



THE GO-GETTERS GUIDE TO CUSTER STATE PARK

The granite towers, rolling hills and sparkling bodies of water that make up [Custer State Park](#) encompasses 71,000 acres of the Black Hills. With all this ground to cover it's easy to overlook some of the best sites and activities, so we created a guide on how to experience Custer State Park to the fullest!

HIT THE TRAILS

With miles of [hiking options](#) in Custer State Park, it can be hard to know which trails should make your to-do list. We've selected a few of the popular hikes within the park and reasons why we think they are worth checking out.

Sunday Gulch

The trailhead for [Sunday Gulch](#) starts at the crown jewel of the park, Sylvan Lake. This 3.9-mile loop takes you behind Sylvan Lake through the forest, down into a creek and over boulders. The diverse terrain and overlook points of this trail are sure to leave you wanting more.

Little Devils Tower

This moderate 3.6-mile [trailhead](#) branches off one of the Black Elk Peak trails. After a small rock scramble to the top, you'll be greeted with outstanding views of the surrounding mountains including the fire tower at the summit of Black Elk Peak and a stunning view of the Cathedral Spires in the distance.

Cathedral Spires

Journey through the [granite spires](#) of Custer State Park from outside your vehicle with a 1.6-mile moderate out and back trail. Also known as the Needles, these amazing rock formations will be an unforgettable, up close experience.

Black Elk Peak

Standing at 7,244 feet, [Black Elk Peak](#) is the tallest point east of the Rocky Mountains. Once at the top you'll be greeted by the gorgeous fire tower, which was built in 1935, and 360 views of Black Elk Wilderness. Round trip this hike is a moderate 6.4 miles.

TAKE A TOUR

The combination of prairies, forests, and rocky outcroppings making up Custer State Park create an excellent habitat for a range of wildlife. While you can see some from your vehicle while cruising Wildlife Loop Road, the park offers unique experiences that take you even closer.

Buffalo Safari Jeep Tour

This [open-air jeep](#) ride takes you further into the park by going off the road and closer to the herd! During the tour the guide will help you spot critters, along with sharing historical and educational facts about the park.

Chuckwagon Cookout

Take part in an old-fashioned hayride with classic campfire songs! The [Chuckwagon Cookout](#) is a 45-minute wildlife tour to a mountain meadow canyon so you can partake in a chuck wagon feast.

Trail Rides

Saddle up and take in Custer State Park on a [guided horseback ride](#)! This peaceful ride will take you through streams and over hills allowing you to experience the quiet nature of the park.

PLAY IN THE WATER

The crystal waters of Custer State Park provide the perfect place for a relaxing float. Home to five stunning mountain lakes: Center Lake, Legion Lake, Stockade Lake, Sylvan Lake and the Game Lodge Pond, the park has no shortage of picturesque bodies of water to play in.

Rentals

True relaxation can be met aboard a paddle board, kayak or canoe. These [rental options](#) (along with life jackets) are offered at Legion Lake and Sylvan Lake.

Swimming

Nothing beats a cool dip in the mountain lakes of Custer State Park. Swimming is allowed in all five lakes, but keep in mind there are no lifeguards.

Fishing

With a valid South Dakota fishing license, visitors can enjoy fishing anywhere within Custer State Park. The parks lakes are stocked a variety of trout like brook, brown and rainbow in addition to the wild trout. You'll also find Northern pike, panfish, and large and smallmouth bass in some of the mountain lakes.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW

Custer State Park offers great educational opportunities for families and kids! Elevate your experience by learning about the history and the creatures who call it home.

Junior Naturalist Program

Youth ages 7 to 18 can take park in the [Junior Naturalist Program](#). This program will teach them the rich, natural and cultural history of South Dakota while spending time outdoors exploring the state park.

Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center

Located one mile west of the Visitor Center is the hub for most of the interpretive and educational programs that occur within Custer State Park. The [Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center](#) is the perfect location to learn, play and explore!

EXPERIENCE THE HISTORY

After more than 100 years, there is a whole lot of history within South Dakota's first state park. From visiting U.S. Presidents to famous scenic byways to historic building structures, the history of Custer State Park is everywhere.

The "Summer White House"

Known as the Game State Lodge, this native stone and wood lodge served as a Summer White House for three months to President Calvin Coolidge in 1927. It's during this stay that Coolidge officially dedicated the inaugural work on Carving Mount Rushmore and issued the pronouncement of the end of his presidency in 1928.

Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway

Consisting of Iron Mountain Road and the “impossible” Needles Highway, the [Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway](#) was created by Governor Norbeck to showcase the scenery without destroying the land or wildlife.

Custer State Park offers 71,000 acres of stunning scenery, amazing wildlife, adventurous outdoor activities, along with history and educational opportunities. Take the reins and experience this park to its fullest. Go get em', go-getter.

GROUP FRIENDLY

Custer State Park offers room for all including group tours, conventions and reunions. These various tours and outdoor activities are perfect for groups of 30-100 people. Call ahead for the best deals and accommodations for your unique gathering.