

## White Pine County, Nevada

White Pine County, in the east-central part of Nevada, is bounded on the east by the Nevada-Utah State line. White Pine County is large but sparsely populated with approximately 10,000 persons in the entire county. The total area of the county is 8,904 square miles. (That is 1,068 square miles greater than the state of New Jersey!) White Pine County's landscape boasts of north-south mountain ranges up to 13,000 feet in elevation, separated by long narrow valleys ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 feet in elevation. The highest point in the county is the summit of Wheeler Peak in the Snake Range at 13,063 feet above sea level.

Ely, the county seat, is just south of the center of the county at an altitude of 6,435 feet. It is located in Steptoe Valley near the southern rim of the Great Basin. Sunny, clear days and a wide variation between day and night temperatures characterize the climate in White Pine County. Because of the elevation, nights are always cool and a short (90 days average) growing season exists. The average first occurrence of freezing temperatures is early September; the average last occurrence of freezing temperatures in the spring is in mid-June. Mining has been the main impetus for settlement in White Pine County. With the opening of each new mining district, the opportunity for men to cut the wild hay and graze herds of cattle to supplement the quantities of foodstuff that had to be transported from a distance also developed. By this process, agriculture and stock raising took root. Often, when the mining district played out, the stock raiser remained. Men discovered the productiveness of Steptoe, Spring, and White Pine valleys and the excellent grazing grounds for stock. When the mines suspended, a nucleus of the population remained to carry on a pioneer program of raising grain and hay and grazing cattle and sheep over the hills.

The metals market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century affects the county's economy as it has since 1869. As the mines prosper, so do the businesses. Real estate, personal property valuation and tax receipts fluctuate with the prosperity of the mines. Business development is a good index of the conditions that exist in the county. As wealth increases, so do the number of businesses. When the people have no money, the businesses lose no time in closing their doors. A prime example is the effect the different closures of the Robinson property have had on the community throughout the years. The latest closure occurred on June 24, 1999 when BHP closed its North American properties, including the Robinson project.

While farming and ranching perform a significant role in the county economy, due to low annual precipitation, farming is limited to areas that can be irrigated from mountain streams or wells. Cultivated crops consist mostly of grains and forage. One of the major assets White Pine County retains, even after the mineral resources are subtracted, are excellent grazing ranges. Livestock raising predominates in the area. The mountain ranges provide summer pasture for both cattle and sheep. All stock must be "finished" for market in feed yards. Sheep flocks are moved to flat valleys at the approach of winter. Bands of sheep can commonly spend an entire winter without receiving supplemental feed. They eat snow for moisture and consume a variety of desert plants, including the lowly sagebrush.

On October 17, 1986, Great Basin National Park came into existence. Hiking, camping, and scenic drives are available at the park. Dramatic mountain peaks, lush meadows, clear mountain streams and alpine lakes can be seen plus a wide range of plant and animal habitats. The Lehman Caves are a special attraction of the park. They contain an array of stalactites, stalagmites and other unique formations with guided tours conducted daily.

White Pine County offers good hunting, fishing, hiking and other outdoor sports that contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by resident and tourist alike. A herd of elk, deer or wild horses are often seen. The Chamber of Commerce motto of "Experience the Unexpected" is very appropriate!