

NEWS

Press Releases



Top 15 TRAILS IN THE WEST

by SnowWest Magazine

11 Big Horns, Wyoming

Perhaps "No man is an island, entire of itself" (John Donne, 1572-1637), but we think an island of mountains, entire of itself, is possible. Okay, so maybe that's a stretch, but it sure aptly describes Wyoming's Big Horn Mountains.



Always visible on the horizon as they sit majestically above Wyoming's vast plains, the Big Horn Mountains are an island of riding in the northcentral part of the state. If you're having trouble visualizing the Big Horns as an island of mountains, go to Google earth and take a look. Nothing surrounds the mountains for miles.

Not terribly big (area wise) compared to some western ranges, the Big Horns stretch about 100 miles north to south, from the Montana/Wyoming border past Buffalo and Ten Sleep, and are about 60-70 miles wide. The national forest, Bighorn (the forest and river are a single word, the mountain range is two words), covers most of that – 80 miles long and 30 miles wide or about 1.1 million acres. Surrounding the mountain range is a huge expanse of prairie that reaches for miles in all directions.

The mountains were named for the Bighorn River (which was named by American Indians because of the huge herds of bighorn sheep that congregated near the mouth of the river).

Except for the 189,000-acre Cloud Peak Wilderness, sledders are free to explore the Big Horns, where elevations range from 5,500 feet to a high of 13,175 feet at Cloud Peak. Most sledding in the Big Horns is between 8,000-9,600 feet where between 115-250 inches of snow falls during the winter months.

The Big Horns are especially popular with Midwesterners because they are 4-6 hours closer to the Midwest than other popular areas like the CDST, Island Park, Cooke City and West Yellowstone. The Big Horns are roughly halfway between the Black Hills and Yellowstone National Park.

This mountain system actually incorporates two trail systems – the north half out of Burgess Junction and the southern half out of Buffalo/Ten Sleep area. Combined, the two systems feature just about 350 miles



of groomed trails and nearly 50 miles of ungroomed trails, with hundreds more acres wide open for boondocking. The Paint Rock trail connects both riding areas, but features some challenging riding that only experienced snowmobilers will enjoy.

The Big Horns aren't as remote as some might think, with services available in several area towns close to the mountain, Sheridan and Buffalo are two of the biggest towns in the area.



Sheridan Travel and Tourism
P.O. Box 7155
Sheridan, WY 82801

Phone 307-673-7120
Toll Free 888-596-6787

email: stt@sheridanwyoming.org
website: www.sheridanwyoming.org

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