



breaking news
order a guide
boating report
sign up for our e-zine



OFFICIAL STATE TRAVEL WEBSITE

press section
travel industry
int'l visitors



DISCOVER WYOMING

PLAN YOUR TRIP

STATE INFO

WYOMING REGIONS

POPULAR LINKS

HOME PAGE 

**WYOMING
OUTDOORS &
NATURE TRAVEL
TALES**

- ← Beginning Biking in Jackson Hole
- ← Best Bets For Sighting Wildlife
- ← Biking the National Forests
- ← Boulder Basics
- ← Calling All Powder Hounds
- ← Camping 101
- ← Camping with Horses
- ← Devils Tower Centennial
- ← Dogsledding in Bridger-Teton National Forest
- ← Dude, Where's My Horse?
- ← Extreme Powder in Jackson Hole & Grand Targhee
- ← Fat Tire Finds in Jackson Hole
- ← Fishing for the Cutt Slam
- ← Fountains of Youth
- ← Getting Soaked on the Snake River
- ← High Horsepower Sledding
- ← Hunting the Hunted
- ← Laying Tracks
- ← Natural Wonders & Historic Treasures
- ← On The Water
- ← Secret Yellowstone



you are here: [Wyoming's official state travel website](#) / [discover Wyoming](#) / [outdoors & nature](#) / [Wyoming outdoors & nature travel tales](#) / [laying tracks](#)

Laying Tracks

Blast through the sand of the Killpecker Dunes on an ATV flats razorbacks

By Dina Mishev



Southwest Wyoming
Killpecker Dunes by Dune Buggy
Wyoming Travel & Tourism

It looks harmless enough. *Both* look harmless enough, in fact. Sand is a soft substance and the ATV resembles nothing so much as a mini-tank, super stable with treads replaced by gargantuan, grippy tires. How difficult can riding over one while astride the other be? Giving the ATV some gas – and nearly giving myself a minor case of whiplash – I fear the answer to that question might not be the “easy as pie” I initially thought.

The largest active dune field in North America (yup, right here in Wyoming), the Killpecker Dunes total nearly 109,000 acres (three times the size of our nation's capital) in the Red Desert and stretch 150 miles each from the Green River Basin across the Continental Divide and into the Great Divide Basin. For those unfamiliar with the intricacies of Wyoming geography, they're generally in the southwestern part of the state.

Within the dune field's borders are sandy flats – where I'm confining myself and my wanna-be whiplash for the present – two Wilderness Study Areas, a rare desert elk herd, a homesteading ranch listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Boars' Tusk (a prominent landmark on the Overland Emigrant Trail), dunes rising up to 150 feet in height, and ridgelines, or razorbacks, steep enough to really spoil your day if you make the mistake of riding off the back of one.

But don't get too excited. Not all of this is open to the all-encompassing category of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs). Dune buggies, dirt bikes, and ATVs only get 11,000 acres in a designated Open Play Area. That's still nearly 20 square miles though. On the busiest of holiday weekends – Memorial and Labor Days and the Fourth of July – the main parking lot will be full (50 cars), but,



change the season

← **Snowmobiling
Adventures on the
Continental Divide
Trail**

← **Steamy Romance**

← **Tetons for Two**

← **The Ball Does Go
Further Up Here**

← **The Road to
Fantastic Fishing**

← **The Secret Spot**

← **Wildlife Gear up
for Winter**

← **Wind River Floats**

← **Wyoming
Winterland**

← **Yurt-to-Yurt in
Evanston**

Travel Manager

You currently have 0 items in your custom travel guide. Click to [view your items](#). Save the information in your cart by [logging in](#) or [registering](#) now. Sign up for our [e-zine](#).

Sponsored Content

Powwows

Powwows, the coming-together of Native Americans for dancing, celebration, prayer and fun, are a central part of Wyoming's cultural calendar.

Museums

From museums of wildlife art to museums dedicated to Wyoming's Western heritage, the inquisitive visitor will have plenty to see and do in Wyoming's museums.

Rodeos

"The Cowboy State." Yup. It sure is. Not only is Wyoming's history and culture *cowboy* history and culture, but the very skills, values and strengths of the cowboy are still celebrated throughout Wyoming.

Historic Trails

In the 1840s and 50s, nearly a half million pioneers, gold rush Forty-Niners and Pony Express Riders embarked along the Oregon Trail during the greatest

divide 11,000 by 50 and you're still left with 220-some acres all to yourself. Hit the dunes mid-week and you'll most likely have the parking lot, and the dunes, all to yourself.

As I bounce my way through the flats, I'm glad it's mid-week and no one is around to see me. To say I'm driving hesitantly is an understatement of the greatest magnitude. I wouldn't be surprised to see Miss Daisy zip past. Prior to today, I once sat astride an ATV in a cycle shop. It felt good and seemed to promise fun if ever taken outside. And my boyfriend said I looked good on it. Introducing movement into the equation however changes the game. Dramatically. I no longer look good – a mixture of concentration and confusion contort my face. Neither does sitting feel good. My butt went numb two hours ago.

Figuring a lunch break can at least solve one of these two issues, I park next to a picturesque pondlet (properly called a flocklet and formed when snow beneath the constantly shifting sand melts). Used to bare bones hiking fare – carrying food on my back I always try to pack as little as possible – the multi-course meal I pull off the ATV is positively gourmet – cheese, hummus, a loaf of freshly baked bread, sliced turkey, homemade chocolate chip cookies. Ten minutes and a bread binge later, I fall back into the sand for a rest and have an amazing dream: I'm flying over the dunes, the ATV wholly under my control, the wind whipping through my hair and a perma-grin on my face. I look good. The ATV feels good. I come to, and am inspired and ready to give it another try.

I never believed my high school cross country coach when she said you could visualize yourself into having a good race, but it seems I've just visualized myself into having a good ride. I feel more at ease. . . and I can feel my butt. Within an hour, I could probably give Miss Daisy a run for her money. I guess it is all about confidence. I begin to contemplate leaving the flats behind. It's not that the flats are boring but rather that I'm not here to sightsee.

The flats at Killpecker are about as un-boring as dune area flats can be in fact. Killpecker is unique in that the flats weave their way betwixt and between a mixture of moderate to mammoth dunes. Most dune areas have smaller dunes and flat areas, i.e., beginner territory, only at their edges. Killpecker's layout makes it makes it a great place for experienced riders to teach newbies without getting too bored themselves. Beginners get to really see what dunes are about too. But to reiterate, I'm not here to see (although I'm happy to say I have already spotted a few members of the desert elk herd). I'm here because – don't laugh now, I know I'm not the only one – 20 years ago a poster of Evel Knievel hung in my bedroom. I want to feel like a daredevil. . . but without breaking any bones or concussing myself. Minor whiplash is about all I'm willing to risk, and I've already nearly accomplished that.

I start out with a moderate dune. Once I get comfortable with really giving the rig some gas, it's actually not that hard to get up. And it's quite fun. It is hard not to go flying down the much-steeper backside – those dreaded razorbacks – however. After several close calls, it dawns on me to do a long-radius turn-around before I get too close to the top. A few more dune summits under my belt and my throat opens up to allow the occasional whoop and holler to escape. But then I remember who I'm pretending to be. Getting into the Evel Knievel spirit, I throw in a few fist pumps. And a bow.

Weather makes the Killpecker Dunes best for riding from April through early October. For more information on the dunes and the Open Play Area for OHVs, log on to www.wy.blm.gov/rsfo/rec/dunes.htm.

RELATED TALES AND DETAILS

overland migration the country has even seen.



No state is more authentically Western than Wyoming. Deer, antelope and, yes, buffalo still roam. Ranches dot the sparsely populated prairie and broad mountain valleys. People dress Western, not to make a fashion statement but because that's the way they are. Even the license plate sports a bucking bronco. And, there is no event in all the land more Western than Cheyenne Frontier Days.
[read more](#)

Many people claim that this is Yellowstone's most scenic view. The sheer walls drop 700 feet to the bottom of the canyon, and upriver the Lower Falls can be viewed. This point offers a spectacular view of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

[read more](#)

Sponsored Content



[Northwest Campgrounds & RV Parks](#)

[Southeast Horseback Riding](#)

[Southwest Campgrounds & RV Parks](#)

[State Park Listings](#)

[Fishing & Hunting Listings](#)

[copyright](#)

[contact](#)

[privacy policy](#)

[travel industry](#)

[help](#)

[site map](#)