



FINAL REPORT: November 5, 2013

Prepared for: Bruce Heimbeck, Community Development Coordinator, City of Guernsey

Client: Guernsey Economic and Tourism Development Corporation and Town of Guernsey

Dates of Destination Assessment: October 27-29, 2013

Guernsey Economic and Tourism Development Corporation (GETDC) retained Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. (RTM) to conduct a Destination Assessment. This assessment took place October 27 through 29, 2013. This report documents the contents of that assessment. This two-day assessment included the following:

- Preparation of Guernsey/Platte County Tourism Industry Overview.
- Tour of Guernsey/Platte County including the following: gateways and wayfinding signage; visitor centers; inventory of lodging, dining, shopping; facilities for sports, meetings, events; transportation; attractions, amenities, and outdoor recreation.
- Completion of Destination Assessment Report on-site in Guernsey, WY.
- Presentation of Recommendations for Tourism Development to Community Leaders.

Population Statistics:

2013	Town of Guernsey	City of Wheatland (County Seat)	Platte County
Population	1,147 (93.6% white, 13.1% Hispanic, .2% black, .4% Asian, .5% Native American)	3,627 (95.1% white, 7.4% Hispanic, .1% black, .7% Asian, .4% Native American)	8,756 (96.8% white, 5.4% Hispanic, .6% black, .5% Asian, .8% Native American)
Households	504	1,539	3,647

Note: US Census states that “Hispanics may be of any race, so also (are) included in applicable race categories” – thus increasing total percentages over 100%

Other Towns in Platte County:

- **Chugwater: 212 people / 93 households**
- **Glendo: 205 people / 101 households**
- **Hartville: 62 people / 32 households**

Sources: US Census Bureau, City of Guernsey

Overview:

Platte County, Wyoming is located in the southeastern part of the state. The name “Platte” is taken from the French word “flat”. Wheatland is the County Seat. Platte County lies along the east slope of the Laramie Range, part of the front range of the Rocky Mountains. The North Platte River runs through the northeast corner of the county.

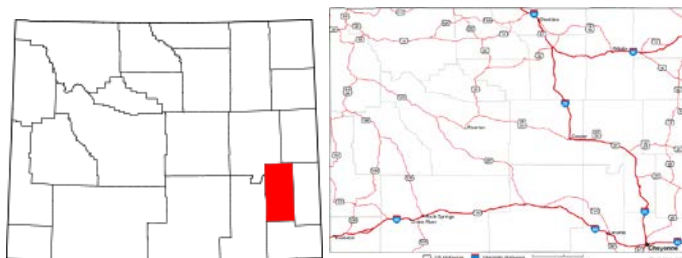
Most of the county is dominated by the blue cone of Laramie Peak on its western horizon, and a north-south travel route along the mountain front, used by people since prehistoric times, now dominates the economy as today’s Interstate 25 and Highway 26, which goes directly east/west through Guernsey and follows the North Platte River, much like the Oregon Trail.

Brief History:

- Early 1700s: residents included Plains Indian Tribes including Crow, Shoshone, and Cheyenne, and somewhat later the Platte River Tribes (Lakota, Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe).
- 1740s: Frances Francois and Louis La Verendrye were the first Europeans to explore the region, but the area’s remoteness discouraged settlement. However, “mountain men” began trapping here.
- 1800s: Wyoming was acquired as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.
- During the fur trade era (1820s-1840s) the Platte River was a major route to the annual rendezvous trade fairs on the upper Green River. The American Fur Company built Fort William, later renamed Fort Laramie, near Platte County, in what is now Goshen County. Also during this time period, as the fur trade declined, the area’s few settlers turned to ranching and supplying wagon trains crossing the area on the Oregon Trail, and later the Bozeman and Overland Trails.
- In the 1840s, the area where Guernsey is now located was known by immigrants as “wash tubi”. This name was given because this is where all the pioneers came to bathe and do their wash.
- During the mid-1800s the region was known as profitable range for sheep and cattle ranching.
- In 1867, the Union Pacific Railroad reached Cheyenne and the U.S. Army opened a supply depot at Fort D.A. Russell nearby. A freight road was opened from there to Fort Laramie. A telegraph line paralleled the road, and along the way roadhouses and stage stops sprang up.
- Gold was discovered in the mid-1870s in the Black Hills of Dakota, and the railroad extended the Cheyenne-Fort Laramie freight road to the gold camps. The entire route became known as the Cheyenne-Deadwood Stage Road, and became famous for its use by such colorful travelers as Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Buffalo Bill and Wyatt Earp, as well as notorious outlaws who preyed on the gold shipments.
- In the early 1880s, oil was discovered and production began in earnest in 1890.
- In 1892 the area became known for the Johnson County Cattle Wars, followed by similar conflicts between cattle and sheep ranchers.
- After the initial discovery of gold, other mining ores were discovered including copper and iron. The mining industry was the impetus for the development of most of the towns in Platte County including Sunrise (a company owned mining town), Hartville (a “rough” town with saloons for nearby Sunrise), etc.

In 1880 a New Yorker named Charles A. Guernsey moved west and bought land in what was then Laramie County. He became a legislator, rancher and promoted mining. He was also instrumental in building the Guernsey Dam. The town of Guernsey was formed in 1902 by the Burlington Railroad. At that time the area was known as the hub of the Oregon Trail, near a pair of famous landmarks, namely

- **Register Cliff and the Oregon Trail Ruts.** It is on this land that present day Guernsey is found. Guernsey quickly prospered as a shipping point, where the rail spur to the mines joined the Burlington Railroad lines.
- In 1894, the Carey Act, written by Wyoming's U.S. Senator Joseph M. Carey, made a million acres of the state's land very appealing to homesteaders. Under the Act, cheap land, water for irrigation and a share in the water canal enabled the settling of the Platte River Valley. The settlers came. With ditches, canals, and dams, they turned Wyoming land and agriculture into a way of life.
- In the 1920s, Wyoming's Teapot Dome oil deposits became the center of a corruption scandal involving the administration of President Warren G. Harding.
- The 1970s energy crisis and resultant increase in domestic oil prices and demand caused a dramatic boom in Wyoming's economy, especially coal mining.
- 2013 Major Employers/Industries: (Unemployment rate: 4.4%)
 - Agriculture: 462 farms/ranches – 1,344,358 total acres
 - \$82,613,000 = Annual crop & livestock marketing
 - Crops: native and alfalfa hay, wheat, barley, oats, corn, dry beans, sugar beets, grapes, raspberries, organic wheat.
 - Livestock: beef and dairy cattle, sheep, hogs, organic beef
 - Basin Electric & Laramie River Station
 - BNSF (Burlington Northern/Santa Fe) Railroad
 - Britz & Company (animal science and biomedical research)
 - Camp Guernsey Army National Guard Camp
 - Guernsey Stone
 - Stallion Oil Services
 - Tourism: \$40,500,000 Annual Revenues; 510 employment, \$400,000 contributed to local sales taxes.
 - 4 hotels & 2 Camping/RV Parks
 - Guernsey State Park & Glendo State Park (water, fishing/boating, camping, picnicking, hiking, etc.)
 - Note: Guernsey State Park Museum (built by CCC)
 - Guernsey Visitor's Center
 - Disc Golf: Course in Guernsey Skate Park in Guernsey
 - Golf Courses: Guernsey & Wheatland
 - Grayrocks Reservoir & Dam
 - Hartville: Oldest incorporated town in Wyoming
 - Pony Express Trail in Glendo
 - Register Cliff State Historic Site - Guernsey
 - Oregon Rail Ruts – Guernsey
 - Laramie Peak Museum – Wheatland
 - NOTE: TripAdvisor: Great reviews for Guernsey State Park, Oregon Trail Ruts & Register Cliff
 - Wheatland Rural Electric Association
 - Wyoming Premium Farms (Hog Farms)



According to the State of Wyoming Office of Tourism, the following is the official tourism entity in Platte County:

Platte County Chamber of Commerce

Cheryl Deuel

6516 16th Street

Wheatland, WY 82201

307-322-2322

cheryl@plattechamber.com

Linkage: How the Guernsey ETDC works with the Platte County Chamber of commerce

The ETDC works with the Platte County Chamber by attending each others organizational meetings, and looking at joint projects. The Chamber funds several Guernsey Economic Development activities. Both organizations are members of Platte County Main Street. They share resources for tourism promotion.

Lodging Properties in Guernsey and Platte County, Wyoming:

Name	Room Count	Address	Location	Notes
Bunkhouse Motel	30	350 W. Whalen	Guernsey	AAA rated Good reviews on TripAdvisor
Sagebrush Motel	12	151 W. Whalen Street	Guernsey	1,2, and 3-bedroom units See reviews on TripAdvisor
Trail Ruts Campground			Guernsey	Operated by the Town of Guensey and located at the golf course
Glendo Lakeside RV Park		631 Lakeshore Drive	Glendo	RV Park
All American Inn & Suites		109 16 th Street	Wheatland	
Blackbird Inn B&B		1101 11 th Street	Wheatland	
Best Western Torchlite Motor Inn	50	1809 16 th Street	Wheatland	Exterior corridor, 2 floors, no elevator, outdoor swimming pool
Motel 6	45	95 16 th Street	Wheatland	Interior corridor
Mountain View RV Park		77 20 th Street	Wheatland	
Parkway Motel	14	1257 South Street	Wheatland	
Plains Motel	11	208 16 th Street	Wheatland	
Super 8	32	2401 16 th Street	Wheatland	Interior corridor, 2 floors, no elevator, heated indoor pool
Vimbo's	37	203 16 th Street	Wheatland	
West Winds Motel	30	1756 South Road	Wheatland	
Western Motel	8	1450 South Street	Wheatland	
Wyoming Motel	26	1101 9 th Street	Wheatland	Exterior corridor, 2 floors, no elevator, no swimming pool

Town of Guernsey Tourism Tax Board Leadership:

Name	Office	Occupation	5- yr. Term
Cate Cundall	Main Contact for Board	Town Clerk/Treasurer	12/2014
Ed Delgado		Mayor	12/2014
Cindy Frederick		City Council member	12/2014
Nick Paustian		City Council member	12/2014
Dale Harris		City Council Member	12/2014
Craig Frederick		City Council Member	12/2014

Current Sales and Lodging Occupancy Taxes for Guernsey and Platte County, WY:

Current Platte County Sales Taxes:

- 4% State Tax
- 1% Platte County Tax
- 1% Platte County Special Purpose Tax (to be collected until special purpose is completed)

Current Platte County Lodging Occupancy Tax:

- 2% in Town of Guernsey only (no occupancy tax is charged in any other Platte County municipality or in the County)

Town of Guernsey Lodging Occupancy Tax 2007-2012:

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
January	1288.8	303.92	363.33	0	979.07	445.12	1,045.75
February	282.26	566.33	649.86	0	0.06	0	471.68
March	571.47	431.57	419.13	0	314.87	449.84	0
April	403.83	724.13	1,327.26	211.71	435.52	290.54	525.86
May	1.18	0.99	911.08	200.51	0	567.8	538.97
June	928.77	545.81	158.19	247.08	566.88	839.62	1,160.07
July		717.53	624.22	593.62	675.8	801.1	984.58
August	746.66	699.94	1,185.36	994.4	1929.3	1,003.62	541.59
September	570.86	1,125.69	816.72	1,172.07	1,285.01	903.02	1,002.99
October	696.14	1,359.05	0	507.97	1,075.25	948.4	
November	1,256.29	51.03	0	1,520.64	846.15	704.36	
December	10.69	771.21	0	9.36	1,127.86	697.86	
TOTALS	\$6,756.95	\$7,297.20	\$6,455.15	\$5,457.36	\$9,235.77	\$7,651.28	\$6,271.49

The reduction in collections seen in this chart for 2009 and 2010 match the statewide Wyoming pattern during the recessionary period. Similarly, the increase since 2011 reflects statewide patterns of more vibrant visitation and lodging. There does appear to be some anomaly in the year 2011 resulting in an increase for that year.

Distribution of Occupancy Tax Collections:

Two percent (2%) occupancy tax is collected in Guernsey, Wyoming. No occupancy tax is collected in any other Platte County municipalities or Platte County.

The Town of Guernsey collects the occupancy tax and the entire tax total is used to operate the Visitor Center. The town does not seek any input from the Chamber or from the local Economic Development group in the allocation of these funds. Local motels are not involved in this process either.

Town of Guernsey and Platte County Tourism Budget:

Again, the only entity that collects an occupancy tax in the entirety of Platte County is the City of Guernsey. The City of Guernsey does not have a specified Tourism Budget, other than what is used to operate the Visitor Center. There is \$1,500 in the Guernsey Economic and Tourism Development Corporation budget.

Tourism-Related Facilities:

Banquet & Meeting Facilities:

Currently there are limited spaces in local restaurants. Churches and the school are used for banquet facilities when needed.

Event and Trade Show Facilities:

Guernsey does not have a fairgrounds type facility. There is a non-operational rodeo grounds in the community. This is quite a topic of discussion as to what to do with the land and facilities on it right now. There was to be funding for a study to look at this from an economic standpoint, but it has not been done.

Swimming/Baseball Field Complex:

This is a 4-acre complex completed in 2010.

- 1 softball/Little League fields
- 1 championship baseball field
- Swimming pool with water slide
- Ball fields fully irrigated.
- 2 concession buildings
- 2 large restroom areas
- 30 paved parking spaces
- 25 unpaved parking spa

Results Measures for Platte County, Tracking and Reporting Tools:

Guernsey Visitor Center Count:

Year:	2010	2011	2012
May	24	19	48
June	313	391	374
July	561	483	620
August	383	271	363
September	55	69	20
Total:	1336	1233	1425
Total Days	100	101	101
Average per Day	13.36	12.20792079	14.10891089

Currently, there is no formal advertising placement for any of the cities in Platte County or for the County itself. Thus, there are no inquiries generated by advertising.

State of Wyoming Reported Travel Spending for Platte County:

Wyoming's April 2013 report titled *The Economic Impact of Travel on Wyoming*, prepared by Dean Runyan Associates, indicates the following trend for Platte County:

Year	2010	2011	2012p	Avg. Percent Change Since 1998
Total Revenues	\$35,600,000	\$39,800,000	\$41,100,000	4.6%
Local Tax			400,000	
State Tax			900,000	
Total Tax			1,300,000	

Transportation Statistics:

Interstate 25	7,500 daily x 365 = 2,737,500	From I-10 in Las Cruces, NM to I-90 in Buffalo, WY. Even travelers from east are likely to travel on I-80 to I-25 north.
U.S. Highway 26 (at Guernsey)	2,354 daily x 365 = 859,210	From I-25 west of Guernsey to Nebraska Designated as Scenic ByWay
WY State Road 270	1,701 daily x 365 = 620,000	Goes north from Guernsey, crosses State Road 20, terminates in Niobrara County
Amtrak	N/A	
BNSF (Burlington Northern/ Santa Fe) Railroad	N/A	
Buses	N/A	

Attraction Attendance:

Name	2012 Attendance	Visitor Notes
Guernsey State Park (mostly outdoor Recreation & water activities)	50,710	225 campsites 90-95% full from June to August. 4 yurts 2 years old. 4 more in planning stage. Visitors either recreation-focused or heritage/cultural
Oregon Trail Ruts	Not tracked	One of primary "attractors"
Register Cliff	Not tracked	One of primary "attractors"
Fort Laramie	50,000	20% international, 70% arrive via I-25 from south. GenX and Baby Boomers. 200 tour buses annually. Average visit 2 ½ hours. 50% repeat / 50% first time.
Glendo State Park	214,477	
Guernsey Visitor's Center (2013)	1,425	
Other assets in Guernsey: Visitor Center and Interpretive Area Guernsey Town Park (along river) Guernsey Pool/Waterslide Platte River (tubing becoming popular)		
Wheatland , the County Seat, is located southwest of Guernsey, just off I-25, and has approximately 250 lodging rooms, restaurants, shopping, etc. It is where the Chamber of Commerce's Visitor Center are located.		
Hartville & Sunrise are very attractive, historic mining towns. Worth the drive, lots of history, charm, but very Limited infrastructure. No commercial services, food & beverage, restrooms, etc.		

- Fort Laramie and Oregon Trail Ruts are the first items visitors to Chamber's Visitor Center in Wheatland ask about, according to Chamber representatives.
- Fort Laramie officials estimate that the reasons people come to the national park include: 1) The words "Fort Laramie" are well known; 2) Trail Ruts; 3) Genealogy (many visitor have relatives who traveled the trail).
- Negative comments from visitors:
 - Not enough lodging rooms in the area
 - Lack of lunch options for visitors to Fort Laramie
- Positive comments from visitors: Scenery, friendly people, history, recreation

Recommendations by Randall Travel Marketing:

Gateways, Signage, Wayfinding:

- Good WDOT signage along I-25 (brown historic & attractions signs especially for Fort Laramie, Oregon Trail Ruts, Guernsey State Park, etc.). Not quite as much signage coming from east, but sufficient.
- Nice gateway sign for Wheatland along I-25 (stone construction, nighttime illumination).
- Nice gateway signs for Guernsey with iron symbol cutouts and nighttime illumination.
- Perhaps Guernsey could adopt black wrought-iron cutout signs to provide a distinction for Guernsey and create a western town feel. This could be done either as light pole attachments, or as a style of signage for businesses. Willets, California is an example of a town that attached similar western icons crafted in metal to their downtown light poles (cowboy hat, boots, horse heads, spurs, etc.) to create a western atmosphere and differentiate itself from the more “California style” towns in Mendocino County.
- Need plentiful, tear-off maps which can be highlighted for wayfinding. Maps need to be distributed to hotels, restaurants, retail, convenience stores, etc. to help those that stop find their way and hopefully extend their stay.
- Signage is needed in Guernsey to direct travelers to Guernsey Visitor Center. Existing signage is difficult to find among the “visual clutter”. Needs to be more visible.
- Existing retail in Guernsey needs more impactful signage, better “orientation” for travelers, better interpretation of local artisans, artists, etc. **Handmade, Homemade, and Artisan-Crafted** are the key words to promote. Talk with existing visitors and see how well retailers are effectively communicating product appeal. Perhaps create tabletop displays which provide information about the artist.

Visitor Center(s):

- Visitor Center in Guernsey is an attraction in itself. During summer, outdoor movies and concerts also happen here.
- Add visitor information in weather-proof exterior device, so visitors can find information when visitor center is closed.
- Recommend conducting basic visitor research at Wheatland Chamber Visitor Center and at Guernsey Visitor Center including capturing visitors email addresses to send follow-up survey to document:
 - Point of origin
 - First time vs. Repeat visit patterns
 - Number in travel party
 - Number of nights staying in Wyoming
 - Number of nights staying in Platte County
 - Choice of lodging facility
 - Communities, attractions, etc. visited
 - Expenditures
 - Satisfaction ratings with categories of amenities

Governance, Funding, Staff:

- No one on current Tourism Tax Board has direct tourism industry experience. RTM recommends changing this so that Board has understanding of the needs of the industry and how to grow revenues. Until such change can occur, the Tourism Tax Board needs to actively solicit input from the local tourism industry to ensure the well-being of the industry.
- Monitor other Wyoming counties to determine when it is appropriate to increase lodging tax. Keep Guernsey rate comparable to other areas.

Marketing:Visitor Guide:

- Recommend simple 4" x 9" or newsprint format so it can be updated annually
- Include tear-off map on the visitor guide (can also be used independent of guide)
- Include ads to offset costs (visitors prefer having ads)

Tear-Off Map:

- Design as part of Visitor Guide, but plan to print and use independently of Visitor Guide
- Distribute widely to encourage longer stays
- Include information on reverse side for attractions, restaurants, hotels, retail
- Identify attractions, restaurants, lodging, retail, visitor centers, visitor facilities such as parks, Platte River access points, etc.
- After design, test with real visitors and seek suggestions for improvement

Website:

- Feature "must sees":
 - Fort Laramie
 - Oregon Trail Ruts
 - Guernsey State Park
 - Glendo State Park
 - Register Cliff
 - Towns of Guernsey, Wheatland, Hartville and Sunrise
- Lodging Grid (showing amenities)
- Restaurant Grid with descriptor lines, days/hours of operation, phone numbers, street addresses
- Retail overview
- Pay particular attention to mobile/smartphone formatting

Advertising Placement:

- Not recommended at this time due to lack of funds. First placement recommendation is to place ad in State of Wyoming Visitor Guide.

Public Relations:

- Not recommended at this time due to lack of funds.

Social Media, Technology Marketing:

- Mobile platforms for wayfinding, “yellow page” type listings, TripAdvisor.com, etc. all need to be investigated and monitored regularly to ensure accurate information is available to travelers including listings of restaurants, lodging, retail, etc. along with days/hours of operation, street addresses, etc.
- Social Media/Facebook: Facebook is a priority and is one of the prime methods of reaching residents in Platte County and informing THEM of events and product updates so they may serve as ambassadors, and become customers of existing retail and commercial businesses.

Inquiry & Fulfillment Procedures, Database Management:

- Keep all inquiries and record in Excel Spreadsheet format documenting:
 - Date of inquiry
 - Source
 - Name
 - Street address, city, state, zip
 - Number in travel party (if known)
 - First time or repeat visitor (if known)
- Eventually, a good database will be useful in marketing events and seasonal visitor opportunities

New Products:

- Float the Platte: Sell or rent float tubes. Provide maps showing access points, or arrange transportation return to starting point.
- Register Cliff Concert/Laser Show & Campfire Dinner. Catered by reservation only.
- Greenway/hiking/biking trail: Follow the Oregon Trail. Give people the experience. Arrange catered “Chuckwagon” style dinners.
- New hotel in Guernsey: recruit new 40-50 room lodge, with meeting space. Contact existing hotel ownership groups in Wyoming, North and South Dakota. Seek input of Wyoming Hotel Association and Wyoming Office of Tourism. Prepare financial overview of existing lodging patterns, current local use and anticipated growth with oil industry and National Guard/Military programs.
- Seek new chef-owner restaurants. Consider incubator program for coaching/mentoring for business plans, marketing plans, loans, etc.
- Develop tourism in Hartville and Sunrise when basic “carrying capacity” infrastructure (restrooms, food & beverage) can be provided reliably.
- In retail and restaurants focus on: Homemade, handmade, organic, locally grown, farm-to-table, fresh baked, etc. Mentor existing retail and restaurants for upselling opportunities such as adding retail, art, jewelry, etc. in restaurants and hotels.