

GOOD TO KNOW

**START/FINISH**  
**Northern Terminus**  
Green River Lakes Trailhead  
**Southern Terminus**  
Big Sandy Campground

**TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN**  
Approximately 6,096 m (20,000 ft)

**SEASON**  
July to mid-September. Late summer is ideal, as the snowfields have melted out and the mosquitos have abated.

**ACCOMMODATION**  
**On-Trail**  
Wild camping is possible throughout the Wind River High Route (WRHR).  
**Off-Trail**  
Big Sandy Lodge. Located just a few minutes from the campground of the same name, these beautifully set rustic cabins make for an ideal place for some post-hike rest and recreation.

- HIGHLIGHTS**
1. Knapsack Col
  2. Alpine Lakes Basin
  3. Cirque of the Towers
  4. Golden Lakes
  5. Bugling elk during their rutting season
  6. Titcomb Basin
  7. Knife Point Glacier
  8. Indian Pass
  9. Alpenglow illuminating the granite peaks
  10. The feeling of relief as you zip your tent up to escape a ravenous horde of mosquitoes

HELPFUL HINTS

**NAVIGATIONAL TOOLS**  
Even if you have a GPS application on your phone, be sure to carry paper maps and a compass on the WRHR (and most importantly, know how to use them). Batteries can die, electronics can fail, signals don’t



always come through. GPS has its limitations, and if a worst-case scenario occurs, having a navigational backup can potentially be a lifesaver. This especially holds true in extreme environments above tree line like the Wind River Range, where the margin for error is slimmer, and the possible consequences of getting lost are far greater.

- GEAR TIPS**  
10 items to bring on the WRHR:
1. Head net
  2. Microspikes (a lightweight traction device for lingering snowfields and the Knife Point Glacier crossing)



3. Trail running shoes
4. Compass and paper maps
5. Lightweight, light-colored long-sleeve shirt
6. Bug repellent
7. Ursack (bear-proof food storage bag)
8. Sunglasses
9. Sunblock
10. Trekking poles (which help with balance on the glacier crossing and while descending talus slopes)

**TRANSPORTATION**  
The Wind River High Route is bookended by two relatively remote trailheads accessed via dirt roads. From a logistical perspective, the easiest way to reach them is to organize a shuttle with the Great Outdoor Shop, a hiker-friendly store in the town of Pinedale (population: 1,890), located on the western slopes of the Wind River Range.

BONUS TRACK

Near the Wind River Range is a hydro-logical oddity known as the “Wedding of the Waters.” Located 7 km (4.2 mi) south of the town of Thermopolis, it is the point at which the Wind River becomes the Bighorn River—however, what sets this mysterious place apart, is that

the name change doesn’t occur at a confluence, as is the case with other watercourses.

The Wedding of the Waters is also known for its inordinate amount of aquatic vegetation, which every winter attracts thousands of waterfowl to the area. Notable among the feeding avifauna are predatory bald eagles, who migrate here during the colder months in search of the river’s abundant spawning trout.

The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is the United States’ national bird. A part of the sea and fish eagle group, this large raptors is endemic to North America, and typically live close by coastlines, large bodies of water, or rivers with large fish populations. Their nests can be found in tall trees with branches that are strong enough to support their massive bulk—measuring up to 2.5 m (8.2 ft) wide and weighing over 907 kg (one ton), they are the largest nests in the avian kingdom. Bald eagle numbers dwindled in the late twentieth century, but have since made a comeback thanks to widespread conservation efforts. The bird was officially removed from the U.S. government’s List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in 2007.

Thanks to its status as the national bird, killing a bald eagle is a federal crime—it violates the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. But the birds are facing a new threat in the form of wind farms. Wyoming sits in a wind corridor that makes it an important location for turbine installations, which are capable of generating almost 10 percent of the total energy consumed in the region.

Unfortunately, some bird species such as the bald eagle have trouble spotting these structures and have become victims of the spinning blades. This has become problematic enough that in December 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service set a threshold for the total number of bald eagles that can be accidentally killed by the wind industry at 4,200 per year. This law has raised many concerns among animal rights and conservationist groups, who have opposed the measure.

But it’s not all bad news. Scientists and engineers are focusing on tackling the problem and have proposed solutions that range from proximity alarms that shut down engines and stop the blades when an animal is too close, all the way to adapting each wind station with sound-emitting boxes that would help divert America’s national bird from a direct collision.

