

# CODY, Wyoming

## MYTH AND LEGEND MADE EASY

by Tony Banning

Legendary pitchman and impresario Buffalo Bill Cody developed his namesake community and promoted it as the “Gateway to Yellowstone National Park and one of the Wild West’s last unsettled places.” That was in 1895. By then the former Army scout and buffalo hunter was an international celebrity. He toured the world with a Wild West show that included the likes of Annie Oakley and Sitting Bull and orchestrated a mythological American West as part of the act.

In Wyoming, Buffalo Bill created the idealized 19th-century outpost based on the real estate industry’s basic tenet—location, location, location. Proximity to Yellowstone made Cody desirable then and it still does today. The community that began as a shrewd business venture remains true to its founder’s vision. Yellowstone is still the nation’s most popular national park. It remains home to dazzling natural wonders—Old Faithful and other volcanic geysers, mud pots and fumaroles; waterfalls, lakes and rivers, mountain meadows and towering peaks. It still harbors grizzly, wolves and of course buffalo. Cody continues as the park’s preferred eastern gateway.

The small community nestled among massive rolling hills serves visitors as a perfect patch of civilization, the ideal complement to Yellowstone’s pristine scenery. Comfortable and charming, it boasts antique shops, art galleries and plenty of dining options. Mostly, Cody continues to draw

visitors to relics of Buffalo Bill’s day. The Irma Hotel, built by the showman in 1901 and named for his daughter, retains the original ornate cherry wood bar, a gift from Queen Victoria. Every summer night on Sheridan Street, in front of the Irma, actors in 19th-century garb go down in a blaze of gunfire to the delight of guests.

There’s much more to Cody than cowboy kitsch. The Buffalo Bill Historical Center provides a



The Buffalo Bill Historical Center

stellar touch point with history. The institution’s billing as the “Smithsonian of the West” is well deserved. Five distinct museums all provide uncommon cultural experiences. The Whitney Gallery of Western Art presents the works of icons including George Catlin, Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt, Frederick Remington and Charlie Russell. The Plains Indian Museum serves as a repository for an impressive collection of artifacts, sensitively presenting the region’s earliest people—their culture, traditions and values. The Firearm Museum offers a comprehensive collection of American weapons—especially the Winchester, the gun that won the West. The Draper Museum of Natural History, 20,000 square feet of highly educational and interactive exhibits, explores the geology, wildlife and human presence in the Greater Yellowstone Region. Founded in 1917, the year Buffalo Bill died, to preserve his vision, the

historical center is the west’s oldest and most comprehensive museum. Its seven-acre building contains almost 35,000 artifacts, 20,000 books and 260,000 archived photos.

Cody’s new airport makes getting to Yellowstone’s majesty and Buffalo Bill’s mythology convenient and comfortable. The \$6-million facility opened earlier this year as part of a \$12-million improvement project. The new 28,000-square-foot



A new easy-to-use air terminal, (left) welcomes visitors to the wonders of Yellowstone National Park (right).



MUSEUM AND AIRPORT: HEART MOUNTAIN RELOCATION CAMP



Buffalo Bill Cody statue.

energy-efficient terminal, almost doubles the size of its predecessor. It includes the Landing Café, a comfortable eatery with unobstructed views of the runway. A new baggage scanner and a layout designed to efficiently move people and facilitate check-in contribute to the simplicity of the boarding experience. Direct United Express flights to Denver transport travelers from across the globe and around the world every day. The ease of access is an extra incentive to explore the town Buffalo Bill built and the land he loved to promote. The old impresario would be proud! ■

### YEE-HAW! COWBOY UP IN CODY

When Cody bills itself as the Rodeo Capital of the World it’s not brag just facts. Every summer-visitor should experience this close kin of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. There’s no



excuse if you’re in town. The Cody Nite Rodeo puts on a fast-riding, high-flying show at 8 p.m. every evening between June 1 and August 31. The season

also includes big-stakes professional competitions. Top bull riders vie for a \$50,000 purse during the Seminole Hard Rock Xtreme Bull Competition June 30. It’s a thrilling prelude to one of the crown jewels of professional rodeo. The Cody Stampede, July 1 through July 4, attracts the sport’s biggest names with a chance to nab some of the industry’s largest purses.



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**CODY, WYOMING**





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