuvenate your soul.”

Fly Fisher’s Paradise

Trout On Inn is another resort on the North Platte that specializes in river adventures.

“Our cabins and lodge have porches that are literally 100 feet from the water, making fishing easily accessible and very convenient for the wade fisherman,” Kristin Underwood says.

She and husband Carey bought their piece of paradise in 2012.

“It had a house and shop,” she says. “Now, with our six cabins, lodge and commercial kitchen, we can



“The city has a lot of charm. The best qualities are friendly, down-to-earth people and an affordable lifestyle.”

– Lauren Griffith, ALMA





Trout on Inn

Backing Brainstormers

A wealth of resources support area entrepreneurs

The Casper region offers a slew of resources to help entrepreneurs launch their businesses and get on the road to success. Those resources include the Casper Area Chamber of Commerce and the Wyoming Small Business Development Center Network.

Also encouraging entrepreneurial growth is Impact 307 Casper incubator, located in Platte River Commons Business Park next to Three Crowns Golf Club. Impact 307 Casper features a co-working space, private offices, multiple conference rooms, two laboratories and teleconference equipment.

Impact 307 also presents the annual Casper Start-Up Challenge competition in April. The challenge allows entrepreneurial prospects to make presentation pitches, with winners awarded valuable business coaching and monetary support.

Another resource is Breakthrough 307, the state's only angel investment group. Breakthrough 307 provides early-stage capital to high-growth potential startups in exchange for partial equity in the new companies. Breakthrough 307 was founded in 2017 and has already invested \$1.9 million in nearly a dozen entrepreneurial ventures in the region.

Also based in Casper is Elevate Wyoming, a company that provides business development expertise. Another resource is Advance Casper, which serves as the economic development organization for Casper/Natrona County and assists local entrepreneurs. In addition, Advance Casper works to attract even more entrepreneurs who might be considering relocating to Casper.

—By Kevin Litwin—

accommodate catering, bed and breakfast, guided fishing and lodging for up to 47 people.”

Weddings have become a big part of their business, too. “We are continually improving our property to better serve our guests,” she says.

Tailored for Tourism

Kristin Underwood, who grew up in Casper (as did Carey), says people enjoy living in the community because of its rural feel and ready access to outdoor recreation that is not far from town.

“It’s big enough to host many things to do but small enough that you never feel overwhelmed by population,” she says. “It’s a place that kids growing up do not always appreciate until they leave and then many come back.”

Griffith is one of those who grew up in Casper, moved away and then returned.

“The city has a lot of charm,” she says. “The best qualities are friendly, down-to-earth people and an affordable lifestyle. The public schools are great, and there are plenty of organizations and activities for kids and adults alike.”

Originally from New Zealand but a Casper resident for several years, Romp cites the community’s “real” feeling as one of its appeals.

“It’s still reasonably small,” she says. “And there are good medical and hospitals here.”

Energy has long been Wyoming’s mainstay industry. But the benefits of hospitality are clear.

“Where oil and gas can be like a boom-and-bust cycle, tourism in Casper is a constant,” Kristin Underwood says. “After the first year we had our property, we thought this place was too beautiful to keep to ourselves and said ‘Hey, let’s share this little piece of heaven with others!’ Hence, the Trout On Inn.”

—Greg Phillips



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An Exceptional EDUCATION

Schools in Casper and Natrona County show a commitment to career readiness



Good public schools play a pivotal role not only in enhancing the overall quality of life within a community, but also in driving economic and workforce development.

The Natrona County School District (NCSD) offers the Casper region's families a high-quality public education that prepares students for successful careers and ensures the region has a deep well of skilled, adaptable workers.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

"We are committed to providing optimum learning opportunities

for every child. We're committed to excellence in education and high expectations, and we have dedicated educators who instill a love for learning and academic success in all students," says Tanya Southerland, director of public relations for the Natrona County School District.

In addition to academic success, the district focuses on providing a wide array of extracurricular activities, ranging from athletics and arts to clubs and community service initiatives.

"These activities enrich students' lives and foster leadership qualities and a sense of responsibility, empowering them to

contribute positively to the community," Southerland says.

The district offers a diverse range of courses and cutting-edge technology that helps prepare students for college and local, in-demand careers. Students and school families can tap into opportunities like dual language immersion, school choice enrollment, gifted and talented, International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs, dual enrollment through Casper College, preschool programming, the Casper Mountain Science Program, and a range of career and technical education programs.

"We are committed to providing optimum learning opportunities for every child."

— Tanya Southerland, Natrona County School District

ILLUSTRATION: ISTOCK.COM/RUDALL30



DEVELOPING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Career readiness begins early in NCS D. Students in grades K-5 are introduced to occupations in their own communities and participate in activities that demonstrate how those careers impact where they live. Through group projects, they learn crucial collaboration and communication skills. Middle school students are encouraged to actively explore careers in areas such as agriculture, engineering design, technology and consumer science. For example, the Woods Learning Center, which serves students in grades K-8, allows students to tailor their learning according to their personal interests.

“Today’s students need far more than traditional reading, writing and arithmetic lessons. At NCS D, we strive to provide all students with optimum learning opportunities and the tools, skills and

knowledge they will need to be successful in the 21st century,” says Michael Jennings, NCS D superintendent.

By high school, students can choose from 16 different career and technical education programs, ranging from business, food and nutrition to robotics, welding and construction. Facilities, such as Roosevelt High School’s new high-tech CTE space, are outfitted with the latest technology. An extension of the high school system, the state-of-the-art Pathways Innovation Center campus offers college-preparatory curriculum, industry certifications, portfolio development through hands-on experience and internships.

PREPARING FOR THE WORKFORCE

Jennings says PIC offers advanced and professional coursework in the 11th and 12th grades, which builds on introductory



Natrona County School District

experiences students receive in ninth and 10th grades. By graduation, most students have earned the certifications that allow them to go straight to the workforce.

“At all secondary schools in the Natrona County School District, students attain real-world applications focusing on industry standards and college or career readiness. Students are provided opportunities for career exploration, portfolio preparation, graduation planning and more. We are committed to providing all students with the best possible education experience while preparing them for their chosen path after graduation,” Jennings says. The school district not only aligns its curriculum with Wyoming Content

and Performance Standards, but also partners with local businesses to develop curricula and programs that ensure students are learning the skills those businesses need.

“NCS D is focused on creating and expanding strong partnerships with local businesses and organizations, creating opportunities for real-world experiences that bridge the gap between classroom learning and professional aspirations,” Jennings says. “By actively engaging with the community, NCS D ensures its students are equipped with the knowledge and skills demanded by evolving industries, making them highly competitive in the job market.”

– Teree Caruthers

Living Well

Casper residents can count on quality care, food and fitness options

While Casper celebrates the traditions of Old West culture, it is also home to a corral full of modern health and wellness resources that includes award-winning health care facilities and a strong recreation program that helps its residents live their best life.

Fresh Food and Healthy Living

A healthy diet is foundational to a community's well-being and the Food Bag Program administered by the Wyoming Food for Thought Project works year-round to provide meals for children facing food insecurity when they are not in school. Volunteers of all ages regularly meet to pack the bright, cheerful bags with nutritional items

and "provide a local solution to hunger, so hunger is not an obstacle for our children to thrive in our community," says Cassie Murphy, Food Bag director.

The organization's Food is Free gardens offer raised beds producing fruits and vegetables in urban settings "where people can come by and pick a free strawberry or a squash or whatever's available at no charge," Murphy adds.

Eat Wyoming is a convenient and growing link between food producers and consumers across the Equality State.

"People can shop at our online farmers market and stock their kitchens with wholesome and seasonal food grown locally by Wyoming's farmers and ranchers,"

says LeAnn Miller, the program director and food broker. "You can purchase a community supported agriculture (CSA) subscription to buy fresh produce that is delivered for pickup at various locations."

Other items from milk to meat, including yak, can be added. During the summer, Eat Wyoming also has a booth on Saturday mornings at the Natrona County Master Gardener's Farmers' Market in Casper. Plus, Natural Grocers has a storefront near the Eastridge Mall, supplying the area with natural and organic groceries and products.

Largest Hospital in Wyoming

Casper residents are well cared for from the stroller set to senior citizens at Banner Wyoming Medical Center, the largest hospital in Wyoming and the state's only Level II Trauma Center.

Services range from trauma, stroke and heart care to da Vinci robotic surgery, weight-loss surgery, maternity, neurology, pediatrics and pulmonary, among many others.



Wyoming Medical Center, Banner Health





Find natural and organic groceries and products at local farmers markets around the region.

The facility, Banner Health’s flagship location, has served Wyoming residents since 1911. Today, it meets the medical needs of over 250,000 people from 11 counties and recently began building a \$6 million electrophysiology lab targeted to open in 2024. The new lab will primarily be used for cardiac ablation procedures and feature specialized equipment to determine the cause for abnormal heart rhythms.

“We know people heal better when they’re close to home,” says Lance Porter, Banner Wyoming Medical Center’s CEO. “Whether you or your family need emergent care for strokes, heart attacks and trauma, or a planned surgery or specialty procedure, we are committed to

ensuring that residents in Casper and across the state have comprehensive health care right here in Wyoming.”

Winning Score for Health

The City of Casper’s Recreation Division knocks it out of the park with a highly utilized collection of 33 community athletic fields for youth and adults – 12 for soccer, eight sites for softball, nine youth baseball/softball locations, three regulation baseball fields and the Mike Lansing Field – all lighted.

Kickball leagues are also popular. The leagues and tournaments make about a \$7 million impact for the local economy.

Two other well-utilized recreation

facilities are the ice arena, where hockey and ice skating are popular, and the aquatic center. Although the pool area has been closed for construction improvements, people should be able to make a splash again in early 2024.

Additionally, the city has an indoor recreation center where residents can enjoy basketball, volleyball and pickleball. Beyond group sports, a fun roster of classes for exercise and fitness, arts and crafts, dance, archery, gymnastics, fencing, martial arts and other choices help keep the mind and body in top shape.

“Our recreational offerings provide the community exercise and fitness, and promote positive sportsmanship all around,” says Paul Zowada, Casper recreation supervisor.

“Keeping people active is one of our top priorities. Engaging with the community and creating new relationships enhances quality of life.”

“People can shop at our online farmers market and stock their kitchens with wholesome and seasonal food grown locally by Wyoming’s farmers and ranchers.”

– LeAnn Miller, Eat Wyoming

– Patsy B. Weiler

We Are the Champions

From basketball to rodeo, Casper is an All-Star location for competitions • *By Cary Estes*

When it comes to sports, they don't just play ball in Casper. Saddles, skis, bikes and even darts are used as well.

That's because Casper is a community that embraces a wide variety of youth and collegiate athletic activities. Sure, plenty of the more traditional sports, such as basketball and soccer, take place in the region. But Casper also is home to an adventurous lineup of tournaments that includes rodeo, biathlon and mountain biking. In addition, events are regularly held in Casper for darts, billiards and cheer/dance.

"Because of Casper's natural assets, with the mountain and the river and the four full seasons that we experience, we're able to have some of the more niche sports that you can't find in most places," says Luke Gilliam, director of sales and development



Wyo Sports Ranch is expected to open in 2025.

with Visit Casper. "So, Casper offers lots of opportunities to access all these different sports."

One of the highlights is the annual College National Finals Rodeo, which in 2024 will be held in Casper for the 25th consecutive year. More than 400 athletes from nearly 100 teams compete for an entire week in what Gilliam calls "March Madness for rodeo."

"It's become a staple for our community," Gilliam says. "We've become

synonymous with championship-level rodeo, to the point that [the competitors] don't say 'I qualified for Nationals' – they say, 'I qualified for Casper.' It's a testament to the community's willingness to support that event and so many others."

And even more events are on the horizon, thanks to the construction of the Wyo Sports Ranch, a 131,000-square-foot athletic complex that is expected to open in early 2025. The facility will contain basketball and volleyball courts, permanent indoor turf, a sports performance and training center, and spaces for gymnastics, dance and cheer.

"It's going to be a facility in size and access that will be unlike anything else in our region," Gilliam says. "This will enhance in a massive way access to indoor sports for



all age groups. For youth events that are typically held at five gyms across the community, this space will be able to host tournaments that will happen all under one roof. And the local school districts will be able to utilize it during the winter months when their outdoor sports teams want to practice."

It is just another way, Gilliam says, that Casper is the place where champions are made.

"Casper is where these athletes can be recognized for all their effort and hard work," Gilliam says. "And we work to make sure those events feel not just like another game, but like a championship." 🏆

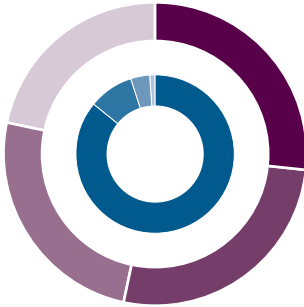
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Community Profile

DEMOGRAPHICS



AGE

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Under 19 | 26% |
| 20-39 | 29% |
| 40-59 | 24% |
| 60 and older | 21% |

ETHNICITY

| | |
|----------|-----|
| White | 86% |
| Hispanic | 9% |
| Black | 4% |
| Other | 1% |

POPULATION

58,543

Sources: Census Reporter, Advance Casper, Wyoming Small Business Development Center, Casper-Natrona County International Airport

TRANSPORTATION

COMMUTE

16.7 Minutes

Mean travel time to work



83%
Drives alone



8%
Carpools



7%
Works from home



2%
Other

CASPER-NATRONA COUNTY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

- » Served by commercial carriers
Delta Air Lines and **United Airlines**
- » Daily flights to **Denver** and **Salt Lake City**
- » The only **Foreign Trade Zone** in the state
- » **Five** on-site rental car companies



REAL ESTATE

25,000

Number of households

2.3

Persons per household

\$276,000

Average home value
(Zillow, November 2023)

HOMEOWNERS / RENTERS



Owners 68%
Renters 32%

FUN FACTS

- » ART 321 - Casper Artists' Guild is celebrating its 100th anniversary.
- » Casper has 1.4 million acres of open public land.
- » Casper is known for its blue-ribbon trout fishing.

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“ The people of Casper are probably the most unique of anywhere I have ever lived... The sense of community is the true heart of Casper. ”

-Connie Morgan
ChooseCPR Ambassador for Family Life

“ Casper is without question one of the best places to be if you enjoy the outdoors. Its location and proximity to a world class fishery, reservoirs and mountain ranges are second to none. ”

-Trent Tatum
ChooseCPR Ambassador for Outdoor Recreation