Casper, WY, the second-largest city in the state, was settled in the late 1800s on the banks of the North Platte River, at the point of convergence for all major westward trails—the Oregon, California, Mormon, Bridger, Bozeman, and Pony Express trails.

Casper's Neighborhoods

Downtown Casper primarily contains a mix of commercial and office buildings. The Nicolaysen Art Museum and Casper Children's Theater are also located in the downtown area. A bank building in the center of the downtown was recently converted into apartments, and other such conversions are planned.

Casper has developed a plan to convert the Old Yellowstone district, a former industrial area adjacent to the river and downtown, into a mixed-use residential, office, and commercial area that will also include a school and park. A variety of higher-density residences, such as townhouses, apartments, and condominiums, are proposed for this area; the rest of the city consists primarily of single-family homes. Other new residential areas are being developed east, south, and west of the downtown. The new developments in the eastern area tend to be larger homes. Older two-story houses comprise the neighborhoods near the Sunrise Shopping Center to the south of the downtown. Farthest from the downtown on the west side, the Bessemer Bend area was the oldest free trail crossing of the river in the Casper area before it became impassable. This area features larger lots with many horse ranches.

Many of Casper's attractions are located across the river from the downtown. These include the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, which displays exhibits of the pioneer days on the Oregon, California, Mormon and Pony Express trails, and the Casper Events Center, which offers concerts, off-Broadway plays, and other entertainment. In addition, the planetarium, Mike Lansing Field baseball stadium, a speedway, and ATV tracks are located here.

The Casper College area is home to other cultural attractions: the Tate Geological Museum, Werner Wildlife Museum, and Science Zone. Houses in the neighborhoods that surround the College are older, modest, and situated on narrow tree-lined streets.

Parks and Recreation

Casper presents many outdoor recreational opportunities. The North Platte River offers fishing, rafting, and kayaking. Several lakes are just a short distance away and offer boating, swimming, fishing, and camping. The Platte River Parkway, approximately 10 miles in length, is a nonmotorized trail system that runs east to west through the Casper community and connects many community parks and recreational areas. Winter skiing and snowboarding are available on Casper Mountain. The city has 42 parks, a recreation center, an ice arena, a public golf course, and an indoor aquatics center.

Casper hosts the annual College National Finals Rodeo for top collegiate rodeo competitors and the annual Central Wyoming Fair and Rodeo.

Casper professional sports teams include the Casper Ghosts (baseball), who play at the Mike Lansing Field, and the Wyoming Cavalry (arena football), who play at the Casper Events Center.

Education

The Natrona County School District is an open-enrollment school district, in which families can select the schools their children will attend regardless of where they live in the county. The district serves about 11,500 students in preschool through 12th grade, with 25 elementary schools, 5 middle or junior high schools, 2 high schools, and 3 special programs. In addition, 1 school educates children from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

The University of Wyoming/Casper College Center offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs, although some course work may be required on the Laramie campus or through compressed video and teleconferencing for degrees not fully offered in Casper. Casper College, a 2-year college, offers more than 50 academic majors and 30 technical and career field options.

Health Care

Casper is served by an acute care hospital with 205 licensed beds, a 24-bed hospital specializing in neurosurgical and spine treatment, a 90-bed facility for treating behavioral health issues, and a 40-bed, free-standing acute rehabilitation hospital.

Casper City Stats

City . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 52,089
Metropolitan Statistical Area . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 70,252
Per capita personal income, Casper, WY MSA (2006) . . . . . . . . $44,152