

# summer GETAWAYS

South Dakota

## Americana

South Dakota boasts history, sights

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## Travel healthy

Should you visit a doctor before your trip?

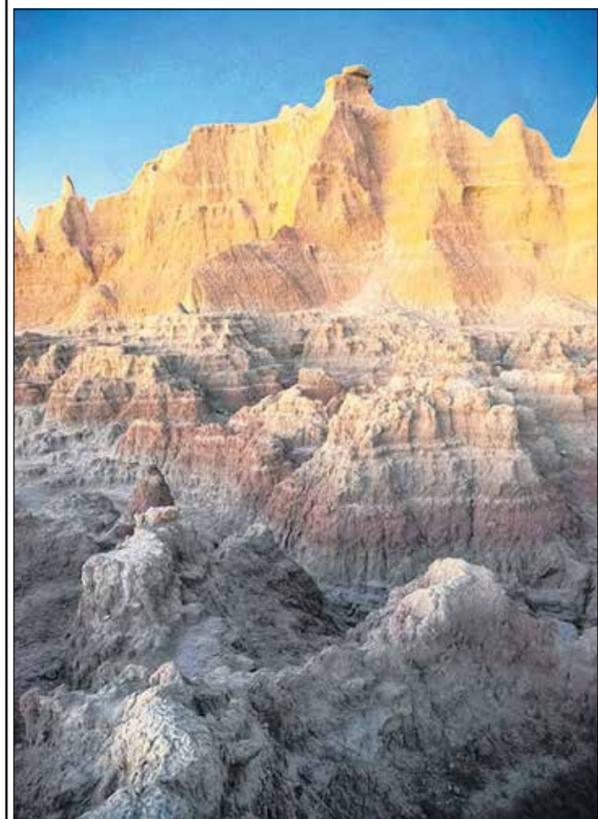
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Ann Arbor, Michigan  
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# Black Hills, Badlands and bison

Boasting Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse and awesome sights, South Dakota makes perfect Americana vacation



Colors dance across the landscape with the rising and setting of the sun at Badlands National Park in South Dakota, above and below.



**By JACKY RUNICE**  
*Daily Herald Correspondent*

Many of us, from middle school kids to senior citizens, have felt a reawakening about our country — and not via the perfunctory flag waving and barbecue on the Fourth of July — but deeper feelings about what it means to be an American.

Perhaps this is the year to forgo manufactured fun at theme parks, Hollywood tours or the Jersey shore and instead fill our hearts as well as our eyes with the salt of the earth.

The splendor of the Black Hills that blister from the surrounding plains; canyons, ravines and the otherworldly nature of the Badlands; miles without strip malls or billboards but bison and meadows; and the incredible visual testaments of Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial. It's the all-American vacation in the middle of the country in South Dakota that's brimming with history, wild geography, Native American culture, iconic monuments and beautiful American vistas all short drives from one another.

## Rapid City

Drive or fly from Chicago right



Traditional Native American decor greets guests at Hotel Alex in Rapid City, South Dakota.

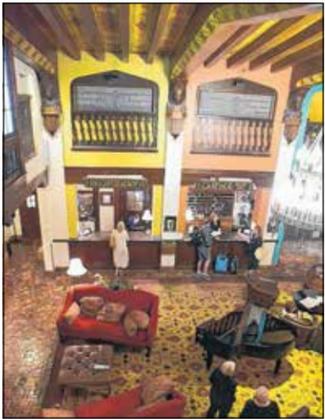
into Rapid City in western South Dakota and you're at the gateway to Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills. Take a day or two on either end of your trip to explore some worthy attractions in the state's second largest city.

Amid downtown's turn-of-the-century buildings are shops and galleries featuring traditional and modern Native American art and Black Hills Gold jewelry; presidential statues on every corner; and Art Alley's vibrant free-form graffiti, pop and political art, abstracts, murals and cultural works by local and visiting artists who use buildings as their canvas.

Don't miss the Journey Museum & Learning Center ([www.journeymuseum.org](http://www.journeymuseum.org)) to get a sense of the 2.5-billion-year history of this part of the planet through interactive displays about geology, dinosaurs, Native American culture of the Lakota Sioux and pioneers who traversed the Black Hills.

**Stay:** Families will go for the new Marriott Fairfield Inn & Suites which is home to South Dakota's largest indoor water park. Couples and history buffs should look into Hotel Alex Johnson in the heart of downtown with modern amenities and historic charm that reflects its 1927 opening. Walk to Main Street Square for summertime movies and live concerts.

**Eat:** Colonial House Restaurant and Bar is comfort food central



You'll take a step back in time when you enter the lobby of Hotel Alex in Rapid City, South Dakota.

with daily homemade soups and breads, big breakfasts featuring locally loved caramel rolls and filling signatures items like chicken-fried steak.

## Road trip

On your way to the nearly 250,000 acres of nature's gift in Badlands National Park (50 miles east of Rapid City), you may as well join the crowds stopping off at Wall Drug Store ([www.WallDrug.com](http://www.WallDrug.com)), one of the world's best known roadside respites full of the cheesy and corny that hasn't changed much (except in size) since 1931. It's a tchotchke-lovers dream of 26 retail departments,

fodder for a kid's imagination with its faux Frontier Town and ginormous jackalope and it's still serving free ice water, a nickel cup of coffee, freshly made doughnuts and rib-sticking meals from hot beef sandwiches and buffalo burgers to hearty breakfasts and apple pie. Kids and professional shoppers will be dazzled, the rest of us must merely endure.

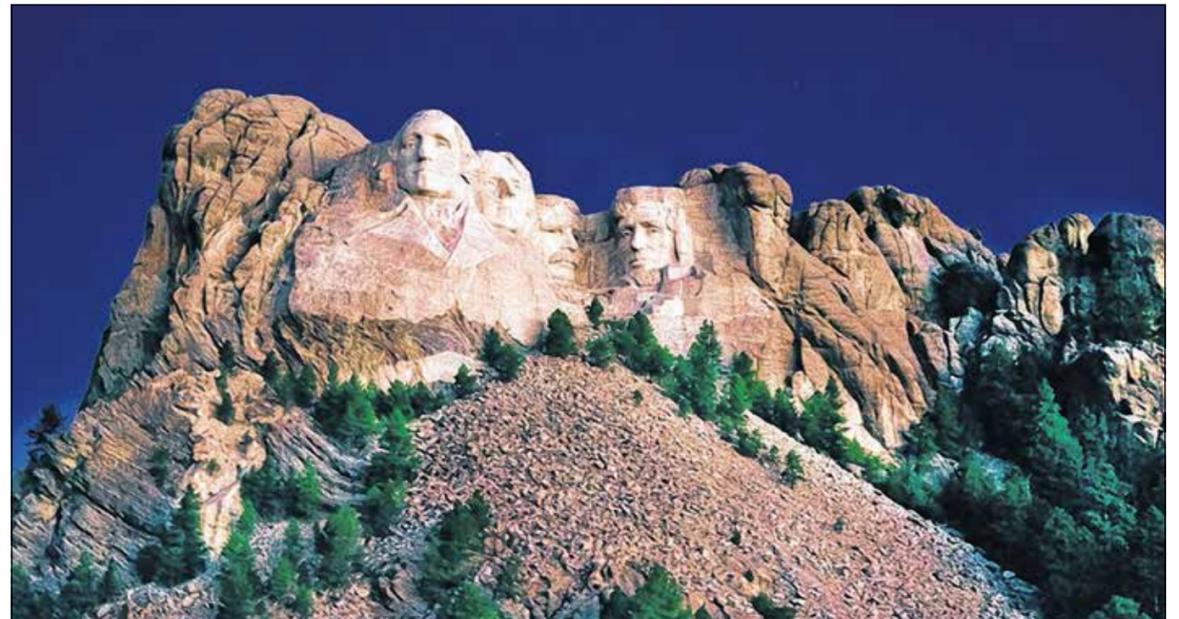
Buffalo Gap National Grassland and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, home to the Oglala Lakota Sioux, border Badlands National Park. Stop in the Oglala Lakota College Heritage Center ([www.olg.edu](http://www.olg.edu)) on the reservation for an overview of the Oglala Lakota people through historical photographs and artwork chronicling history from the early 1800s to the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. You can visit the Wounded Knee monument and cemetery and although the site of the battlefield is a designated National Historic Landmark, it's in disrepair. History buffs will want to stop at what is basically a pilgrimage site that is nonetheless moving.

## Badlands National Park

It's hard to choose between sunset and sunrise at Badlands National Park because each offer different visuals that are equally disarming. One is a lavender and peach settling of the day among the buttes and canyons; the other a glorious awakening to mesas, spires and gullies afire with red volcanic rock. Either way or both, your camera will be clicking to capture the changing colors over the mystic wonderland carved by wind and water over countless years. You're bound to spy bison, bighorn sheep, prairie dogs and other wildlife.

**Stay:** You can camp, RV or stay in a pine cabin with views of the Badlands at Cedar Pass Lodge ([www.cedarpasslodge.com](http://www.cedarpasslodge.com)). The cabins have TV, refrigerator, microwave, air conditioning and other amenities.

**Eat:** One mile south of Manderson, South Dakota, on Black Elk Road, Bette's Kitchen is just that — lunch in Betty O'Rourke's kitchen (or on



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HAROLD RAIL

If you're heading to Mount Rushmore, plan walk the Presidential Trail, a half-mile trail that will get you a closer look.



Wall Drug Store is a roadside souvenir-shopper's delight on the road from Rapid City, South Dakota, to Badlands National Park.

porch outside). Betty is a great-granddaughter of Oglala Lakota medicine man Black Elk, second cousin to war chief Crazy Horse, and her house was the site where the famous tome, "Black Elks Speaks," was finished. See photos on the wall of her of Black Elk, while Betty and her family prepare your sandwich, delicious fried chicken or, if you're lucky, Route 66 Meat Loaf Deluxe.

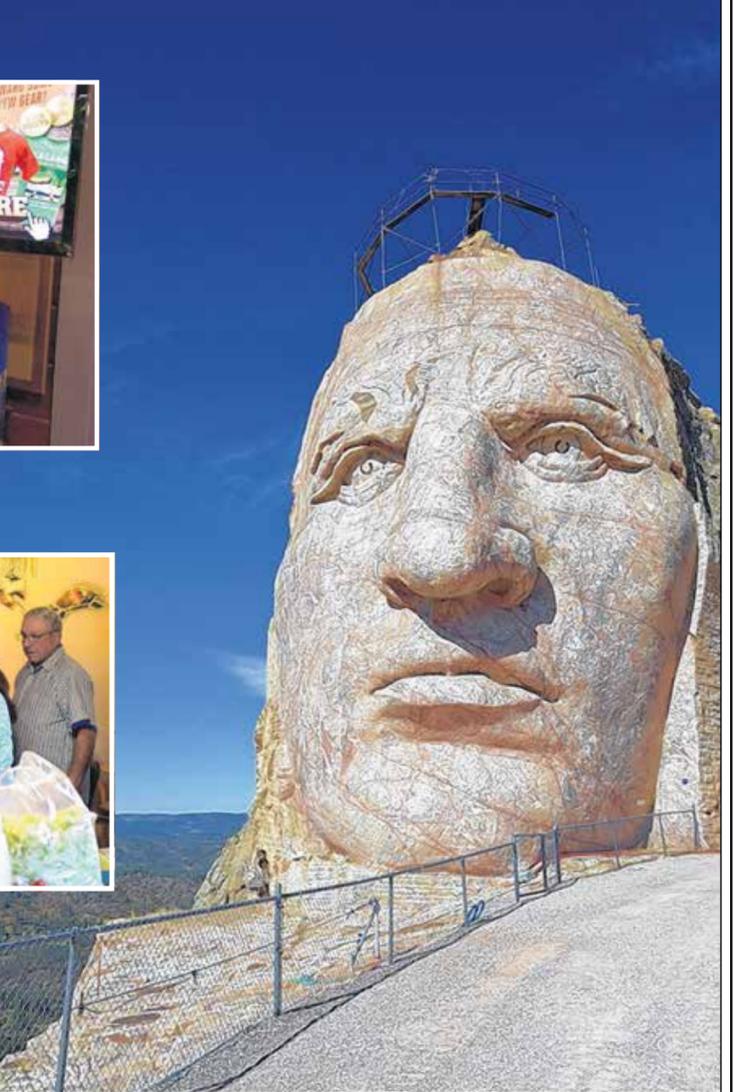
## Hill City

Hill City ([www.hillcitysd.com](http://www.hillcitysd.com)), in the heart of the Black Hills, has a dual history of hosting miners who came to prospect for gold and later the small mountain town became a paleontological and

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Betty O'Rourke goes over the menu with a visitor to Bette's Kitchen, literally the kitchen in O'Rourke's home. At right, Crazy Horse stands tall.



# Travel: History, sights make South Dakota a bucket-list trip

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geological center for exploration and discovery. It's definitely worth visiting for the excellent Museum at the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research ([www.everythingprehistoric.com](http://www.everythingprehistoric.com)) where anyone who is into fossils will think they've hit pay dirt. Revel in fossils of invertebrates and vertebrates; terrestrial and marine animals; plants and amber; plus minerals and meteorites. Main Street, Hill City, also offers sweet art galleries including Sandy Swallow Gallery, Native American owned and operated and featuring Oglala Lakota artists. Swallow's family history is nothing short of fascinating ([www.sandyswallowgallery.com/history](http://www.sandyswallowgallery.com/history)). Warrior's Work/Ben West Gallery ([www.warriorswork.com](http://www.warriorswork.com)) houses art, hats and clothing that will captivate novices and aficionados.

A historical ride on the 1880 Train is not just for kids: see the Black Hills of South Dakota on an airy vintage steam train ([www.1880train.com](http://www.1880train.com)). The two-hour narrated round trip between Hill City and Keystone is a relaxing way to see the countryside. If you're looking for something more adventurous, consider a horseback riding, ATV or trail tour via High Country Guest Ranch ([www.highcountrypgstranch.com](http://www.highcountrypgstranch.com)).

**Stay:** The Harney Peak Inn ([www.harneypeakinn.com](http://www.harneypeakinn.com)) on Main Street beats all the usual chain options for homey, spacious and friendly accommodations centrally located for exploring and hiking the Black Hills, Main Street shops and galleries. It's nine miles from Mount Rushmore, 14 miles from the Crazy Horse Monument and 26 miles from Rapid City. High Country Guest Ranch offers log vacation homes and camping cabins, a heated outdoor swimming pool, biking and hiking on the Mickelson Train in the Black Hills, general store, fire pits and hot tubs.

**Eat:** The Alpine Inn began as the Harney Peak Hotel — a hot spot for dining and a favorite of miners and railroad men until 1934. The Alpine Inn has been serving German specialties from schnitzel to apple strudel since the 1980s.

## Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse Memorial

Nearly 3 million people from across the planet make the trip to see the 60-foot-high granite faces of presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln at Mount Rushmore National Memorial in Keystone (about 24 miles from Rapid City). Celebrating its 76th birthday in



A historical ride on the 1880 Train offers a two-hour narrated round trip between Hill City and Keystone.

2017, the monument is mesmerizing in its grandeur but kids will definitely need a little more than staring at it from afar. Walk the Presidential Trail, an easy half-mile in length to get a tad closer to the sculpture. Breakfast or lunch at the on-site Carver's Cafe, the only three-star Certified Green Restaurant in South Dakota!

A 25-minute drive deposits you at the stunning Crazy Horse Memorial that sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski began in 1948 after Lakota Chief Standing Bear invited him to carve an enduring monument to Native Americans ([www.crazyhorsememorial.org](http://www.crazyhorsememorial.org)). Take time explore the museums and collections and to learn about the sculptor, his wife, and their 10 children, who helped their father on the mountain

and their mother in the visitor complex — it's Hollywood material.

## Custer State Park

The 71,000-acre Custer State Park is also home to one of the world's largest bison herds and if you can wait until late summer to take your bucket list trip to South Dakota, you're in for the visual treat of a lifetime when the 52nd Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival takes place. Cowboys, cowgirls and crews star in the saddle to move the 1,300 herd. The annual roundup, held the last Friday in September, is free and open to the public and it roars in on Sept. 29, 2017. Following the roundup, there's a weekend full of fun via an arts festival and Dutch oven cook off.



Sandy Swallow, a Native American artist, operates a gallery in Hill City, South Dakota, that features work from Oglala Lakota artists.

**Stay:** Custer State Park offers some spectacular digs like the Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired Sylvan Lake Lodge or cabins at Legion Lake Lodge where you can wade in clear shallow water and reel in trout. You'll be surrounded by spruce at the Western themed Blue Bell Lodge and be sure to save room for the famous Chuck Wagon Cookout. Be positively presidential holing up at the State Game Lodge, a native stone and wood lodge built in 1920, listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was the "summer White House" for President Calvin Coolidge in the 1920s. Make your choice among the four distinct historic lodges at [custerresorts.com/lodges-and-cabins](http://custerresorts.com/lodges-and-cabins).

Chart your distinctly American vacation at [www.travelsouthdakota.com](http://www.travelsouthdakota.com).



The annual Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival takes place in September at Custer State Park.