

7 days in South Dakota

Since you are staying in one location the entire trip, you can pretty much mix up the order of each day. We watched the weather forecast in each location and chose the location with the least chance of rain for the day, which worked out well for us.

Day 1 - Arrival / Rapid City (12:30PM)

- Flights - PIT - Rapid City, SD (RAP)
 - Arrive 12:30PM, pick up rental car
- Check out Rapid City activities
- Grab food / drink for Airbnb
 - on-the-go snacks, water, drinks, coffee
- 5pm - check-in
10015 South High Meadows Drive
Black Hawk, SD

Rapid City things to do

- Complete The City of Presidents Walk, featuring life-sized bronze statues of every past U.S. president (printed guide 512 Main St., Ste. 240)

Local breweries

- Firehouse Brewing Co. & Wine Cellar
- Lost Cabin Beer Co.
- Dakota Point Brewing
- Zymurcracy Beer Company (vet-owned)
- Hay Camp Brewing Company
- Woodland Republic Brewing & Blending

Check out a Piece of the Berlin Wall:

- See the pieces of the Berlin Wall and tank traps that were purchased and brought to Rapid City.

Dessert / Coffee

- Silver Lining Creamery
- Pure Bean

Day 2 - Mount Rushmore, full-day

- **Morning: Mount Rushmore National Memorial**
 - Visit Mount Rushmore early, ideally at sunrise.
 - Take iconic photos from the viewing deck.
- Walk the 0.9-mile Presidential Trail Loop with 422 stairs.

- Pass by the Sculptor's Studio (check for open hours).
 - Note: \$10 parking fee (not covered by the America the Beautiful Pass).
- **Late Morning: Crazy Horse Memorial**
 - Visit the Crazy Horse Memorial, a massive mountain carving.
 - General admission includes museum access and viewing deck.
 - Indian Museum of North America
- **Lunch: Black Hills Burger and Bun Co in Custer**
 - Enjoy award-winning burgers like the "Hot Granny" and "Black Hills Blues."
 - Option to swap for bison patties.
- **Afternoon: Walk over to Custer Skywalk** (seems meh, skip if not feeling it)
 - Hike the 0.5-mile Custer Skywalk with stairs for great views.
- **Evening: Drive Iron Mountain Road**
 - Drive **US-16A** from Custer State Park and Mount Rushmore National Memorial
 - Pass through three tunnels
 - Doane Robinson Tunnel, framing Mount Rushmore

Day 3 - Deadwood, Spearfish, Devils Tower

- **Explore Downtown Deadwood** (8am-1130)
 - Stroll through historic downtown Deadwood
 - Saloon No. 10, the historic site where Wild Bill Hickok was shot.
 - Pump House (food, coffee?)
 - **Mount Moriah Cemetery** – resting place of Wild Bill Hickok, Seth Bullock, and Calamity Jane.
 - Chubby Chipmunk for chocolate truffles
- **Hike to Mount Roosevelt Friendship Tower** (*optional*)
 - Take a short 0.8-mile hike to the tower for views of the Black Hills
- **Spearfish Canyon Scenic Byway** (12-4PM)
 - Drive along the 19-mile scenic route.
 - **Stop 1: Spearfish Falls**
 - Park at the Latchstring restaurant and hike the 0.8-mile round trip to the falls.
 - Enjoy the viewing deck close to the falls.
 - **Stop 2: Roughlock Falls**
 - Parking nearby for short walk to the falls.
 - **Stop 3: Devil's Bathtub (skip if tight on time)**
 - 1.1-mile round trip hike – natural waterslide and swimming hole
 - **Stop 4: Bridal Veil Falls**
 - 60 ft waterfall view from the observation deck.
 - **Stop 5: Community Caves Trail**

- Hike the steep 0.6-mile round trip to the caves and waterfall.
- Climb to the top of the caves for canyon and road views.
- **Downtown Spearfish (4-5)**
 - Dough Trader Pizza* (food)
 - CASH ONLY
 - Call ahead – 605-642-2175
 - *If time... or on way home?*
 - Spearfish Brewing Company
 - Sawyer Brewing Co
 - Crow Peak
 - **Dessert at** Leones' Creamery
- **Drive to Devils Tower (5-6 PM)**
 - ~1 hr drive from Spearfish
- **Explore Devils Tower (6-8 PM)**
 - Hiking (all connected if desired)
 - **Devil's Tower Trail** (1.3-mile loop, 45min)
 - Red Beds (2.8-mile loop, 1hr 15m)
 - Joyner Ridge (1.5-mile loop, 45min)
 - Watch for wildlife and enjoy the sunset views of the tower

Day 4 - Wind Cave

- **Wildlife Loop Drive**
 - Drive the 18-mile Wildlife Loop in Custer State Park.
 - Custer State Park Visitor Center
 - Wildlife Station Visitor Center
 - Buffalo Corrals
 - Blue Bell Stables
 - Legion Lake Lodge
 - Coolidge General Store
 - Custer State Park Visitor Center
- **Wind Cave National Park**
 - **1pm** Wind Cave tour - Fairgrounds
- **Hiking in Wind Cave National Park**
 - **Rankin Ridge Trail:** A 1-mile hike to a fire lookout (currently closed) with views of the Black Hills.
- **Optional Longer Hike:** Lookout Point Trail and Centennial Loop (5.2 miles) through prairies and rocky inclines, with chances to see bison (2hr)
- **Optional: Visit Jewel Cave National Monument**

- If Wind Cave tours are closed or you want more cave exploration, consider visiting Jewel Cave for additional tours.
- **Evening: Lovers' Leap Trail**
 - Hike the 4.2-mile Lovers' Leap Trail, featuring forest scenery, creek crossings, and views of the Black Hills.
- **Dinner:** State Game Lodge

Day 5 - Custer State Park

[PDF Guide](#) < [Download here](#)

- **Drive the Needles Highway**
 - Start at Legion Lake
 - Drive the 14-mile scenic Needles Highway, named for its needlelike granite formations.
 - Enjoy views of the Cathedral Spires and go through several scenic tunnels.
- **Hike the Cathedral Spires Trail (along the Needles Highway)**
 - 1.6-mile hike to an open valley surrounded by needle-like rock formations (Cathedral Spires).
- **Continue on Needles Highway**
 - Drive through the Needle's Eye Tunnel, a famous and narrow tunnel with rock formations resembling a needle's eye.
- **Hike the Sunday Gulch Trail** (*optional*)
 - 3.9-mile loop trail starting at Sylvan Lake, featuring rock slabs, handrails, metal stairs, and stream crossings.
- **Hike up Black Elk Peak – 3.5–4hr**
 - 7.1 mile loop, 1,459ft gain
 - Hike up Black Elk Peak, the highest point in South Dakota (7,242 feet).
 - Use Trail 9 for the ascent and Trail 4 for the descent, both starting near Sylvan Lake.

Day 6 - Badlands

- **Morning Hikes:**
 - **Notch Trail:** Hike this 1.3-mile trail featuring a wooden ladder climb and stunning viewpoints.
 - **Window Trail:** A short 0.3-mile boardwalk leading to a "window" overlook.
 - **Door Trail:** A 0.8-mile boardwalk trail with an opening into the Badlands' unique landscape.
- **Scenic Drive & Visitor Center:**

- Drive the Badlands Loop Road, stopping at overlooks like White River Valley, Yellow Mounds, and Pinnacles Overlook.
- Visit the park's visitor center.
- **Midday Break at Wall Drug:**
 - Grab a coffee and try the famous maple donut at Wall Drug.
 - Explore the shops and take a photo with the giant jackrabbit.
- **Afternoon Drive:**
 - Drive Sage Creek Rim Road, a scenic but unpaved route.
 - Stop at Robert's Prairie Dog Town to see the prairie dogs.
- **Sunset & Evening:**
 - Watch the sunset at Pinnacles Overlook, an ideal spot for a picnic.
 - Optionally, engage in night photography or join the Night Sky Viewing program.

Day 7 - Open / Flexible

- Hot Springs / Mammoth Site?
- Explore Rapid City
- Explore Deadwood
- Additional time for Custer, Badlands, or Wind Cave
- ATV riding trails ([link](#))

Day 8 - Fly home

- drive to Airport
 - 7:05am - depart

Drive times from Airbnb

- 40min Rapid City
- 45min to Deadwood
- 45min to Spearfish (downtown)
- 1 hr to Mount Rushmore
- 1.5 hr to Wind Cave
- 1 hr to Custer State Park
- 1.5hr to Badlands