

# Price Gouging Or Good Business? Rooms For Gillette Camporee Go For \$1,500 A Night

The International Pathfinder Camporee will bring more than 60,000 people to Gillette, Wyoming, for a week in August. Even months out, rentals are going for up to \$1,500 a night. Some call it price gouging, others say it's just good business.



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Held every five years, the International Pathfinders Camporee event draws tens of thousands of people. The last event in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, had 55,000 attendees. (Courtesy Photo)

Normally, the second full week of August doesn't mean much to Wyoming unless you're on the road to Sturgis, South Dakota.

For Gillette, which is along the Interstate 90 corridor to the famous motorcycle rally, it's usually a little busier, but nothing like what the city will see this summer.

From Aug. 5-11, the [International Pathfinder Camporee](#) will be held at the Cam-plex grounds in Gillette. The event is organized by the Seventh Day Adventist Church every five years. And for that week, this town of 32,000 in northeast Wyoming will become the largest city in the state when more than 60,000 pack in for the Camporee.

All of the Pathfinder participants will camp at Cam-plex, but this leaves thousands of volunteers and any other attendees with limited choices for where to stay for the week. Add in strain of those on their way to and from the Sturgis rally and there are even fewer options.

In an ultimate supply-and-demand position of power, homeowners in Gillette and surrounding communities all the way out to western South Dakota are taking advantage, listing their homes and rooms for as much as \$1,500 a night.

Some call it price-gouging while others say there's nothing wrong with charging what someone's willing to pay.

Either way, there are few options if you want to be in Gillette for the Camporee and didn't book a room a year ago.

## **'This Is Ludicrous'**

Some Gillette hotels, such as the Baymont by Wyndham right off Interstate 90 and the Budget Inn, do not have rooms available from Aug. 5 to Aug. 11.

Campbell County Commissioner Butch Knutson told Cowboy State Daily that two- and three-star hotels such as La Quinta and the Ramada Plaza are costing anywhere from \$550 to \$900 a night.

"This is ludicrous," he said. "As a commission, we can't do anything because this is a private enterprise. The hotel owners are entitled to whatever price they feel like charging."

Even so, he said it doesn't paint the Gillette community in a positive light and could discourage people from returning in the future.

Despite some hotels showing no vacancies during the Camporee timeline, Knutson can't quite believe they're sold out due to the prices they are charging.

"We've seen rooms go for \$300, maybe \$400 per night, but nothing like what they're going for right now," Knutson said about previous high-attendance events in the area, like the National High School Finals Rodeo.

He was disappointed that some hotel owners in Gillette are willing to price gouge people for a Christian-themed event such as Camporee.

“We’ve all been in need of something or we’re going to someday and it’s just nice when people help,” Knutson said. “This is a town with really giving people and it just makes me sad when anyone takes advantage of it.”



The sprawling Cam-plex campus in Gillette, Wyoming, will host more than 60,000 International Pathfinder Camporees and support people this summer on its grounds, which encompasses more than 1,000 acres. (Cowboy State Daily Staff)

## **Up To \$1,500 A Night**

From a glance at Airbnb prices, homes in Gillette are available to rent anywhere from \$650 (for a three-bedroom home) to \$1,500 (for a three-bedroom, two bathroom home next to Camp-plex) per night.

For an event that runs six days, Airbnb guests could drop \$5,000 or more, including fees.

Some Gillette homeowners who have listings on Airbnb declined to speak with Cowboy State Daily when contacted.

The cheapest option on Airbnb is a tent available for rent in Devils Tower, which is about 62 miles northwest of Gillette. Additionally, hotel rooms were available from anywhere from \$150 to \$175 in Douglas, about 115 miles south of Gillette.

But anywhere within about a 90-minute drive, expect to pay way over average for that week.

No properties were available to rent in Gillette on Wright on VRBO, a similar online rental marketplace, during the second week of August.

The city of Gillette passed a resolution allowing lodging in recreational vehicles during a short period from the end of July to mid-August.

## **‘Price Gouging’**

Gillette Mayor Shay Lundvall understands the points of capitalism and a free market, but he is also disappointed to see local hotel owners and Airbnb hosts steeply increase their prices during Camporee week.

“I wrestle with the overarching perception that all of the events are going to significantly cause prices to increase,” Lundvall told Cowboy State Daily. “You can still make money and be a free market, but let’s not do it at the expense of our community.”

“I agree with a free market, but my perspective is that we want to make sure we have an accommodating and encouraging environment for people to want to come back.”

He described the room rate increases as “price gouging,” despite noting the irony that many hotels had already sold out of their rooms for the second week of August.

Many Gillette social media users said hotel prices normally go up that time of the year because of the motorcycle rally, but Lundvall and Knutson both said they’ve never been this high.

“The rooms do go up during Sturgis, everyone knows that,” Lundvall said. “But to what extent? To the tune of \$700, \$800, \$900, \$1,000 per night? I would ask the hotel owners and other business owners in the city of Gillette to be mindful of this going forward for future events.”



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<p><b>Home in Gillette</b> ★ New Comfortable central located home \$850 night - \$3,880 total</p>	<p><b>Home in Gillette</b> ★ New Kid friendly \$700 night - \$3,195 total</p>	<p><b>Cabin in Carlie</b> ★ New Devils Tower Rustic Cabin #3 4 beds \$319 night - \$1,456 total</p>	<p><b>Home in Gillette</b> ★ New 3 bed 2 bath next to cam-plex \$1,500 night - \$6,847 total</p>
<p><b>Room in Gillette</b> ★ New Stay with Leslie Spacious! \$620 night - \$2,830 total</p>	<p><b>Home in Gillette</b> ★ New Charming townhouse \$1,500 night - \$6,847 total</p>	<p><b>Home in Gillette</b> ★ New Close to main highway. 1 single bed \$700 night - \$3,195 total</p>	<p><b>Home in Sundance</b> 5 Acre Custom Home for Rally! 5 beds \$995 night - \$4,827 total</p>
<p><b>Home in Spearfish</b> ★ 5.0 (10) Beautiful home in Higgins Gulch Spearfish 3 beds \$574 night - \$2,694 total</p>	<p><b>Tent in Devils Tower</b> ★ 4.89 (520) Crazy Horse (14' tipi) 1 bed \$70 night - \$320 total</p>	<p><b>Home in Moorcroft</b> ★ 5.0 (5) The Red Ranch 5 beds \$1,500 night - \$7,018 total</p>	<p><b>Condo in Hulett</b> ★ 4.81 (16) No cleaning or pet fees-Cozy apartment in town 1 queen bed \$261 night - \$1,190 total</p>

Airbnb shows rooms and homes listing from anywhere from several hundred dollars a night to has high as \$1,500 during the International Pathfinders Camporee in Gillette this summer. The cheapest listing is a \$70 tent near Devils Tower more than an hour away. (Cowboy State Daily Staff)

## **But It's Not All Bad**

Despite complaints from Gillette locals about the high hotel prices or concerns about the strain nearly tripling the population for a week will have on local resources, Knutson and other Campbell County officials are still excited about the possibilities Camporee could bring to the city.

“I think [Camporee] is going to be a great opportunity for our community,” Jessica Seders, executive director of the Campbell County Convention and Visitors Bureau, told Cowboy State Daily. “There’s been an opportunity given to us and it’s up to us to make it worth everyone’s time.”

She pointed out that while the room rates are unusual for Gillette, they are typical of prices seen during events like Cheyenne Frontier Days.

Seders also noted that there are economic impacts already being reaped because of the Camporee, such as \$85,000 worth of mountain bikes bought locally.

“It’s difficult sometimes for people to understand the impact of economic development because they may not feel it immediately or personally, but their friends, their family members or even a client of theirs might be staying in business because they’ve been given an opportunity due to [Camporee],” she said. “We just have to be open to things that may not affect our daily life, but will still have a positive impact on the community.”

Camporee is slated to be held in Gillette again in 2029.