

# TATANKA

The Custer State Park Newspaper | Volume 40 | 2019 | South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks



## CUSTER STATE PARK: 100 YEARS OF TRADITION



*“Creation of Custer State Park has been more than merely taking an area and proclaiming it as a park. Years of toil without sufficient funds or help often made the dream difficult. The flame of inspiration flickered and nearly went out in the early years of frustration. But the dogged determination of these unrewarded individuals kept it alive.”*

-R.A. Hodgins, Director of Game, Fish, and Parks 1969

Custer State Park is one of the largest state parks in the United States. Enjoyed by almost 2 million visitors from around the world every year, this jewel of South Dakota is home to free-roaming buffalo, pristine lakes, gurgling streams, along with the granite outcroppings of the Needles spires. The establishment of the park did not occur overnight, it was a long process involving the vision of Peter Norbeck, the constant shuffling of ideas and moving pieces.

The dream of Custer State Park began in 1905 when Norbeck first saw the Black Hills. He and a friend made the trip in a Cadillac from the eastern side of the state to Rapid City. During the visit to the Black

Hills he envisioned a large park to preserve the area’s significant beauty for future generations.

The groundwork for a park began in 1898 when the Black Hills was placed under federal control with South Dakota retaining Sections 16 and 36 of each township as school lands. Neither the State nor the U.S. Forest Service were interested in managing these numerous small holdings, and the agencies began to trade the scattered sections with each other. By 1912 the state owned 48,000 continuous acres in Custer County which was then designated as Custer State Forest and later became Custer State Game Preserve.

In 1919, now Governor of South Dakota, Norbeck addressed the legislature, declaring that an unusual opportunity awaited the state and work should proceed to create a permanent state park out of the game preserve. On March 1, 1919, his vision became reality and Custer State Park was born.

Norbeck loved the Black Hills and visited the park often. He traversed the area on foot and by horseback, laying out roads that lead visitors past spectacular views. He thought certain areas should be accessible to the public, but the roads he planned made engineers shudder.

Luckily for Norbeck, State Engineer Scovel Johnson thought any road could be built with enough dynamite, so Norbeck and Johnson began constructing roads – roads that passed through breathtaking scenery but that blended in with the surroundings. As visitors travel the narrow turns and climbs of Needles Highway and Iron Mountain road they travel in the footsteps of Norbeck and, as he said, “You’re not suppose to drive here at 60 miles an hour, to do the scenery justice you should drive at no more than 20. To do it full justice, you should just get out and walk it.”

With the 1930’s came the Great Depression, but the plans for Custer State Park were not placed on hold because of the crash in the economy. Possibly more was accomplished *because of* than *in spite of* the

depression and drought of the 1930s. From 1933 until 1941, four Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps worked within the borders of Custer State Park. These men built dams, buildings, roadways and bridges throughout the park. Several of the larger projects included the creation of Stockade Lake, Center Lake, The Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center, Wildlife Station Visitor Center and Mount Coolidge Lookout Tower.

With the 1960s, large changes came to the park. The managers of the park began to realize the park was not only a game preserve, but it was becoming a major tourist destination. With this change came additional expenses. To combat this growing difficulty, the park introduced the first park entrance license which at the time was \$2.

The park experienced several more changes over the years, both in management styles and through natural forces. In the 1970s park managers decided the Park Zoo and Doll House did not fit with the overall feel of the park, so both were removed. In 1988, the Galena Fire, which burned over 16,000 acres in July, changed much of the logging and fire practices of the park.

In 2017, the park again experienced a large fire, the Legion Lake fire. This unique winter fire started in December and burned over 54,000 total acres, 34,000 of those acres in the park itself.

2019 is Custer State Park’s first Centennial. As the park looks back, it sees more than an origin and a growth; it sees an abundance of accomplishments made possible by people overcoming both man-made and nature’s challenges. The park would not be what it is today without the interaction between the beautiful countryside and the people that live and visit here.

Custer State Park’s story is ageless. Yesterday’s history shaped today’s park and the visitors and staff of today shape the park for tomorrow.

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### Why a Newspaper?

In 1980, Custer State Park rolled out its first park guide, called *Tatanka*. This early publication was a simple newspaper that shared stories and information about the park to our visitors. Over the last 40 years, the *Tatanka* changed into the park magazine we typically use. In honor of our 100-year anniversary, the park has developed a throwback version of the *Tatanka*. We hope you enjoy the information, stories and memories of Custer State Park’s 100 years of tradition.

### Custer State Park Resort CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Join Custer State Park Resorts for 100 years of tradition with Jeep Safari rides, Chuckwagon Cookouts and endless other activities. Dine with us, as each of our resort restaurants offer a Centennial Feature Entrée for the 2019 season. Specially-crafted to take you back to a century ago, these plates pay tribute to the 1900s: the days of stagecoaches, gold mining, President Coolidge, and more...with a twist of today’s modern, delectable preparations.

**See Page 12 for a special centennial coupon!**



## Park Rules

Regulations are designed to protect both park visitors and park resources. Park rangers enforce the park's laws and regulations.

- **DO NOT approach the buffalo.**
- Do not feed or disturb wildlife.
- Vehicles on designated, signed roads only.
- Open fires are prohibited unless in an approved fire grate located in campgrounds or picnic areas.
- Pets need to be on a leash no longer than 10 feet. Pets are not allowed in any park buildings or on designated swimming beaches. Please clean up after your pet, and do not leave pets unattended. Service animals are welcome.
- Removal of any natural or cultural features such as rocks or artifacts is prohibited.
- Loaded firearms are not allowed in the park. Unloaded and cased firearms may be transported in a vehicle.
- Open carry is not permitted. You may carry a concealed weapon with a valid permit.
- Visitors are not allowed to jump or dive from bridges, rocks or cliffs into any of the park's lakes.
- Only state-sponsored geocaches are allowed in the park.

## Lost and Found

All lost and found items and records are kept at the park office. If you find or lose an item, stop at one of our entrance stations, visitor centers or the park office and fill out a lost and found form.

## Contact Information

### Camping Reservations

1.800.710.2267  
campsd.com

### Custer State Park Resort

Information: 605.255.4772  
Reservations: 1.888.875.0001  
info@custerresorts.com  
custerresorts.com

### Custer State Park

Park Office: 605.255.4515  
custerstatepark@state.sd.us  
custerstatepark.com

**Tatanka is the Lakota word for bison or buffalo.**

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*The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks' mission is to provide sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities through responsible management of our state's parks, fisheries and wildlife by fostering partnerships, cultivating stewardship and safely connecting people with the outdoors.*

# THINGS TO KNOW



## WELCOME

Welcome to Custer State Park. One hundred years later we are thankful that Peter Norbeck (the Father of Custer State Park) had the foresight and vision to create South Dakota's oldest and largest state park. Peter Norbeck said it best in the following quotes:

Governor Norbeck in a 1917 address to the State Legislature: "The state forest and game preserve will continue to be a place of increasing interest. It is a place of beauty, and it is an inspiring sight to see our native wild game grazing quietly along the wayside."

Custer State Park still holds this charm today as a place where one can view plentiful wildlife throughout its 71,000 acres. The park has been rated in numerous top 10 lists as one of the greatest places in the world to view wildlife.

In a 1921 speech to the First National Conference on State Parks, Peter Norbeck observed: "Parks are not merely picnicking places. They are rich store houses of memories and reveries. They are bearers of wonderful talks to him who listen a solace to the aged and an inspiration to the young. A state park cannot be planned until it is found."

Our goal is to continually enhance the visitor experience. The renovated Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center attracts youth to gain an appreciation for the outdoors. They are our future. When planning the visitor center, our goal from the start was to create a world-class building that would mold and shape the memories visitors create in Custer State Park and the Black Hills, and give them a reason to stay longer and return again.

My favorite quote from Peter Norbeck about the park, "To do the scenery half justice, people should drive 20 or under; to do it full justice they should get out and walk."

Peter Norbeck was very passionate about the roads in Custer State Park. He spent weeks on horseback riding potential routes. He worked with the South Dakota State Highway Commission to develop a system of roads in the park. The South Dakota State Highway Commission is quoted saying "[Roads] ... must be responsible for efficiency of construction with economy of location, but the matter of artistic and landscape development, the last two subjects being real and final, are to be kept ever in site."

The vision of those that have come before us have shaped Custer State Park into what it is today. We need to keep in mind the purpose of the roads. They are not meant to get from point A to point B. Driving the park roads is a unique experience that provides opportunities to view wildlife and nature. The roads are meant to be traveled at slower speeds and provide different opportunities that travelers would not see on other highways. The windy, narrow roads, along with the switchbacks themselves are unique features and add to that experience. If we build our roads through the park like a gun barrel, people will drive like a bullet. So slow down take your time and enjoy what the park has to offer.

The future of the park is to find that balance between preservation and use, to continually create the memories that are passed down from generation to generation. So many of our visitors experienced the park in their youth and find their way back. Some visit annually, some come back after several years with their kids or grandkids to pass down the tradition and create new memories to cherish.

For me it is truly a humbling experience to manage Custer State Park, and I continually thrive to keep within the spirit of our founding father by continually asking myself what would Peter Norbeck think?

Matt Snyder, Superintendent  
Custer State Park





# VISITOR CENTERS



The Custer State Park Visitor Center opened in 2016 at the junction of the Wildlife Loop Road and Highway 16A. The building includes an interactive park map as well as a 100-seat theater where a park film immerses visitors into the history and natural wonders of Custer State Park.

## VISITOR CENTER HISTORY

The **Custer State Park Visitor Center** opened to the public in May 2016. Before the building was constructed, this was the site of a group camping area. Did you know there was a zoo here before that? From the early 1920s to 1970 this was the site of the Park Zoo. The zoo housed bighorn sheep, bear, coyotes, badger, woodchucks, a red and a grey wolf, fox, bobcats, raccoons, red and grey squirrels, porcupines, white-tail and mule deer, eagles, owls, cranes, pigeons, pheasants, peafowl and other birds.

Before this was the site of the zoo, it was the homestead of Reisin Otis (1890s to 1900s). Mr. Otis served as postmaster of the Otis Post Office from 1889 to 1895, and the Otis School was in this area as well.

In 1952 the Park Zoo counted 146,000 visitors. From the large windows in the visitor center, you can still see evidence of the dens used in the bear exhibit.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the outside of the **Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center** has not changed much since its construction, even as the purpose of the

building has undergone many alterations. Originally built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1937, this building functioned as the park museum until it was dedicated as the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center in September 1979. In September 2017, it reopened as the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center.

Another CCC-constructed building, the **Wildlife**

### Station Visitor Center

was originally built as the herdsman's or custodian's house. The building and the barn next to it were built in 1937. The barn originally had five stalls for horses and other livestock. The main building was converted into a visitor center in 1987 and remodeled in 2017. The current entry to the Wildlife Station Visitor Center opens into what was the kitchen and garage of the house.

Many families homesteaded in this area through the early 1900s. The Durst family owned the land in the immediate area of the Wildlife Station Visitor Center. Several other homesteads were in the surrounding area.



PETER NORBECK OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTER

## VISITOR CENTER HOURS

### Custer State Park Visitor Center

Located at the junction of Wildlife Loop Road and Highway 16A

#### Memorial Day – Labor Day:

Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Labor Day – Sept. 30:** Open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Oct. 1 – Memorial Day:** Open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Thanksgiving and Christmas:** Closed

### Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

Located on Highway 16A near the State Game Lodge

#### Open House Weekend – Sept. 30:

Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Oct. 1 – Open House Weekend:** Closed

### Wildlife Station Visitor Center

Located on Wildlife Loop Road.

**Memorial Day – Labor Day:** Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Labor Day – Sept. 30:** Open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Oct. 1 – Memorial Day:** Closed

### Badger Hole Historic Site

Located on Badger Clark Road

**Memorial Day – Sept. 22:** Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Sept. 23 - Memorial Day:** Closed

### Gordon Stockade Historic Site

Located on Highway 16A at West Entrance

**Open 24/7 year-round**

## Park Entrance Fees

An entrance license is required for all park visitors. Only people traveling non-stop on U.S. Highway 16A are exempt from this requirement. Entrance licenses are valid at all South Dakota state parks.

### Temporary Vehicle License

(1-7 consecutive days)

\$20/vehicle

\$10/motorcycle

### Annual Park Entrance License

\$30/vehicle

### Second Annual Park Entrance License

\$15/vehicle

### Transferable Park Entrance License

\$65/vehicle

### Camping fees

See page 15

### Motorcoach License

(Valid only at Custer State Park.)

\$3/person per visit

## CUSTER STATE PARK ACCOLADES

Buffalo Roundup Named Top North American Event – American Bus Association

5 Great American Wildlife Adventures – Forbes

Best Places to Travel in September – Condé Nast Traveler

Best State Parks to Visit in America – Thrillist

Best Family Travel Destination in South Dakota – MSN.com

9 Places to Hang Out With Animals in the Wild – Orbitz



# WILDLIFE OF CUSTER STATE PARK



Custer State Park is one of the few places in the world where you are able to see an abundance of wildlife in their natural habitat. Visitors may encounter a variety of wildlife throughout the park's 71,000 acres, including along trails, in the campgrounds and beside the road. Wildlife Loop Road is particularly known for its common sightings of buffalo, pronghorn and prairie dogs, but keep an eye out for white-tailed and mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep and a host of birds and smaller wildlife as well. For the best results, travel the loop during the early morning or later in the evening, when wildlife are most active.

## Hunting: A Management Tool

Some animal species in the park are managed through hunting programs. Hunting helps reduce the size of populations, preventing overcrowding within the park. Control of numbers ensures an adequate supply of food for all species and prevents habitat loss and competition between species.

Most hunting seasons typically occur from mid-September through early January. Turkey hunting takes place in the spring from mid-April through mid-May each year.

The fees collected from hunting licenses generate revenue which help fund wildlife management programs.

Species managed through hunting in the park include bison, elk, deer, pronghorn, mountain lion and turkey.

## WHERE DID THE WILDLIFE COME FROM?

Wildlife has been an important part of Custer State Park since its inception. When Peter Norbeck visited the Black Hills in 1905, he quickly realized that the wildlife in the area had been hunted to near extinction. In 1913, the State Legislature established a state game preserve within the boundaries of what was Custer State Forest. They also approved \$15,000 to fence and stock the area with game. Staff quickly began the process of bringing in animals to the new preserve.

The first wildlife to arrive were 25 elk from Yellowstone National Park. The first 25 bison were bought in the fall of 1914 from the Scotty Philip's

ranch. It took 12 days to transfer the bison from the train cars in Hermosa (east of the park) to what was then the Custer Game Preserve. Other game animals and birds quickly followed in the years to come. Beaver, pronghorn, mountain goats, big horn sheep, deer, ring-necked pheasants (which did not survive) and wild turkeys were all established in the new preserve.

The preserve was officially declared Custer State Park in 1919, with the help of then Governor Peter Norbeck. The Governor continued his efforts to keep the park full of wildlife. In 1924, eight mountain goats were obtained from Canada for the Park Zoo. They quickly escaped their

enclosure and to this day, are found throughout the southern Black Hills.

One of the final additions to the park's wildlife were the burros. For many years, the burros were used by the Sylvan Lake Lodge to carry visitors up to the top of Black Elk Peak. In the late 1920s, the burros were released into the park and quickly established themselves as one of the highlights for visitors to see along the Wildlife Loop Road.

Today, wildlife management is one of the park's top priorities and remains a challenge to balance wildlife numbers, habitat and visitor experiences.





# WHICH ANIMALS CAN YOU SPOT?



## COYOTES

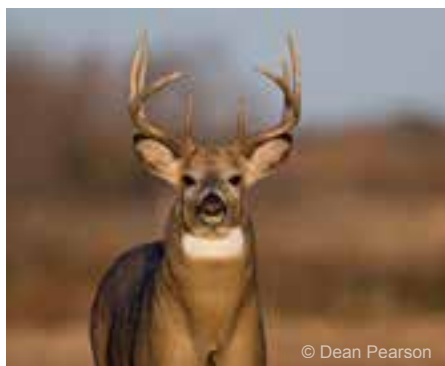
Coyotes hunt in all habitats of Custer State Park. Their diet is varied and dependent on weather, but consists mainly of small animals.

## ELK

Elk are the second largest member of the deer family (only moose are larger). Mature bulls grow and shed heavy, wide antlers each year. They are shy and seldom seen during the daytime hours. They are best found at dawn or dusk.

## MULE DEER

These deer are aptly named for their large ears. Their black-tipped tails are short and narrow and are carried down when the deer runs. Mule deer often bound with a stiff-legged gait, as if bouncing on powerful springs when they flee.



© Dean Pearson

## WHITE-TAILED DEER

White-tailed deer live mainly in the timberlands. As its name implies, the white-tailed deer has white hair on the underside of its tail. When the animal runs, the tail is flipped up and looks like a waving white flag.

## PRONGHORNS

Pronghorns, commonly referred to as antelope due to their similar appearance, live on the open grassland. The name pronghorn comes from the buck's large pronged horns. The horn sheaths are shed each year. The fastest land animal in North America, pronghorns can run 60 mph for great distances.



## PRAIRIE DOGS

The black-tailed prairie dog is found on the dry, upland prairie. It is a rodent that lives in large social groups called towns. Prairie dogs get their name from their bark-like call. They are considered an important species of the prairie ecosystem because they create habitat and are a food source for many other species of wildlife.



## BURROS

The burros in Custer State Park are not native to the Black Hills. They are descendants from the herd that once hauled visitors to the top of Black Elk Peak. The rides were discontinued years ago and the burros were released into the park.



© Sam Stukel

## MOUNTAIN LIONS

Chiefly nocturnal and reclusive, mountain lions are found within the Black Hills and Custer State Park. These predators feed on several species, including deer, elk, rabbits and wild turkeys.

## BIRDS

The park's diverse habitat makes for exciting bird watching. Visitors can find the mountain bluebird, white-winged junco, golden eagle, prairie falcon and western tanager, to name a few.



## BIGHORN SHEEP

A herd of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep was introduced to Custer State Park in 1922. Rams have thick, curled horns and ewes have smaller curved horns.

## MOUNTAIN GOATS

The mountain goat was not found in South Dakota until 1924, when it was introduced to the Black Hills. Today, they are found in the granite outcroppings and crags around Black Elk Peak, Needles and Mount Rushmore areas. The all-white mammal feeds on grasses, ferns, moss and lichen among other high-elevation plants. Both sexes have sharp, slender, black horns.



## BUFFALO

The park is home to as many as 1,350 head of North American bison, more commonly known as buffalo. Bison can grow to 6 feet tall and weigh more than 2,000 pounds. They are considered the largest native terrestrial mammal of North America.

There were once millions of bison, but by 1900 it is estimated that fewer than 1,000 bison remained on the entire continent.

Peter Norbeck, often known as the "Father of Custer State Park," recognized the situation and decided to take action to preserve this native beast. In 1914, the park, then known as Custer State Forest and Game Sanctuary, purchased 36 bison to start its herd. By the 1940s, the size of the herd had swelled to over 2,500.

The herd soon began to overgraze the park's rangeland and the bison numbers were lowered. Each year during the roundup, the size and the structure of the bison herd is adjusted according to the predicted availability of grassland forage. The spring birthing season replenishes the herd.

### Please don't feed us!

Feeding the park's wildlife is prohibited. In fact, feeding any wild animal can be dangerous to both you and the animal.

## KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

When viewing wildlife, please remain in your vehicle or stay at least 100 yards from bison, elk and other animals. Regardless of distance, if any wild animal changes its behavior due to your presence, you are too close. Please back away.



## HISTORIC PLACES TO SEE ON YOUR DRIVE

### The Home of Badger Clark

The Badger Hole was the home of Charles "Badger" Clark (1883-1957), South Dakota's first poet laureate. In 1927, he leased a cabin site in the park where he built the Original Badger Hole, living in it for several years while building the newer Badger Hole, doing much of the work himself. He wrote *A Cowboy's Prayer* and *I Must Come Back*, as well as other poems, verse and short stories that are popular among South Dakotans, cowboys and travelers from all over the world.

After Clark's death on September 26, 1957, the Badger Hole was acquired by the state and maintained just as he left it.

### Mount Coolidge Lookout

The Mount Coolidge Lookout and Fire Tower was built in 1940 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. It rests atop a 6,023-foot peak and is used for communications and spotting fires.

The turnoff is located on SD87. A 1.7-mile gravel road leads visitors to the top of the mountain, but large vehicles and motorhomes should avoid making the trip, as the road is narrow and winding. From the top, visitors can see as far as the Badlands-60 miles away.

### The Gordon Stockade

In the summer of 1874, an expedition led by Lt. Colonel George A. Custer discovered gold in the Black Hills. Under the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, however, this region belonged to the Plains Indians, and white settlement was not allowed.

Word of the discovery spread quickly, and a group of gold seekers from Sioux City, Iowa, moved into the Black Hills the following winter. Upon their arrival, the Gordon Party built a log fortress on the bank of French Creek to protect themselves from a possible Lakota attack.

Today, as you approach the replica of Gordon Stockade, interpretive signs tell the story of this short-lived, illegal occupation.

### CCC Buildings

With the depression in the 1930s came the Civilian Conservation Corps program (CCC). These young men created many improvements throughout Custer State Park and the nation. Their mark can still be seen today, as they constructed what is now the park's Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center, Wildlife Station Visitor Center, Mount Coolidge Fire Tower and many bridges as well as the dams that created Stockade, Center and Legion Lakes.

## TAKE YOUR TIME

These winding drives are enjoyed at a slower pace.

When making plans, please allow ample time to travel at a safe speed – generally 25 miles per hour or slower.

# SCENIC DRIVES

## Needles Highway

- 14 miles
- Expect travel time of about 45 to 60 minutes.
- Closed in the winter.

The Needles Highway is more than a 14-mile road – it's a spectacular drive through pine and spruce forests, meadows surrounded by birch and aspen and rugged granite mountains. The road's name comes from the needle-like granite formations which seem to pierce the horizon along the highway.



## Iron Mountain Road

- 18 miles
- Expect travel time of about 45 to 60 minutes.

This winding road runs between Mount Rushmore National Memorial and the junction of US 16A and SD36. Constructed in 1933, only a portion of this road lies within the park, but it is a must-see.

Along the highway, visitors will find wildfire exhibits, pigtail bridges, magnificent Black Hills scenery and tunnels that frame Mount Rushmore.



## Wildlife Loop Road

- 18 miles
- Expect travel time of about 1 hour.
- Open year-round.

The 18-mile Wildlife Loop Road takes visitors through the open grasslands and pine-speckled hills that much of the park's wildlife call home.



## Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway

- Expect travel time of about two to three hours.

The Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway complements the park's three scenic drives and includes some of the most dramatic natural and historic features in the Black Hills.

Sites include the Needles, Mount Rushmore and a bird's eye view of the rocky peaks and forested hills of the Black Hills National Forest.

## Tunnel Information

Tunnels are found on three highways in or near Custer State Park. Drivers of travel trailers, campers, recreational vehicles and buses should be aware of the tunnel sizes. Please note: the measurements of the tunnels in the Southern Black Hills were updated in 2018. Not all signs or publications will reflect these changes. These measurements in the Tatanka are the most current.

### Iron Mountain Road – US 16A N

|                |             |             |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Doane Robinson | 12' 0" Wide | 11' 4" High |
| C.C. Gideon    | 11' 6" Wide | 10' 9" High |
| Scovel Johnson | 10' 9" Wide | 11' 0" High |

### Sylvan Lake Road – SD 87/89, North of Sylvan Lake

|             |            |            |
|-------------|------------|------------|
| Hood Tunnel | 8' 9" Wide | 9' 8" High |
|-------------|------------|------------|

### Needles Highway – SD 87 N

|                    |            |              |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| Needles Eye Tunnel | 8' 0" Wide | 9' 9" High   |
| Iron Creek         | 8' 9" Wide | 10' 10" High |





# PARK ACTIVITIES

Weekly interpretive programs are provided at the Custer State Park education center and visitor centers. Current schedules are posted in the campgrounds or can be picked up at any of the visitor centers. Come join us at these great programs and explore the park.

## Under the Sun

Join one of the many programs offered in the park. Programs are offered between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Please ask park staff for more information regarding specific offerings, times and locations.

### Pups Prowl and Junior Naturalist

Activity-based, hands-on explorations for ages 3-6 and 7-12.

### Patio Talks, Visitor Center Talks and Wildlife Station Talks

Stop in for an informal chat with a naturalist about Custer State Park's history, nature, geology or your most pressing question.

### Stories in the Shade

Relax under the shade of the oak trees and enjoy creating a story.

### Bison Olympics

Do you have what it takes to be a bison? Learn just how fast bison can run, or how high they can jump, how much food and water they need every day, and how you compare.

### Hook 'em and Cook 'em

A chance to fish if you've never done it before or if you forgot to pack your fishing gear. This program provides an opportunity to match wits with a rainbow trout. If you're successful the naturalist will demonstrate a simple way to clean and prepare a fish. (Participants in this program do NOT need a fishing license regardless of age.)

### Canoeing

Spend some time on the lake learning the ins and outs of canoeing or perfecting your strokes. (Children must be 7 years or older and accompanied by an adult. Minimum weight for canoes and kayaks is 50 lbs.)

### Adventure Hikes, Exploration Hikes and Take a Hike

Spend some time exploring the trails with a naturalist. Exploration Hikes and Take a Hikes are designed for families, Adventure Hikes are more strenuous.

## By the Light of the Moon

Enjoy a quintessential evening campground program after dinner with a naturalist. Topics range from history of the bison herd within the park to the impacts of fire on the Black Hills ecosystem.

## Stories in the Stars and Full Moon Investigations

Join a naturalist at the Wildlife Station Visitor Center during new moons to learn more about the constellations we see and the stories they tell us. June and July programs meet at 8:30 p.m., August and September programs meet at 7:30 p.m.

Use your senses to investigate the park by the light of the moon on full moon nights. June and July programs meet at the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center at 8 p.m., August and September programs meet at 7 p.m.

| New Moon     | Full Moon     |
|--------------|---------------|
| Mon, June 3  | Mon, June 17  |
| Tues, July 2 | Tues, July 16 |
| Wed, July 31 | Thurs, Aug 15 |
| Fri, Aug 30  | Fri, Sept 13  |

## 10 AMAZING THINGS TO DO AT CUSTER STATE PARK

1. Hike the road to Mount Coolidge Fire Tower to view the sunrise.
2. Eat a bison burger at one of the lodges.
3. Enjoy a horseback ride at Blue Bell Lodge.
4. Take a technology break from the outside world.
5. Discover the home of cowboy poet Badger Clark.
6. Get stuck in a wildlife jam on the Wildlife Loop Road
7. Go canoeing or paddleboarding one of our four lakes.
8. Investigate and explore at the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center.
9. Take a Jeep Safari Tour and get up close and personal with the wildlife.
10. Drive Needles Highway.

### SUNRISE/SUNSET SCHEDULE

| Date    | Sunrise (MT) | Sunset (MT) |
|---------|--------------|-------------|
| May 25  | 5:19 a.m.    | 8:23 p.m.   |
| June 8  | 5:12 a.m.    | 8:34 p.m.   |
| June 22 | 5:12 a.m.    | 8:40 p.m.   |
| July 6  | 5:19 a.m.    | 8:38 p.m.   |
| July 20 | 5:31 a.m.    | 8:29 p.m.   |
| Aug 3   | 5:46 a.m.    | 8:14 p.m.   |
| Aug 17  | 6:01 a.m.    | 7:54 p.m.   |
| Aug 31  | 6:17 a.m.    | 7:31 p.m.   |
| Sept 14 | 6:33 a.m.    | 7:05 p.m.   |
| Sept 28 | 6:49 a.m.    | 6:40 p.m.   |

## Custer State Park is Open Year-round — Come Experience Winter in the Park!

- Beat the winter blues and escape to the park! Every third Saturday during the months of January, February and March, the park offers a variety of guest speakers at the Visitor Center. Topics vary from history to wildlife management and even live music.
- Winter is a great time to explore the park; the season brings a quiet serenity to the place and there are fewer visitors to share it with. On the second Saturday during the months of January, February and March, the park takes guests on a series of guided hikes. If there is enough snow, guests can experience snowshoeing throughout the park free of charge.
- During the month of December the Visitor Center takes on a holiday feel with the Festival of Trees. Local businesses and community partners decorate trees which are on display and visitors can vote for their favorite.







**Sylvan Lake** is the park's oldest lake and one of the most iconic. This small lake was created in 1891 when the Reder family dammed the small stream going through the valley. This is one of the busiest lakes in the park and parking can become challenging in the summer season.



**Stockade Lake**, named after the historic Gordon Stockade found on its western shores, is the largest lake in Custer State Park. Originally named Doran Lake after the CCC Camp Doran which built the dam in 1934, this lake is the only lake in the park that allows all types of boats.



**Legion Lake** is the park's second largest lake and one the most photographed. This popular lake was created as a place for members of the American Legion to relax after World War 1. Now it offers the same atmosphere to numerous families each year.



**Center Lake** is the park's smallest lake and is tucked away in the north central part of the park. This small lake boasts a great beach as well as boat dock for canoes and kayaks.

# LAKES AND STREAMS

## Boating

For your safety, wear a personal flotation device (PFD), or life jacket, whenever you are on the water. PFDs are mandatory for all people riding in a boat on South Dakota waters.

Boating is permitted within Custer State Park with the following restrictions:

- Sylvan Lake: Electric motors only
- Legion Lake: Electric motors only
- Stockade Lake: All boats allowed
- Center Lake: Only slow, non-wake boating allowed

## Swimming

Swimming is allowed at the park's five lakes: Center Lake, Legion Lake, Stockade Lake, Sylvan Lake and the Game Lodge Pond.

There are no lifeguards on duty. Jumping from cliffs and rocks into the water is illegal and strictly prohibited. Pets and glass containers are prohibited from all zoned swimming beaches.

## Fishing

Fishing is allowed anywhere in Custer State Park. A valid South Dakota fishing license is required.

Anglers will find rainbow, brown and brook trout in the park's waters. Only one trout can exceed 14 inches, but there is no minimum size restriction. (Stockade Lake has a 15-inch minimum size limit on large and smallmouth bass.)

It is legal to use artificial lures, flies, worms or other bait. A variety of sport and panfish are found in Stockade Lake including northern pike, bass, perch, crappie, bluegill and bullhead.

Licenses, bait and tackle are available at each of the four resort areas. For daily limits and rules, please refer to the *2019 Fishing Handbook*, available at the visitor centers and the park office. The handbook is also available online at [gfp.sd.gov](http://gfp.sd.gov) and on our mobile app, SDGFP Outdoors.

| Fishing Licensing Fees |          |              |
|------------------------|----------|--------------|
| License                | Resident | Non-Resident |
| One-day                | \$8      | \$16         |
| Three-day              | N/A      | \$37         |
| Annual                 | \$28     | \$67         |
| Youth Annual           | N/A      | \$25         |



### PRESIDENT COOLIDGE FISHING IN 1927

Wearing a suit and straw hat, President Coolidge tries his luck at fishing in what is now Grace Coolidge Creek. Even though he really didn't look the part of a fisherman, no one had a better chance of catching a fish than the President. Wanting to show off the Black Hills as a fishing mecca, park officials had installed fishnets across the creek a mile above and mile below where the President planned on fishing. They then dumped over 2,000 large trout from the fish hatchery in Spearfish, SD, into this closed off section of the stream. The President enjoyed many hours fishing the streams during his three month visit to the Black Hills.



# HIKING TRAILS

| Sylvan Area Hiking Trails  | Location  | Length  | Difficulty   |
|--|---|---|--|
| Cathedral Spires   | 2.5 miles east of Sylvan Lake on Needles Highway (Hwy 87)   | 1.5 miles to Spires (one-way)   | Strenuous  |
| Little Devil's Tower Trail   | 1 mile east of Sylvan Lake on Needles Highway (Hwy 87)  | 1.25 miles (one-way)  | Strenuous  |
| Sunday Gulch Trail<br><i>(Closed during winter season)</i>   | Reach the trailhead by following the Sylvan Lake Shore Trail to behind the lake dam   | 2.8 miles (loop)  | Strenuous<br><i>(ice may be present along trail in June)</i> |
| Sylvan Lake Shore Trail  | Sylvan Lake, the trail may be accessed at various points along the lakeshore  | 1 mile (loop)   | Easy   |
| Sylvan Lake Trailheads to Black Elk Peak (formerly Harney Peak)<br><i>(Black Elk Peak is located in the Black Hills National Forest, however several trailheads are located in Custer State Park.)</i> | Sylvan Lake Day Use Area:<br><i>Trail #9:</i> begin just across the footbridge leading to the swimming beach<br><i>Trail #4:</i> begins at the furthest southeast corner of the day use parking area  | <i>Trail #9:</i> 3.3 miles to Black Elk Peak (one-way)<br><i>Trail #4:</i> 3.5 miles to Black Elk Peak (one-way)  | Moderate to Strenuous  |
| Other Hiking Trails  | Location  | Length  | Difficulty   |
| Badger Clark Historic Trail  | 0.5 miles south of US 16A on Badger Clark Road  | 1 mile (loop)   | Moderate   |
| Cairn Trail  | Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center  | 0.3 miles (loop)  | Moderate   |
| Creekside Trail  | Trailheads at visitor center and Grace Coolidge Campground on US 16A  | 2 miles (one-way)   | Easy, paved  |
| French Creek Natural Area Trail<br><i>(There are no trail markings. Follow the stream.)</i>  | West Trailhead - 3 miles from Blue Bell Lodge on North Lame Johnny Road (CSP4); East Trailhead - 4 miles south of the visitor center on Wildlife Loop Road  | 12 miles (one-way)  | Moderate<br>Non-established trail                            |
| Grace Coolidge Walk-In Fishing Area Trail  | Southern Trailhead - Parking area along US 16A, across from Grace Coolidge Campground; Northern Trailhead - Adjacent to the beach at Center Lake  | 3 miles (one-way)   | Easy to Moderate   |
| Legion Lake Trail  | Legion Lake   | 1 mile (loop)   | Moderate to Strenuous  |
| Lover's Leap Trail   | Across US 16A from the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center. Behind the Pavillion   | 3 miles (loop)  | Moderate to Strenuous  |
| Prairie Trail  | Along Wildlife Loop Road, 13 miles from the Visitor Center or 5 miles from the Blue Bell Entrance Station   | 3 miles (loop)  | Moderate   |
| Stockade Lake Trail  | 0.3 miles south of US 16A on Stockade Lake Drive  | 1.5 miles (loop)  | Moderate   |
| South Dakota Centennial Trail (#89)  | 3 Centennial Trailheads in Custer State Park<br><i>Iron Creek Trailhead</i> - North of SD Hwy 87, Needles Highway on Camp Remington Rd<br><i>Badger Hole Trailhead</i> - 0.5 miles south of US 16A on Badger Clark Road<br><i>French Creek Trailhead</i> - 3 miles from Blue Bell Lodge on North Lame Johnny Road | Approximately 22 miles of the Centennial Trail are located within Custer State Park. The three trailheads provide access points to the park's portion of the trail. |  |

## Trail Guide

For maps and detailed information about the trails, stop at the park's visitor centers.

## Black Elk Peak Area Map

A more detailed map of the Black Elk Peak (formerly Harney Peak) area trails is available at the visitor centers and at Sylvan Lake entrance station, store and lodge.

## Trail Challenge

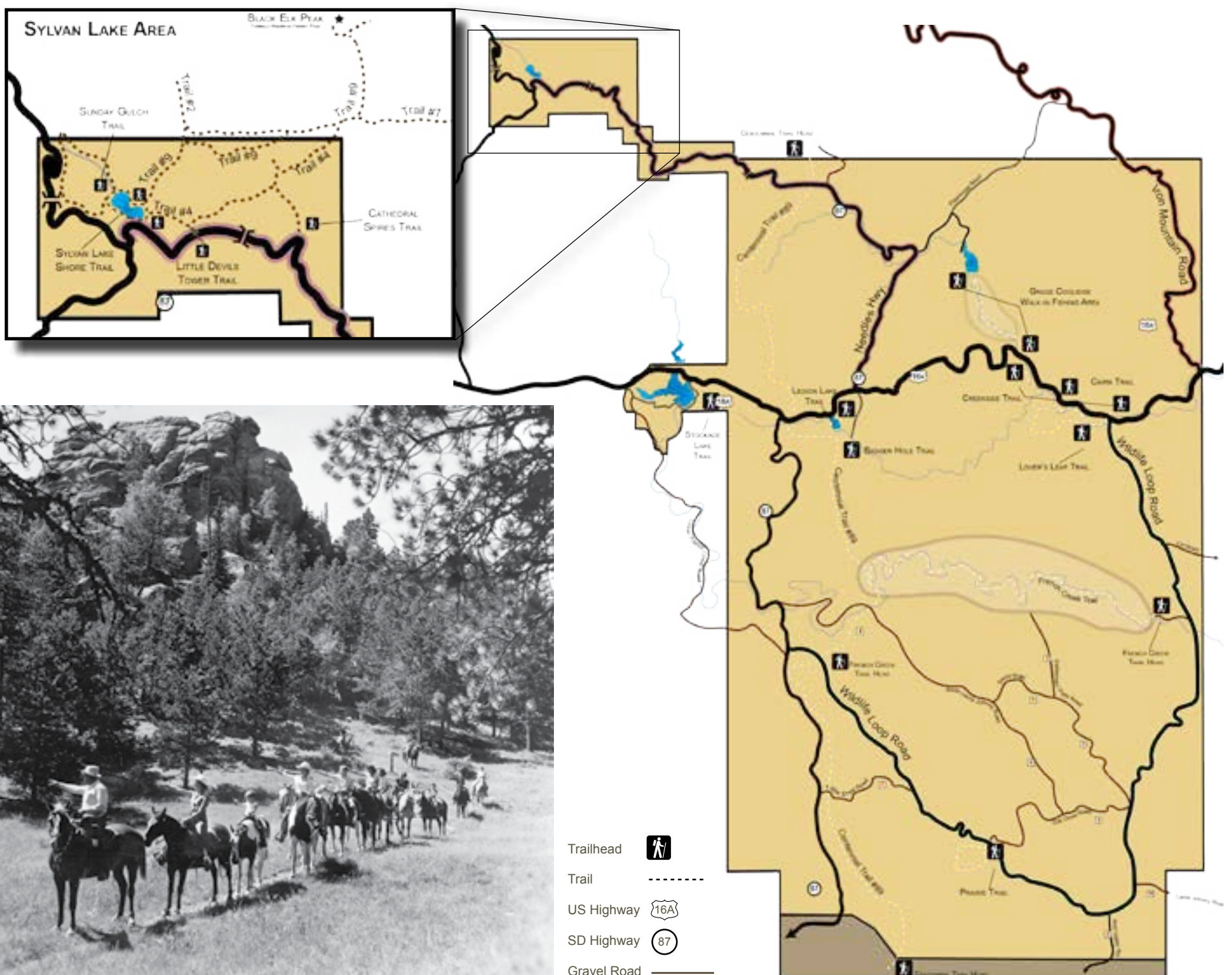
The Custer State Park Trail Challenge takes place from May through July. Collect all eight rubbings and receive a prize! Learn more at the Custer State Park Visitor Center.

## Trail Ratings

**Easy:** The trail mainly follows level ground.

**Moderate:** Parts of the trail follow steep slopes and rocky areas.

**Strenuous:** Much of the trail follows very steep slopes and rocky areas.





# CUSTER STATE PARK HISTORY

**1874** The Gordon Party arrived in the area in search of gold. This illegal party built a stockade near present day Custer. Within five months, they were removed by the US Cavalry.



**1893** Sylvan Lake Hotel is opened and operated by the Reder family.

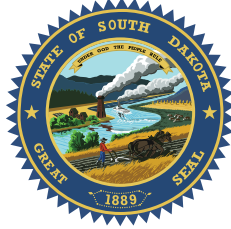


**1910** State of South Dakota relinquished all rights to 60,143 acres of timber land within the Black Hills in exchange for 47,937 of Federal land in Custer County plus 12,212 acres in Harding County.

**1877** Homesteaders are filing claims on land that is now Custer State Park.

**1880** John. P. Durst operates one of the largest sawmills in the area, Durst Sawmills which was located near what is now the Wildlife Station Visitor Center.

**1889** South Dakota joins the Union.



**1903** A ten stamp mill was constructed by the Ivanhoe Mining and Milling company. The mining claim was operated until 1906 with very little gold found.

**1905** Peter Norbeck visited the Black Hills and Custer County for the first time by automobile, leaving Fort Pierre and driving through areas mainly having no roads. When he was the area, he envisioned a state game park to preserve the native game of South Dakota and a place where people could come and view the wildlife and natural features of the area. His idea was to create a great state park of unusual beauty and proportions.

**1912** South Dakota's School and Public Lands Department took over 47,000 acres of what would become the core of Custer State Park. Legislature named it Custer State Forest.

**1960** A \$1 windshield sticker for campers was introduced.



**1957** The Badger Hole, the home of Charles Badger Clark, was purchased by the State of South Dakota.

**1953** President Eisenhower visited the State Game Lodge and Custer State Park for three days.

**1961** Visitation topped the one million mark for the first time.

**1962** The first hunting license for elk is offered.



**1956** The Black Hills Playhouse moved from Legion Lake to facilities remaining at Camp Lodge, one of the CCC camps located in the park. A theater was built on the location in 1955.



**1946** The Black Hills Playhouse began production in a tent near Legion Lake.

**1967** A \$2 park vehicle entrance sticker was required.

**1979** CSP dedicated the park museum and welcome center as the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center (now known as the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center).

**1988** July 4-9, the Galena Fire burned 16,002 acres in the park.

**1990** September 12-17, the Cicero Peak Fire burned 4,510 acres within the park, but totaled 14,203 acres.

**1965** The first public bison roundup took place. Several months later the first buffalo auction took place with 100 head sold and gained national news coverage from CBS on the uniqueness of the event.



**1989** The first time reservations could be made for park campgrounds.

**1993** The Buffalo Roundup increased in popularity drawing in as many as 9,000 visitors. The park adds the annual Arts Festival to complement the Roundup.



Custer State Park is constantly learning about new historical moments through archival research. This timeline contains several historic milestones in the park's story, but does not



# 1919-2019



**1913** Senator John F. Parks introduced a measure establishing a "State Game Preserve" of 61,440 acres of formerly Federal land.

H.S. Hedrick became the first State Game Warden and the state purchases 25 Elk from Wyoming to place in the preserve.

**1919** Custer State Forest becomes Custer State Park.

**1922** The 14-mile Needles Highway was completed. Norbeck, C.C. Gideon and Scovel Johnson, state engineer, tramped by foot and horseback and designed the road to preserve the natural beauty and give the public the best artistic view.

After burning down in 1921, the State Game Lodge is rebuilt and reopened.



**1914** The first 36 bison are brought to Custer Wildlife Preserve from Scotty Phillip's herd at Ft. Pierre.



**1921** Through State appropriations, the Sylvan Lake area was acquired and the park now reached 127,000 acres. 56,000 of those acres would be set aside as the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve.

The original State Game Lodge was built.



**1924** Six Rocky Mountain goats were introduced to the park from Canada, and the bison herd reached 100 animals.



**1925** Badger Clark starts work on his cabin, The Badger Hole, and began living in the Legion Lake area.



**1935** The original Sylvan Lake Lodge burned to the ground.

The park purchases Blue Bell Resort from the Jensen Estate.

**1936** December 20, Peter Norbeck died from complications of cancer.

**1930-41** The Great Depression came and the Civilian Conservation Corps set up four camps within the park's boundary. Camp Pine Creek, Doran, Narrows and Lodge constructed much of the infrastructure of the park that you see today, including creation of Stockade, Center and Legion Lake. They built buildings such as the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center, Wildlife Station Visitor Center and Mount Coolidge Lookout Tower. They also spent countless hours on roads, trails, forest management and park operations.



**1927** Norbeck started construction on Valhalla, his summer home.

President Calvin Coolidge came to Custer State Park and spent the entire summer at the State Game Lodge, making the lodge the "Summer White House."

Chris Jensen, a Black Hills Pioneer, built a hotel near French Creek naming it after the company he and his partners worked for, Northwestern Bell Telephone Company, hence the name, Blue Bell.

**2000** An April blizzard destroyed much of the timber in the park. Crews worked for four years cleaning up the debris.



**2016** The new Custer State Park Visitor Center opens.

**2019** Custer State Park, along with South Dakota State Parks, celebrates 100 years of Tradition.



**2004** The Division of Custer State Park merged with the other South Dakota State Parks within the Department of Game, Fish and Parks.



**2017** The park renovated the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center and turned it into the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center.

December 11-18, The Legion Lake Fire burned 36,358 acres within the park's boundary, totaling 54,023 acres, making it the third largest wildfire in Black Hills history.





## LEGION LAKE LODGE HISTORY

In 1913, several American Legion Posts leased a house around Galena Creek and built several cabins as a recreation spot for veterans and their families.

The name of Legion Lake was the result of a public vote.

Money was raised in 1932 to move the house to higher ground, and a dam was built by the Civil Conservation Corp (CCC) to form the lake.

The Lodge was later purchased by the state and added to the Custer State Park Resorts.










Additional cabins and amenities were built over the years, including a new lodge featuring lakeside dining in 2017, to accommodate the visitors who have (and will) enjoy the legacy created by the American Legion in 1913.

# LEGION LAKE LODGE AND DOCKSIDE GRILL



*Delight in a day at the water's edge.  
Located 1 mile from Needles Highway entrance.*

## LEGION LAKE LODGE

-  Fishing
-  Swimming Beach
-  Playground
-  Restaurant
-  Boats
-  Hiking
-  Shopping
-  Cabins
-  Scenic Drives

### Dockside Grill and Rentals

**605.255.4521**

Relaxed and inviting atmosphere for families. No reservations. Breakfast, lunch and dinner on the lakeside deck. Specialty ice cream, coffee and local beer on tap.



### Centennial Feature Entrée

Join in as each of our resort restaurants offer a Centennial Feature Entrée for the 2019 season. Specially crafted to take you back to a century ago, these plates pay tribute to the 1900s: the days of stagecoaches, gold mining, President Coolidge and more...with a twist of today's modern, delectable preparations.



## CENTENNIAL FEATURE ENTRÉE \$2 OFF

Available at State Game Lodge, Sylvan Lake Lodge, Blue Bell Lodge and Legion Lake Lodge. Coupons cannot be combined with any other discounts or offers. Please present coupon at the time of ordering.





# SYLVAN LAKE LODGE AND RESTAURANT



**You don't want to miss this view.**

*Located on Highway 87 N, 1/2 mile from the North Entrance of Needles Highway.*

## SYLVAN LAKE LODGE HISTORY

Created well before Custer State Park came into being, the Sylvan Lake area has drawn visitors to its beauty since the late 1880s.

In 1883, the Reder family completed construction of a the man-made lake. Efforts then quickly turned to the construction of a mountain lodge nestled along the lake and below Black Elk Peak.

In 1885, the original lakeshore lodge was completed and boasted 66 rooms, a pavilion with a bandstand, and a boathouse. The Reders experienced enormous success drawing tourists from across the country.

In 1920, the area was sold to the State of South Dakota and added to Custer State Park.

A fire burned the original lodge down in 1935. The Sylvan Lake Lodge you see today reopened in 1935, with a hotel wing added in 1991 and its newest and largest cabins added in 2016.











## Sylvan Restaurant, Store and Rentals

**605.574.2561**

Fresh, locally-sourced ingredients grace the table, and the lodge's air of historic luxury complements the view. Make reservations on the stone veranda (dogs welcome) for al fresco dining at an elevation of 6,145 feet.



## SYLVAN LAKE LODGE

-  Fishing
-  Swimming Beach
-  Restaurant
-  Boats
-  Hiking
-  Shopping
-  Cabins
-  Scenic Drives





## STATE GAME LODGE HISTORY

It was a proud moment when the State Game Lodge was officially opened on August 8, 1921. But on October 19, 72 days later, the Game Lodge burned to the ground. It was quickly rebuilt and reopened on June 15, 1922. The State Game Lodge became the “Summer White House” for President Calvin Coolidge in 1927 when his intended stay of two weeks turned into nearly 13 weeks. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The guest cabins that once housed Coolidge’s staff or park management have since been renovated. Hotel wings were added in the 1970s and fully remodeled in 2015. Creekside Lodge, on the grounds of the Game Lodge, was built in 2008. The Game Lodge Resort’s largest and newest cabins were added in 2016.

The lodge saw another Presidential visit in 1953 when President Dwight Eisenhower stayed at the lodge for three days while addressing the Young Republicans and dedicating Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City.








# STATE GAME LODGE AND HISTORIC DINING ROOM



**A stately residence in a prime location.**

*Located 1/2 mile from the Visitor’s Center and Wildlife Loop Road entrance; 1 mile from Iron Mountain Road entrance.*

## STATE GAME LODGE

-  Fishing
-  Restaurant
-  Hiking
-  Shopping
-  Cabins
-  Scenic Drives
-  Jeep Rides

## Historic Dining Room, Store and Buffalo Safari Tours

**605.255.4541**

Eloquently historical. Dinner is a culinary treat. Entree selections highlight local game such as walleye, pheasant, buffalo and rattlesnake. Reservations recommended.



## Creekside Lodge

*Located on the grounds of the State Game Lodge*

### Resort Amenities and Activities

- Open year-round
- Large gathering space off lobby
- Outdoor patio
- Buffalo Safari Jeep Tour

### 30 Oversized Lodge Guestrooms

- Accommodating 2 to 6 guests





# BLUE BELL LODGE AND RESTAURANT



*Tucked in the peaceful pines, western comfort awaits.  
Located 1 mile off the Wildlife Loop Road.*

## BLUE BELL LODGE HISTORY

At the base of Mount Coolidge is nestled the rustic Blue Bell Lodge, which was originally designed as a private hunting lodge for C.J. Jensen in the late 1920s.

The lodge and 11 cabins were completed in 1927 and provided a perfect place for Jensen's clientele to stay while hunting the local game.

Contrary to what many visitors think, the lodge is not named after the Bluebell flower, rather it is named after the company Jensen worked for: The North Western Telephone Company whose logo was an actual blue bell.

Custer State Park acquired the property in 1935 from Governor Leslie Jensen, the heir of C.J. Jensen.










## Restaurant, Gift Shop and Activities

**605.255.4531**

Comfortable Old West saloon-style setting. Specialty burgers and sandwiches, salads, buffalo and steak. Peaceful patio overlooking French Creek.



## BLUE BELL LODGE

-  Restaurant
-  Hiking
-  Shopping
-  Cabins
-  Scenic Drives
-  Trail Rides
-  Chuckwagon Cookout





# RESORT ACTIVITIES

## Hayride Chuck Wagon Cookout

### Blue Bell Lodge

- Reservations required by 2 p.m. | 605.255.4531
- Arrive at Blue Bell Lodge by 4 p.m. (exact time varies by time of year)
- Departure between 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. (exact time varies)
- Arrive back by 8 p.m.

A vehicle-drawn hay wagon takes you on a backroad wildlife tour to a mountain meadow canyon for a chuck wagon feast. Singalong country/folk music entertains everyone throughout the evening. Each paying guest gets a souvenir cowboy hat and bandanna. Ask for seasonal departure times when making reservation.

### Chuck Wagon Cookout Menu

- An 8 oz. choice sirloin steak or a 1/3 lb. hamburger entrée (vegetarian option available)
- Cowboy beans
- Corn bread
- Potato salad / coleslaw
- Watermelon
- Cookies
- Coffee and lemonade

**Adults:** \$58

**Children (11 & under):** \$51

**Children 3 years and under:** Free

(if child sits on a parent's lap on the ride and eats from a parent's plate).

## Buffalo Safari Jeep Tour

### State Game Lodge

- Reservations required: 605.255.4541
- 1-1.5 to 2-Hour Tours
- Departing 6 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Driver/guide takes you where only they are permitted - off-road - to provide historical and educational information about the park and wildlife on this scenic tour of the backcountry.

**Adults:** \$55

**Children (11 & under):** \$50

## Buffalo Safari Jeep Tour and Cookout

### State Game Lodge

- Reservations required by 2 p.m. | 605.255.4531
- Departs at 3:30 p.m. or later each night (exact time varies by time of year)
- Jeep Safari takes you on a 1.5-hour tour followed by the Chuckwagon Cookout at Blue Bell Lodge. Jeeps bring you back to the Game Lodge after the cookout. Ask for seasonal departure times when making reservation.

**Adults:** \$93

**Children (11 & under):** \$86

**Children 3 years and under:** Free

## Horseback Trail Riding

### Blue Bell Lodge Stables

- Reservations Required | 605.255.4700
- Arrive 30 minutes prior to scheduled trail ride to complete the required insurance-related paperwork.
- Children must ride alone and meet minimum safety requirements.

### 1-hour trail ride

**Adults:** \$52

**Children (11 & under):** \$45

### 2-hour trail ride

**Adults:** \$74

**Children (11 & under):** \$54

### Half-day ride with lunch

\$170 per person

### Full-day ride with lunch

\$260 per person

## Boat and Water Sport Rentals

**Legion Lake Lodge: 605-255-4521**

**Sylvan Lake Lodge: 605-574-2561**

- All persons under 18 years of age must have an adult sign for rental with adult supervision while in the water.
- Life jackets are furnished and required to be worn.

### Capacities

- Stand-up paddle boards: 1 person
- Canoes and kayaks: 1-3 people

**Half-hour:** \$14 per person

**Family rate:** \$50

(4-6 people for 1 hour/1 boat)

**1-hour:** \$24 per person





# CAMPING

## Camping

Camping fees are based on the number of camping units in your party. A camping unit is any one hard-sided camper and/or one of more tents, if all occupants meet the definition of family (parents or grandparents and their unmarried minor children) or do not exceed six people.

Checkout

Checkout time for campsites is noon. Checkout is 11 a.m. for camping cabins.

## Primitive Camping

For a primitive outdoor experience, backpackers should try the French Creek Natural Area. Hikers using this area can camp anywhere along the canyon bottom. Open fires are prohibited. Campers must self-register at the stations located on each end of the natural area. The fee is \$7 per person, per night.

## Camping Cabins

### Locations

Blue Bell, Game Lodge, Stockade South, French Creek Horse Camp

### About cabins

- Sleep four to five people.
- Linens are not included.
- Check-in time is 4 p.m.
- Checkout time is 11 a.m.
- No smoking or cooking in the cabins.
- Pets, except for service animals, are not permitted in cabins.

### Amenities

- Heating and air conditioning
- Electricity
- Picnic table
- Fire ring
- Porch
- Bunk bed and double bed
- Table
- Benches



## Group Camping

Group campgrounds are located near Stockade Lake South and the Game Lodge Campground. These areas feature picnic shelters, vault toilets, fire grates, picnic tables and water on site. Showers and flush toilets are available within walking distance from the campgrounds. Evening programs are located nearby on most nights during the summer. Designated swim beaches can also be found close by. Call 1.800.710.2267 for reservations. Reservations are not available online.

## Camping Reservations

**campsd.com | 1.800.710.2267**

1.714.602.4453 (international)

### Reservations required

Campsite and group areas can be reserved one year in advance.

Camping cabin reservations can also be made a year in advance, but must be made at least two days prior to your arrival. Call the park office at 605.255.4515 to check on availability for last minute trips.

### Fees

There is a non-refundable reservation fee of \$7.70 for non-residents.

A \$2 fee is assessed to all phone reservations.

Camping fees for the entire stay must be paid at the time the reservation is made.

### Cancellations

If you cancel your reservation, you will be charged one night's camping fee for each campsite reserved or \$25 per camping cabin. Because of its unique use, French Creek Horse Camp cancellation policy is:

- 30 or more days before arrival: you will be charged one night's fee for each campsite reserved.
- 29 - 14 days prior to arrival: one-half of your entire camping fee.
- Less than 14 days prior to arrival: non-refundable.

## Same Day Reservations

### Center Lake Campground

- All open sites can be reserved beginning at 6 a.m. MT each day.
- Checkout time is noon MT.
- Campers occupying a "same day reservation" site must call before 6 a.m. MT to extend their stay.
- Campers are required to occupy their site by 10 p.m. MT on the night of their arrival. If they fail to do so, they are charged a cancellation fee and forfeit the remainder of their reservation.

## Non-profit Youth Camping Areas

The park offers two primitive areas (Shady Rest and Center Lake) for non-profit youth tent camping only. Call 1.800.710.2267 for reservations. Reservations are not available online.

| CAMPGROUNDS                      | Number of sites            | Campsite fee | Campsite w/electricity | Camping cabins* | Camping cabin fee | Showers | Flush toilets | Vault toilets | RV dump station | Large trailer sties | Handicap access | Laundromat | Concessions | Fuel | Evening program | Hiking trail | Fishing dock | Boating (motorized) | Swimming | Fishing | Playground | Resrvable sites* | Accessible sites |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|----------|---------|------------|------------------|------------------|
| Blue Bell*                       | 31                         | \$21         | \$25                   | 23              | \$50              | ●       | ●             | ●             |                 | ●                   | ●               | ✓          | ✓           | ✓    | ●               |              |              |                     |          | ✓       |            | 30               | 1                |
| Center Lake+                     | 71                         | \$19         |                        |                 |                   | ●       |               | ●             |                 | ●                   |                 |            |             |      | ●               | ●            |              | ●                   | ●        | ●       | ●          | 71               |                  |
| Game Lodge*                      | 57                         | \$21         | \$25                   | 11              | \$50              | ●       | ●             | ●             | ●               | ●                   | ●               | ✓          | ✓           | ✓    | ●               | ✓            |              |                     | ●        | ●       | ●          | 55               | 2                |
| Grace Coolidge*                  | 27                         | \$21         | \$25                   |                 |                   | ●       | ●             |               |                 | ●                   | ●               | ✓          | ✓           | ✓    | ✓               | ✓            |              |                     | ✓        | ●       |            | 26               | 1                |
| Legion Lake*                     | 22                         | \$21         | \$25                   |                 |                   | ●       | ●             |               |                 | ●                   | ●               |            | ✓           |      |                 | ●            | ✓            |                     | ✓        | ✓       | ✓          | 21               | 1                |
| Stockade Lake North*             | 42                         | \$21         | \$25                   |                 |                   | ●       | ●             | ●             |                 | ●                   | ●               |            |             |      | ●               | ✓            | ✓            | ✓                   | ✓        | ✓       | ●          | 40               |                  |
| Stockade Lake South*             | 25                         | \$21         | \$25                   | 13              | \$50              | ●       | ●             | ●             |                 |                     | ●               |            |             |      | ✓               | ✓            | ✓            | ✓                   | ✓        | ✓       | ✓          | 23               |                  |
| Sylvan Lake*                     | 39                         | \$21         | \$25                   |                 |                   | ●       | ●             | ●             |                 |                     | ●               | ✓          | ✓           |      |                 | ✓            |              |                     | ✓        | ✓       |            | 36               |                  |
| French Creek Horse Camp*         | 29                         |              | \$35                   | 3               | \$50              | ●       | ●             | ●             | ●               | ●                   | ●               |            |             |      |                 | ●            |              |                     |          | ●       |            | 26               |                  |
| <b>SPECIALIZED CAMPING AREAS</b> |                            |              |                        |                 |                   |         |               |               |                 |                     |                 |            |             |      |                 |              |              |                     |          |         |            |                  |                  |
| French Creek Natural Area        | \$7/person                 |              |                        |                 |                   |         |               |               |                 |                     |                 |            |             |      |                 | ●            |              |                     |          | ●       |            | 0                |                  |
| Calvin Coolidge Group Area**     | \$7/person, minimum \$140  |              |                        |                 |                   | ✓       | ✓             | ●             | ✓               | ●                   |                 | ✓          | ✓           | ✓    | ✓               | ✓            |              |                     | ✓        | ●       | ✓          | all              |                  |
| Stockade Group Area**            | \$7/person, minimum \$140  |              |                        |                 |                   | ✓       | ✓             | ●             |                 |                     |                 |            |             |      | ✓               | ✓            | ✓            | ✓                   | ✓        | ●       | ✓          | all              |                  |
| Non-profit Youth Areas**         | \$0.50/person, minimum \$6 |              |                        |                 |                   |         |               | ●             |                 |                     |                 |            |             |      |                 |              |              |                     |          |         |            |                  |                  |



## ANNUAL EVENTS

### January

**First Day Hike**

January 1, 10 a.m.

Custer State Park Visitor Center

**Game Lodge Snowshoe Hike**

January 12, 10 a.m.

Custer State Park Visitor Center

### February

**Valentine's Lover's Leap Snowshoe Hike**

February 9, 9 a.m. and Noon

Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

### March

**Sylvan Lake Snowshoe Hike**

March 9, 10 a.m.

Sylvan Lake General Store

### April

**Earth Day Bluebird Box Workshop**

April 20, 10 a.m.

Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

**Earth Day Bat Box Workshop**

April 20, 1 p.m.

Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

### May

**State Park Open House and Free Fishing Weekend**

May 17-19

Statewide | Free entrance

**Custer State Park Seasonal Volksmarch Trail Open**

May 18 - Sept 30

### June

**National Trails Day - June 1**

Prairie Trail Hike, 8:30 a.m.

Meet at Wildlife Station Visitor Center

Creekside Trail Family Hike, 1 p.m.

Meet at Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

Badger Clark Trail Hike, 4 p.m.

Meet at Badger Hole Historic Site

### September

**26th Annual Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival**

September 26-28

**54th Annual Buffalo Roundup**

September 27

Free entrance

### October

**Halloween Hike**

Date to be determined

Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

### November

**54th Annual Buffalo Auction**

November 2

Custer State Park Visitor Center

**Festival of Trees**

November 29 - January 1, 2020

Events are subject to change.

Visit [custerstatepark.com](http://custerstatepark.com) or call 605.255.4515 for more information.

# BUFFALO ROUNDUP AND AUCTION



## Buffalo Roundup: What is the purpose?

The park began to gather the herd back in the 1960s when the decision was made to eradicate the disease brucellosis from the herd. The herd was certified brucellosis free in 1965 allowing the sale of live animals. Since that time, the roundup has been used in conjunction with the fall sale as a way to manage the size of the herd and to provide an opportunity to brand and vaccinate the calves.

"Studies show that during normal moisture years, the park's grassland can support about 1,400 head of bison," explains Chad Kremer, herd manager for Custer State Park. "That number fluctuates depending on rainfall and the available rangeland forage."

The buffalo are on their own to forage. The park does not supplement their food supply.

"We inventory the range conditions each year and that determines the number of buffalo we sell at the

fall auction in November," said Kremer. "We need to keep the buffalo numbers compatible with available forage, and that is why you may see varying numbers for the size of our herd. This year we have about 1,300 buffalo in the herd, and we'll be building back to that target number of 1,400 in the future."

Kremer points out that for Custer State Park, the Buffalo Roundup is a management tool to prepare for the annual buffalo sale. But he says, "It is an event that is open to the public, and we are happy to share it with the thousands of guests who come to experience something out of the old west."

"It truly is a magnificent sight to see—buffalo rumbling across the plains driven by cowboys and cowgirls on horseback. It takes you back to days gone by and lets the spectators catch a glimpse of old west history," adds Kremer.

## Park Hosts Longest Running Bison Auction

Custer State Park holds the longest running bison auction in the world. For 54 years, the park has been utilizing the auction as a management tool to ensure the herd is at a size that can be supported by available rangelands, and to provide bison to establish and re-populate herds across the continent. This year's auction will be held on Saturday, November 2, 2019, at the Visitor Center.

There was once millions of bison stretched across North America, by 1900 it was estimated that fewer than 1,000 bison remained on the entire continent. Peter Norbeck, often recognized as the "Father of

Custer State Park," acknowledged this situation and decided to take action to preserve what is now our national mammal. In 1914, the park, then known as Custer State Forest and Game Sanctuary purchased 36 bison to start its herd.

Today the park manages a herd of around 1,300 bison. The park's current management plan continues Norbeck's dream of helping bring these magnificent animals back from near-extinction. Custer State Park bison can be found in herds in nearly every state in the U.S., as well as Canada and Mexico.

### STURGIS MOTORCYCLE RALLY Aug 2-11, 2019

Every August, thousands of motorcyclists visit the Black Hills during the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Below are the next several years' rally dates, so you can either join 'em or avoid 'em.

Aug. 7-16, 2020

Aug. 6-15, 2021

Aug. 5-14, 2022



### BUFFALO ROUNDUP Friday, Sept. 27, 2019

- The roundup takes place near the corrals on Wildlife Loop Road.
- Two viewing areas are set aside for spectators—the north and south viewing areas.
- Arrive between 6:15 and 7:30 a.m.
- Sorting takes place 30 minutes after animals are in the corrals.
- Reservations are not required.
- Food concessions available on site.
- Free park entrance.

### 26TH ANNUAL ARTS FESTIVAL Sept. 26-28, 2019

Enjoy three days of continuous entertainment along with over 150 arts and craft booths near the State Game Lodge on Hwy 16A. Visit with artisans and crafters from across the Midwest as they exhibit and sell their wares.



# BLACK HILLS PLAYHOUSE

Experience incredible theatre in a stunning setting in Custer State Park!



**JUNE 14 - 30, 2019**

Packed with thrills, romance, laughter, and immortal characters like Little John, Friar Tuck, and Maid Marian, *Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood* tells the enduring story of a hero of the people who takes on the ruthless powers that be. So get ready to duck a quarterstaff or two – you won't want to miss a moment of the swashbuckling fun! Rating - PG



Written by Catherine Johnson  
Music by Benny Anderson & Björn Ulvæus

**July 26 - Aug 11, 2019**

*Mamma Mia!* centers around bride-to-be, Sophie, trying to find her long-lost father to walk her down the aisle. Not knowing which of the three possible men from her mother's diary to invite, she brings all three of them back to the island last visited 20 years ago.

With ABBA classics like "Dancing Queen," "Waterloo" and the title number, this smash hit musical is sure to have you dancing in the aisles! Rating - PG 13



**JULY 5 - 21, 2019**

Based on the true story of conjoined twins Violet and Daisy Hilton, *Side Show* is a moving portrait of two women joined at the hip whose extraordinary bondage brings them fame but denies them love. Told almost entirely in song, the show follows their progression from England to America, around the vaudeville circuit, and to Hollywood on the eve of their appearance in the 1932 movie *Freaks*. Rating - PG 13



**August 16 - 25, 2019**

*Steel Magnolias* is the bittersweet story of six women who gather under the dryers at Truvy's Beauty Salon to share gossip, laughter, recipes and beauty secrets on four significant days across three years of their lives. When tragedy strikes, they face it with sass and strength, supporting each other through thick and thin. By turns hilarious and poignant, *Steel Magnolias* is a heartwarming portrait of friendship and love. Rating - PG

THE BLACK HILLS  
PLAYHOUSE



## PERFORMANCE TIMES

**Tuesday - Saturday:** 7:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday:**  
2 p.m. matinees

Visitors advised to arrive 1/2 hour before curtain. Reservations recommended.

## TICKET PRICES

**Adults:** \$35

**Kids (18 and younger):** \$16

For tickets, call 605.255.4141 or purchase online at [blackhillsplayhouse.com](http://blackhillsplayhouse.com).

**Black Hills Playhouse**  
24834 S Playhouse Rd  
Custer, SD 57730  
[www.blackhillsplayhouse.com](http://www.blackhillsplayhouse.com)

BLACK HILLS 2019  
PLAYHOUSE

**\$3 PER PERSON**  
OFF THEATRE PERFORMANCE

Present this coupon for discount or use online with code CSP19. Discount offers may not be combined.

## AREA STATE PARKS

Your Custer State Park entrance license is valid at all South Dakota State Parks including Angostura Recreation Area near Hot Springs, Bear Butte State Park near Sturgis and Rocky Point Recreation Area near Belle Fourche.

An additional trail pass is required for the George S. Mickelson Trail. There is no fee for Spearfish Canyon Nature Area.

### Angostura Recreation Area

Located 10 miles southeast of Hot Springs, off US 18/385 | Phone: 605.745.6996

Located in the southern Black Hills, Angostura Reservoir is a water-lover's haven with breathtaking, scenic views. Offering crystal clear waters, 36 miles of shoreline, and some of the finest sandy beaches in the state, the area boasts opportunities for a variety of water sports and fun summer activities.

### Bear Butte State Park

Located 6 miles northeast of Sturgis off SD 79  
Phone: 605.347.5240

Mato Paha or "Bear Mountain" is the Lakota name given to this site, which is sacred to many American Indian tribes. The geological formation is one of several intrusions of igneous rock in the Black Hills that formed millions of years ago. A rugged two-mile hike to the mountain summit rewards visitors with a view of four states. At the base, the Bear Butte Education Center highlights the mountain's geology, history and the cultural beliefs of the Northern Plains Indians.

### George S. Mickelson Trail

Runs 109 miles from Edgemont to Deadwood  
Phone: 605.584.3896

The George S. Mickelson Trail runs through the heart of the Black Hills. Its gentle slopes and easy access enables people of all ages and abilities to enjoy

the scenery of the area. The trail is 109 miles long and contains more than 100 converted railroad bridges, 4 rock tunnels and 15 trailheads. It is frequented by bicyclists, hikers and runners. A Mickelson Trail Pass is required.

### Rocky Point Recreation Area

Located 8 miles east of Belle Fourche off SD 212  
Phone: 605.641.0023

A popular fishing and boating park, Rocky Point Recreation Area is located on the 8,000-acre Belle Fourche Reservoir just north of the Black Hills. It is one of the few large bodies of water with walleye and tiger muskie fishing in western South Dakota.

### Spearfish Canyon Nature Area

Located 1 mile west from the Scenic Byway at Savoy on FDR 222 in Spearfish Canyon  
Phone: 605.584.3896

Spearfish Canyon Nature area includes the Roughlock Falls, Spearfish Falls and the Savoy Pond area. The canyon is considered one of the most beautiful locations in the Black Hills. A trail system connects all three areas and offers spectacular views of the waterfalls. Be on the lookout of the rare American dipper, a stocky, gray bird often spotted catching its food underwater by swimming or walking on the stream bottom.





# CUSTER STATE PARK

