

## **South Dakota**

My name is Robert Greenan and I'm from South Dakota. Let me be the first to tell you that it doesn't get any better than my state! Located in the mid-west region of the United States, South Dakota is often referred to as a Great Plain state bordered by Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming and, of course, North Dakota. The state capitol is Pierre, which is located almost exactly in the center of the state. Prairie, grassland, and farmland cover 90% of the state, where buffalo once ranged in herds of thousands.

The name Dakota comes from the American Indian tribes Lakota and Dakota Sioux. Dakota is the Sioux word for "friends" or "allies."

Even before we were a state, the great plains of South Dakota was at one point a territory, acquired in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. It was not until one year later, that the first American settlement was established at Fort Pierre by the Lewis and Clark expedition. South Dakota has been home to many well-known historical figures such as Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Sitting Bull, and General George Custer.

South Dakota has a lot of nicknames, the official one however is "The Mount Rushmore State", and it even appears on the South Dakota State Flag. It refers to the fantastic mountain sculpture near the city of Keystone, which is one of South Dakota's most famous sites.

Mount Rushmore, sculpted by Gutzon Borglum and his son Lincoln Borglum over a period of 14 years, shows the faces of four U.S. Presidents - George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. Construction began in 1927, although it would take another fourteen years for the final project to be completed. Today, this national landmark attracts 2 million visitors annually, making it a hot commodity for South Dakota's tourism.

Another popular stop is the Crazy Horse Memorial, which is the world's largest mountain carving in progress and created to honor the culture and traditions of North American Indians.

South Dakota is a popular family vacation destination and Badlands National Park is one of its many attractions. It features 244,000 acres of sharply eroded buttes and jagged spires that create a moon-like surface. Thousands of fossils of prehistoric creatures have been uncovered in the park. Archeological and paleontological digs continue today, with some open to public participation.

The Black Hills National Forest is 1.2 million acres of pine and spruce forest, granite peaks and outdoor adventure. Harney Peak, at an elevation of 7,242 feet, is the highest point in the U.S. east of the Rocky Mountains.

South Dakota has a rich history going back to the days of the dinosaurs. One of the most complete T. rex skeletons was found in South Dakota and the largest collection of Columbian Woolly Mammoth fossils are still being unearthed at The Mammoth Site in Hot Springs in the southern Black Hills.

But not only bones were found. In 1876, during the Black Hills Gold Rush, South Dakota's Homestake Mine opened and became the oldest, largest, and deepest mine in the western hemisphere and one of the largest gold producers in the United States before closing down in 2002.

Another popular sight is the Pickler Mansion. The historic home of Major John A. and Alice Pickler in Faulkton South Dakota, has been a Faulk County landmark for well over 130 years.

Many events took place in this commonly called "Pink Castle". From weddings, proms, funerals to being a polling place for the township for many years. The home was used to host many visiting dignitaries including Teddy Roosevelt and Susan B. Anthony, who stayed with them in 1890. Susan B. Anthony was an American social reformer and women's rights activist who played a pivotal role in the women's suffrage movement.

After enjoying the tour, head on over to the rodeo! I bet you didn't know that's South Dakota state sport is the rodeo.

Come on down to my beloved state of South Dakota! We will be expecting you!