



Badlands National Park © NPS

FACT SHEET

National Parks in South Dakota

Badlands National Park • Jewel Cave National Monument • Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail • Minuteman Missile National Historic Site • Missouri National Recreational River • Mount Rushmore National Memorial • Wind Cave National Park

South Dakota's national parks invite visitors to look into the past. From fossil beds dating up to 35-million-years-old to Cold War missile sites and a range of events in between, these sites offer insight into both the natural and the human history of this continent.

Badlands National Park - Consists of 244,000 acres of sharply eroded buttes, pinnacles and spires blended with the largest, protected mixed grass prairie in the United States. Established as Badlands National Monument in 1939, the area was redesignated "National Park" in 1978. Over 11,000 years of human history pale to the ages old Paleontological resources. Badlands National Park contains the world's richest Oligocene epoch fossil beds, dating 23 to 35 million years old.

Jewel Cave National Monument - Established by Presidential Proclamation on February 7, 1908. With more than 129 miles surveyed, Jewel Cave is recognized as the third longest cave in

the world. Airflow within its passages indicates a vast area yet to be explored.

Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail - In 1804, Meriwether Lewis & William Clark began a voyage of discovery. They departed from Camp Wood located in what was to become Illinois. The President Jefferson had privately requested Congress to fund the expedition shortly before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. They traveled over a three-year period through lands that later became 11 states. Most of the 3,700 mile-long trail follows the Missouri & Columbia Rivers.

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site - It was created to illustrate the history and significance of the Cold War, the arms race, and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) development. Minuteman Missile NHS consists of two significant Cold War sites, a Launch Control Facility (Delta-01) and a missile silo complex (Delta-09). The facilities represent the only remaining intact components of a nuclear missile field that consisted of 150 Minuteman II missiles, 15 launch control centers, and covered over 13,500 square miles of southwestern South Dakota.

Missouri National Recreational River - Both the upper 39-



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mile reach and the lower 59-mile reach along the Nebraska-South Dakota border combine to form one of few sections of this once vast ecosystem along the "Big Muddy" that remains in a relatively natural state. Offers the forested buff-colored chalkstone bluffs to gently rolling range bottomland; the brilliant white of migrating pelicans to the rich blues of prairie asters; the soaring majesty of resident bald eagles to fleeting glimpses of the wily red fox.

Mount Rushmore National Memorial - The four figures carved in stone on Mount Rushmore represent the first 150 years of American history: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. The ideals of these presidents laid a foundation for our nation as solid as the rock from which their figures are carved.

Wind Cave National Park - One of the world's longest and most complex caves and 28,295 acres of mixed-grass prairie, ponderosa pine forest, and associated wildlife are the main features of the park. The cave is well known for its outstanding display of boxwork, an unusual cave formation composed of thin calcite fins resembling honeycombs. The park's mixed grass prairie is one of the few remaining and is home to native wildlife such as bison, elk, pronghorn, mule deer, coyotes, and prairie dogs.

Key Issues Facing National Parks in South Dakota

Taking care of America's national parks should be a national priority. With the 100th birthday of the National Park System approaching in 2016, it is more important than ever to address the ongoing problems that our parks are facing. The National Park Service is suffering from an operations funding shortfall now exceeding \$800 million annually. In addition, several billion dollars are needed to protect archaeological sites and historic buildings, and repair the extensive backlog of maintenance projects. Many park friends in Congress have spent years highlighting the fiscal crisis in America's national parks. The Administration has responded with a budget request for 2008 that would increase the National Park Service operating budget by \$258 million -- a strong step in restoring our parks and improving the experiences of visitors. This budget also launches the National Park Centennial Challenge, which if properly framed and enacted could help restore the parks for their 100th birthday and for generations to come. In addition to the operational shortfall, the National Park Service has a \$1.9 billion land acquisition backlog consisting of over 11,000 tracts of land and covering more than 1.8 million acres. In many instances, failure to acquire these lands makes

operating the parks more complex and costly. Unfortunately, funding for national park federal land acquisition has declined dramatically in recent years, from \$130 million five years ago, to only \$23 million in the fiscal year 2008 request.

- The National Park Service is in the process of taking over control of the Missouri National Recreational River from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As a result, the park is not fully funded, cultural resources are only beginning to be managed, and all park management activities must obtain approval from private landholders.
- At Mt. Rushmore, helicopter overflights of the park are becoming a nuisance and interfere with visitors' ability to have conversations in certain areas of the monument.
- Fossils are being poached from Badlands National Park. These paleontological resources are nonrenewable and their loss inhibits further understanding of the ancient environment.
- In the historic district of Jewel Cave National Monument, significant improvements needed to be made to visitor services. Permanent toilet facilities need to be installed. Site orientation cues and on-site signage are also minimal and need to be improved to enhance the visitor experience.
- The elk population at Wind Cave National Park is growing and has the potential to adversely impact the developing an Elk Management Plan that maintains a healthy elk herd while reducing the threat to the plants and other animals in the region.

Park Visitation in South Dakota

In fiscal year 2005, the national parks in South Dakota welcomed 3,770,336 visitors.

Budget Information

In fiscal year 2006, the operations funding for the 7 national parks in South Dakota was \$11.7 million. For fiscal year 2008, the Administration is proposing a 16 percent increase, which would bring operations funding to \$13.5 million.

Contact Information

For more information on the national parks in South Dakota, please contact NPCA Legislative Director Blake Selzer at 202-223-6722, ext. 250.



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