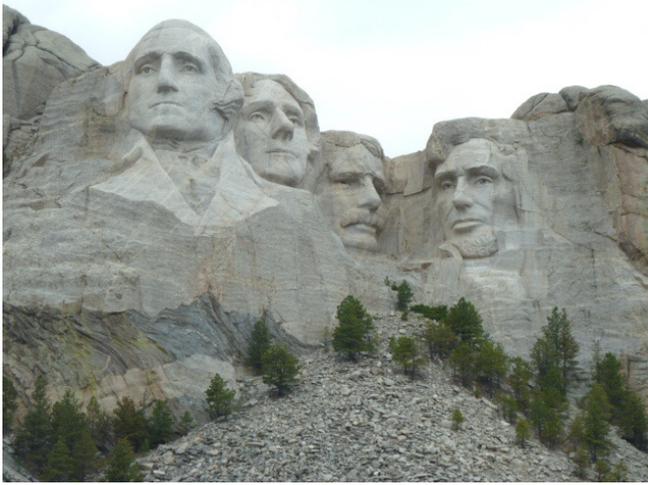


SOUTH DAKOTA

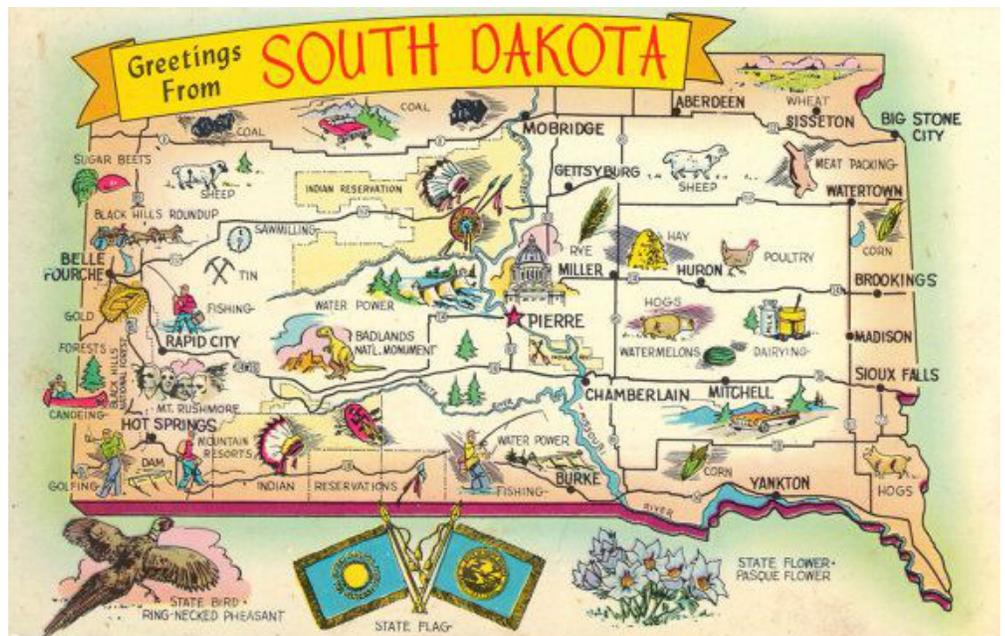


South Dakota is full of places that can take you away from the here and now. Watch a herd of buffalo trundle across the prairie, and you feel as if you've returned to a time before railroads and farmers overran the plains. Pay a visit to Mitchell in late summer, and you'll wonder if you've stumbled upon some ancient harvest ritual—an entire palace is decorated in corn and grass.

Of course, the classic South Dakota attractions remain: the Black Hills, Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore, the Crazy Horse Memorial and Wind Cave National Park. You can make an entire vacation of these alone—their proximity allows you to see the best of the state in a short amount of time.

Geography

South Dakota is made up of high plains and rolling hills, but the Black Hills (in the southwest corner) are characterized by mountains, rivers and lakes, which conceal the state's various caves and mine shafts. At the Missouri River, the cornfields of the east give way abruptly to the buttes, badlands and cattle country of the west.



Why Travel To South Dakota: South Dakota's main attractions are outdoor activities, Mount Rushmore, the Badlands, mountain scenery, varied wildlife (bison, elk, pronghorn antelope and mountain goats), the Black Hills and gambling.

Is South Dakota For You: Travelers who love hiking, fishing, biking, hunting, beautiful scenery and spectacular national monuments will have a great time in South Dakota. Those seeking varied nightlife, diverse shopping or big-city amenities won't easily find them.

When to Visit & Weather: The best time to visit South Dakota is from June through early autumn. July and August are the warmest months, with temperature ranges of 56-78 F/12-24 C. The Black Hills are generally cooler in summer, but hot spells can occur even there. Nights cool off rather dramatically—as low as the 40s F/4 C—so take a jacket or warm sweater. Even in August, freezing temperatures can occur at high altitudes. Autumn temperatures are still comfortable, with highs from the mid-60s to mid-70s F/18-25 C.

Potpourri

- In what is considered the largest annual gathering of motorcycle enthusiasts in the world, up to 500,000 hog aficionados swarm into the small South Dakota community of Sturgis each August. In the past, extreme rowdiness was sometimes part of the event, but the presence of more RUBs—rich urban bikers—has toned the atmosphere down.
- The Black Hills are so named because of the dark color of the pine and spruce trees that cover the region. The Native American phrase for the area, *paha sapa*, means "hills that are black."
- A special computer system monitors Mount Rushmore for cracks and moisture—caretakers fear that water could seep into the fissures and freeze, causing the rock to split.
- Gold is an important part of South Dakota's history—the first strike happened in Custer. In 1876, at the height of the gold rush, an experienced miner could process 50 pans of gold a day.
- For more than 50 years, Spearfish has been the site of the annual *Black Hills Passion Play*, in which a cast of professional actors, locals, horses, donkeys, camels and sheep re-create the last days of the life of Christ.
- The HBO series *Deadwood* is based on historical accounts of the time when Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Seth Bullock and other characters from a rowdier age cooled their heels in the town. Thankfully, those who visit Deadwood today will find a much friendlier crowd.
- South Dakota landscapes are often used by movie-makers. The films *Dances with Wolves* and *National Treasure: Book of Secrets* were filmed on location in South Dakota.



*Oh, give me
a home
where the
buffalo
roam...*



Do's and Don'ts

- Do be prepared for traffic congestion in the Black Hills during summer, especially during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally the first week in August.
- Don't be too loud with your opinions about whether the Black Hills should or shouldn't be returned to the Sioux. South Dakotans on both sides of the issue are touchy on this subject.
- Don't pronounce the name of the state capital, Pierre, as if it were a French name. Locally, it's pronounced *Peer*.
- Don't pick up Native American artifacts if you're lucky enough to see any. Aside from being disrespectful, it's a violation of federal law to remove them from the area.
- Do look for a dramatic change of scenery as you drive west across the Missouri River on Interstate 90: Eastern prairies and cornfields suddenly give way to badlands and western buttes.

Recreation:

South Dakota is a place outdoor-oriented people love. Visitors hunting the Chinese ring-necked pheasant and other upland game birds add many millions of dollars to the state's economy each year. The Missouri River provides excellent walleye fishing, the prairie pothole lakes in the northeast are filled with tasty panfish, and there are exciting fly-fishing excursions for Black Hills anglers.

Bird-watchers love to visit South Dakota for the drumming prairie chickens, the variety of hawks and other raptors, the nesting bald eagles and the neotropical migrants. Photographers love the prairie grasses, colorful Badlands and all the Black Hills have to offer. There's nothing like capturing a prairie sunrise behind a weathered barn.

The 109-mi/175-km Mickelson Trail follows an abandoned railroad line through the Black Hills. In the summer, it is filled with walkers, bicyclists and horseback riders. Cross-country skiers glide down the trail in winter, passing the mighty ponderosa pine trees and native Black Hills spruce, and seeing the hills in a winter blanket of white.

Geostats:

Passport/Visa Requirements: Citizens of Australia and the U.K. need a passport and proof of onward passage but in most cases will not need a visa (contact a U.S. embassy or consulate for details). Canadians need to show proof of citizenship accompanied by a photo ID.

Population: 781,909.

Languages: English.

Predominant Religions: Christian (Protestant, Roman Catholic).

Time Zone: 6-7 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time (-6 and -7 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November. The state has two time zones, Central and Mountain. They are divided down the central part of the state.

Voltage Requirements: 110 volts.