Skyline Wilderness Area History

The Skyline Wilderness Area encompasses 150 acres of undeveloped forest and meadows straddling historic Skyline Drive and Dinosaur Park in the heart of Rapid City, South Dakota. The property was donated to the City by the Skyline Drive Preservation Group with the intention that the property remain in its undeveloped, natural state as an urban wilderness, in perpetuity.

Skyline Drive Scenic Byway - Skyline Drive was constructed as a WPA Project under the federal relief programs during the 1930s. The scenic byway winds along the ridge line that separates the eastern and western portions of the city. The road was originally lined with log guard rails and local limestone retaining walls. Although the road itself has been repaved many times and the log guard rails were replaced after they deteriorated, much of the original rock wall work remains. It was designated a Scenic Byway in 2006.

Amphitheater - The Amphitheater was constructed in 1934 as part of the Herald Pageant of America Project. Although never realized as an event venue, much of the terracing remains along the eastern side of Skyline Drive.

Scenic Trailheads and Overlooks

Dinosaur Park - 940 Skyline Drive
This venue was constructed in the 1930s to attract tourists visiting Mt. Rushmore. It includes large sculptures of Apatosaurus, Tyrannosaurus Rex, Triceratops, Stegosaurus and Anatotitan. Smaller sculptures of a Dimetrodon and a Protoceratops can be seen near the Gift Shop. The sculptures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

West Dinosaur Trailhead - 1705 W. Fulton

Petrified Forest Trailhead - 1430 Skyline Drive
Tours of the area were conducted from a log-shaped building in the 1950s and 60s. Although the structure burned down in 1965, the foundation and many of the petrified logs remain in the area today.

Stonewall Overlook - 2215 Skyline Drive
Views of west Rapid City and the Black Hills can be enjoyed from this overlook which features a well preserved, historic stone wall and a new restroom facility.

Trail System

A “Trails for Everyone” project started in 2014 created a network of hiking/biking trails for all ages and abilities. The Skyline Trail parallels Skyline Drive with great views of the city through the entire park. The Amphitheater Trail creates a loop around the open meadow and historic amphitheater.

Trail Etiquette

Motorized vehicles and horses are prohibited.

Stay on Established Trails
- Well-built trails are designed to preserve the land and protect it from erosion.
- Short-cutting or going cross-country damages the delicate landscape.

Avoid Using Trails in Muddy and Wet Conditions
- Foot and bike traffic on muddy trails cause significant damage to the trail and leads to greater erosion.

Dogs Must be on Leashes
- It's the law!
- Not all trail-users appreciate your pet like you do.

Clean Up After Your Pet

Be Courteous and Share the Trails
- Downhill users yield to uphill users. Cyclists yield to hikers.
- Let fellow trail users know you’re coming; a friendly “hello” is a nice option or a bell on your bike.