

Cool Retreats for Seasonal Fun

8 places to enjoy great summertime living by Mary Ann Hemphill

Summer brings long days, concerts under the stars, farmers markets, picnics and hiking - and, in many areas, uncomfortably hot temperatures that can linger into fall.

If you want summer's fun, but not the sizzling heat, look to places that promise a cool retreat. Their lake-borne breezes, fresh mountain air, shaded forests or rushing streams are refreshing, whether you are biking a waterfront trail or picnicking in the dappled shade.

Here are eight destinations with abundant outdoor activities and a summertime climate in which to enjoy them. And what begins as a summer home just might become a full-time residence in retirement as golf and hiking give way to winter sports.

Sheridan, Wyoming

Set on the Bozeman Trail, that turbulent 19th-century path to the goldfields of Montana, Sheridan is a friendly small town replete with Old West history and charm.

Buffalo Bill Cody auditioned acts for his Wild West Show at the Sheridan Inn. Downtown has more than 30 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. The Sheridan WYO Rodeo in July is considered one of the top professional rodeos in the country. And the buffalo roam, along with elk, in Kendrick Park.

Foothills and the Big Horn Mountains provide not only a scenic backdrop but also varied and abundant outdoor recreation, ranging from leisurely wildflower tours to hand gliding. Residents enjoy hiking, biking, boating, water skiing, spelunking, horseback riding, rock climbing and wildlife photography. Trout and other game fish are plentiful in the area's many streams and alpine lakes. Four golf courses lie within a 35-mile radius.

Summer brings weekly outdoor concerts in Kendrick Park, the Celebrate the Arts event, Big West Arts Festival, Sunday polo games and the Sheridan Farmers Market where local growers, artisans and musicians offer food, crafts and music.

Housing options include single-family homes, condos, townhomes in and near town and several new developments on the edge of town and near the foothills. The Powder Horn Golf Community is on 900 unspoiled acres and six miles from downtown. The community includes a championship 27-hole golf course, a large clubhouse with a fitness center, a pool house, two tennis courts, nature trails and trout-stocked ponds. It was among America's 100 Best Master-Planned Communities cited in the Where to Retire July-August issue.

The Powder Horn's real estate options include home sites, custom homes and maintenance-free homes. Short-term and long-term rental options offer opportunities to test-drive the community. Information: (800) 329-3598.

Sheridan is in north-central Wyoming, 23 miles south of the Montana border. The average elevation is 3,694 feet.

Population: 16,719

Climate: High Low

January 33 10

July 85 52

Cost of living: Above average

Housing cost: The median sales price of homes in Sheridan was \$215,000 for the second quarter of 2009, according to the Sheridan County Board of Realtors.