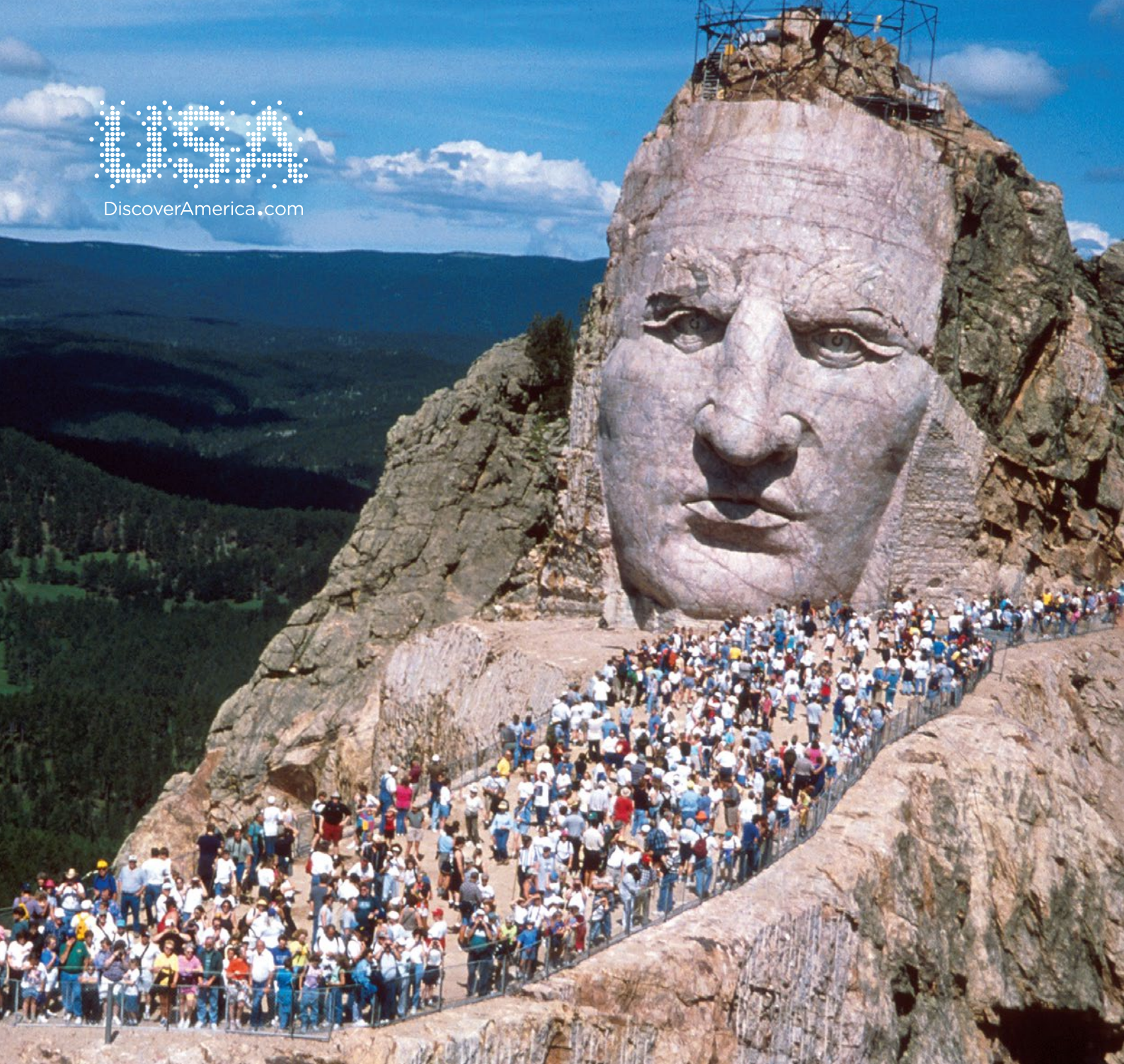




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# The REAL America South Dakota

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USA

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# The REAL America South Dakota

## SD Wineries

South Dakota is gaining a reputation for its wineries, which can be found all over the state. Try Hill City for the quirky Naked winery or the stylish Prairie Berry Winery, one of the first in the state. Here clients can browse an extensive range of wines made from ingredients such as rhubarb, sample up to five at no cost, then select a bottle to take away—or just a glass to enjoy, perhaps with a generous platter of buffalo salami and cheese. Throughout summer, the winery also offers events including the Summer Music Series (31 May–20 Sep), relaxed acoustic outdoor concerts. See [prairieberry.com](http://prairieberry.com)

## Affordable America

One of the definite advantages to touring small-town America is the prices are far different to what you'll experience in the big cities. A beer can be around USD2–USD3 (just a hint, cowboys opt for Bud Light) and a burger around USD5 at the bars.



## Not So Rapid City

Like the rest of South Dakota, in reality Rapid City is far from rapid, but it's a lovely place to wander, browse for souvenirs, have a bite to eat and serves as a handy base for visiting the Black Hills, Badlands and Lakes region for clients not keen to move from hotel to hotel. There are plenty of museums like the Journey Museum and Museum of the American Bison, and the centre of town includes the City of Presidents walk, where visitors can 'meet' sculptures of past US presidents. Clients looking for genuine Native American artwork and handcrafts to take home should try the Prairie Edge Trading Co and Galleries at 606 Main St. See [visitrapidcity.com](http://visitrapidcity.com)

## More Kiwis Exploring The Real America



**Wide open spaces and Jurassic scenery, backwater bars, roaming bison, Native American powwows and more cowboys than you can shake a lasso at—Kiwis are looking for the 'real America' and they're finding it in the heart of the States.**

Rocky Mountain International, which represents North Dakota,

## Mt Rushmore

Probably South Dakota's most famous attraction is Mount Rushmore, and while it may seem targeted at patriotic Americans the massive sculpture in the face of the mountain is worth a look for any visitor to the state. You really need to visit to appreciate the work that went into carving the 60-ft faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln into the mountain, and the story of the sculptor Gutzon Borglum is fascinating in itself.

Clients can wander around the Presidential Trail (hint—go clockwise, there are fewer stairs to climb up that way) and learn about the men who inspired the mountain, then have an ice cream made to Jefferson's original recipe.

The monument is open daily, year-round, but over Summer the National Park Service holds interpretive programmes through the day, the Sculptor's Studio is open and each night there is a high-tech lighting ceremony held in the amphitheatre at dusk. Entry to the monument free but there is a parking fee (from USD11 for a car). See [nps.gov/mrur](http://nps.gov/mrur)

South Dakota, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana, has been stepping up its efforts to target Kiwi travellers over the last few years as the US recognises the potential of the New Zealand market.

While RMI doesn't have any official statistics, anecdotal evidence is pouring in from visitor centres across the region that there are New Zealanders popping up all over the place as they explore beyond the traditional gateways.

As well as dramatic scenery, that the region is the 'real America' is also evident in its locals—friendly, often religious and usually fiercely patriotic people with deep roots in the land. Most of them have also never been to New Zealand so visitors should expect to be bombarded with questions about just where in the world they can find the mysterious home of the Hobbit.

## ... South Dakota

The most recognisable landmark in the Rocky Mountain region is arguably Mount Rushmore, found in South Dakota's Black Hills region. However there's plenty more to discover in South Dakota, which is rich in natural history as well as a good dose of Wild West magic.

## South Dakota For Agents

Agents can become a fan of the South Dakota Travel Professionals Facebook page for weekly updates on activities and upcoming events in South Dakota, see [facebook.com/sodaktravelprofessionals](http://facebook.com/sodaktravelprofessionals). There's also a dedicated agent site at [travelsd.com/travel-professionals](http://travelsd.com/travel-professionals)



## Cowboy Up At Wall

There are shops in most of the tourist towns in South Dakota selling cowboy and Native American souvenirs, but none can match Wall Drug in scale and variety. The store, which claims to be 'America's number one roadside attraction', started out as a drug store in 1931 but now features with a maze of stores selling everything from shampoo to Stetsons. There's a huge range of authentic cowboy boots in every colour of the rainbow (and a huge range of prices to match). Out back, visitors can pat a (stuffed) bison, pan for gold, ride a jackalope, watch a gorilla play the piano or run from a hungry T-Rex. There's not much else in the town of Wall other than a few cowboy bars but it's worth a night, Anne's Motel is just across the road and offers old-fashioned comfort. See [walldrug.com](http://walldrug.com)



## Quiet Sundays

Religion runs deep in South Dakota and as such clients should be aware that the streets are generally very quiet on a Sunday as the locals are all at church.

Many shops won't open until 1100 or later, depending on the size of the town or city, but there's usually cafes open and serving breakfast.





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## Bear Country USA

One of the largest collections of black bears in the US can be found at Bear Country USA in the Black Hills, just south of Rapid City.

Visitors drive their own car through a series of enclosures in a safari-style adventure, which culminates in the bear pen (and they're everywhere—there's no danger of missing them!). Afterwards visitors can leave their car and visit the baby animals, including incredibly cute bear cubs. Bears give birth Jan/Feb and the cubs stay with their mothers for three months before being removed and put on display.

Entry is USD16 per adult, see [bearcountryusa.com](http://bearcountryusa.com)

## Autumn Colours

Iron Mountain Road in the Black Hills was last year named one of the best places to see fall foliage in the US.

## Black Hills: The Great US Roadtrip



**South Dakota claims the Black Hills and Badlands region as the home of the great American roadtrip, and with wide empty roads, surreal landscapes and a healthy dash of the Wild West, it's hard to argue.**

Self-drive is undoubtedly one of the best ways to see the region, allowing visitors to stop and wander any

number of trails, make the most of endless photo opportunities or hunt out a herd of bison.

There's no such thing as a traffic jam in these parts—even the cities are easily navigable and often strangely quiet even on a weekday.

In them, visitors will find shops to pick up cowboy boots and Native American dream-catchers, pubs where they can enjoy a bison burgers and friendly locals fascinated by New Zealand and just where it is in the world.

There are numerous parks to drive through, each offering their own unique feature, whether it be mammoth fossils or towering rock 'needles'.

Then of course there are the famous faces of American presidents and Native American legends to discover.

## Hitting The Road

The speed limit on rural Interstate is 75mph for cars or trucks with a minimum speed of 40 mph. Secondary highways are 65 mph, unless otherwise posted, and city streets are 25 mph unless otherwise posted. Driving rules are mostly the same as New Zealand but there's a few minor differences—notably, drivers and turn right on a red light as long as there are no cars coming.

Petrol is reasonable compared to New Zealand prices—it's around USD3.60 a gallon, and a gallon is around 3.8L. We travelled from Rapid City to the Badlands, back to Custer National Park and into Custer, around 350km, on USD20.



## Serene Spearfish

Spearfish is one of the most serene spots in the Black Hills, offering beautifully maintained paths to explore as well as wide open roads to drive.

Clients can head to the Devils Tower National Monument (with a paved trail around its base), along the Spearfish Canyon National Scenic By-way, and in the canyon itself there's waterfalls, hiking trails and a trout stream.

The Spearfish loop also includes the High Plains Western Heritage Center in Spearfish, and the D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery along Spearfish Creek.

Keen Kevin Costner fans can also follow signs up into the canyon for a *Dances with Wolves* film site—it's signposted but there's not much else to see, although film buffs will no doubt recognise the scenery.



## Buffalo Spotting In Custer National Park

Visitors to South Dakota are spoilt for choice when it comes to national parks, among them Custer, home to massive herds of buffalo as well as pronghorn, elk, mountain goats and burros (donkeys).

There are around 1300 bison wandering Custer's 71,000 acres, and while there's no guarantee visitors will spot them, park rangers are full of handy tips about where they may have last been spotted.

One of the best times of the year to spot wildlife is spring, when there's green grass on the roadsides, attracting the wildlife closer to the roads.

Five lodges in the park offer some beautiful places to stay amidst the nature, including the Game and Creekside lodges (open year-round) and Blue Bell, Legion Lake and Sylvan Lake lodges (open May-Oct), or clients can simply drive in and explore themselves.

Entry to the park is USD15 per car for one to seven days entry.



## Motorbike Heaven

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is one of the world's oldest, largest motorcycle gatherings offering incredible riding exhibits, demos, racing, concerts and much more. It draws legends, superstars and hundreds of thousands of enthusiasts and is listed as of on the '1000 places to see before you die'. It's next on 04-10 Aug, see [sturgismotorcyclerrally.com](http://sturgismotorcyclerrally.com)





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# The REAL America South Dakota



## Journey Through Time

A great place to get an overview of South Dakota's natural history is the Journey Museum in Rapid City. The museum aims to preserve and explore the heritage of the Black Hills, and takes visitors on a journey through time that starts with the violent upheaval that formed the hills more than 2.5 billion years ago. There's also some heart wrenching history of the people who have inhabited South Dakota in that time. See [journeymuseum.org](http://journeymuseum.org)

## SD's Triceratops

The state fossil of South Dakota is the triceratops, fossils of which have been found in rocks from the Hell Creek Formation in the northwestern part of the state. These fossils are from late in the Cretaceous Period, and are about 66 to 68 million years old.



## Mammoth Site

Hundreds of animals including mammoths died at Hot Springs around 26,000 years ago after climbing into a sinkhole to drink and becoming stuck down there. Around 60 Columbian and woolly mammoths have been unearthed at the site, as well as camels, llamas and giant shortfaced bears. Visitors can tour the working excavation site year-round and view the remains as they are found, and there are junior and advanced palaeontologist programmes. See [mammothsite.org](http://mammothsite.org)

## South Dakota's Jurassic Past



Home to endless natural rock sculptures and some of the most spectacular fossil deposits in North America, South Dakota is a dream for anyone with an interest in geology and paleontology.

Prehistoric people hunted woolly mammoth and bison in the area around 11,000 years ago and left evidence which is still being discovered now.

Visitors are encouraged to get involved—a few years back, a seven-year-old girl discovered a saber-toothed cat skull while taking part in a junior ranger programme in the Badlands park.

Sandstone cliffs in the Cave Hills (northwest) show rock art from 5000 years ago, there are village sites dating from hundreds of years ago, and the most complete t-rex skeleton ever found was discovered in a tiny town in the state.

Much of the history and fossils are accessible for viewing by visitors in

museums and centres around South Dakota.

Several organizations and attractions sponsor archaeological and paleontological excavations that are open to the public. Digs vary from year to year. For more information, see [history.sd.gov/archaeology](http://history.sd.gov/archaeology)

## Sue At Faith

There's not a lot going on in the tiny town of Faith but it was put on the map a few years back when Sue, the most complete tyrannosaurus rex skeleton ever discovered, was unearthed there.

Sue became the subject of much controversy and legal battles, and she was eventually sold at an auction for USD8 million.

The Black Hills palaeontologists who discovered her may have lost Sue but they've still got Stan, a t-rex now on display at the Black Hills Museum of Natural History in Hill City.

Meanwhile if clients do happen to be passing Faith they can stop by the visitor centre or take a picture of one of the most elaborate (and out of proportion) town signs they're likely to come across in the area.



## Badlands National Park

The Badlands National Park got its name from the Lakota people, who described it as 'mako sica' or 'land bad', and while early residents struggled to make a living from the land, 2.5 billion years of history have created a spectacular place to visit.

Erosion has produced buttes, canyons and pinnacles in layered colours, and the area is home to fossils including ancient dog-sized camels, horses, saber-toothed cats and rhino-like creatures.

Visitors can check out fossils at the Ben Reifel Visitor Centre at the park entry, hike the Fossil Exhibit Trail and attend daily ranger programmes (27 May-25 Aug).

The park is open year-round, entry is USD15 per car. The best way to view it is driving through, stopping off at any of the numerous lookout points along the way. See [nps.gov/badl](http://nps.gov/badl)

## Dinosaur Park

If fossils are a little abstract for the younger kiddies, clients can stop on the side of the road just out of Rapid City to meet a group of giant cheesy dinosaur sculptures which have survived since the 1930s.

The concrete dinosaurs were erected to cash in on visitors arriving to check out Mt Rushmore, and they're a gentle introduction for small children—who can also clamber on them for a photo.

Entry is free, the dinosaurs are at 940 Skyline Dr.





USA

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# The REAL America South Dakota

## Casino Culture

Deadwood has been synonymous with gambling since the 1800s and is now the only place you can gamble in South Dakota other than on Indian reservations.

The town has embraced this quirk—the street is lined with casinos, wander into any bar or restaurant and you're sure to find a slot machine, and many of the hotels boast them too.

## Saloon 10

The old-style saloon on the main street features antiques and Old West memorabilia including Wild Bill's death chair. He was murdered in the original Saloon 10, which is actually located just down the street. See [saloon10.com](http://saloon10.com)



## Moriah Cemetery

Moriah Cemetery is the resting place of Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane as well as numerous other local personalities, and while wandering a cemetery might seem morbid it's actually a fascinating glance into the town's history.

Wild Bill and Jane are buried next to each other in the cemetery—legend has it that Jane always (falsely) claimed to be one of Bill's sweethearts and her dying wish was to be buried beside him.

Visitors receive a map which points out where noted citizens are buried and gives their stories, including the mass grave of 11 men who died together in a fire and a special section for children. There's also a great lookout over the town of Deadwood. The cemetery (which closed to new burials in 1949) is open from 0800-2000, entry is USD1 for adults, USD0.50 seniors, children are free.

## Visit The Wild West In Deadwood



Once known as the most lawless settlement on the frontier, Deadwood is a town so rich in Wild West stories that HBO created a television show based on its history and characters.

The town's heyday was in 1876 during the gold rush, and it was home to famous names including Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane and Potato Creek Johnny.

Its checkered past includes gambling, prostitution, gun fights and moonshine, dozens of saloons lined the streets and at one point a third

of the city was said to be employed by the 'vice industry'.

Gambling remains a key earner for the town but tourism is big business too—Deadwood has embraced its history and has become a sort of cross between the Wild West and Disneyland.

Saloons still line the streets, characters roam around in costume and all day through summer there are re-enactments of gun fights and the killing of Wild Bill, bands playing and the flashing lights and ringing bells of casinos.

Child or adult alike, it's impossible not to be drawn into the town's Wild West magic, especially when there's a gunfight taking place on the street next to you.

It's definitely worth at least a day on a South Dakota adventure.

## New Holiday Inn

InterContinental in Nov opened the Deadwood Mountain Grand, a Holiday Inn Hotel, following a USD50 million renovation to the hotel.

The property has undergone 'significant renovations' with an overall Western theme, while historic Deadwood artwork graces guest room walls.

Formerly a historic mining building, the hotel features nine floors with 98 guest rooms and five suites, casino and event centre, fitness centre, indoor pool, spa, 'Lil Sheriffs' kids club, Aught Six Grille and Slime Plant Bar and Lounge. It also offers a comedy and music line-up in its event centre.

## Ice Cream

At the bottom of Main St is Sweet Revenge which claims to have 56 flavours of ice cream and soft serve, from pumpkin to peanut butter fudge (which we can vouch for—it's good!). There are also around 40 flavours of salt water taffy and a huge selection of other American candy classics.

## Adams Museum

The Adams Museum gives a fascinating insight into the town's colourful characters and an outline of how they earned their (sometimes inflated) reputations. It also has a history of the town, which has a past coloured with gold rushes, prostitution, prohibition, outlaws and most of all, gambling. The curiosities on display include a two-headed calf. Entry is by suggested donation of USD5 for adults, see [adamsmuseumandhouse.org](http://adamsmuseumandhouse.org)

## Costner's Casino



Kevin Costner is big in South Dakota ever since *Dances With Wolves* helped put the state on the map, and the Midnight Star casino in Deadwood, owned by the star himself, is something of a Costner shrine.

Ostensibly designed to 'reflect the opulence of Deadwood during the turn of the century', Costner's photos and costumes line the walls of the building, which also has a restaurant and bar on the third floor. Costner also owns a museum dedicated to the bison, with a massive brass sculpture of 14 bison being pursued by native Americans as a centrepiece. See [themidnightstar.com](http://themidnightstar.com) or [storyofthebison.com](http://storyofthebison.com)



## Wild West Performances A Deadwood Highlight

From Memorial Weekend to Labour Day, there's free entertainment in the town in the form of re-enactments from the town's heyday.

The information centre and many of the shops in town have schedules of the performances, which include re-enactments of real gun battles, bands, story-telling, medicine men touting their wares, the shooting of Wild Bill and the arrest of his killer. The characters get the kids involved but the shooting can be a little frightening for young children.





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# The REAL America South Dakota

## Hands-on Culture

A new tour company based in Wall is offering a hands-on, authentic Native American cultural experience. Lakota Ways teaches South Dakota visitors about the rich cultural heritage of the Lakota people, with lessons in traditional Native American crafts such as beadwork, tipi raising, porcupine quillwork and more. Lakota Ways also features displays of traditional Native American song and dance and takes visitors on a tour of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. See [lakotawayss.com](http://lakotawayss.com)



## Native Americans

South Dakota is home to the Great Sioux Nation, made up of nine Lakota, Nakota and Dakota tribes (they apparently prefer the terms Dakota, Lakota and Nakota to Sioux). There are more than 62,000 Native Americans in SD, and visitors are welcome to reservations as long as they behave respectfully.

Some basic guidelines include ask permission before taking photos, sketching or audio/video recording; and don't disturb sites that contain devotions or offerings like pipes, bundles, ties, flags or food, or Native American remains or artefacts.

At ceremonial events it's especially important to dress, speak and behave appropriately, as an unkempt appearance can be offensive.

A great way to get a taste of Native American culture is at a powwow, where there is Native American dance as well as vendors selling food like tacos and fry bread. There are many powwows held across the state. South Dakota Tourism has a great guide to Native American culture, the various reservations and what visitors will find there, and powwow events. See [travelsd.com/travel-professionals](http://travelsd.com/travel-professionals)

## Cowboy Culture In The Wild West



A key draw card for the Dakota region has long been the cowboy, and he's evident (both fictional and real) throughout the streets, souvenir shops and restaurants.

For visitors keen to experience the cowboy life first-hand, a growing trend is opting to stay on working ranches.

Crow Creek guest ranch near Belle Fourche started taking in guests around five years ago, and gets visitors from all over the world.

Todd and Cindy Larson's ranch is around 4000 acres, and is stocked with cattle and a herd of horses. The pair take groups of up to five at a time who are keen to experience a few days in the life of a cowboy, including horse riding, cattle branding, pistol shooting and evening sing-alongs.

It's a personal experience—just the guests and the Larsons, who are happy to either entertain their visitors or leave them to relax and explore.

Cindy cooks up cowboy feasts and guests have their own barn-like lodge to stay in separate from the main house, so they have as much privacy as they wish.

Todd (pictured) prefers that his guests have at least some horse riding ex-



perience if they want to roam the ranch with him but if they're staying longer there's time to learn—he recommends at least five to really get the hang of it.

The ranch is generally closed over winter. See [crowcreekguestranch.com](http://crowcreekguestranch.com)

## Custer Buffalo Corral

Once a year, the approximately 1300 buffalo in Custer State Park are rounded up by cowboys and girls in what is both a spectacular sight and a necessary tool in managing the herd. The round-up begins at 0930, guests need to be there by 0900 and stay in the viewing areas until the herd is safely in the corrals (usually around noon). Clients can hang around to watch staff sort, brand and vaccinate the massive beasts ready for the autumn sale. Reservations aren't required for the event, which this year is on 27 Sep.

Over the weekend following the roundup is the Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival near the State Game Lodge. Around 125 exhibitors sell Native American and Western arts and crafts and locally made products, there's non-stop entertainment such as dancers, bands, and poets, educational programmes are conducted throughout the weekend with snakes, birds, and living history demonstrations, and on Sun there's the annual chili cook-off.

For details and next year's date

[CLICK HERE](#)



## Crazy Horse Memorial To Dwarf Mt Rushmore

While everyone has heard of Mt Rushmore, few people know about the Crazy Horse memorial being built nearby which, on completion, will claim the title of World's Largest Mountain Carving. While the only complete part of the sculpture is Crazy Horse's face, the rest of the carving is beginning to emerge from the mountainside—and it's easily evident how it will eventually command the surrounding area. When complete, the carving of Crazy Horse riding his horse, arm outstretched, will stand 563 feet high and 641 feet long. Work started on the sculpture in 1948 and no one is quite sure how much longer it will take to complete, although it's thought the horse might emerge in another 10 years. Each year in Jun and Sep there's a limited chance to climb to the top and view Crazy Horse's face up close, while over summer there's a Legends of Light laser show projected on to the mountain. The memorial is open year-round, there is a large orientation centre, museum and sculptor's studio. Entry to the monument is USD10 per car, see [crazyhorsememorial.org](http://crazyhorsememorial.org)