

South Dakota 6-Day Itinerary

September 8th - 14th, 2012

Day 1 (5 to 7 miles) Today we venture away from the Black Hills over the plains to the extraordinarily stark Badlands National Park. Easily eroded deposits of silt, clay and volcanic ash have created a 100 mile "wall" of fantastic formations between the White River valley below and the plains above. We'll weave our way around the rugged canyons and steep buttes of this treeless land on a few short trails before discovering the heart of the formations. Later a loop trail takes us across the open prairie where we often see elusive big horn sheep in this harsh environment, as well as coyote, deer, prairie falcons and prairie dogs.

Day 2 (3 - 7 miles) We drive an hour into Wyoming to visit awe-inspiring Devils Tower, one of the most recognizable landmarks in our country. The Plains Indians call it Bear's Den Butte, a sacred place for generations of their people. Prayer bundles hanging from tree limbs and climbers clinging to the rock face are glimpsed as we hike through pine woods and grasslands. A loop around the tower enables us to see it in all its grandeur while keeping an eye out for golden eagles, prairie falcons, nighthawks, Clark's nutcracker and bluebirds. Deer and antelope are often seen on the drive or in the park. After lunch the residents of a nearby prairie dog town will entertain us with their antics.

Day 3 (7-8 Miles) You are faced with a choice today. Should you climb 5760' Crow Peak or hike along sparkling Rapid Creek? Both offer diverse forests alive with wildflowers, especially in the spring. Crow Peak requires a 1600' climb on a nicely laid out trail with sensational views of distant prairie and pine-cloaked mountains. An old railroad grade along Rapid Creek leads to an old mining area. Along the way are unusual cliffs, meadows and beaver dams. Bighorn sheep and eagles are sometimes seen. Whichever choice you decide we will likely have time to stop at Hill City for shops, galleries and ice cream.

Day 4 (6 to 9 miles) Bison are the theme today. It's likely we'll see them and other wildlife on our driving safari through Custer State Park and Wind Cave National Park. The rolling prairie and scattered forest of our morning hike are excellent bison habitat. We've also encountered, elk, deer, coyote, antelope, hawks, eagles, even a burrowing owl at the prairie dog town! The afternoon features a tour of Wind Cave, with a steady descent along well-lit passages amid gorgeous formations, including a profusion of unusual boxwork particular to this cave. An elevator takes you back to the surface. Another option is a visit to the world-renowned archaeological site in Hot Springs, where fossilized remains of hundreds of woolly mammoths can be found. If you'd rather be hiking there are a number of near-by trails as well.

Day 5 (7-8 miles) The highest point in South Dakota, 7242' Harney Peak is our destination. The view from it's historic stone fire tower takes in most of the Black Hills and across the plains the distant Badlands are visible. Harney Peak is the highest of a swarm of granite pinnacles with names such as Cathedral Spires and the Needles. Those on the easier option will take their time tackling the 1200' climb to the summit on a well maintained trail that loops through the magnificent Cathedral Spires. The more ambitious hikers will follow the same route but include an additional climb to the top of Little Devil's Tower. This 6989' mountain has superb views of the Cathedral Spires, the Needles and Harney Peak but adds a steep mile to the hike with some

scrambling over ledge to reach the summit.

Day 6 (1 to 2 miles) No need for hiking boots because today we visit Mount Rushmore. This gigantic sculpture is truly an inspiring monument to the indomitable American spirit. We begin to grasp the scale of this artistic and engineering achievement with a walk along the boardwalk beneath the massive carved faces. The museums, bookstores, and gift shops, are well worth a peek but keep an eye out for wildlife, too. Mountain goats might be nibbling the grass nearby.

BLACKHILLS & BADLANDS 6-DAY - THE INNS

SATURDAY

Hotel Alex Johnson
523 Sixth St.
Rapid City, SD 5557701
Tel.: (605) 342 1210 or (800) 888 2539
www.alexjohnson.com

SUNDAY & MONDAY

Spearfish Canyon Resort
10169 Roughlock Falls Rd
Lead, SD 57754
Tel.: (605) 584 3435
Fax: (605) 584 3990
www.spfcanyon.com

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY

Sylvan Lake Lodge
RR #2
Custer, SD 57730
Tel.: (605) 574 2561
Fax: (605) 574 4943
www.custerresorts.com

If you would like more information about the inn, please visit their web sites -

2011 SOUTH DAKOTA TRAVEL

If you are driving to the starting point, you will find the driving directions enclosed.
If you are arriving by public transportation we offer the following pick up schedule:-

FROM AIRPORTS:-

SOUTH DAKOTA

Rapid City Regional Airport - 4:00 p.m. (2nd floor near elevator)
Airlines to check for flights: United, Northwest, etc.

If you find you need to stay over before the trip, we recommend the Hotel Alex Johnson 523 Sixth St. Rapid City, SD Tel.: (800) 888 2539 or (605) 342 1210 When booking a pre tour room please ask to speak with Kate Pierce, Sales Manager. The hotel offers a complimentary shuttle if notified 48 to 24 hours prior to arrival.

Driving directions to Hotel Alex Johnson:

The Hotel Alex Johnson is located in the heart of historic downtown Rapid City. When traveling west on Interstate 90, take Exit 57 to St. Joseph St. where you will take a left once you are on St. Joseph St. look up, you can't miss it.

We can return hikers to the airport by 2:30 p.m., on the last day of the trip.

(If you should need to leave earlier from our last nights lodging (Sylvan Lake Lodge) there is the Airport Express ph.# 605 399-9999 @ \$85.00 for single or double occupancy, three or more \$30.00 per/person)

FROM BUSES:- SOUTH DAKOTA

Greyhound offers service to Rapid City where we can meet you at approx. 4:30 p.m.

Greyhound Ticket Center
Main Tel.: (605) 348 3300
www.greyhound.com

IT IS VITAL THAT YOU LET US KNOW YOUR TRAVEL PLANS (EG. FLIGHT TIMES AND NUMBERS OR BUS ARRIVAL TIMES) IN ORDER FOR US TO MEET YOU.

YOU SHOULD ARRANGE A FLIGHT TIME THAT ARRIVES BEFORE OUR PICK UP TIME AND AFTER OUR RETURN TO AIRPORT TIME. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE RECEIVED PICK UP CONFIRMATION BEFORE YOU LEAVE ON YOUR TRIP!

OUR TRAVEL SERVICE BETTER TRAVEL AT (800) 331 6996 CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR PLANS.