

The Johnson County Burger Trail: A 3-Day Solo Adventure

Where the rolling Great Plains meet the Bighorn Mountains, Johnson County, Wyoming, offers solo travelers an unexpected pairing: legendary Western history and seriously good hamburgers. This 3-day itinerary takes you through Buffalo and Kaycee, combining the best local burger spots with outdoor adventures, scenic drives, and authentic small-town experiences.

Johnson County's Best Burgers

Before hitting the trail, here are the burger spots you'll want to know about:

- **Dash Inn** (Buffalo) – A local favorite on Hart Street known for the Dash Burger, plus wings, shakes, and drive-thru convenience. "Where the Locals Eat."
- **Busy Bee Cafe** (Buffalo) – Since 1927, this downtown spot overlooking Clear Creek serves bison burgers alongside an old-fashioned soda fountain. A favorite stop for Sheriff Walt Longmire fans.
- **Bozeman Trail Steakhouse** (Buffalo) – A family restaurant since 1979 featuring hand-cut steaks and elk burgers. Featured on America's Best Restaurants.
- **Cowboy Bar & Grill** (Buffalo) – Burgers and hand-cut fries in a family-friendly atmosphere on Highway 16 East.
- **Occidental Saloon** (Buffalo) – Burgers and steaks in a classic Western saloon where outlaws once gathered.
- **Tavern 307** (Buffalo) – Downtown comfort food and full bar, open Thursday through Monday.
- **Bison House** (Buffalo) – Casual burgers and Detroit-style pizza at Buffalo Golf Club.
- **Invasion Bar and Grill** (Kaycee) – Small-town burgers, fried chicken, and cold beer in outlaw country.

Day 1: Downtown Buffalo and Main Street Burgers

Morning

Arrive in Buffalo and settle into your lodging. Start your exploration with a walk along the Clear Creek Trail System, which winds through downtown and offers easy access to shops and restaurants. The trail follows the mountain-fed waters of Clear Creek, providing a peaceful introduction to the area.

Midday

Head to **Busy Bee Cafe** on Main Street for your first burger of the trip. Order the bison burger — a local specialty — and enjoy the view of Clear Creek from the dining room. The old-fashioned soda fountain makes this a perfect spot for a milkshake or malt.

Afternoon

Walk off lunch with a visit to the **Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum**, a 2023 National Medal recipient that tells the story of Johnson County's Western heritage through artifacts collected over decades. Afterward, explore downtown Buffalo's shops and galleries along Main Street.

Evening

For dinner, walk to the **Historic Occidental Hotel & Saloon**. The "Ox" has welcomed travelers since 1880, and the saloon serves burgers and steaks in an atmosphere where Buffalo Bill Cody and Butch Cassidy once gathered. Check for live music in the saloon.

Planning tip: Downtown Buffalo is walkable, so park once and explore on foot.

Day 2: Bighorn Mountains and Scenic Drives

Morning

Fuel up with breakfast, then head west on U.S. Highway 16 — the Cloud Peak Scenic Byway. This 47-mile route climbs through the Bighorn National Forest, reaching 9,666 feet at Powder River Pass. Stop at overlooks to take in views of the mountains and watch for wildlife including deer, elk, and pronghorn.

Midday

Return toward Buffalo and stop at **Bozeman Trail Steakhouse** on Hart Street. Try the elk burger — one of the reasons this family restaurant was featured on America's Best Restaurants. The Western atmosphere and gift shop make it worth the visit.

Afternoon

Drive south of Buffalo to **Crazy Woman Canyon**, a 13-mile single-lane dirt road that winds through towering cliffs alongside a rushing creek. The slow pace is perfect for taking in the scenery, and there are pull-offs for photos and short walks. The canyon connects Highway 87/196 to Highway 16.

Evening

Back in Buffalo, head to **Cowboy Bar & Grill** on Highway 16 East for burgers and hand-cut fries. The family-friendly atmosphere runs until 9 p.m., with the bar open later for those who want to linger.

Planning tip: Crazy Woman Canyon is a dirt road — check conditions and take your time.

Day 3: Outlaw Country and Kaycee

Morning

Check out of your Buffalo lodging and drive 45 minutes south on Interstate 25 to Kaycee, a small Western town of about 300 people with a big history. Start at the **Hoofprints of the Past Museum** to learn about Butch Cassidy, the Hole in the Wall Gang, and the Johnson County Cattle War.

Midday

Walk to **Invasion Bar and Grill** for lunch. This small-town spot serves burgers, fried chicken, and cold beer in a casual atmosphere with darts and a jukebox. It's the kind of place where you might strike up a conversation with a local rancher.

Afternoon

Visit **Chris LeDoux Park** to see the "Good Ride Cowboy" monument honoring the world champion bareback rider and country musician who called this area home. If time allows, drive the gravel road southwest toward Red Wall Country and Outlaw Canyon — about an hour each way — for a glimpse of the landscape where outlaws once hid.

Evening

Return to Buffalo for one last burger before heading out. Stop at **Dash Inn** for the Dash Burger and a shake—a fitting farewell from "Where the Locals Eat."

Planning tip: Kaycee has limited services, but the Sinclair station in town is one of the most popular convenience stores in the state.

Before You Go

- **Getting here:** Buffalo is at the junction of Interstate 25, Interstate 90, and U.S. Highway

16 — one of the most accessible towns in Wyoming.

- **Best time to visit:** Summer and fall offer the best weather for scenic drives and outdoor exploration. Some mountain roads may close in winter.
- **Restaurant hours:** Hours vary seasonally. Call ahead or check social media for current schedules, especially in Kaycee.
- **Lodging:** Buffalo offers hotels, motels, vacation rentals, and RV parks. Book ahead during Longmire Days and other events.