

# Gillette Camporee Expected To Bring 60,000 People To Event This Summer

The International Pathfinders Camporee is expected to bring 60,000 people to Gillette this summer which will shatter the record attendance of a single event in Wyoming. Everything is sold-out in Gillette and rooms were going for \$800 a night.



[Renée Jean](#)

March 02, 2024 9 min read



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) Ten years ago, Jason Aldean rocked a record Cheyenne Frontier Days crowd of 25,000 people. They were all crammed into the CFD stadium for one night, which was not just an event record, but also a state record.

Gillette, Wyoming, could be about to bust that record single-day attendance with an upcoming event that is set to bring 60,000 people together all at once at its sprawling Cam-plex complex

for the International Pathfinders Camporee, a huge youth camping event put on by the Seventh Day Adventist Church every five years.

The 2024 Camporee, scheduled for Aug. 5 - 11, is sold-out, according to Cam-Plex Executive Director Aaron Lyles, and it's going to be a record for the International Pathfinder's Camporee as well. The last one in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, hosted 55,000.

"This is their every five-year major, global event," Lyles told Cowboy State Daily. "And depending on how you look at it, we will be tripling the number of people who are here, when you count residents, so it's going to be a really interesting next few months."

That tripling is going to make Gillette the largest city in Wyoming [for about a week](#).

People will be coming to Gillette by plane, automobile and bus, and local are already booked solid, Lyles said, as are the hotels and Airbnbs in many communities around Gillette. Some of the rooms went for \$800 a night, according to Lyles.

"The local airport has just been inundated with requests for additional flights," he added. "And my understanding is that we're pretty well at capacity in that regard."

There have also been a huge number of requests for private chartered flights, and there are discussions underway about whether the National Guard should consider helping staff the air control tower as a training exercise.

"(That's) not final," Lyles said. "But those are among the conversations that are happening right now."



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)

## **The Wisconsin Road Map**

Camporee is a term more often associated with Boy and Girl Scout camping events, and the Pathfinders Camporee, put on by the Seventh Day Adventist Church for its youth, brings a similar sort of vibe, Lyles said.

It is one massive youth-camping spree. It used to be held in Oshkosh, but organizers said they had outgrown that location.

After a multi-stage process, they picked Gillette for their next home, and they have signed a contract to hold the International Camporee at the Cam-plex site both this year and in 2029. Thanks to the group's experience in Wisconsin, though, there is already a pretty detailed roadmap to help guide Gillette as it gears up to host a massive event that should set a new record for attendance, all at the same time and place, in the Cowboy State.

Cheyenne Frontier Days brings a quarter million people to its event over a 10-day period, but seating is capped at 22,500, and daily attendance ranges between 40,000 to 50,000 people coming through over the course of an entire day, but not necessarily there all at the same time. Hulett's Ham and Jam, meanwhile, regularly hosts around 25,000 to 30,000 Sturgis Rally motorcyclists for its daylong event, though many of those guests come and go as well, and the Fort Bridger Rendezvous brings in 60,000 people over a two-day event, many of whom also come and go and are not necessarily all in the same place at the same time.

## **Growth Spurt**

Bringing 60,000 people together in one place all at one time is a different sort of beast and, while it's not a zombie apocalypse or nuclear Armageddon, Gillette started preparing for the big week three years ago.

That started with announcements both to regular citizens and to businesses about the event and what to expect when. It also included preparing for the city's infrastructure to handle triple the number of regular demand on resources.

"Everyone's been getting regular communications both from Camporee and our community agencies saying, 'Hey, this major event is coming. If you don't want the headache and hassle of having long lines at the grocery store, go buy your groceries by this date' kind of stuff," Lyles said.

That has included telling merchants how much additional product to stock, based on the past experience that International Pathfinders have for Camporee in Wisconsin.

“So, they’ve been working with Walmart, as an example, and they already have prior store logs from Wisconsin,” Lyles said. “So, they know what sort of demands were made on the Walmarts, the Lowes, the Home Depots, and they’ve been communicating with those facilities for quite some time.”

Gillette itself is now moving into a validation phase, talking with all of its businesses as well to make sure that everyone’s going to be as ready as possible when the big week arrives Aug. 5-11.



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)

## A City Of Campers

While the idea for Camporee is essentially one vast camping event, like the Boy and Girl Scouts do, it’s not really out-in-the-woods-style camping.

Camporee will essentially pop up a city of its own at Cam-plex, complete with newspaper, radio station, food vendors, shops, activities and more.

Along with that pop-up city will come all the dull, mundane logistics that also must happen — like trash removal, signs directing traffic and transportation logistics, water supplies and waste disposal.

That has Lyles “down in the weeds” figuring out details like how many rolls of toilet paper are needed — 148,000 — on up to how many more ATMs there should be — a mere 20.

“I’ve heard that they put a pretty substantial demand on cash supply,” Lyles said. “So, I’m working with our local ATM supplier to increase the number of ATMs on the grounds. I think we’ll be in the ballpark of 20 ATMs.”

More usually, Cam-plex runs about eight ATMs, though generally only two or three are active at any one time.

“All 20 of these will be heavily utilized all the time,” Lyles said.

The Cam-plex director is also looking at things like where to put the bike racks, and what to do if Camporee attendees decide to move a port-a-potty into their camp site.

“I’ve heard in some cases that in international settings, more of communal property is a consideration,” Lyles said. “So, they might take a port-a-potty into their camp site. And if they do that, how does the service truck service that port-a-potty at that point?”

Meanwhile, the [port-a-potty issue](#) has been solved, Lyles told Cowboy State Daily.

“They have contracted a portable toilet contractor, and we do not need to supply the extra toilets,” he said. “Those funds are then allocated to other Camporee contract expenses.”

## **Sturgis At The Same Time**

Complicating matters is the fact that Camporee is going to be happening at about the same time as the annual blowout Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota.

That has Lyles communicating with South Dakota officials about traffic flow, just to ensure everyone, from emergency management on up, are all on the same page about what’s going to be happening in the region.

The Wyoming side of the Sturgis Rally has become [a very large part of the economy](#) for towns on the so-called Devils Tower Loop, a journey thousands of Sturgis-goers undertake during the Rally.

There are even well-known events like the [Ham and Jam](#) in Hulett that draw upward of 25,000 to 30,000 motorcyclists throughout the day.

So, right in the middle of Sturgis Rally-goers crossing Wyoming, Camporee attendees will also be bringing a large flow of traffic into the state, Lyles said.

It’s all going to be similar to what happened during the total eclipse in 2017. But, unlike the eclipse, once in Gillette, traffic flow from the Camporee should settle down fairly quickly, Lyles said. The gates will close up at noon Tuesday of the event, after which vehicles won’t be going in and out anymore.

“It will be a big traffic flow in over a two-day period and then a really substantial flow outward at the end that Saturday night of the event at the end of the week,” Lyles said. “Once they’re here, though, it should settle in with probably just a couple thousand vehicles moving around daily.”

## **Economic Impact Is Huge**

In 2019, the Camporee in Oshkosh hosted 55,000 people and had an estimated \$25 million impact in direct spending.

The Camporee in Gillette is going to be a little bit bigger at 60,000 people, all with a similarly huge economic impact because the group buys a lot of the things it needs locally, from ice and food to souvenirs and more.

Just how much additional tax revenue the Camporee will bring to Gillette through sales tax and lodging taxes is not clear, Lyles said, but the ripple effect of filling up so many hotels and outside spending at grocery and other stores is going to be huge.

“A lot of the people who are putting on the event, the organizers and staff, will meet here for the week or two weeks prior to the event in the setup phase,” Lyles said. “A lot of those folks are using Airbnbs, the hotels and RVs.”

The economic impact, though, won’t be confined to Gillette.

Airports and hotels around Gillette are going to be at capacity as well, Lyles said, and he’s expecting that some of the Camporee visitors will extend their stays, either before or after, so they can take in other sights in the Cowboy State.

“One thing I think it’s important for the whole state of Wyoming to know is that Wyoming has been very proactive about this,” Lyles said. “From Homeland Security to, you name it, the Highway Patrol, Department of Transportation — all these agencies are, and it’s been very humbling for me, to see the skill and expertise that they bring to the table. They’re not leaving any stone unturned, and that’s pretty exciting to know that we have that kind of support.”

*Renee Jean can be reached at: [Renee@CowboyStateDaily.com](mailto:Renee@CowboyStateDaily.com)*



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)