



A Golden Opportunity

SOUTH DAKOTA GIVES TRAVELERS ENDLESS OPTIONS FOR FAMILY FUN, OUTDOOR ADVENTURE AND STRAIGHT-FROM-THE-LAND DINING. **by KIT BERNARDI**

► South Dakota has always been 77,000 square miles of adventure. Just as gold miners traversed this land staking claims, millions of tourists travel through the Mount Rushmore State each year, discovering golden vacation memories. With six national parks, 13 state parks, 43 recreation areas, vibrant cities and

historic small towns, South Dakota always yields riches.

Arts and Culture

As the largest city in South Dakota and the southeast's cultural center, **Sioux Falls** is a hive of activity. The city welcomes many of its visitors at the state's largest airport, **Sioux Falls Regional Airport**, which serves nearly 500,000 domestic passengers annually. After landing, scope out the lay of the city on the **Sioux Falls Trolley**, which circles downtown's galleries, restaurants and parks. Don't miss the chance to admire the artwork along the 55-piece **SculptureWalk**, which features works from local, national and international artists. The sculptures, owned by the artists, are loaned for one year, so visitors can come back year after year and have an entirely new experience.

Perhaps the quintessential Sioux Falls experience is strolling the paved paths through **Falls Park**, one of the city's most distinctive landmarks and its namesake. Watch the north-flowing Big Sioux River as it tumbles down a cascade of three waterfalls, climb the five-story observation tower, explore historic ruins and reenergize with a visit to the on-site café. The **8th and Railroad Center**,

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Badlands National Park; Sylvania Lake; Downtown Sioux Falls.

My South Dakota

TOM BROKAW

JOURNALIST,
AUTHOR AND
SPECIAL CORRE-
SPONDENT FOR
NBC NEWS

LOCAL ROOTS: I'm a native South Dakotan in the truest sense of the word. Both of my parents' families came to South Dakota in the late 1880s. I was born in 1940. We moved around the state a lot because of the nature of my father's work in construction. We moved to Yankton when I was 15. It was there I finished high school and met my wife, Meredith. I consider that my hometown.

FAVORITE EATS: Murdo's Restaurant, near Yankton. What I also like to do is stop in any small town, go to the local restaurant and order a hot beef sandwich. It's roast beef on white bread, covered in rich gravy, with mashed potatoes on the side.

MUST-DO: There are two parts to South Dakota: the east and the west. The eastern part has small farms. It's still the American savanna. You cross the Missouri River, and you're in the Old West and ranchland. I always try to get people to visit both parts of the state.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: World's Only Corn Palace; children try their hand at construction. We moved to Yankton when I was 15. It was there I finished high school and met my wife, Meredith. I consider that my hometown.

comprising converted 19th-century train buildings, is the hub for year-round First Fridays events featuring live music, gallery openings and shopping events.

The **Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science**, once the city's first high school, is one of the only facilities in the world that brings together visual arts, performing arts and interactive science and educational opportunities under one roof. Within Washington Pavilion, **Kirby Science Discovery Center** has more than 100 interactive exhibits that engage families in brainy fun. Artifacts and 16 large-scale murals portray pioneer prairie life at the **Old Courthouse Museum** and the building in which they are housed, constructed of local Sioux quartzite stone in the 1890s, is a worthy attraction in its own right.

The 26-mile **Sioux Falls Bike Trail** loops past **Yankton Trail Park**, site of the free **Sioux Falls Jazz and Blues Fest**. Also in the park, **Sertoma Butterfly House and Marine Cove** is well loved by kids and parents for its aquatic animal touch pool and indoor garden.

Fifty miles north of Sioux Falls, in the college town of **Brookings**, South Dakota State University draws visitors with its unique campus museums. The 7,000-piece permanent collection of the **South Dakota Art Museum** showcases prairie life paintings and illustrations of native son Harvey Dunn as well as works by Oscar Howe and contemporary fine art prints in the Cockerline Collection. The **South Dakota Agricultural Heritage Museum** highlights the state's agrarian roots.

Just adjacent to campus, stroll through 70 creatively—and beautifully—manicured acres of botanic gardens at **McCrorry Gardens**, where mas-

ter gardeners lead tours and explain in detail the plant life that shapes the landscape. This year marks the gardens' 50th anniversary, which will be celebrated on August 7.

Brooking's top family-fun attraction (and one of the best in the state) is the **Children's Museum of South Dakota**. At the museum, kids can feel the thrill of coming face-to-snout with a life-sized, roaring, animatronic T. rex family and get in touch with their creative side by painting, making music and trying out other art forms. The museum also provides kids fun ways to learn about the natural history of South Dakota through interactive exhibits about the weather, plants and animals of the state's prairie landscape.

In Aberdeen, 95 miles northwest of Watertown, wide-eyed kids meet their favorite fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters at **Storybook Land** and **The Land of Oz**. **Wylie Park** attractions easily fill a family's day with fishing ponds, go-carts, bumper boats and a pint-sized roller coaster. Stay overnight to visit the **Dacotah Prairie Museum** and the studios of nationally acclaimed sculptor **Ben Victor**. Downtown's restored Art Deco-style **Capitol Theatre**, a former vaudeville house, hosts the fall **South Dakota Film Festival** in September.

More South Dakota culture stops line the length of Interstate 90. In **Mitchell**, visit the iconic, onion-domed **World's Only Corn Palace**. Each year, local artists adorn the building with massive murals created using corn, grain and native grasses.

Rapid City is the gateway to the famed Black Hills area. The city's cultural sights do their share to prepare visitors for exploring the surrounding region, which was called out by Lonely Planet in

My South Dakota

JOHN T. PORTER

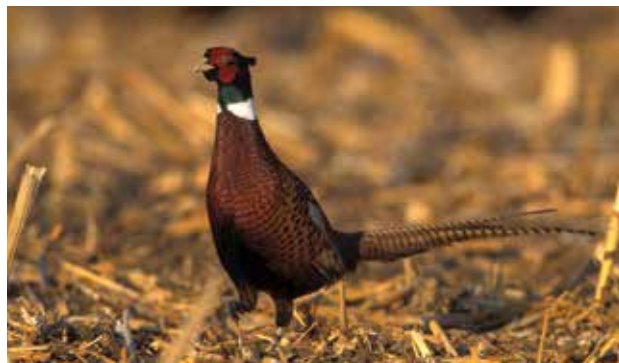
CEO OF AVERA HEALTH

LOCAL ROOTS: I'm a lifelong South Dakotan—born in Pierre and educated at the University of South Dakota for both my undergraduate and law degrees.

FAVORITE EATS IN SOUTH DAKOTA: South Dakota has a rich heritage in German, Dutch and Native American cuisine. My favorite is a thick juicy steak that I get at Alpine Inn in Hill City. Great food at reasonable prices. For the evening meal, they only serve “little” or “big” steaks—nothing else. People wait for hours just to get in.

ONLY HERE: I have to say the World's Only Corn Palace. It's very whimsical and everyone should visit it at least once.

PERFECT DAY: For me, it would be running or bicycling along the George S. Mickelson Trail, a rails-to-trails line running from Deadwood to the southern hills area. It's 109 miles of crossing trestles and going through tunnels. Whether you walk, run or bike, it is a wonderful way to spend a beautiful South Dakota day.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: Needles Highway; Fall pheasant hunting season; Storybook Land.

its list of top 10 domestic destinations for 2015 and also is mentioned in Frommer's recommendation of South Dakota as a top travel spot for the year, too.

Start at the **Journey Museum**, home to collections that delve into the Western Great Plains' geological formation, Sioux Indian culture and artistry and pioneer, military and mining settlement. At the **Dahl Arts Center**, the 191-foot Cyclorama Mural illustrates America's economic history and art galleries feature both traveling exhibits and local artists' works. **Prairie Edge Trading Company and Galleries** is the premier place to buy museum-quality Native American jewelry, beadwork, paintings and sculpture. During the free **Landstrom's Factory Store Tour**, watch artisans handcraft jewelry from local gold. In downtown Rapid City, public art installations greet visitors on almost every corner. The **City of Presidents** is a series of 42 life-sized bronze sculptures of our nation's leaders, which preside over intersections. The edgy, expressive murals splashed across brick walls in **Art Alley** change often. Main Street Square's **Passage of Wind and Water**, a half-block-sized sculpture, artistically interprets native landscapes.

Explore the Outdoors

Fresh air and wilderness fun await in South Dakota's rugged **Black Hills National Forest**, **Custer State Park** and **Badlands National Park**.

Named long ago by the Lakota people *mako sica*, meaning “land bad,” the craggy, soft-hued rock formations of the **Badlands** dramatically erupt from surrounding flat grasslands. Get expansive, ever-changing views as you drive along the **Badlands Scenic Byway**.

On **Custer State Park's** 71,000 scenic acres, you'll see herds of buffalo roaming freely as you drive the **Custer Wildlife Loop**—but that's not all. One of the park's five lodges, the **State Game Lodge** offers up-close bison jeep tours. Near the park's south end, labyrinthine **Wind Cave National Park** winds more than 143 miles underground, making it one of the world's largest maze cave systems. And in **The Needles**, named for sky-piercing rock outcroppings, daring rock climbers seemingly dangle from threads as they ascend the granite. Not a climber? Get out for a hike among the otherworldly rock formations or cruise along **Needles Highway**.

Custer State Park is just one part of the 1.2 million-acre **Black Hills National Forest**, a haven of untamed natural beauty that begs to be explored in a number of different ways—on foot or horseback or by bike or car. **Centennial Trail**, a 111-mile trail, opened in honor of South Dakota's 100-year anniversary of statehood. Also largely contained within the Black Hills National Forest is the 109-mile **George S. Mickelson Trail**, built along an abandoned rail route that traverses some seriously scenic wilderness. To summit 7,242-foot



5 ONLY-IN-SOUTH DAKOTA EVENTS

1 Only at the 50th annual fall **Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup** will you witness 1,300 bison thundering across amber waving grasslands and real cowboys and cowgirls herding the shaggy beasts into corrals for branding. (September 25)

2 Twice a year, the public can get face time with "Crazy Horse" at the **Crazy Horse Volksmarch**, the world's largest volksmarch, which draws 15,000 walkers 6.2 miles through woodlands to the top of the memorial. (June 6-7 and September 27)

3 Among the most colorful Native American gatherings of spirited dancers and musicians is the **Oglala Nation Powwow and Rodeo** at Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Cowboys also rope and ride for cheering audiences. (July 30 to August 2)

4 **The Red Cloud Indian Art Show** at Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is the nation's largest, longest-running Native American art show. It features painting, photography, beadwork, quillwork and more. (June 7 to August 9)

5 Historic frontier town Sturgis revs up for 500,000 visitors during the annual **Sturgis Motorcycle Rally**. It celebrates 75 years in 2015 with rockin' headliner entertainment that's sure to attract record crowds. (August 3-9)

HISTORIC SITES IN SOUTH DAKOTA'S UNTAMED MOUNTAINS, LEGENDARY TOWNS AND DYNAMIC CITIES BREATHE LIFE INTO STORIES OF PREHISTORY, FIRST PEOPLES, AMERICA'S FOUNDING, EXPANSION AND NATIONAL PRIDE.

Harney Peak (the nation's highest summit east of the Rockies) isn't as hard as you'd think, and the best bet to make the trek is hiking trail No. 9, which starts near the arrestingly beautiful **Sylvan Lake**.

In Rapid City, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks runs **The Outdoor Campus—West**. This free wildlife exhibit center offers free instruction in archery, fishing and rock climbing. Its sister complex is in Sioux Falls, which, despite being an urban center, has its own opportunities for enjoying the great outdoors.

River Greenway has gone through an extensive revitalization, enhancing the bike trail that passes through the city from Sixth to Ninth Streets. The project also includes an amphitheater, improved walking trails and seating areas that make the greenway a popular gathering place.

Sports and the outdoors go hand in hand in South Dakota. Anglers cast their lines in **Lake Oahe**, near Pierre, and in glacial lakes dotting the northeast, hoping to hook the state fish, walleye, and other species such as northern pike, bass and perch. Crappie and walleye are sure catches at **Mina Lake Recreation Area**. The scenic, cold creeks around the town of **Spearfish** in the northern Black Hills are exceptional grounds for fly-fishing. After you catch your limit, drive the **Spearfish Canyon Scenic Byway** and stop by filming sites featured in *Dances with Wolves*.

Tucked between northeast South Dakota's rivers and glacial lakes, **Aberdeen** is prime land for outdoor activities. **Aberdeen Regional**

Airport serves the surrounding area year-round, but flights increase during the popular fall pheasant hunting season (October to January). To spot other birds, visit **Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge**, north of Aberdeen, where more than 240 migratory species rest and breed on 21,498 acres of wetlands and prairie.

History

Historic sites in South Dakota's untamed mountains, legendary towns and dynamic cities breathe life into stories of prehistory, first peoples, America's founding, expansion and national pride.

Laura Ingalls Wilder, celebrated author of the *Little House* book series, set five of her books in **De Smet**, 40 miles west of Brookings. The 153-acre **Ingalls Homestead**, the actual acreage Laura's father acquired through the 1862 Homestead Act, offers tours and activities.

History surrounds **Pierre**, the state's capital city, through which the Missouri River flows. Visit Lewis and Clark sites, **Fort Pierre National Grassland**, neighborhoods of Victorian-era homes, the **Trail of Governors** sculpture walkway and the **State Capitol**, which is capped by a 96-foot-high, stained glass dome.

South Dakota's most popular attraction, drawing 3 million visitors a year, is the monolithic sculpture of presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln carved in the granite face of **Mount Rushmore National Memorial**. Follow the woodsy, stone stairway to sculptor Gutzon Borglum's studio to learn the epic story about

My South Dakota

STEVE WATKINS

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF ORION FOOD SYSTEMS

LOCAL ROOTS: I was born in a small town in north-eastern South Dakota called Britton. It was a great place to grow up.

FAVORITE EATS IN SOUTH DAKOTA: If you're in northeast South Dakota, Charlies Resort in Lake City is a must for prime rib. If you're out in the Black Hills looking for the best burger in the state, then you need to visit Lewie's, outside of Lead.

MUST-SEE: Sica Hollow in northeast South Dakota and Spearfish Canyon in the Black Hills are two absolutely beautiful places to visit in the fall. For camping, fishing and water sports, there is no better place to go than the Glacial Lakes area.

TRAVEL ADVICE: Amongst all the tourist to-do's, take the time to spend time in the outdoors. The Black Hills have some incredible views—take the time to do Harney Peak Trail, starting at Sylvan Lake; head over to Spearfish Canyon to see Bridal Veil Falls and Devil's Bath tub.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Wooden Legs Brewing Company in Brookings; Kool Deadwood Nights parade.

how his 400-person team carved the presidents' 60-foot-tall faces.

Crazy Horse Memorial is a colossal stone sculpture, not yet completed, honoring another hero, Lakota leader Crazy Horse, who led the charge that defeated General George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of Little Bighorn. Started in 1948 by sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski, the warrior's face and part of his arm are finished.

Outside the Badlands, family-owned **Wall Drug** made history and put Wall on the tourist map in 1936 with roadside billboards advertising free ice water. Today, tourists keep coming (sometimes 20,000 a day) for cold water, 5-cent coffee, buffalo burgers, homemade doughnuts, Western clothing and a healthy dose of wholesome fun.

Deadwood easily doubles for a Western movie set—a feeling made all the more real by the presence of **Mount Moriah Cemetery**, the final resting place of legendary gunslingers Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane.

Food and Drinks

South Dakota's fertile soil, ranch grasslands and pristine waters produce a bounty of flavorful ingredients that are featured on menus, wine lists and taps across the state.

Cattleman's Club Steakhouse in Pierre has risen to recognition as one of the best places to find juicy, cooked-to-order cuts of beef. To the east, in Brookings, cheesy pizza and beer makes **Wooden Legs Brewing Company** a hot spot.

Sioux Falls' burgeoning indie restaurant scene satisfies foodies' cravings for farm fresh ingredients and local purveyors' products. **Breadico di Na-**

politano Bakery offers more than a dozen kinds of fresh-baked loaves daily. And whether it's morning or midday, there is always a sweet reason to stop at European-style pastry shop **CH Patisserie**. Other top dining options include **The Market**, a combination restaurant, bar and gourmet grocer, and **Parker's Bistro**.

In the Black Hills, mac 'n' cheese and buffalo meat loaf rank high at Rapid City's hip **Murphy's Pub & Grill**. Indian fry breads topped with taco fixings are dished out at the historic 1878 stagecoach stop **Cheyenne Crossing**, outside of Lead.

South Dakota's beer and wine scenes are growing fast, and oenophiles and beer lovers will find places to sample their favorite beverage. Tour craft breweries, wineries and tasting rooms starting in Custer at **Bitter Esters Brewhouse** and **Naked Winery** and then to the north to **Belle Joli Vineyards** in Belle Fourche. Some great stops in between include Hill City's **Prairie Berry Winery** and **Miner Brewing Company**, Rapid City's **Firehouse Brewing Company**, **The Knuckle Brewing Company** in Sturgis and **Crow Peak Brewing Company** in Spearfish. In Sioux Falls, at **Monks House of Ale Repute**, in-house **Gandy Dancer Brew Works** produces beer from South Dakota hops and yeast. The southeast's winemakers use locally cultivated grapes and fruit to produce award-winning vintages at wineries including **Valiant Winery** in Vermillion, **Strawbale** near Sioux Falls and **Schadé** in Volga.

From the rolling Missouri River to the austere Badlands canyons to the forests of the Black Hills—South Dakota's rich landscapes were made for adventures—just choose yours. ▼