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YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE PARKS

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BLACK HILLS, BADLANDS & MOUNT RUSHMORE



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Welcome



Welcome to the **Black Hills and Badlands of South Dakota**, home to unique attractions, amazing scenery, and some of the friendliest people in the world.

Explore the region's scenic drives, such as **Spearfish Canyon** and the **70-mile Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway**. You'll find amazing views around every corner. Just 50 miles east, you'll find a moon-like landscape in **Badlands National Park**, where you'll find more than 400 miles of nature walks and hikes.

South Dakota is also home to two of the world's largest mountain carvings: **Mount Rushmore** and the **Crazy Horse Memorial**, a tribute to Native American heritage. Visit both and learn the history and story behind each of these magnificent sculptures.

Custer State Park, the country's second largest state park, is home to a wide variety of animals. Along Wildlife Loop Road, you'll have a chance to see **antelope, deer, prairie dogs**, "begging" burros, and the park's **1,300-member bison herd**. In fact, Austin-Lehman Adventures named Custer State Park one of the world's Top 10 Wildlife Destinations.

In addition to all of this, the Black Hills weaves in family attractions that have been around for generations, colorful **Native American culture**, vibrant **Old West history**, an abundance of outdoor adventure, **two of the world's longest caves**, and several unique festivals and events.

We hope this *Oh, Ranger!* guide to the region will inform and enhance your stay here in South Dakota, and that you'll be inspired to return again soon to the land of Great Faces and Great Places. Whether you're visiting the region for the first time or you know the Black Hills and Badlands like the back of your hand, you'll have an amazing time! Please stay safe, plan ahead and, most importantly, have fun!

Contents



American Park Network® publishes *Oh, Ranger!* ParkFinder™, OhRanger.com, and *Oh, Ranger!* guides—a collection of visitor guides for public lands all across America—and operates *Oh, Ranger!* Wi-Fi in parks and public lands. American Park Network is an official partner of the National Forest Foundation, National Parks Conservation Association, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, American Hiking Society and the Student Conservation Association.

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Cover: Badlands Loop Road features dozens of spectacular overlooks and trailheads.
Credit: Dual Logic



**FOR ANSWERS TO ALL YOUR
QUESTIONS, GO TO
OhRanger.com**

What's New!

The Truth About America's Public Lands



"No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong."

– Albert Einstein

I think everyone can agree that Albert was a pretty smart guy. His quote suggests he was also quite open to being proven wrong. Einstein set the bar for both genius and humility by his unyielding embrace of the scientific method.

In a world where information is often clouded by personal perspective, it's crucial that we follow Einstein's lead and proceed with care when it comes to facts and truth. Facts, by definition, are verifiable, objective data – things we can observe, measure and ultimately prove. In the absence of new learning, facts are grounded in evidence that remains constant despite opinion or belief. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines truth as *"being in accord with fact or reality."* One person's reality may be quite different from another's. Truth, therefore, requires context. If we're open, it's not that hard to see how different life experiences may provide us with wildly different (and subjective) realities.

America's public lands are steeped in both facts and truth. From the geology of the Grand Canyon to the biodiversity in Yellowstone, facts about these places are backed by years of research and scientific study. But the truth of these lands is more complex. It's about the cultural significance they hold, the stories they tell, and the way they connect us to the past and to each other. The truth includes understanding the important role these lands play – for future generations, to native communities, with regard to preservation, as engines of economic development and so

much more. 'Truth' may lead one person to favor mining while another's truth may dictate conservation above all else.

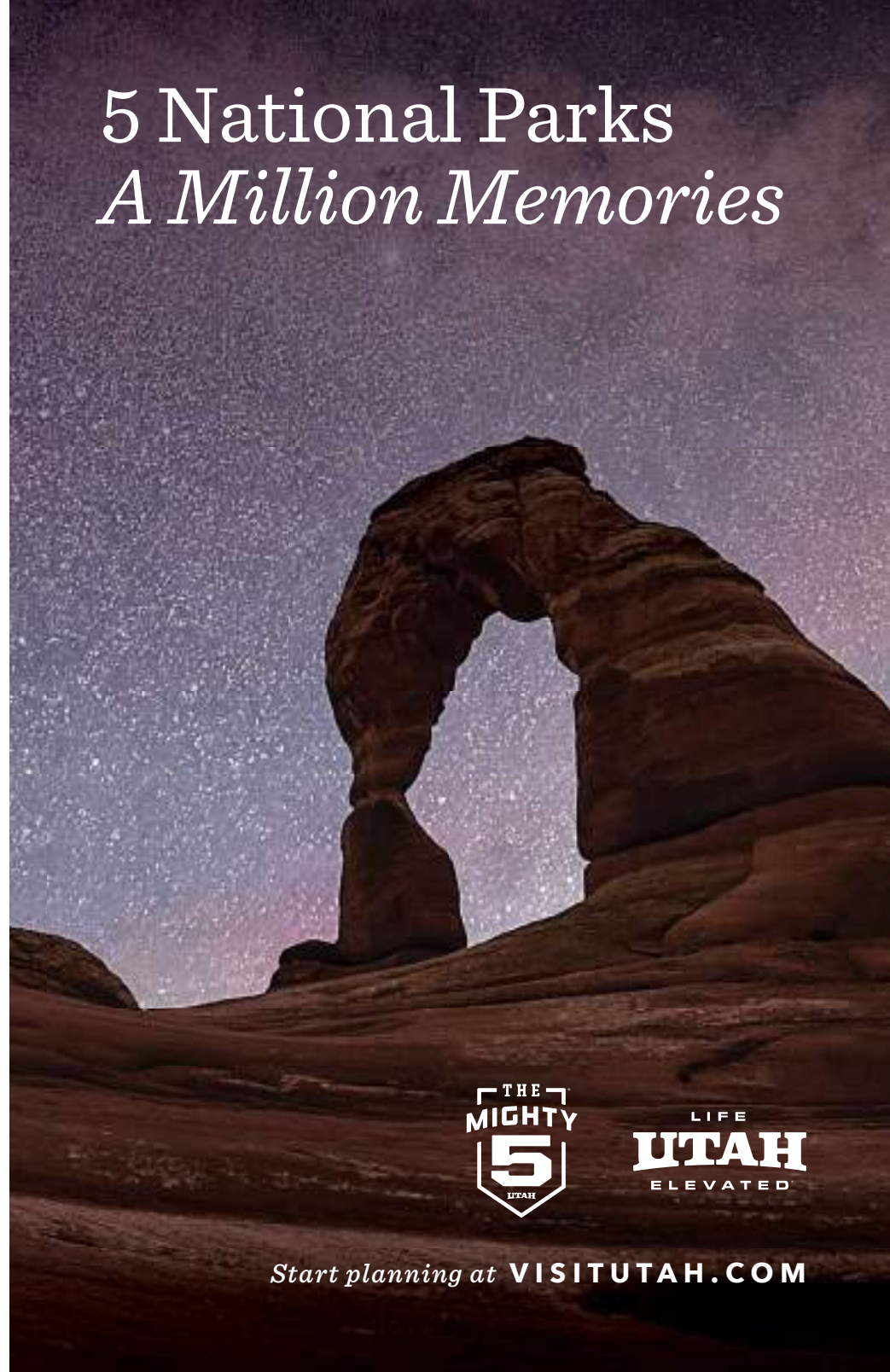
As with many issues, we won't all agree on how to balance facts and truths. Different perspectives exist on how to best utilize public lands. We need to resist the urge to simply dismiss the opinions of others whose views don't align with our own. Facts provide a foundation for understanding. Truth is shaped by personal and collective values. It's essential that we utilize facts in decision-making while, at the same time, embrace the truth in its full complexity. There's never been a better time to commit to listening, remaining open and considering different experiences and values. Only then can we have constructive dialogue that leads us to common ground. The Organic Act of 1916 created the National Park Service and placed equal weight on conservation as it did recreation, which are often in direct conflict. More than a century later, it's still hard to reconcile such opposing goals... and that's a fact!

Let's approach the stewardship of our public lands with an acknowledgement of facts, a respect for truth and an openness to understanding each other's perspectives, especially when we disagree. Together we can ensure that America's public lands remain a rich resource and a legacy for generations to come!

Founder & Editor-in-Chief

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5 National Parks *A Million Memories*



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South Dakota's Black Hills are home to one of the most famous memorials in the country: Mount Rushmore, depicting four prominent presidents in America's history. Carved into South Dakota granite, **George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln** stare out at the surrounding region.

The **South Dakota Badlands** are sure to amaze all who venture into the park. The stunning reds, oranges, and sand tones reveal breathtaking geology. The rocks' sharp edges pierce the sky while prairie intertwines itself through the rugged landscape. Ironically, the originally proposed name for the Badlands was Teton.

Wind Cave and **Jewel Cave** offer untamed, underground beauty. Jewel Cave grabbed its name from its shining calcite crystals, and at over 200 miles in length, it is the third-longest cave in the world. **Wind Cave** is also one of the largest and most-complex known caves in the world. Both caves offer ranger-guided tours and activities!

GETTING TO THE BLACK HILLS

By Car: I-90 runs just north of the region to the gateway towns of Spearfish and Sturgis. You can get free state highway maps from the South Dakota Office of Tourism by visiting travelsouthdakota.com or calling **(605) 773-3301** or **(800) 732-5682**.

By Air: Rapid City Regional Airport, located 10 miles southeast of Rapid City, provides easy access to the Black Hills area. Flights to and from Phoenix, Orlando, Las Vegas, Chicago, Dallas,



Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Charlotte, Denver, and Salt Lake City are available on United, Delta, Allegiant, Sun Country Airlines, and American Airlines.

BLACK HILLS VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

The visitor information center is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., closing at 6 pm during the summer. Located on the north side of Interstate 90 at Exit 61 in Rapid City, it provides free brochures, travel guides, and maps. The shop carries local crafts, books, and park passes, and fishing licenses are also sold here. The center is located at 1851 Discovery Circle, Rapid City, SD 57701. For information, call **(605) 355-3700**, or visit blackhillsbadlands.com.

WEATHER

Summer daytime temperatures in the Black Hills average around 80°F and higher. Bring comfortable clothing, a hat, and sunscreen. Evenings cool down significantly with more noticeable temperature drops in higher elevations. In the fall, sunny days and crisp temperatures are common, though snowstorms may occur in October.



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insure your investment

Do you really need RV insurance on your travel trailer?

As RVers, we know the allure of the open road and the freedom it offers. However, with freedom comes responsibility, including the important decision of securing insurance.

What is RV insurance?

RV insurance is designed to cover various types of RVs, including travel trailers, toy haulers, motor homes, fifth wheels, and camper vans. While liability insurance is not required for most travel trailers, having RV coverage could benefit you and your adventures.

How can RV insurance protect you?

- **Protection against accidents:** May provide financial protection for repair costs, medical expenses, and liability in case of an accident.
- **Coverage for theft and vandalism:** Could help with repairs or replace your trailer with less out-of-pocket expenses if it's lost or stolen.
- **Natural disasters and weather events:** May cover the cost of damage from storms, floods, or other natural disasters.

Is your travel trailer covered under your home or auto insurance?

While your home or auto policy can protect your trailer in certain instances, it can also leave you with gaps in your coverage.

For example, your auto policy may only cover your trailer while you're on the road, not if you're parked or at a campsite. The same goes for home insurance—if you're on your home's property it might be covered, but damage from a storm at a campground wouldn't be.

What specialized coverages does Progressive offer?

Progressive offers a variety of specialized coverages that aren't included on a standard auto insurance policy like:

- **Roof Protection Plus®:** Covers repairs or replacements for RV roofs, including if the cause is wear and tear.*
- **Pest Damage ProtectionSM:** Covers the cost of repairs from pest infestations.*

Confidence on the road

Having RV insurance gives you confidence you're protected no matter where you roam. From remote national parks to bustling campgrounds, RV insurance ensures you have the support and financial protection you need if something goes wrong.

While insurance for your travel trailer may not be legally required, it's a crucial investment in protecting your RV, finances, and peace of mind.

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Winter temperatures range from 40°F to -20°F, and icy roads and limited visitor services require that you plan your trips carefully. Even in the spring, the weather is often cold and wet. It is recommended that you bring warm clothing and rain gear just in case.

VISITOR SERVICES

GUIDED TOURS

Local companies offer bus tours to Mount Rushmore, Black Hills National Forest, Custer State Park, and Crazy Horse Memorial. For more information, please contact Stagecoach Charter at **(605) 343-3113** or mountrushmoretours.com; or Black Hills Tour Company at **(605) 515-3237, (605) 389-2092**, or blackhillstourcompany.com

PETS

Badlands National Park and Jewel Cave National Monument require that pets be kept on a

leash no longer than six feet. They are allowed in developed areas such as campgrounds, picnic areas, parking areas, and roads. It is important to keep pets away from wildlife, as they can transmit disease. Pets are not allowed on trails, in backcountry areas, or public buildings. Pets are not permitted anywhere in Mount Rushmore National Memorial, apart from parking areas. There are, however, dog-friendly exercise areas located at the edge of the main parking lot.

SERVICE STATIONS

Gas stations are readily available in Hill City, Keystone, and along all the major thoroughfares of local communities. It is important to remember to fill up before exploring the more remote areas of the Black Hills.

SPECIAL SERVICES ♿

Facilities accessible to visitors with disabilities are indicated throughout this guide by this symbol: ♿.



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IMPORTANT NUMBERS

NATIONAL PARKS

Badlands National Park	(605) 433-5361 nps.gov/badl
Jewel Cave National Monument	(605) 673-8300 nps.gov/jeca
Mount Rushmore National Memorial	(605) 574-2523 nps.gov/moru
Wind Cave National Park	(605) 745-4600 nps.gov/wica

LOCAL VISITOR ASSOCIATIONS

South Dakota Office of Tourism	(800) 732-5682 or (605) 773-3301
Black Hills, Badlands & Lakes Association	(605) 355-3600
Custer Chamber of Commerce	(800) 992-9818 or (605) 673-2244
Deadwood Chamber of Commerce	(800) 344-8826 or (605) 578-1876
Hill City Chamber of Commerce	(605) 574-2368 or (800) 888-1798
Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce	(605) 745-4140
Keystone Chamber of Commerce	(605) 666-4896 or (605) 786-3035
Lead Chamber of Commerce	(605) 591-0209
Elevate Rapid City	(605) 343-1744
Spearfish Chamber of Commerce	(605) 642-2626 or (800) 626-2626
Sturgis Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau	(605) 347-2556
Wall Chamber of Commerce	(605) 279-2665
Emergencies	911

CAMPING RESERVATIONS

National Forest Campsite Reservations	(877) 444-6777
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AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURE

Red Cloud Heritage Center (Pine Ridge)	(605) 867-8257 or (605) 867-5888
Siouxland Heritage Museums	(605) 367-4210
Tribal Government Relations	(605) 773-3415

These will vary by park and activity. For additional information, please call **(605) 433-5361**. For an additional resource, consult *Easy Access to the National Parks*, which is published by the Sierra Club and available in most bookstores.

REGULATIONS & SAFETY

It is always important to keep a few basic rules in mind to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. It is better to be safe and prepared rather than in an unpleasant or risky situation.

DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS

Remember that all animals in the parks are wild. **DO NOT feed them.** When animals begin to associate humans with food, they lose their natural fear of people. These encounters can result in damage or personal injury. **Give animals**

as much space as possible. Bison and elk can cause significant damage if they charge into cars. When humans get too close, animals can be frightened and feel threatened, which sometimes results in attacks.

Respect wildlife at all times and do not leave garbage or food behind. Garbage attracts animals to areas such as campsites, resulting in encounters best avoided. Wherever you are, it's best to follow a **"leave no trace"** policy. This is best for you, for other visitors, and for all of South Dakota's abundant wildlife.

PRAIRIE DOGS

You may spot a few (or many!) prairie dogs during your Black Hills adventure. While adorable, these animals have a surprisingly strong bite and can carry transmittable diseases—like the plague—so keep a safe distance at all times. When in doubt, use your zoom lens.

FEDERAL RECREATION LANDS PASSES

A federal recreation pass is helpful if you plan to visit many national parks, forests or other federal lands. For information, call **(888) 275-8747** or visit store.usgs.gov/pass.

Type	Cost	Availability	Details
Annual Pass	\$80 \$20	General Public Seniors (62+)	This one-year pass is available on site, by phone or online (not available at Mount Rushmore).
Military Pass	Free	U.S. active service members and their dependents	This one-year pass is available on site. ID (CAC Card or DoD Form 1173) required.
Access Pass	Free	U.S. residents with permanent disabilities	This lifetime pass is available on site or via mail order. ID and documentation required.
Volunteer Pass	Free	250 cumulative volunteer service hours with NPS	Inquire locally to obtain information about this one-year pass.
Senior Pass	\$80	U.S. residents age 62+	This lifetime pass is available on site (not including Mount Rushmore), online or via mail order. ID required.

Lodging & Dining



Accommodations are not available within Mount Rushmore National Memorial, but hotels, motels, lodges, vacation rentals, and campgrounds are plentiful throughout the region. Aramark Destinations operates **Cedar Pass Lodge** within Badlands National Park. Advance reservations are strongly recommended, especially in the summer. Please visit cedarpasslodge.com or call (855) 765-0737 for more information.

Cedar Pass Lodge and Cabins is open mid-April through mid-October 2025. Its location near park headquarters makes it the perfect starting point to explore the area. • **AMENITIES** Air-conditioned cabins; gift shop with turquoise, silver, pottery, Sioux quillwork, books, and jewelry. **Cedar Pass Lodge Restaurant** serves everything from trout and steaks to tacos, including wine and beer. The dining room overlooks Badlands. *Lodge closes at 11 am for the 2025 season.* BLD &

Located at the intersection of Highways 87 and 89, **Sylvan Lake Lodge** has 67 rooms, some of which overlook Sylvan Lake, a dining room and a cozy lounge.

(888) 875-0001 • custerresorts.com • **AMENITIES** guest cabins with fireplaces and kitchenettes; swimming, paddleboating, fishing, hiking, rock climbing nearby. **Sylvan Lake Lodge Dining Room** offers fantastic views with fare such as buffalo, freshwater trout, and wapiti (elk). BLD &

President Calvin Coolidge made the stone-and-wood **State Game Lodge** his summer White House in 1927. It has seven historical rooms with an adjacent motel and cottages. The lodge is located in **Custer State Park** off of U.S. Highway 16A. (888) 875-0001 • custerresorts.com •

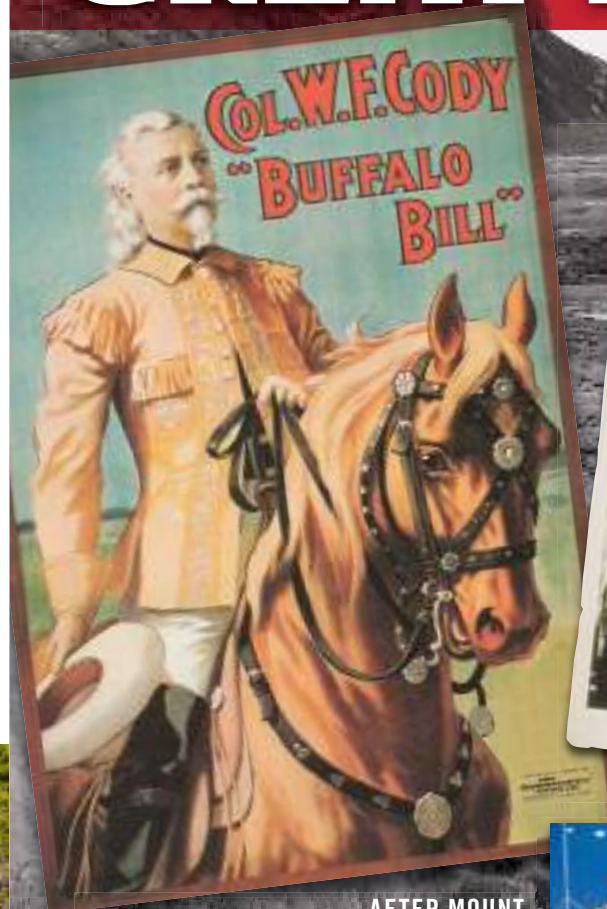
AMENITIES The lodge is close to hiking, fishing, and a summer stock theatre at the Black Hills Playhouse. **State Game Lodge Dining Room** serves South Dakota specialties like buffalo, pheasant, and rainbow trout. BLD

Carvers' Cafe at the base of the **Mount Rushmore** has an expansive dining room with a seasonal menu, subject to change in winter. It serves ice cream throughout the day! Hours vary. Closed Christmas Day.

• nps.gov/moru & BLD



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History & Culture



At the close of the 18th century in what is now South Dakota, the dominant **Sioux** were at the height of their power. Comprised of three major tribes—**Yankton, Santee, and Teton**—they were exceptional horsemen, skilled hunters, and superior warriors. The Sioux tribes had no written language, but their history and heritage were entrusted to storytellers and recorded by “winter counts”—drawings painted in a spiral on animal hides.

The Sioux were divided into bands and then again into smaller, extended family groups known as *tiyospaye*. Hunting bison, or *tatanka*, and processing the meat, hide, and bones were tasks for the entire *tiyospaye*. They built earthen lodges and teepees of buffalo hide while their eastern cousins lived in bark-and-mat wigwams.

NEWCOMERS

As **European immigrants** flooded the eastern United States, white settlers gradually moved westward seeking fertile land and suitable town sites.

In the 1700s, **French-Canadian explorers** began mapping the Missouri River with an eye on the pelts and hides they could buy from the American Indians and sell back East. Adventurers and brothers **Francois “The Chevalier”** and **Louis-Joseph Gaultier de La Verendrye** were the first Europeans to cross the northern Great Plains and claimed the region for King Louis XV in 1743 at Fort Pierre, near the present-day town of the same name.

Trappers and mountain men had been trading with native tribes for decades

when **Thomas Jefferson** became the nation’s third president. His policy of westward expansion led to the 1803 purchase of the 828,000-square-mile **Louisiana Territory** from Napoleon of France for three cents an acre. The land deal included most of what would become South Dakota.

LEWIS AND CLARK

With a new deed to an immense and largely unexplored territory, Jefferson sent the **Corps of Discovery** into the American West in 1803. Led by Jefferson’s personal secretary, **Meriwether Lewis**, and Lewis’ friend **William Clark**, the expedition set out to chart the Missouri River, map the supposedly short divide to the Columbia River and introduce the concept of an American government to the natives encountered en route.

The 31-member party, guided through the region by **Sacagawea**, met little resistance from tribes, as they passed through South Dakota. The journals of Lewis and Clark frequently refer to the wide-open spaces and black herds of bison they viewed from vantage points along the Missouri River.

LAND TREATIES

As the push for western expansion continued, the federal government entered into a series of treaties with the Sioux, culminating with the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. This treaty established the **Great Sioux Reservation** and granted all lands from the Missouri River west to the Bighorn Mountains of western Wyoming to the tribes. Soon, however, the well-intentioned treaty would be broken.

GOLD RUSH

In 1874, **George Armstrong Custer**, led the first official white expedition into the Black Hills. When Custer’s dispatches confirmed the presence of gold in the area’s creeks and coulees, gold rush fever flared. As treasure seekers swarmed into the region, federal troops futilely attempted to cordon off the Hills to protect tribal property boundaries. Negotiators in Washington, fearing war, encouraged the tribes to sell the land for cash, which they desperately needed to survive as bison populations dwindled.

Negotiations failed. The federal government ordered all tribal members to return to their reservations. Army troops were assembled to round up all “hostiles” and return them to their reservations by force, if necessary. In response, Hunkpapa Sioux leader and medicine man **Sitting Bull** (shown) summoned 10 tribes of the Sioux to his camp in Montana Territory. Together, they discussed their options, but no consensus was reached.

BATTLES AND LOSSES

On June 25, 1876, in the valley of the Little Bighorn River, **Sitting Bull** and his 4,000 warriors were encamped when Custer and his troops mounted their infamous attack. Hopelessly outnumbered, Custer and his entire force of more than 200 soldiers were killed. Congress reacted quickly and began punishing even the peaceful Sioux. A new treaty was enacted which ceded tribal land in the Black Hills to the federal government.

Following Sitting Bull’s death in 1890, **Big Foot**, the hereditary chief of the Minniconjou Sioux of the Cheyenne Reservation, became seriously ill with pneumonia. He decided to move his band to the Pine Ridge Reservation to join Sioux chief Red Cloud.



As they neared **Wounded Knee Creek**, after an exhausting 150-mile journey, Big Foot and his band of 350 men, women, and children were confronted by the U.S. cavalry. During the confusing encounter, a shot rang out and troops began firing indiscriminately, killing more than 200 Sioux, including Big Foot and his daughter. Today, a solitary stone memorial marks the site of the tragic Massacre at Wounded Knee.

DAKOTA BOOM

In the 1880s and 1890s, new lands opened up to homesteaders, gold was harvested from the Black Hills, riverboats ran the rivers, and railroad tracks were laid to new town sites. By 1889, the population of South Dakota was large enough to warrant statehood, and on November 2 of that year, South Dakota became a U.S. state. In 1973, Wounded Knee was back in the news again, the site of a 10-week standoff between American Indians and federal marshals. Two American Indians were killed during the conflict, which helped raise awareness of the plight of natives in the United States at that time.

Mount Rushmore



Mount Rushmore National Memorial is open year-round except December 25. There is no admission charge to enter, but there is a parking fee (valid for one year from date of purchase) of \$10 per car; \$5 for seniors (62 or older); active military are free. The Federal Recreation Lands Pass does not cover the fee.

GETTING TO MOUNT RUSHMORE

Car: The most direct route by car is via I-90: Take exit 57 to Highway 16 (Mount Rushmore Road) and continue on to the memorial entrance. From Rapid City, go southwest on Highway 16 for 23 miles.

Air: Rapid City Regional Airport, located 10 miles southeast of Rapid City, is the closest airport.

Train: No rail service is available.

SCHEDULE & HOURS

The information center and **Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center** are both open every day of the year (except December 25), with extended hours during the summer season. The busiest months are June, July, and August. To avoid crowds during this period, consider visiting before 9:00 am or after 3:30 pm. Please check the park website or Facebook page for up-to-date information.

LIGHTING CEREMONY

In the summertime, the sculpture lighting coincides with the park's **evening lighting ceremony**. In winter, Mount Rushmore is illuminated for one hour beginning 30 minutes after sunset.

PARKING FEES

Daily parking passes are \$10 per vehicle; \$5 per car for seniors. Active military are free (ID required). The fee for commercial tour buses is \$50 for 24 hours after first time of entry. Non-profit educational buses pay \$25 for 24 hours after first time of entry. Parking fees may be paid with cash or most credit cards.

INFORMATION CENTER

Stop at the information center along the avenue for details about activities and programs. Exhibits, a bookstore, and brochures are available to help you plan. The Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center is open every day except December 25th.

RANGER PROGRAMS

The National Park Service (NPS) offers a variety of **interpretive programs**, including children's programs and Presidential Trail walks. Consider visiting the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota Heritage Village as you walk down the Presidential Trail. Inquire at the information center or Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center for the schedule.

SCULPTOR'S STUDIO

The Sculptor's Studio opens May 24-August 9, 8 am to 6 pm; August 10-September 30, 8 am to 4 pm.

PRESIDENTIAL TRAIL

The 0.6-mile Presidential Trail (with 422 stairs) starts from Grand View Terrace, follows a historic roadbed overlooking

the amphitheater, and then winds through ponderosa pines and rocky outcrops to a point directly below the sculpture, offering views of the four figures.

It continues to the Sculptor's Studio before looping back to Grand View Terrace. The first quarter-mile of this 0.6-mile trail is fully accessible to visitors with disabilities. Please note this trail can close due to wintery conditions.

Presidential Trail access information is available at the park Information Center, on the park website at nps.gov/moru or the park Facebook page.

GIFT SHOP

Xanterra Travel Collection® operates the Gift Shop at Mount Rushmore National Memorial, which offers fine collectibles and mementos. You'll find clothing, wildlife posters, postcards, fine jewelry, local American Indian art, and a book section. Hours vary. Visit nps.gov/moru for more information.

LOST AND FOUND

To report a lost or found item, please contact the NPS at **(605) 574-3465**.

RECYCLING

Please place your paper and plastic in the recycling bins located in the park. Mount Rushmore National Memorial recently achieved Climate Friendly Park status, which means it has completed training and formed a plan of action to promote sustainability to mitigate climate change.

ROAD CONDITIONS

Current road conditions are available by phone by dialing 511 or by visiting South Dakota 511 at sd511.org. Remember to

keep your seatbelt fastened, follow posted speed limits, watch out for wildlife and be prepared to share the road with cyclists.

BOOKSTORE

The Mount Rushmore Society operates stores in the Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center and Information Center, selling souvenirs and gifts, as well as books and other educational products.

PETS

With the exception of service animals, pets are not permitted in the memorial.

AUDIO AND MULTIMEDIA TOURS

Rent the **Mount Rushmore Audio Tour: A Living Memorial**, a recorded audio guide that uses an audio wand. It incorporates narration, interviews, and recordings of Gutzon Borglum, Lincoln Borglum, American Indians, and workers. The rental fee is \$6.

You can also rent the **Mount Rushmore Self-Guided Tour: A Living Memorial** multimedia tour for \$8. Family and group rates are available. Aided by a GPS map, there are 29 tour stops around the park that combine photos, video, and audio to tell you about how Mount Rushmore was carved. The tour is available in Spanish, German, French, and Lakota.

The Junior **Ranger Quest**, a new adventure that allows kids to participate in up to 16 challenges at different tour stops around the park, is also included in the program. Once complete, kids can get a Junior Ranger badge from a ranger desk, just like the written Junior Ranger program. The Junior Ranger Quest is also available to download for free on the Apple Store and Google Play.

Making Of Rushmore

Mount Rushmore National Memorial is as much a product of dreams and determination as it is the work of a talented sculptor.

THE FATHER OF RUSHMORE

In 1923, **Doane Robinson**, the aging superintendent of the South Dakota State Historical Society, had a vision of a massive mountain memorial carved from stone so large it would put South Dakota on the map. Robinson told all who would listen of his dream of giant statues of Western figures such as Chief Red Cloud, Buffalo Bill Cody, Lewis and Clark, and legendary Sioux warriors marching along South Dakota's skyline. Robinson spoke to local organizations and wrote letter upon letter.

Many South Dakotans believed that a colossal sculpture would attract thousands of visitors with heavy wallets. Others found the notion ludicrous. Finally, when the newspaper stories stopped and the snickers ceased, Robinson enlisted the aid of the one man he knew could carry the torch—the respected **U.S. Senator Peter Norbeck**.

Norbeck, a frequent visitor at the White House, had the admiration of his peers in the Senate as well as that of the farmers and ranchers of South Dakota who had sent him to Washington. Robinson's mountain-carving proposal captured the senior senator's imagination, and he encouraged the historian to seek a sculptor capable of commanding such a project. Sculptor **Gutzon Borglum**, one of America's most prolific artists, received a letter from Robinson proposing the project in August 1924. Borglum jumped at the chance.

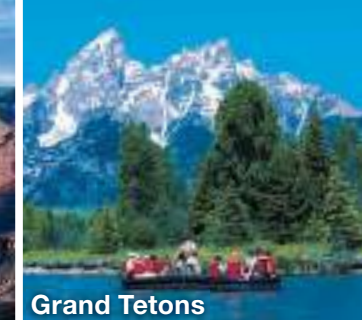
MIXED SIGNALS

However, upon his arrival in September 1924, the flamboyant Borglum politely, but forcefully, informed Robinson and Norbeck that his life's work would not be spent immortalizing regional heroes. The sculptor insisted that the work demanded a subject national in nature and timeless in its relevance to history.

By selecting four great presidential figures for the carving, the trio sought to create an eternal reminder of the birth, growth, preservation, and development of a nation dedicated to democracy and the pursuit of individual liberty.



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Grand Tetons



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Borglum soon embarked on a site-searching trip to find a grouping of rocks massive enough to support a giant sculpture.

He examined the Needles, as Robinson suggested, but found the rock too brittle for carving. He left and returned next year. It was on Borglum's second trip—August 13, 1925—that he found what he was seeking. Borglum and his party climbed **Black Elk Peak**, at 7,242 feet, the highest point between the Rockies and the Swiss Alps. The surrounding vista inspired him. "Here is the place!" Borglum exclaimed. "American history shall march along that skyline."

He set his sights on the craggy, pine-clad cliff known as Mount Rushmore, near the isolated mining town of **Keystone**. It had southeastern exposure, giving it direct sunlight most of the day, and was made of sound granite relatively free from fracture. Borglum carefully explored the crevices and sampled the rock of Mount Rushmore. With each test, he reconfirmed that he had found his mountain.

THE WAITING GAME

Senator Norbeck and Congressman William Williamson easily secured federal legislation to allow a mountain carving in **Harney National Forest**. A similar bill in the state legislature was passed in 1925.

But months passed as supporters of the Rushmore project scrambled for funding. Environmentalists suggested the project would deface the mountainside. Others asked how a mortal sculptor could hope to improve on what a higher authority had already designed. As the calendars changed to 1926, most South Dakotans dismissed the whole fanciful conception. Months passed. The sculptor's dream remained an idea.

PRESIDENTIAL ATTENTION

Then, in the spring of 1927, **President Calvin Coolidge** decided to spend his three-week summer holiday in the Black Hills.

On June 15, Senator Norbeck and 10,000 South Dakotans warmly greeted President and Mrs. Coolidge, their two dogs, and the First Lady's pet raccoon as they stepped from the train in Rapid City. They were soon settled comfortably into the State Game Lodge and the Dakotan way of life (the lodge would become Coolidge's "Summer White House"). Their three-week visit turned into a three-month stay.

This extended vacation allowed Borglum and Norbeck enough time to convince Coolidge to participate in the **formal dedication** of Mount Rushmore. On August 10, the president rode horseback to the mountain, sporting cowboy boots and a 10-gallon hat given to him by local residents.

"We have come here to dedicate a cornerstone laid by the hand of the Almighty," Coolidge told a crowd of 1,000 South Dakotans. In an impassioned speech by a man not known for his passion, Coolidge became the first to refer to Mount Rushmore as a "national shrine," then pledged federal support for the project.

After listening with satisfaction to the president's remarks, the 60-year-old Borglum climbed to the mountain's craggy summit and symbolically drilled six holes to mark the commencement of carving. The Mount Rushmore dream would embrace the remaining 14 years of his life and leave a monument unlike any other.



MEN AND MOUNTAIN

At first, it was just a job, a way to put food on the table. But as the four faces emerged from the granite, the men who helped carve the memorial began to share the sculptor's dream. These drill-dusty, unemployed miners, who had originally sought only a paycheck in the heart of the Great Depression, became caught up in a challenge that would produce a national treasure.

In the six-and-a-half years of work that occurred on and off between 1927 and 1941, Borglum employed almost 400 local workers. Some built roads, ran the hoist house, generated power, or sharpened thousands of bits for the pneumatic drills. Others set dynamite charges or completed delicate finishing work on the sculpture.

Among the most highly skilled workers were those using **dynamite**. Using techniques he had developed at Stone Mountain in Georgia, and relying on skills his crew had acquired in mining, Borglum used the explosive in an innovative way that helped to remove large amounts of rock quickly and relatively inexpensively. His powder men became so skilled that they could blast to within four inches of the finished surface and grade the contours of the lips, nose, cheeks, neck, and brow. In fact, 90 percent of the 450,000 tons of granite removed from the mountain was taken out with dynamite.

MODEL TO MASTERPIECE

Borglum created a model of the four presidents on a 1-to-12-inch scale, meaning an inch on the model represented a foot on

the cliff. This model has been preserved for viewing at the Sculptor's Studio. To transfer measurements from the model to the mountain, workers determined where the top of the head would be, then found the corresponding point on the model. A protractor was mounted horizontally on top of the model's head. A similar, albeit 12 times larger, apparatus was placed on the mountain. By substituting feet for inches, workers quickly determined the amount of rock to remove.

Drillers then used the same measuring system and air-powered tools to drill closely spaced holes to exacting depths, a process known as "**honeycombing**." The rock between these holes was then broken away using chisels and hammers. The final process, known as "**bumping**," used a pneumatic drill and a special bit to leave the finished surface as smooth as a concrete sidewalk.

A skilled driller could make \$1.25 per hour on the project, which was better than the mines were paying. Yet Borglum's crew often had to endure extended layoffs due to a lack of funds and harsh winter weather. When spring or more funding came again, the workers would report back to the mountain, eager to get back to work on their adopted cause.

As his dream neared completion, Borglum's biggest fear was leaving a mystery for future generations. In 1938, he began carving a giant vault in the canyon wall directly behind Mount Rushmore, in which he planned to place records of the memorial, Western civilization, and individual liberty and

freedom. Borglum's death and the country's entry into World War II, however, intervened and the **Hall of Records** was left unfinished (in 1998, the National Park Service completed a scaled-down version of the hall).

After Borglum's death, his son, Lincoln, spent another seven months refining the monument, but as America prepared for war, funds were needed elsewhere. On October 31, 1941, congress declared the monument complete, leaving Mount Rushmore as we know it today: a truly American icon that will stand the test of time, lasting for generations to come.

FUN FACTS



Q. HOW BIG ARE THE HEADS ON MOUNT RUSHMORE?

A. The heads are about 60 feet tall—the average size of a six-story building. Washington's nose is 21 feet long and the rest are approximately 20 feet. The eyes are about 11 feet wide and the mouths are approximately 18 feet wide.

THE FACES OF RUSHMORE



George Washington The "father of our country" and the nation's first president, earned his place as the foremost figure in the presidential portrait. Born in 1732 in Virginia, he surveyed what was then considered the western wilderness, the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. At only 23 years old, he commanded the Virginia militia, then served as a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses. He was a justice of the peace and commander-in-chief of the Continental Army before assuming his most illustrious role as first president of the United States. Before sculpting Washington, Borglum studied portraits by Rembrandt, Peale, and Gilbert Stewart, and a life mask by artist Antoine Houdon.

Theodore Roosevelt The only presidential selection to draw any measure of criticism was that of Theodore Roosevelt, the nation's 26th president, because some said history had not yet judged Roosevelt's presidency (he had been dead only eight years). But Borglum believed Roosevelt's vision of America's role in the world community qualified him for the fourth place on the mountain. Roosevelt had realized the dream of Christopher Columbus by completing the Panama Canal and connecting the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

More significantly, Borglum identified with Roosevelt's energy and charisma, and saw him as the epitome of the "American Spirit." Borglum sculpted him from memory, as he and "Teddy" were close friends and confidants before, during, and after Roosevelt's presidency.

Thomas Jefferson Born in 1743 to Virginia planters, Thomas Jefferson drafted the Dec-

laration of Independence at age 33, giving the nation a plan for sovereignty and freedom. Jefferson also served as governor of his native state, as minister to France and as secretary of state under President Washington. From 1801 to 1809, he served two successful terms as the nation's third president.

Jefferson was ultimately included because of his vision of an America that spanned from coast to coast. His purchase of the vast Louisiana Territory, which more than doubled the size of the young nation, brought this dream closer to reality.

Borglum chose to render Jefferson as a young man, using the life mask created by American artist John H. I. Browere. As depicted on Mount Rushmore, Jefferson is looking to the heavens, emphasizing his reputation as visionary and philosopher.

Abraham Lincoln "The Great Emancipator" Abraham Lincoln, was born to poor parents in Kentucky's backwoods in 1809. Lincoln taught himself law, served in the Illinois Legislature, then gained a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1858, he challenged Senator Stephen Douglas and—through wit, wisdom, and a series of historic debates—won the admiration of the American people: though he lost the election. Elected president in 1860, Lincoln oversaw one of the most pivotal periods in American history: the Civil War. Through steadfast devotion to the nation, he successfully preserved the Union.

Lincoln was Borglum's favorite leader. In fact, the sculptor named his only son for the 16th president. After studying photographs and a life mask of Lincoln, Borglum chose to portray him with the beard and the determined look he wore during his tenure in office.

Badlands National Park

The stunning panorama of Badlands National Park rests just an hour east of Rapid City on I-90 (exits 110 and 131). This 244,000-acre landscape is both barren and beautiful. Wind and rain erosion have created an eerie moonscape of deep gorges and jagged sawtooth ridges with rock layers painted in subtle hues of sand, rose, gold, and green.

GEOLOGY AND FOSSIL HISTORY

Starting 65 million years ago, weather patterns shifted, and the area now called the Badlands was lifted and transformed by geological forces. The black, muddy floor of an ancient sea that once covered this area was compressed into a band of 2,000-foot-thick rock known as the **Pierre Shale**. Forests flourished and withered away. Volcanoes laid down a thick layer of ash and rivers repeatedly flooded the region, depositing sediment. These successive layers of matter often held the bodies and bones of animals now long extinct, preserving them for posterity as fossils.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

"Let sculptors come to the Badlands. Let painters come. But first of all, the true architect should come. He who could interpret this vast gift of nature in terms of human habitation so that Americans on their own continent might glimpse a new and higher civilization certainly, and touch it and feel it as they lived in it and deserved to call it their own. Yes, I say the aspects of the Dakota Badlands have more spiritual quality to impart to the mind of America than anything else in it made by man's God."

—Frank Lloyd Wright, 1935

Wind and the rushing waters of rivers now long vanished eroded the dry, fragile soil, coursing through different layers of harder and softer rock, gouging out channels and gullies, and carving cliffs, spires, and odd rock formations.

Erosion continues to this day, frequently revealing long-buried fossils. Drawn by the fossilized remains of saber-toothed cats, miniature camels and horses, and huge rhinoceros-like beasts known as titanotheres, scientists discovered millions of years of geologic history buried in the multicolored layers. One of the world's richest Eocene/Oligocene Epoch **fossil beds** is located here, yielding a wealth of information on the "Golden Age of Mammals" of approximately 27 million to 37 million years ago.

South Dakotans began petitioning Congress to set aside a portion of the Badlands as a preserve as early as 1909. The area was designated Badlands National Monument in 1939, then given national park status in 1978.

NOT SO "BAD" TODAY

Today, the Badlands are more hospitable than when American Indians, trappers, and early fossil hunters explored its wonders. Highway 240, known as **Badlands Loop Road**, snakes through the passes, offering 14 scenic overlooks, roadside exhibits, developed nature trails, and an air-conditioned visitor center at Cedar Pass.

ENTRANCE FEES

For 2025, entrance fees at Badlands National Park are \$30 per car, \$25 per motorcycle, and \$15 for those traveling on foot or bicycle. A Badlands annual pass is \$55.



Commercial entrance fees are \$150 for a motor coach and \$60 for a minibus. All passes are valid for seven days. Please note that cash is not accepted for passes; credit or debit only. For more information, please visit nps.gov/badl.

VISITOR CENTERS

The **Ben Reifel Visitor Center** at Cedar Pass was named after the first American Indian to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives (from 1961–1971). In 2025, the Center is open every day from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with holiday closures. The Ben Reifel Visitor Center offers a park orientation film, exhibits featuring models and murals of Badlands' landscapes of the past and present with interactive animations and video presentations, as well as a bookstore with proceeds donated to the park's education program. Cedar Pass Lodge, operated by Aramark Destinations, continues the tradition of service to park visitors that began in 1928 with a restaurant, cabins, and gift shop. The Lodge is closed during the winter.

The **White River Visitor Center** is about 20 miles south of the town of Scenic on BIA

(Bureau of Indian Affairs) Route 27 in the Pine Ridge Reservation. For 2025, the center will be open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., starting from October to mid-May. Located within the South Unit of the park (which encompasses part of the adjoining Pine Ridge Reservation), it is staffed by members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe working as cultural interpreters.

BADLANDS NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The association is a nonprofit organization that assists the National Park Service with educational, historical, and scientific programs for visitors to Badlands National Park. Proceeds from association-operated book sales and online store purchases help support a wide variety of park activities. For more information, contact the Association at **(605) 433-5489** or visit badlandsnha.org.

HIKING

Badlands trails range from a 0.25-mile loop past fossil displays to a 5.25-mile path across a prairie. See the "Walking & Hiking" chapter for more information. Park naturalists present guided walks and hikes through-

out the park, as well as talks, Junior Ranger Programs and evening programs at Cedar Pass Campground.

Check the visitor centers for times and locations. Journeying west to the **Sage Creek Basin** area of the park, look for 650 head of bison as well as pronghorn, big-horn sheep, coyote, deer, and rattlesnakes that live in the 64,250-acre **Badlands Wilderness Area**. Though known for the Badlands formations, about half of the park acreage is prairie. The Badlands wilderness is the largest remaining expanse of **wild prairie** in the NPS system. There are no marked trails within the wilderness, but it is entirely open to hiking, camping, and backpacking. Potable water is available only at park visitor centers and near the Pinnacles Entrance Station. Boiling, using chemicals, or even filtering won't make the chalky water drinkable.

Note: For your safety, it is extremely important to carry water and tell someone your itinerary before you depart.

NATURE & WILDLIFE

While admiring the creatures and abundant wildflowers on the lands, don't forget to watch the ridges where eagles, hawks, and turkey vultures soar on warm updrafts. The best times to visit the Badlands are early morning and early evening when soft lighting brings out wildlife and the subtle colors found in the layers of compressed sandstone and Pierre shale.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information or free maps, contact the Superintendent's Office, Badlands National Park, (605) 433-5361; badl_information@nps.gov; 25216 Ben Reifel Rd., Interior, SD 57750 or visit nps.gov/badl.



CELEBRATING 65 YEARS OF SUPPORT

When you make a purchase at the Badlands Natural History Association (BNHA) Store, located in the Ben Reifel Visitor Center, you are contributing to the park's future. Since 1959, BNHA has donated more than \$4 million to Badlands National Park to support its key missions:

To join BNHA today
Call (605) 433-5489

For more information visit www.badlandsnha.org
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Badlands
NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Explore The Black Hills

There is far more to the Black Hills than just Mount Rushmore and the Badlands. Check out the other amazing places in the surrounding area!

CUSTER STATE PARK

South of the memorial, dwarfing the surrounding rock formations, stands Black Elk (formerly Harney) Peak. At 7,242 feet, it is the highest point between the Rocky Mountains and the Swiss Alps. In the shadows of that granite monolith, Highway 87 takes you to the boundaries of **Custer State Park**. Just southeast, Needles Highway snakes through the spires of the park. Heading east, past the State Game Lodge, is the park's Wildlife Loop, where even amateur photographers can capture deer, bison, pronghorn or eagles for the family album. Custer boasts a herd of 1,300 bison, which is one of the largest publicly owned herds in the world. Often, these 2,000-pound animals have been known to bring traffic to a halt while they stand in the road.

Custer offers multiple lodges, each with its own distinct identity. Chuckwagon cookouts, Jeep rides, and boat rentals are just a few of the experiences available at the lodges. For information, call (605) 255-4515 or (605) 394-2693 or visit gfp.sd.gov.

WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK

Wind Cave is immediately south of Custer State Park and north of Hot Springs on U.S. 385. Above ground, elk, pronghorn, deer, and bison roam the more than 28,000 acres of natural sanctuary that make up the park.

Below the surface of the park, a **limestone labyrinth** awaits. With nearly 150 miles of known passageways, Wind Cave is one of the longest caves in the world. Its rare crystal formations—gypsum beard, box-work, and snowy calcite crystals—distinguish it as a world-class cave.

Park rangers provide **regular guided tours** of the cave (fee required, cashless only) year-round. Above-ground park tours and a bookstore are available. Backcountry camping requires a permit (free). For more information, call (605) 745-4600 or visit nps.gov/wica.

JEWEL CAVE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Located west of Custer on U.S. 16, Jewel Cave National Monument is part of the massive Black Hills hydrologic system. Boasting more than 200 miles of explored and mapped passageways, Jewel Cave is one of the longest caves in the world. Normally open daily during the summer season with extended hours in spring and fall.

Cave tours and staff are available during the winter months on a limited basis. Exhibits and displays at the monument's visitor center showcase the surface and subsurface features of the monument. Interactive displays will further engage families and kids. Ranging from wildlife dioramas to painted murals and a cave crawl-through to touchscreen interpretive podcasts, visitors will be immersed in even more learning experiences that complement a sense of exploration and discovery.





Crazy Horse

Tickets are required for cave entry and are sold on a first come, first-served basis; tours often sell out by late morning during the summer season. *Note:* Tickets for the Scenic Tour are available at **blackhillsvacations.com**. Teachers may call the visitor center to inquire about educational programs and academic fee waivers. For information, call **(605) 673-8300** or visit **nps.gov/jeca**.

THE MAMMOTH SITE AT HOT SPRINGS

Twenty-six thousand years ago, Columbian and woolly mammoths, looking to escape the bitter cold of the Ice Age, were attracted to a warm pond located on the western edge of present-day **Hot Springs**. Every now and then, mammoths slid into the natural, steep-sided sinkhole and became trapped. After dying of starvation or exhaustion while trying to climb the slippery sides of the hole, their bodies settled to the pool's murky bottom and eventually became entombed in silt.

In 1974, a bulldozer operator was preparing the site for a housing project when he noticed a tusk in the dirt. Now the spot is called the "Mammoth Site," and is enclosed in a modern interpretive facility, which is located just west of Hot Springs on U.S. 18. For more information, call **(605) 745-6017** or visit **mammothsite.org**. The Hot Springs Area Chamber of Commerce can be reached at **(605) 745- 4140**.

DEADWOOD

Located minutes from the Black Hills National Forest, Deadwood is a small town rich in Wild West history, becoming the first National Historic Landmark in South Dakota back in 1961. With authentic gaming halls, time-appropriate street lamps, and fine din-

ing, Deadwood is an elegant trip back in time. Learn more at **deadwood.com** or call **(800) 344-8826**.

KEYSTONE, SD

Keystone is the closest town to Mount Rushmore and a vital gateway. This old mining town offers lodging, dining, and entertainment for visitors; however, there is more to the town than its proximity to the monument. Here you can experience the West the same way its first visitors did.

The **Black Hills Central Railroad**, an authentic 1880 train, takes riders across the untouched tree-covered Black Hills. Explore **Rushmore Cave** or try your hand at gold panning at **Big Thunder Gold Mine**. The **Keystone Historical Museum** displays exhibits on the rich regional history with photos, early mining tools, and memorabilia. The museum is open May through September. Admission is free and visitors can go on a walking tour. For information, go to **visitkeystonesd.com**.

STURGIS

Sturgis gives off the appearance of another small, old mining area set in the Black Hills, where horses once lined the main street. If you stumble upon Sturgis from August 1 to 10, 2025, you may find something else lined up on the main drag. The town experiences a dramatic population boom with the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. Bikers travel thousands of miles to participate in the rally, which draws crowds of more than half a million people! It's no surprise that Sturgis is home to the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum & Hall of Fame. For more information, visit **sturgis-sd.gov** and **sturgismotorcyclerally.com**.

The Mount Rushmore Memorial encouraged another accomplished artist to carve a second colossal sculpture in the Black Hills. In 1948, seven years after work stopped on nearby Mount Rushmore, grand-scale carving began on the Crazy Horse Memorial.

A NATIVE COUNTERPART

Sculptor **Korczak Ziolkowski** (pronounced "Jewel-cuff-ski") had worked as an assistant to Gutzon Borglum at Mount Rushmore in 1939. That same year, **Chief Henry Standing Bear** of the **Oglala Sioux** wrote Ziolkowski asking him to consider carving a giant sculpture dedicated to the American Indian. The Sioux, Standing Bear said, "would like the white man to know the red man has great heroes, also."

Ziolkowski, a determined artist, loved the challenge and was inspired to dedicate the rest of his life to the sculpture. Chief Henry Standing Bear, and other leaders, chose the Sioux warrior Crazy Horse for the subject. Crazy Horse was born in the Black Hills and is partially credited with Custer's sensational defeat at the Battle of Little Bighorn.

The artist spent several decades alone on the mountain, drilling and blasting the likeness of the great Sioux leader from the granite of Thunderhead Mountain. Depicting Crazy Horse atop his steed, the 563-foot-tall memorial is being carved in the round and will dwarf the four presidents on Mount Rushmore when completed.

After Ziolkowski's death in 1982, the memorial continues to be built, overseen by four of the Ziolkowski's children and three



grandchildren. On site are the 1/34th-scale plaster model, the studio-home and workshop of the sculptor, the museum gift shop, the Indian Museum of North America featuring three immense exhibit halls with thousands of artifacts, the Native American Educational and Cultural Center, and the new Mountain Museum and restaurant. Unlike Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial is funded solely by private donations and admission fees.

Admission to the monument is \$10 per person on a motorcycle, bicycle, or foot. Fees for visitors arriving by car are as follows: \$35 for three or more passengers; \$30 for two passengers; and \$15 for a single passenger. The monument is open year round. Hours vary by season. Van rides to the top are available through charitable giving to Crazy Horse Memorial®. The **"Legends in Light" Laser Show** is performed in season. Crazy Horse Memorial is located between Custer and Hill City on U.S. 16-385. For more information, call **(605) 673-4681**, or visit **crazyhorsememorial.org**.

Things To Do



Throughout the year, you can experience wonders of western South Dakota through numerous park activities and programs. Check park newspapers and brochures for current programs and scheduling.

SPRING, SUMMER AND FALL

FISHING

In the land where trout is king, fishing has attained royal status. All headwater streams, including Grizzly Bear Creek near **Mount Rushmore**, are full of brook trout; Rapid Creek and Spearfish Creek have wild brown trout; and Horsethief Lake below Mount Rushmore and many other **Black Hills** streams are stocked with rainbow trout. Some spots to try are Pactola Reservoir and Sheridan Lake in the **Black Hills National Forest**, and Center and Stockade lakes in **Custer State Park**.

You can pick up a non-resident fishing license at any sporting goods store and at many convenience stores. Fees for the license are \$26 (\$10 for residents) for one day, \$45 for three days or \$80 (\$31 for residents) for a year. Resident youth under age 18 are not required to have a fishing license. Since July 2020, all multi-day licenses now require a \$25 (\$10 for residents) Habitat Stamp fee.

TECHNICAL CLIMBING

Short, demanding, technical climbs are plentiful in the Black Hills, making it the ideal place to explore different ways to reach individual summits. Devils Tower in neighboring Wyoming is undoubtedly

the most touted climb, but the **Needles-Sylvan Lake** district of the Black Hills also offers excellent climbing among its approximately 300 granite spires. A guide to technical climbing called *"Climbing the Needles—Touch the Sky,"* published by the American Alpine Club, can be purchased at local bookstores. Equipment, maps, and other information are available at many sports shops in Rapid City. *Check local climbing regulations (and recommendations), as rules and conditions vary by park.*

HORSEBACK RIDING

Various private outfitters offer horse rentals in the Black Hills. For more information, inquire in the Badlands visitor center. Horseback riding is allowed anywhere in the park except on marked trails, roads, or in developed areas. An area in Sage Creek Campground has been designated for horses. Inquire at the visitor center for more information on horse use at Badlands.

HUNTING

Hunting is a year-round sport in South Dakota. While hunting is not permitted in South Dakota's national parks, hunters have access to nearly five million acres of public land. Upland game, waterfowl, small game, and big game dominate the fall hunting seasons. Predator hunting fills the winter months and spring signals the start of turkey hunting and the second season for light geese.

PICNICKING

Pack a picnic and head for any of the free picnic areas that dot the Black Hills and the Badlands.



With spectacular views of the Black Elk Wilderness and Black Elk Peak, the **Iron Mountain Picnic Area** in the **Black Hills National Forest** is located near the Norbeck Memorial Overlook, along Iron Mountain Road. The **Breezy Point Picnic Area** offers commanding views of Mount Rushmore. It's located in the Black Hills National Forest just west of Mount Rushmore on State Highway 244.

In Badlands National Park, the **Bigfoot Pass Picnic Area** is located along the **Badlands Scenic Byway**, seven miles northwest of Cedar Pass. Named for Chief Bigfoot, this area overlooks the route he and his band took to Wounded Knee in 1890. Eight miles south of the Pinnacles Entrance to

the Park, the **Conata Picnic Area** is the gateway to the Sage Creek Wilderness area and is an ideal spot to have lunch and take in the park's wildlife. For more information about getting provisions for your picnic, see the "Camping" chapter.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Mountain biking is quickly becoming a popular activity in the Black Hills, what with nearly 6,000 miles of fire trails and logging roads open for exploration. Though you probably won't find these roads marked on a map, any gravel road into the Black Hills National Forest—such as Deerfield Road west of Hill City—will lead you to one. If you need to rent a bike, check in the communities of Rapid City or Custer.

CRAZY HORSE VOLKSMARCH

Taking place twice a year, the bi-annual Crazy Horse Volksmarch (an organized hike) is a woodlands ramble to the world's largest mountain carving in progress. The 10K (6.2-mile) round-trip hike is the most popular event of its kind in the nation, drawing as many as 15,000 participants. It is the only time each season (weather permitting) the public can ascend the carving.

The spring **Volksmarch** takes place on the first full weekend in June, often coinciding with the anniversary of the 1998 dedication of the nine-story-high carved face of Crazy Horse and the anniversary of the first blast on the mountain.

The fall Volksmarch takes place on the last weekend in September. Admission is free to the memorial for hikers, with a donation of three cans of food per hiker for the KOTA Care & Share Food Drive. The AVA charges \$4 per person (for all ages) for the hike.

ROCKHOONDING

The unique geology of the Black Hills ranks it in the top five locations in the United States to find a variety of minerals. Besides the obvious "rock" gold, rockhounds can find more than 40 different minerals here, including rose quartz, copper, silver, and feldspar. Keep your eye out for a Fairburn agate, the state's official gem, which is rusty brown with a white core that is visible when it's split in half; they are found in alluvial deposits along the foothills.

WILD CAVING

At Jewel Cave National Monument, visitors (16 years or older) can experience extraordinary caving on the Wild

Cave Tour, No spelunking experience is required. The tour is offered on week-ends. With hard hat secured and head lamp turned on, you can experience the cave in its untouched, natural state. *Note:* Wild Cave Tours require each participant to fit through an opening that measures 8.5 inches top to bottom and 24 inches from side to side. Availability depends on season. For more information visit nps.gov/macaplanyourvisit/.

WINTER

SKIING

At the end of November, preparations begin for ski season. In the Black Hills, peak skiing is during January and February, with snow continuing to accumulate until early April. Downhill, Nordic skiers, and snowboarders flock to the area's main ski resort, **Terry Peak**. The resort has a ski shop, equipment rentals, ski schools, lodges, and a terrain park. For information about snow conditions, including cross-country trails, call the South Dakota Office of Tourism at **(605) 773-3301** or Terry Peak at **(605) 584-2165**.

SNOWMOBILING

The development of a 400-mile network of marked, mapped and groomed snowmobile trails in the Black Hills National Forest has made this area a true snowmobiling destination. Exploration of the Black Hills' hidden byways by snowmobile has become a regular winter pastime. Pathways are groomed every night in the winter. Snowmobile servicing, rentals, and guides are available, as are pit stops, gas, warming shelters, trailheads, and parking. To check snow and trail conditions, call **(605) 773-3301**.

BEYOND DAKOTA: DEVILS TOWER




The Black Hills are not exclusively in South Dakota. A portion of the mountain range spills west into neighboring Wyoming. If you continue north and then veer west on I-90, you'll cross the border. U.S. 14 at Sundance will put you on the path toward Devils Tower National Monument, located about 60 miles west of Spearfish, SD.


America's first national monument is a massive stone pillar that juts skyward 1,267 feet above the Belle Fourche River Valley. To geologists, Devils Tower is an igneous intrusion. To American Indians, it is *Mato Tipila*, "Bear Lodge."

The **Tower Walk** enables visitors to explore Devils Tower with a ranger on the Tower Trail. This 1.5-hour guided walk begins in front of the visitor center. Good walking shoes and water are recommended.

Access to the monument is year-round, and the park's visitor center is open daily in the summer, and from Wednesdays-Saturdays in the winter. Closed on some national holidays. For more information, contact the Superintendent's Office, Devils Tower National Monument, P.O. Box 10, Devils Tower, WY 82714; **(307) 467-5283, x635** or visit nps.gov/deto.

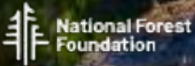
W H E R E
W E C O M E
A L L I V E





Sign up for **Tree-Mail™** and stay connected to inspiring stories about recreation and restoration in National Forests and Grasslands.

Ashley National Forest by Alex Butterfield



Camping



CAMPING NEAR MOUNT RUSHMORE

Camping is prohibited at Mount Rushmore; however, the U.S. Forest Service operates a nearby campground at Horsethief Lake.

The **KOA Mt. Rushmore** campground is the next-closest to the memorial. Amenities include cabins, tent sites, full hookups, a restaurant, and a lodge. Shuttle service to the sculpture lighting ceremony is provided. Call **(605) 574-2525**, or visit **koa.com** for more information.

All campgrounds in the **Black Hills** are within 90 minutes of Mount Rushmore. While they can accommodate 25,000 overnight guests, it is recommended to make reservations and arrive early.

For more information, please visit the Camp South Dakota page within **travelsouthdakota.com**. For information on camping in South Dakota's state parks, contact the Department of Game, Fish & Parks, 523 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501-3182; **(800) 710-2267**. For RV information, visit **gocampingamerica.com**.

WIND CAVE CAMPING

Elk Mountain Campground at Wind Cave offers 64 sites for tents and recreational vehicles amid hills of ponderosa pines and prairie. Open year-round: \$24 per night, from mid-May to mid-September; \$12 in the off-season. Restrooms, firewood, fire grills, and picnic tables are provided, but water is available only in the summer. Permits required for backcountry camping. For more information, please contact Wind

Cave National Park at **(605) 745-4600**, or visit **nps.gov/wica**.

BADLANDS CAMPING

The park service operates two campgrounds at Badlands National Park. **Cedar Pass** has 96 sites (RV Electric, Group Standard Electric and Non-Electric: \$47/night; RV Non-Electric: \$37/night). **Sage Creek** is free, first-come first-served, with 22 sites (primitive, pit toilets, no running water, or campfires). For camp reservations, contact Cedar Pass Lodge at **(605) 433-5460**; or visit **nps.gov/badl**.

Cooking stoves and charcoal grills are allowed in campgrounds, but open fires are prohibited. Food, gasoline, lodging, and camping are available at the gateway towns of Interior, 11 miles south of I-90 on Highway 44; and Wall, at the junction of I-90 and Highway 240.

Among mature trees, **Badlands/White River KOA** is a quiet oasis adjacent to the Badlands. Includes free Wi-Fi, a pool, level pull-thrus, a pet park, 50 amp service, and breakfast. Take I-90 Exit 131, four miles east of Interior on Hwy 44. Open from April 25 to October 13. Call **(800) 562-3897** or visit **koa.com**.

CAMPING SUPPLIES

Groceries and general camping supplies are available at outlets near Mount Rushmore. The **Uptown Rapid**, off I-90 has more than 100 stores offering everything but groceries. Two miles south of Ben Reifel Visitor Center is **Badlands Grocery**.

RESPONSIBLE RECREATION - OHV

Spanning 1.2 million acres, Black Hills National Forest contains one of America's largest motorized trail systems open to vehicles 62 inches or less in width. The forest contains more than 3,600 miles of open roads, with over 650 miles of designated trails for all types of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV), and 21 motorized trailheads, and is sure to bring a smile to your face.

RIDE RESPONSIBLY

Motorized vehicle operators are responsible to know and follow OHV regulations. Minimize your impact on the environment when you ride by traveling responsibly, respecting others' rights, educating yourself, and avoiding sensitive areas. Please ride safely, be considerate to pedestrians and animals, make sure you check conditions ahead of time and bring sufficient gear and water, and always Tread Lightly!®

OHV PERMITS

A Black Hills Motorized Trail Permit is required to access the SD portion of the motorized trail system and when riding an unlicensed OHV on a forest road designated "open to all vehicles." As of the time of printing, permits for a **seven-day consecutive pass are \$20**. If you plan to come back (and you should), an **annual pass is a great deal at \$25**. Prices are subject to change.

Permits may be purchased online at **BlackHillsBadlands.com/motorized-trail-permits** or any Forest Service office in the region, where local experts can provide insider tips to make your trip fun, memorable and safe. They're also available at the Black Hills Visitor Information Center **(605) 355-3700**, located off Interstate 90 at Exit 61 in Rapid City. The visitor center is open seven days a week, year-round, from 8 am to 5 pm and offers extended summer hours. The State of Wyoming requires a separate permit when operating an OHV in Wyoming. There is no reciprocity for out-of-state registrations.



Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative provides funding to promote safe, responsible use of OHVs, educate the public on proper recreational land use and wildlife conservation practices, and protect appropriate and sustainable access to public lands.

See if your group qualifies and apply at:

yamahaoai.com

RULES & REGULATIONS

In South Dakota, state motorcycle law governs ATVs and UTVs.

- On-the-road drivers need a licensed OHV, must be 14 years of age or older, and possess a valid driver's license.
- ATV/UTV use is strictly prohibited on the interstate highway system at all times.
- Eye protection is required for ATV/UTV operators on all public roads unless a windshield is in place.
- Helmets are advised for all ATV/UTV operators and riders on all roads. Helmets are required by law for anyone under 18.
- Operators on roads must be able to provide registration and proof of insurance.

There is no minimum age or license requirement for off-road drivers on trails. However, please follow the manufacturer's guidelines on age and size requirements. The forest is closed to crosscountry travel except for the open roads and motorized trails, as shown on the free Motor Vehicle Use Map, which you'll get with your permit.

Note: ATVs/UTVs may be used on most roads and highways, as long as they are registered and licensed. If you live in a state where ATVs/UTVs cannot be licensed for road use, you may not ride on roads in South Dakota unless you obtain a special road travel permit, available at any county courthouse in South Dakota.



Minimize your impact on the environment by traveling and riding responsibly, respecting others' rights, educating yourself and avoiding sensitive areas. For more information, visit treadlightly.org

For more information on the designated OHV areas in the Black Hills National Forest, visit fs.usda.gov/activity/blackhills/recreation/ohv

OHV RENTAL OPTIONS

NORTHERN HILLS

D&K ATV Rentals 12737 Guest Ranch Loop, Nemo, SD **605-578-1354**
DK-ATVRentals.com

Mystic Trails Rentals 21766 Custer Peak Rd, Deadwood, SD **605-584-4794**
MysticHillsHideaway.com

Spearfish Canyon Adventures 10619 Roughlock Falls Rd, Lead, SD
605-584-3435 SpfCanyon.com

Trailshead Lodge Rentals 22075 US Hwy 85, Lead, SD **605-584-3464**
TrailsheadLodge.com

CENTRAL HILLS

Adventure Rentals 12670 Robins Roost Rd; Hill City, SD 57745
Custer: 605-673-4540
Hill City: 605-574-2684
AdventureRentalsSD.com

Black Hills Outdoor Fun 12780 Black Forest Rd, Rapid City, SD **605-574-2430**
BlackHillsOutdoorFun.com

Black Hills Wilderness Edge Adventures 1315 Old Hill City Rd, Keystone, SD **605-391-6551**
BlackHillsWildernessEdge.com

Mount Rushmore KOA At Palmer Gulch 12620 Us Hwy 244, Hill City, SD
800-562-8503 KOA.com

SOUTHERN HILLS

Adventure Rentals 444 Mt Rushmore Rd, Custer, SD **605-673-4540**
AdventureRentalsSD.com



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Setting the industry benchmark for capability, comfort and confidence, Yamaha's new 2025 Wolverine RMAX 1000 Side-by-Side lineup offers a wide range of key enhancements designed to maximize your adventure.



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RMX4 1000 COMPACT XT-R

ALL-NEW RMAX4 1000 XT-R

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RMX2 1000 SPORT



REALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE



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Professional drivers depicted on closed areas. Side-by-Side models shown are recommended for use only by operators 16 years and older with a valid driver's license. Always wear your seat belt, helmet, eye protection and protective clothing. Yamaha recommends that all Side-by-Side riders take an approved training course. For Side-by-Side safety and training information, see your dealer or call the ROHVA at 1-866-267-2751. Read the Owner's Manual and the product warning labels before operation. Models shown with optional accessories. Vehicle specifications subject to change. 10-year limited V-belt warranty; see your dealer for details or visit YamahaMotorsports.com ©2025 Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. All rights reserved.

Walking & Hiking



Whether you're a day hiker, backpacker, ice climber, spelunker, or hardened mountaineer, you can find the trail you're looking for in the Black Hills or Badlands. You can purchase a detailed map showing trail locations at Wind Cave, Jewel Cave, Custer State Park, Bear Butte State Park, and Forest Service offices in Rapid City and Custer.

HIKING TIPS

Before you set off on your hike, remember to check a route's difficulty, the time required for round-trip travel, water availability, and the trail and weather conditions. The park discourages hiking or climbing alone, and no matter how experienced you are, always let someone know your itinerary before you head out.

While you're hiking, stay on designated trails. Cutting across switchbacks increases erosion and can be dangerous. Many trails have precipitous drop-offs, slippery surfaces, and loose sand and shale. To be safe, stay back from the edges, watch your footing, and **wear appropriate footwear**.

Summer temperatures can exceed 100°F in the shade. Wear a **hat** and **sunscreen**, and carry plenty of water—you should drink one gallon per day. Avoid hiking or camping in flash flood areas, and stay away from high, exposed places during lightning storms.

Do not disturb wildlife or remove any park resources, including rocks, plants, fossils, and artifacts. Vehicles, including bicycles, are only allowed on paved or designated

roads and trails. Always remember to pack out all your litter.

MOUNT RUSHMORE

The **Presidential Trail** departs from Grandview Terrace and follows a historic roadbed to the talus slope directly below the sculpture. This 0.6-mile trail (with 422 stairs) provides extraordinary views of Mount Rushmore as it winds to the Sculptor's Studio. NPS rangers lead guided walks during the summer months. During winter, the trail may be closed due to ice and snow.

Two trails lead to **Borglum View Terrace** and the Sculptor's Studio: one is a nature trail that starts from the main entryway, and the other is a steep trail with uneven steps that starts from Grandview Terrace.

The one-mile **Blackberry Trail**, which connects to the Centennial Trail, was designated a National Recreation Trail in 2018. Park at Mount Rushmore and cross Highway 244 to access the trailhead.

Q. IS MOUNT RUSHMORE HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE?

A. All facilities at Mount Rushmore National Memorial are wheelchair-accessible. There is handicap accessible parking available and there are a limited number of wheelchairs available, free of charge, for visitors at the information center.

WALKING & HIKING TRAILS

Trail	Starting Point	Difficulty Distance	Description
BADLANDS			
Door Trail	Northern end of large Door and Window parking area	Easy <i>0.75 miles round-trip</i>	Easy walk through a natural doorway into the Badlands formations.
Window Trail	Center of Door and Window parking area	Easy <i>150 yards</i>	An accessible boardwalk ends in a dramatic view of canyons. ♿
Fossil Exhibit Trail	5 miles northwest of Ben Reifel Visitor Center	Easy <i>0.25-mile loop</i>	A quick loop past replicas of fossils discovered in nearby formations. ♿
Castle Trail	Fossil Exhibit Trail and the Door/Window parking area	Moderate <i>5.25 miles one-way</i>	Moderate hike through a mix of prairie and Badlands topography. Look for deer and bighorn sheep.
Notch Trail	North end of the Door and Window parking area	Difficult <i>1.5 miles round-trip</i>	Travels through a small canyon, up a ladder, past a dry, 20-foot waterfall and then ends at a natural wall. Watch for sharp drop-offs.
Saddle Pass Trail	Loop Road, 2 miles west of Cedar Pass	Difficult <i>0.2 miles</i>	Leads from the Loop Road, 2 miles west of Cedar Pass, climbs the wall for 0.25 miles and intersects the Castle Trail.
Cliff Shelf Nature Trail	1/2 mile north of the Visitor Center	Easy <i>0.5-mile loop trail</i>	Winds through a wooded prairie oasis surrounded by the arid Badlands. Walkers will wander in and out of small, tree-shaded areas and take advantage of boardwalks and a flight of natural stairs.
MOUNT RUSHMORE			
The Presidential Trail	Washington (south) side of the Grand View Terrace	Easy to Difficult <i>0.6 miles</i>	Get a closer view of Mount Rushmore on this family-friendly trail. It takes you to the base of the mountain, down to the Sculptor's Studio and back up to the terrace.
Blackberry Trail	Southeast end of the parking facility	Moderate <i>1 mile</i>	Winds from Mt. Rushmore into the Black Elk Wilderness and connects with Centennial Trail #89. There are several water crossings along this gravel path.
BLACK HILLS			
Crow Peak Trail	7 miles southwest of Spearfish on Higgins Gulch Road	Difficult <i>3.5 miles</i>	This challenging hike has a worthwhile reward—panoramic views over Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana.
Centennial Trail	Bear Butte to Wind Cave (more than 24 access points)	Easy to Moderate <i>111 miles</i>	This landmark trail begins in the prairie grasslands near Bear Butte State Park and crosses the north-south length of the Black Hills to Wind Cave National Park.
Black Elk Peak Trail	14 trailheads	Easy to Difficult <i>50 miles</i>	Accessible by hiking or horseback riding, this trail winds through the Black Elk Wilderness. Hike one or all of the Harney Range trails.
Flume Trail	Sheridan Lake	Easy to Moderate <i>11 miles</i>	This national recreation trail follows the historic Rockerville Flume bed as it winds through the Black Hills.

Who's Who At The Parks

The dedicated efforts of the following groups make possible the continual preservation and improvement of Mount Rushmore, Badlands and other state parks.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The NPS is the federal custodian of all national parks, including Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Badlands National Park, Wind Cave National Park, and Jewel Cave National Monument. As an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the NPS has the responsibility of preserving and protecting the environmental and cultural values of our national parks, protecting the fish and wildlife therein, and providing for public use and enjoyment of the parks. Visit nps.gov for more information.

XANTERRA TRAVEL COLLECTION®

Xanterra Travel Collection® operates the memorial's Carvers' Cafe and the gift shop. Recently, Xanterra Travel Collection® invested millions of dollars in new concession facilities at Mount Rushmore. Within Mount Rushmore, it hires more than 100 seasonal employees. For employment information and applications, contact Xanterra Travel Collection®, Employment Office, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, 13000 Highway 244, Bldg. 81, Keystone, SD 57751; **(605) 574-2515**; or visit online at xanterrajobs.com.

ARAMARK DESTINATIONS

Aramark Destinations operates **Cedar Pass Lodge**, the only lodging, gift store, and restaurant located in Badlands National Park. Cedar Pass Lodge provides visitors a

distinctive collection of regional and hand-made gifts, Northern Plains native crafts and offers a memorable stay in this unique destination. Thoughtfully designed to enhance every visitor's experience and understanding of Native American Culture, Cedar Pass Lodge embraces the historical significance of South Dakota and the western prairies. For information about Aramark Destinations, visit thenationsvacation.com. For information on Cedar Pass Lodge, visit cedarpasslodge.com or call **(855) 765-0737**.



THE MOUNT RUSHMORE SOCIETY

The Mount Rushmore Society has been supporting Mount Rushmore National Memorial since work on the mountain first began. Currently running the bookstores located in the visitor centers, an online gift shop, and the audio tour of the monument, the society is one of the nation's largest and oldest National Park Service friends organizations, raising millions for facility improvements and promotional events since 1930.

The Mount Rushmore Institute is another division of the society, serving as a forum to advance the cause of freedom and the principles of democracy. Contact the Mount Rushmore National Memorial Society at 830 Main Street, Rapid City, SD 57701; call **(605) 341-8883**, or visit mountrushmoresociety.com.

MOUNT RUSHMORE BOOKSTORES

The Mount Rushmore Bookstores are located in the Visitor Center, Information Center, and Sculptor's Studio, and carry edu-

cational books and products about Mount Rushmore and the region. The organization also operates the Mount Rushmore Audio Tour and Multimedia Tour. You can find out more about these tours at the Mount Rushmore Audio Tour Building or at any of the bookstores throughout the park.

Sales from the bookstores, the online gift shop, and tour sales help support several of the park's needs. For more information, contact the Mount Rushmore Bookstores at 13036 Hwy 244, Keystone, SD 57751, call **(605) 574-2523** or visit mountrushmoresociety.com.

BADLANDS NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1959, the association is a non-profit organization that assists the National Park Service with educational, historical, and scientific programs for visitors to Badlands National Park.

Proceeds from association book sales and their online gift shop, help support park activities such as the training of naturalists and visitor center staff; the publication of free visitor information; and the funding of historical and scientific research, student internships, special visitor programs, and school outreach programs. Contact the Badlands Natural History Association, P.O. Box 47, Interior, SD 57750, call **(605) 433-5489**, or visit badlandsnha.org.

CRAZY HORSE MEMORIAL

The Crazy Horse Memorial pays tribute to the great Sioux warrior and is the world's largest mountain carving. The Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation works to protect and

preserve American Indian culture and traditions. It is completely funded by donations and admission fees. Admission to the monument is \$10 per person or \$15-\$35 per carload from May 24th to September 30th, 2025 (depending on number of passengers). The monument is open year-round. Closing hours vary seasonally. The monument is located five miles north of Custer on U.S. 16-385. For more information, contact Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation, 12151 Avenue of the Chiefs, Crazy Horse, SD 57730-8900, call **(605) 673-4681** or visit crazyhorsememorial.org.

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE PARKS

The South Dakota State Parks protect some of the most beautiful land the state has to offer. More than 60 parks and recreation areas across the state offer a range of activities for visitors. From rocky crags to sun-soaked prairies to tree-laden forests, South Dakota has it all for the ultimate adventure. For more information, visit gfp.sd.gov/parks or call **(605) 223-7660**.

BLACK HILLS PARKS & FOREST ASSOCIATION

The Black Hills Parks and Forests Association is a nonprofit interpretive association partner of the National Park Service, National Forest Service, South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks and National Grasslands. It operates outlets in 14 locations in the Black Hills, including Jewel Cave National Monument, Wind Cave National Monument, Custer State Park, Black Hills & Nebraska National Forests where publications are available. Call **(605) 745-7020** or visit blackhillsparks.org.

Nature & Wildlife



The Black Hills region represents a unique mosaic of forest and prairie environments, bringing together animals and plants that cannot be found living together anywhere else. As a transitional east-meets-west landscape, the Black Hills support a diverse blend of species from the deciduous forests to the east, the Rocky Mountain forests to the west, the deserts to the southwest, and the native Midwest prairie.

LIFE IN THE FOREST

Elevation determines the type of vegetation in the Hills: the high granite peaks surrounding Mount Rushmore support only sparse plant life, while lower elevations and streambeds foster the growth of hardwoods and spruce, as well as many marshland weeds and grasses. A variety of animals and birds can be found on the rocky ledges and in the crags, crevices, and forests surrounding Mount Rushmore. The dominant tree at Mount Rushmore and throughout the Black Hills is the

ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Towering as high as 180 feet, its bark is yellow to orange in mature trees and black in younger trees. Five- to 10-inch dark green needles grow in tufts near the end of its branches. Reaching 75 feet, the state tree of South Dakota, the **Black Hills spruce** (*Picea glauca*), is found in the cool gulches and basins of Mount Rushmore.

LIFE ON THE PRAIRIE

The evergreen forests and stands of deciduous trees of the Black Hills are interrupted by stretches of fertile meadows, gradually giving way to a sea of prairie grass that flows past Badlands National Park to become the Great Plains. This variegated prairie environment supports a different, yet coexistent, diversity of life.

The **lanced-leaved cottonwood** (*Populus acuminata*) and the **eastern cottonwood** (*Populus deltoides*), named for their three- to four-inch-long seed-

REINTRODUCTION OF THE BLACK-FOOTED FERRET



The black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) is considered to be one of the most endangered land mammals in North America. Thought to be extinct in the 1970s, a small

colony of this species was found on a ranch near Meteor, Wyoming. Canine distemper killed all but 18 ferrets in the colony. The survivors were trapped and protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and became part of a captive breeding program.

The black-footed ferret is a prairie resident dependent upon extensive prairie dog colonies for survival. Depletion of prairie dogs in the 20th century has led to the near extinction of this ferret. Captive-bred ferrets were reintroduced in Badlands National Park in 1994. Park staff are encouraged by wild-born kits (young ferrets), some of which are now producing young.



bearing capsules that release cotton-like seeds, are found in small numbers in the lower canyons of Mount Rushmore.

A vital range grass of the Great Plains, the **blue grama** (*Bouteloua gracilis*) is able to withstand drought conditions extremely well, providing nourishment for range animals during dry periods. Its leaves, which grow three to six inches, are made up of curved seed spikes, giving them a distinctive comb-like appearance.

The **prairie rattlesnake** is the only venomous snake native to South Dakota, and while seldom seen, is a common inhabitant of Badlands National Park. Experts at camouflage, the prairie rattlesnake is a light brown to green, with a yellowish belly. A dark oval patch with light colored borders runs along the center of their backs. Adult rattlesnakes can reach more than 40 inches in length.

While **mountain lion** (*Puma concolor*) sightings are rare, there is a sizable population that inhabits the Black Hills. Also known as pumas or cougars, they are tan to light cinnamon with black on the back of their ears and the tip of their tail. Adult males can grow to 8 feet in length, including the tail, and weigh 150 pounds. Adult females may be up to seven feet long and weigh 90 pounds.

These powerful felines are apex predators with few natural enemies. They prey primarily on deer, but are opportunistic hunters. It's true that mountain lions are more likely to see you than you'll see them, but they are dangerous and aggressive and you should be prepared. If you encounter one, stay calm. Never turn your back or run. Make yourself appear larger, make a lot of noise, and throw rocks and sticks. If you are attacked, stand your ground and fight back.



COYOTE

Canis latrans

The cry of the coyote is one of the most distinct sounds of the American West. Coyotes are smaller than wolves and are very successful predators. They eat small mammals, reptiles, insects, and fruit. When hunting in packs, they are capable of killing significantly larger animals. • **Weight** 20-30 lbs • **Length** 3-4.5 ft • **Active** year-round.



BOBCAT

Lynx rufus

The bobcat is not often seen by visitors. Most bobcats are nocturnal and solitary, eating mainly small mammals and birds. The animal's ears are pointed and black-tipped with black hair tufts spiking upward. It's named for its stubby, or bobbed, tail. • **Length** 2-4 ft; tail 4-7 in • **Weight** 20 lbs (average) • **Active** year-round.



AMERICAN BISON

Bison bison

Almost exterminated near the turn of the 20th century, the scattered bison herds in Grand Teton are representative of the millions that once roamed the Great Plains. These powerful animals can climb steep terrain, jump over fences, and quickly outdistance humans on the run! • **Weight** 800-2000 pounds • **Length** 7-12.5 feet • **Active** year-round.



PRAIRIE DOG

Cynomys ludovicianus

The prairie dog is a rodent, about the size of a rabbit, commonly found across South Dakota. These animals spend a large amount of time constructing dwellings. In recent years, the population of prairie dogs has been impacted by plague, carried by fleas. • **Weight** 2-3 lbs • **Length** 12-15 in • **Active** year-round.



WHITETAIL DEER

Odocoileus virginianus

The white hairs on the underside of the deer's tail and rump are an effective communication device. They graze on green plants and woody vegetation, and thanks to their four-part stomach, can feed on food that other mammals cannot. Although principally nocturnal, they can be active at any time. **Weight** 90-310 lbs • **Length** 6-7 ft • **Active** year-round.



DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP

Ovis Canadensis nelsoni

Massive curled horns are the most distinctive feature of this non-native species. They were introduced to the area following the 1916 extinction of Audubon sheep. Padded hooves allow it to climb steep and rocky terrain. • **Weight** 150-200 lbs • **Length** 5¼ ft (average) • **Height** 5-6 ft • **Active** year-round.

BECOME A JUNIOR RANGER

Kids ages three to 12 can join this popular program at **Mount Rushmore, Badlands, and Jewel Cave** to learn more about the importance of our national parks. By completing the fun activities described in the park's *Junior Ranger Booklet*, kids can earn Junior Ranger and Junior Ranger Trainee certificates and badges. To learn more, inquire at the information or visitor centers. Daily Junior Ranger Programs are offered at Badlands from mid-June through August. Jewel Cave also offers a Pee Wee Ranger Program for kids ages three to four. Older kids, ages 13 and up, can join the **Rushmore Ranger program** to enhance their Mount Rushmore experience. A certificate is awarded upon completion of the booklet.

WALK THROUGH HISTORY

Go on the **Mount Rushmore Audio Tour: A Living Memorial** and participate in the Junior Ranger Quest, a new adventure that allows kids to participate in up to 16 challenges at different tour stops around the park. After completing the challenges, kids receive a Junior Ranger badge from any ranger desk.

UNCOVER A MAMMOTH

Open year-round, the **Mammoth Site in Hot Springs** (approximately 1.5 hours south of Mount Rushmore) offers kids four and up a unique, hands-on opportunity to learn to excavate, map, and take field notes at this world-renowned excavation site. For more information about

Junior Paleontological Digs or about the Mammoth Site, call **(605) 745-6017** or visit **Mammothsite.org**.

HUNT FOR GOLD

Get in the spirit of the 1876 Gold Rush! Head for the streams of the Black Hills where amateur gold panners still regularly find placer gravel containing gold nuggets, flakes, and dust. All you need is a gold pan and a little luck—any gold-panning enterprise will be happy to show your kids the tricks of the trade.

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

While touring, play "**What do you see in the rock?**" as you drive by the spires of the Needles or the eerie moonscape of the Badlands. Have your kids pretend they are sculptors and ask them what they would carve, where, and why.

TATANKA: STORY OF THE BISON

Thirty to sixty million bison once roamed the great plains of North America. By the close of the 19th century, it's estimated that fewer than 1,000 bison survived.

The Interpretive Center & Story of the Bison tell their story. Take a journey through an authentic Lakota Encampment with American Indian Interpreters that give presentations throughout the day. The centerpiece of the museum is the Bison Jump, the third largest bronze sculpture in the world. For more information, call **(605) 584-5678** or visit **storyofthebison.com**.

A good pair of **binoculars** is the perfect companion for your trip—they don't just bring distant wildlife into view—it enhances your awareness of your surroundings, helps you spot elusive creatures, and allows you to witness natural behaviors without threatening them. Whether you're birding, watching

predators from afar, or scanning the treetops for movement, using binoculars skillfully can turn a simple hike into a rich, immersive experience. Here's how to get the most from them:

- **Choose the right specs:** An 8x42 pair offers a great balance of magnification, brightness, and stability for most users.
- **Adjust for your eyes:** Use the center focus wheel and diopter ring to fine-tune clarity.
- **Stabilize your view:** Rest your elbows on a surface or use a trekking pole for added support.
- **Scan with purpose:** Look for movement or color changes in the landscape. Animals are often camouflaged and reveal themselves through motion.

To protect both the environment and wildlife, always stay on marked trails to avoid damaging fragile ecosystems. Give animals plenty of space by using zoom lenses or binoculars, and follow all park regulations regarding restricted areas and seasonal closures. Moving quietly and minimizing noise not only reduces stress on wildlife but also increases your chances of witnessing natural behaviors without human interference.

ENHANCE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Using cameras and binoculars encourages observation and you'll begin noticing subtle things—a fox's behavior at dusk, the changing texture of bark in different light, or a flash of color in the canopy. These tools sharpen your senses and help you build a stronger connection with the outdoors.

From photographing fog rolling through a valley to spotting a hawk soaring overhead, the combination of thoughtful observation and the right gear brings national and state park adventures to life.

[illegible]

If You Only Have A Day

It is possible to fit in a quick **tour of Mount Rushmore National Memorial** and **Badlands National Park** in one day. The parks are a two-hour drive (100 miles) apart, so start early. While exploring, you will see highlights of the Black Hills region.

Coming from the east on I-90, turn into Badlands National Park at Cactus Flat (exit 131), then head south on Highway 240 for 10 minutes to the **Ben Reifel Visitor Center**. Stop for lunch at **Cedar Pass Lodge** (April-October), visit the interpretive offerings, or take a short hike near the visitor center.

Continue west on Highway 240 and stop at the many scenic overlooks along the way. After you pass **Needles Overlook**, head north to I-90 to exit the park. Continue west on I-90 through Rapid City and take exit 57 to Highway 16 (Mount Rushmore Road), which will bring you to the memorial.

Allow at least two hours to explore Mount Rushmore. Find your state's flag while walking down the **Avenue of Flags** right in front of the monument. Or, time permitting, come back to the memorial for the nightly lighting ceremony, which begins at 9 pm during the summer (8 pm in the fall). *Note: Renovations will affect schedules and openings. Check the park website before making plans.*

Continue south on Iron Mountain Road, which connects to **Custer State Park's Wildlife Loop Road**. A two-hour drive takes you around the loop where you will see an amazing array of animals.

Often, entire herds of **bison** line the prairie as far as the eye can see. An alternate route back to Mount Rushmore is to complete three-fourths of the loop, then get on the Needles Highway and cut over onto Highway 244 going east to the memorial.



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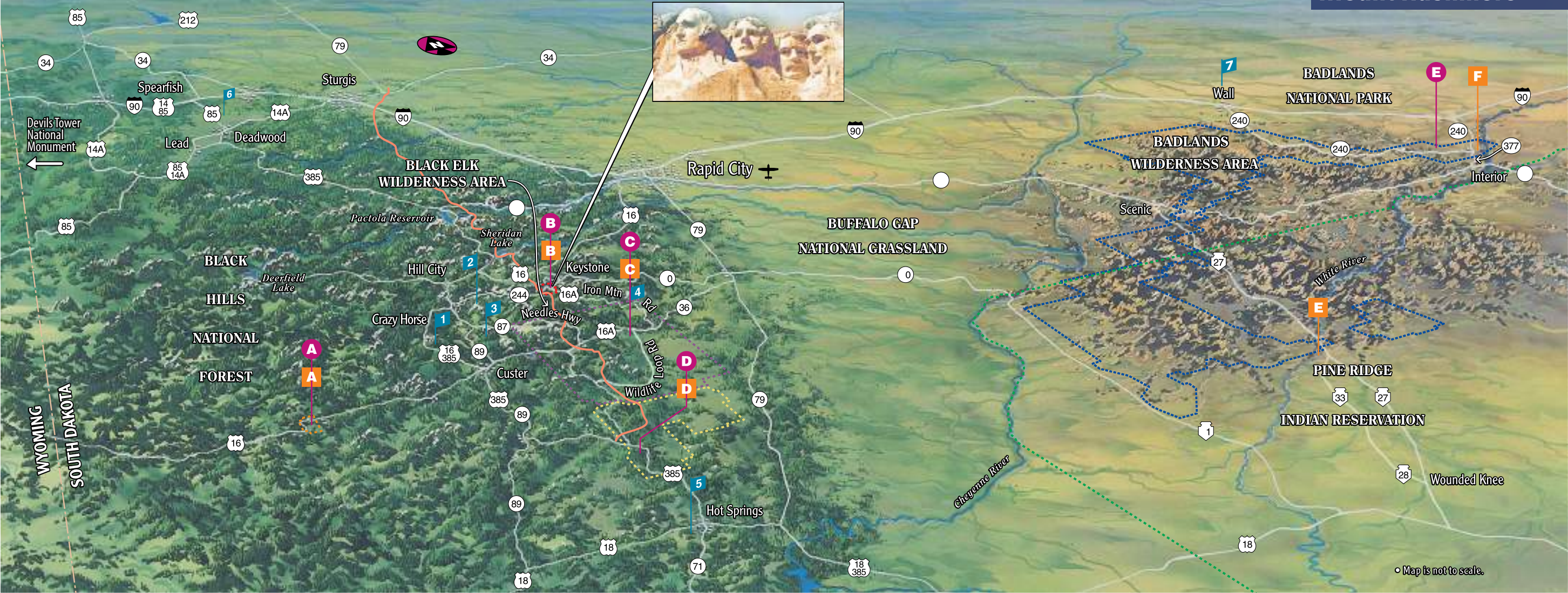
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Black Hills, Badlands and Mount Rushmore



A Jewel Cave National Monument

- Books
- Picnicking
- Visitor Center

B Mount Rushmore National Memorial

- Dining
- Gifts/books
- Memorial

C Custer State Park

- Camping
- Dining
- Gas
- Gifts
- Groceries
- Lodging

D Wind Cave National Park

- Camping
- Gifts/books
- Picnicking
- Visitor Center

E Badlands National Park (North Unit and South Unit)

- Camping
- Dining
- Gifts
- Lodging
- Picnicking

Legend:

- ✈ Rapid City Regional Airport
- Pine Ridge Indian Reservation
- Centennial Trail

POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1 Crazy Horse Memorial
- 2 Black Elk Peak
- 3 The Needles
- 4 State Game Lodge
- 5 Mammoth Site
- 6 Tatanka Story of the Bison
- 7 Wall Drug

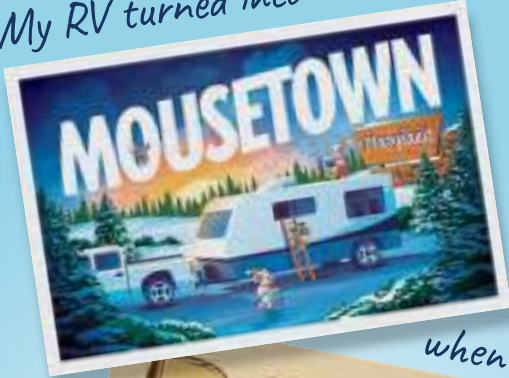
VISITOR CENTERS

- A Jewel Cave
- B Mount Rushmore
- C Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

- D Wind Cave
- E White River (summer only)
- F Ben Reifel

• Map is not to scale.

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