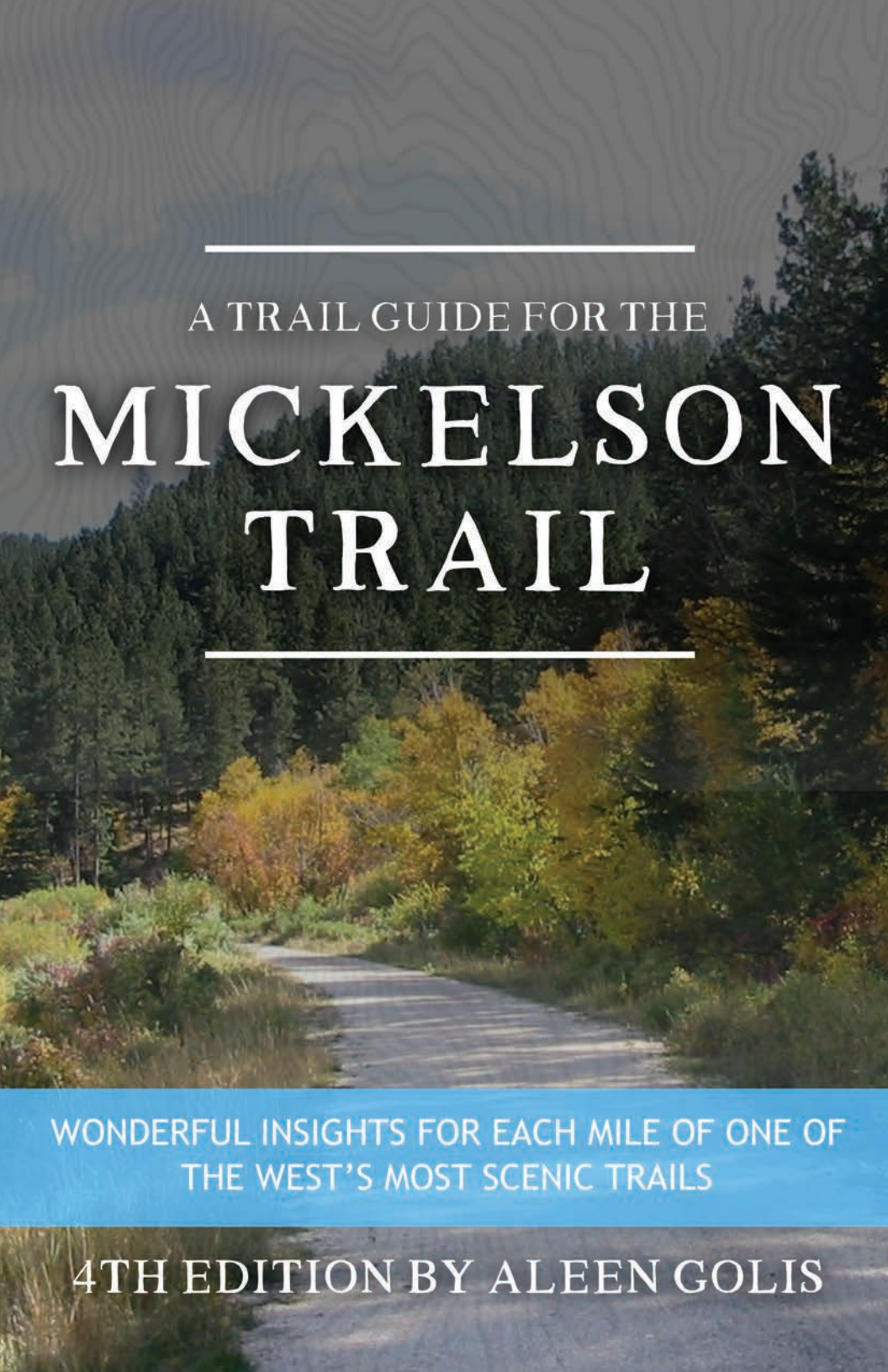


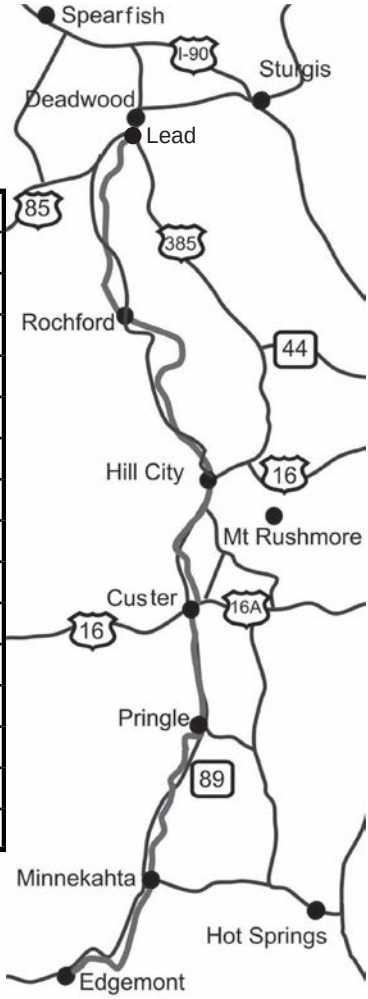
A TRAIL GUIDE FOR THE

MICKELSON TRAIL

WONDERFUL INSIGHTS FOR EACH MILE OF ONE OF THE WEST'S MOST SCENIC TRAILS

4TH EDITION BY ALEEN GOLIS

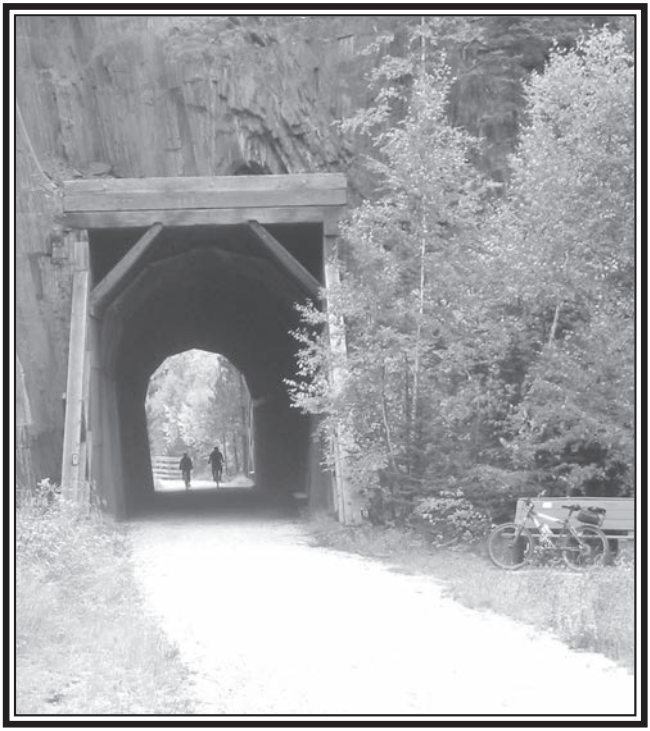
MILEPOST	CITY	DATE RIDDEN
0	Edgemont	
16.2	Minnekahta TH	
32.1	Pringle	
35.7	White Elephant TH	
44.5	Custer Harbach Park	
49.6	The Mountain TH	
60.1	Hill City, Tracy Park	
74.7	Mystic TH	
82.6	Rochford	
92.6	Dumont TH	
98.5	Englewood TH	
103.3	Sugarloaf TH	
105.3	Kirk TH	
108.8	Deadwood	
0.9	Lead Spur	



A Trail Guide for the

MICKELSON TRAIL

Black Hills of South Dakota



Guide to towns, places, history, flora, fauna & geology

Along the Mickelson Trail in the

BLACK HILLS OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Services ** B&Bs ** Camping ** Photos ** Maps

Aleen Golis

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A&J Enterprises
Box Elder, South Dakota 57719

Book layout & formatting by Jerry Golis

The Complete

Mickelson Trail

Guide

Midwest Largest Bicycle Sculpture at Pringle, 2017. /Aleen Golis

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This guide would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of many people. Harley Noem, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, provided information for my many questions. Members of the Mickelson Trail Affiliates, both past and present, have provided words of support and insight into local history. Some have authored portions of this guidebook. Their encouragement fostered the idea of a guidebook culminating in its eventual production. Dick Lee, foundational in the trail origination, once again stepped up to the helm to provide encouragement and inspiration to this entrepreneur with a wonderful introduction to the book. Local business along the trail have stepped up to the plate and paid for advertising to help decrease retail price of the book.

Thanks to each of our affiliated authors for filling in the voids in my trail knowledge: Rick Mills and Gregory Walters for the Burlington History; Lynn and Tom Eyermann for the flora, fauna and geology; and Robert and Anna Wade for the mining history. Local community authors include Caroline Curl from Edgemont, Anna Marie Evans from Pringle, Ann Marrow from Custer, Ed Gerken from Hill City, Russel Frink from Mystic, Dave Snyder from Dumont, Michael Cody for all the tunnel restoration history, and Jim Wilson from Deadwood who tackled Deadwood, Lead and Englewood history. Bless Andy Smithson for the Thru Walking chapter , and Wade Burns for the Spiritual Pathways side trip, both added for the 3rd Edition. My husband Tom has helped in immeasurable ways, including authoring a side trip, providing a balancing mind for ideas, and hours of proofing, not to mention keeping the household running while I was writing. Proofing recognition must also go to my daughter, Judy Hengel, and mother Elva Paules, who at 84 & 89 found many errors and assisted with both the first and second editions. Many others also assisted in proofing, picking pictures, and other duties. Photo credits must be shared with Ed Gerken, Rick Mills, Gregory Walters, Lynn Eyermann, Mitch Mick, and Dan Putney, and Andy Smithson. Map credits belong to Lynn and Tom Eyermann.

We certainly must acknowledge the work of Governor George S. Mickelson. Without his ability to facilitate action within governmental departments, the trail would certainly not exist. Thousands of hours of hard work toward making the Mickelson Trail a reality were shared by a number of futuristic thinkers in order to make the Mickelson Trail a reality. Those visions can now be enjoyed by all who traverse the trail.

On the many bike trips along the trail, we have encountered a number of visitors and shared the company of various mountain bikers, hikers, and horseback riders. Occasionally, a horse and cow or two as well. My daughters, Judy and Jeri, and my six grandchildren have all enjoyed sharing this wonderland as we spent time on the trail. It was through one such ride that the dream of a guidebook was born. And it is only with the continued encouragement by my daughter Judy, and the promise of hours of her tenacious proofreading, that I have attempted such a daunting task for the first edition, and built upon the first edition with each successive edition.. Without their companionship, help, and enthusiasm this guide would never have been finished, nor would any of the trips have been as fun.

Dedicated to the Grandchildren of the world, who keep us young.

This book is dedicated to my husband, Tom, who has provided many hours of companionship riding the Mickelson Trail. I also dedicate it to my daughters, Judy & Jeri, and my six grandchildren: Colter, who has ridden most of the trail in one day at age 13; Zane and Cassie, who kept Grandpa Tom entertained for hours with songs as he pulled them along when little, to the enjoyment of sharing riding when older; and Cade and Amber, who have diligently allowed Grandma to "line out" the days' riding for them, and Taya who has yet to ride her own bike on the trail. They ALL have given me the "opportunity" to enjoy sharing the trail many hours over the past years. Any treasure is only a treasure when it is shared.

Trail Trek 2013 riders wait for train in Edgemont

PREFACE

The Mickelson Trail is a 114-mile trail from Deadwood to Edgemont, South Dakota. Salvaged from an old railroad bed, the trails' easy grades make it a family-oriented adventure. The trail includes three plant ecosystems. Gold and other mineral mine remnants can be found along the trail at many sites. Ghost towns, coupled with modern commerce, mingled in country life, simultaneously present the visitor with multiple options. You'll find natural beauty of great power here: craggy mountains, mysterious geologic formations, sudden weather changes, towering evergreens, grassy prairie, and vistas that will make you smile in wonder. We have trendy restaurants and rustic bars, sophisticated art galleries, quaint attractions, cowboys, Indians, business people, and artists. The Black Hills offers something for everyone, and recreation of all kinds. The Mickelson Trail can be enjoyed by all levels of bicyclist or hiker. And for those bicyclists who are avid mountain bikers, there are multiple single-track trails available in the Black Hills that will provide plenty of challenge for you, many of which join the Mickelson Trail.

We've filled this book with places to visit, eat and shop, fun activities for children, sights to see, side trails to take, history to discover, and much more. The Table of Contents will direct you to specific areas, and the How to Use This Guide page will help you use and enjoy some of the unique tidbits we've sprinkled throughout this book.

Whether you're an avid mountain biker, or a recreational traveler, we're glad for the opportunity to contribute to your enjoyment of our beloved Black Hills.

Current listings of Mickelson Trail Affiliate Businesses who are located within 2 miles of the trail is available at www.mickelsontrailaffiliates.com with links to business websites.

Overall, the trail goes through more private property than National Forest. The trail has a large variety of scenery as it passes through many different types of terrain and through three separate ecosystems. There are over 100 bridges, and four hard rock tunnels. As visitor numbers grow, so does the amount of trash that is left. Each spring, the Mickelson Trail Affiliates spends time on the trail cleaning different areas, as do other organized groups from the communities along the trail. Please be mindful of those behind, and leave the terrain cleaner than you found it—for everyone to enjoy.

Welcome. The Mickelson Trail awaits your exploration.

Notes from Mile Post 25

Living only a few miles from the trail, I have been able to enjoy some sections even before the total trail was developed. I have dreamed of many ways to share the trail experience. It is the enjoyment that I have received from my many trail explorations, of both the trail history and the people history, that I wish to share with others. You will find some of these stories included.

My mission began and remains very simple: deliver to you the information you need, in a readable format, which will afford you memorable trips on the trail. This book is meant to give brief information about the history, flora, fauna, services available, maps, and stories of interest along the trail, all within one binding in a size that will easily fit into bike bags to carry with you as you bike. Designed to enhance everyone's experience on the trail, it will provide bikers planning a weeklong trip, hikers, or casual daily users the information necessary to make the activity pure pleasure. Because the trail is being enjoyed by visitors from out of state, and from the international community, we have added information that will make planning a trip on the Mickelson Trail from afar possible.

Help Us Keep This Guide Up to Date:

Every effort has been made by the authors and editors to make this guide as accurate and useful as possible. However, many businesses come under new management or ownership, establishments close, phone numbers change, or services available differ, etc. If you have updated information that is not included in the book, please share that information with us. We would love to hear from you concerning your experiences with this guide and how you feel it could be improved and kept up to date. While we may not be able to respond to all comments and suggestions, we'll take them to heart. With each new edition, we'll attempt to incorporate your information. Please send your comments and suggestions to the following address:

Aleen Golis

fin8wim16@gmail.com

Thanks for your input and happy trails!!!

Rails To Trails:
A Dream Comes True!

Dick Lee-deceased

It is a warm August day in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. The year is 1986 and I'm riding my new mountain bike on an old road that is like a roller coaster. The uphill has me breathing hard and the downhill is a welcome relief as the air-cools my aging body from the strain. Overhead, I see an eagle circling. He seems to be curious about me and what I am doing on this lonesome stretch of road.

On a side road on one of the downhills, I see a woman and a young boy on their mountain bikes. I stop to visit and learn the woman's name is Cynthia and the boy is her son, David. We talk for a while and I invite them to ride along. Our destination is a beautiful little lake named Iron Creek Lake. The eagle has floated above us for a while but leaves us, possibly more intent on finding a mouse in a nearby field. It seems strange, this meeting in the middle of nowhere…

The following day, we meet up again for some more riding and our journey brings us to an old familiar area to me. It is an old railroad grade between the two old mining communities of Rochford and Mystic and the trestles that carried the trains of the Burlington Northern Railroad that ran through the center of the Black Hills for over a hundred years are being cut down by a salvage contractor. Piles of timbers are everywhere looking like so much driftwood on a beach.

We talk about it as we ride along and both of us feel it is a waste and a shame that all of the history of this great Railroad Line will be lost forever as this great corridor through the Black Hills will just dissolve into the landscape and private ownership. We were fired up to do something about it and the Rails to Trails effort was born that day in August of 1986.

We both made phone calls the following day and Cynthia learned the salvage operator actually felt bad about what he was doing (tearing the trestles down) and encouraged us to somehow stop the salvage through some type of legal process that might be available. I had sent a letter to Tom Daschle and the rest

of the South Dakota Congressional Delegation and got a favorable reply from Tom right away so we were off and running! Or so we thought. A long, rough and bumpy road lay ahead.

In sports, we talk about a local team that has potential but needs a "ringer." Someone that is good and can pull the team through. The story of the success of this great trail was the fact that people who could make a difference came along at exactly the right time. It was an amazing process.

Our first "ringer " was Cynthia's husband, Guy Edwards. Guy had been a State legislator, was head of the City Council in Rapid City and was involved in many civic programs. His energy and drive to get this trail effort off the ground in the coming months was phenomenal. He spent most of his time consumed by the passion to make this trail work. Without his sacrifice and great talent for getting start up projects off the ground, there would not have been a Mickelson Trail.

What happened between August of 1986 and the final ribbon cutting in 1998 that signified the opening of the Mickelson Trail from Deadwood to Edgemont was due in part to efforts from three South Dakota Governors, and an incredible determination and support from the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks and it's Foundation.

A huge force rose up to help us. George Mickelson was campaigning for Governor when we were trying to drum up support for the Trail and he made a public pledge to support the effort if elected. He was elected and never wavered in his support and active participation in the project. He was killed in an airplane accident before the Trail was completed but he and Guy and I cut the ribbon opening the first section in the year before he died. What a day that was!!

We were also very fortunate to have active and unconditional support from the South Dakota National Guard, eventual support from the U.S. Forest Service and legal battles that worked out for us after going all the way to the South Dakota Supreme Court. Federal dollars in the form of matching funds also paved the way for the difficult process of financing the Trail.

The Trail involved several million dollars of expenditures for the construction cost as well volunteer workers who gave their hearts and their sweat to make this dream a reality.

This dream leaves a great legacy for South Dakota. The Mickelson Trail has been designated a State Park and is very well managed by Game, Fish and Parks and has been called the "Crown Jewel" of all the rail/trail conversions that have occurred across the United States. It has become a source of pride for all the people of South Dakota and a testament to the idea that a few people,

working together with state and federal agencies can cooperate to accomplish a common goal and make a sound idea work.

There are so many folks that contributed to the success of this trail both in the private, volunteer arena and those who worked tirelessly as public servants in the State and Federal agencies. They all contributed incredibly to the success of this effort. Doug Hofer (Game, Fish and Parks) supported the Trail from the outset and never wavered. Dave Snyder took over from me when I was getting burned out and brought the Trail through its final financing problems and worked and contributed immensely to the finished product. Governor George Mickelson compared the vision for this trail effort not unlike the vision that Peter Norbeck and Gutzon Borglum had for their contributions to the beautiful Black Hills and the State of South Dakota.

In behalf of my partner in the early beginnings of the Trail effort, Guy Edwards, and all the volunteers and dedicated public servants that gave their time and energy to this project, we would like to welcome you to the trail and hope that your experience as you ride or hike the Trail will be a great one.

We also hope that you will take home with you the thought that you can do something to make the area you live a better place. Through volunteer efforts like this great Trail, we all serve our country from the grass roots level and that may be the best service of all.

1880 Trail Serenity. Courtesy of the Black Hills Central Railroad, 1880 Train.

Introduction to the Mickelson Trail

Rules of the Trail

- All trail users age 12 and older are required to have a trail pass except on the trail within the city limits. The trail passes, $4 daily or $15 annual pass, are available for purchase at the trailheads. Passes must be located on the person or the bicycle. Trail users who are unable to show a trail pass will be subject to a fine.
- The trail is open to hiking, biking and horseback riding. No motorized vehicles are allowed on the trail with few exceptions. Seasonally, there is a section of the trail for snowmobiles between Deadwood and Dumont. Motorized maintenance vehicles are also allowed as are ambulances and other emergency vehicles.
- Obey all traffic signs.
- Remain to the right side of the trail except to pass and be sure to give a clear warning before passing other users. Do not pass others in the tunnels.
- Bicycles must yield to pedestrians and everyone must yield to horses.
- There are parts of the trail which are called “open range” areas. In these areas cattle roam freely. If you come to an area where cattle are on the trail, in a calm voice talk so the cattle will hear you and slowly work your way around them. Try not to spook the cattle because they may run away from you, right into a group of bicyclists coming your direction.
- Avoid disturbing wildlife including plants and animals, and refrain from defacing natural features.
- All pets must be leashed.
- Camping and campfires on the trail right-of-way or at the trailheads is prohibited.
- Smoking is not allowed on or adjacent to the trail.

- Discharging firearms or fireworks from or across the trail is strictly prohibited.
- Air guns and slingshots are not allowed on the trail.
- Please respect the landowners along the trail. They have been gracious in sharing their space and deserve to have their privacy respected.
- Stay on the trail and be considerate of other users.
- The trail is open only from dawn to dusk.
- Bicyclists are encouraged to wear helmets.

Additional Information

- Trail surface is primarily crushed limestone and gravel. Thin tire road bikes are not recommended.
- Telephones are not available on the trail. Cell phones do not have reception throughout many of the trail areas, and while it is better than 10 years ago, there are still dead areas.
- Be sure to keep your equipment well maintained and carry simple repair tools.
- Be conscious of changing weather conditions and dress appropriately for the weather. The day may be hot when you start biking but can turn icy cold with hail within a few minutes. The reverse can happen as well.
- Bring sunscreen and a hat, as many portions of the trail are not shaded.
- **Carry plenty of water.** Water is available at most Trailheads in cisterns with water that is maintained during the summer months by the Game Fish & Parks Service.
- Trailheads are not under constant surveillance. Be sure to place valuables out of view and lock your vehicle.
- Report concerns to the trail office in Lead at (605)584-3896.

Important Phone Numbers

Black Hills Trail Office
11361 Nevada Gulch Rd
Lead, SD 57754
(605)584-3896

Black Hills National Forest Service
Mystic Ranger District
803 Sioux San Drive
Rapid City, SD 57702
(605)343-1567
and
23939 Hwy 385
Hill City, SD 57745
(605)574-2534

Black Hills National Forest Service
Supervisor's Office
RR2 Box 200
Custer, SD 57730
(605)673-9200

South Dakota Game Fish & Parks
523 East Capital Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
(605)773-3391
Call 911 for emergency Service

Deadwood Hospital
Northern Hills General Hospital.
& ER
61 Charles St.
Deadwood, SD 57732
(605)722-6101

Rapid City has several 24 hr. Clinics

Rapid City Regional Hospital
353 Fairmont Blvd
Rapid City, SD 57701
(605)719-1000

Hill City & Edgemont only have part time clinics, no hospital — No 24 hour availability.

Custer Community Hospital & ER (Limited weekly service to Hill City & Edgemont Clinics)
1039 Montgomery St.
Custer, SD 57730
(605)673-2229

Hot Springs Hospital & ER
Fall River Health Services
Hwy 18 bypass
Hot Springs, SD 57747
(604)745-3159

Emergency Lock smith
Handy Solutions--emergency auto Lock-out Service
Randy Larson
Cell: 605-209-3421
Home: 605-574-9577

Getting started

How To Use The Guide

This guide book is written starting from MP-0, at Edgemont, and ending at MP-108.9 in Deadwood. The trail in this direction gains approximately 2,300 feet in elevation, which doesn't count the incline repeats. With that in mind, the user who wishes to ride overall more downhill than uphill should start at Deadwood and utilize the book from the back forward.

The book is divided into sections which match trailheads and towns along the trail. These sections are marked by dark tabs along the front edge of the book for easy reference to a specific section. Remember, the book starts at Mile Post 0, (MP-0) which is Edgemont. Edgemont section includes everything between Edgemont all the way to the next major trailhead of Minnekahta Junction, and so on.

Many co-authors are utilized throughout the book repeatedly. The pre-trail history is written by Dick Lee, one of the founding fathers of the trail. Each town has local history presented by a historian for that area. The Burlington Railroad History is presented by Rick Mills and Gregory Walters. The tunnel history has been gracefully provided by Micheal Cody. The mining history is presented by Robert and Anna Wade. The flora, fauna and geology are presented by Tom and Lynn Eyermann. A guide chapter for completing a walk-thru is provided by Andy Smithson who at age 70 walked and documented the full trail, and in addition provided multiple pictures as he progressed along the trail. The Back to the Trail information is written by Aleen Golis, book author. To keep those sections written by others clearly marked, the following logos are utilized in the text as appropriate:

The train logo is utilized for Rick Mills and Gregory Walters.

The pine branch for the flora, fauna and geology sections by the Eyermanns.

The pick, shovel and adz logo is utilized to denote the mining history, written by the Wades.

The bicycle is utilized to denote trail text written by Aleen Golis, author.

Local history is denoted by the book logo.

The tunnel, denotes tunnel history by Michael Cody.

Maps are attached in the back of the book. They are formulated to fit end to end, and include the three "Side Trips." On the inside back cover of the book is a chart with trailhead mileage information, with a second chart on the last book page before the maps, that is in a format conducive to cutting out, covering with laminating material, and hooking to bike handle bars with a twisty tie for quick review.

Emergency numbers are listed for you in the front introductory section. Cell phone usage in the Black Hills generally is very minimal due to few towers and poor reception. Trailheads do not have phones available for emergency use.

Mile Post numbers (MP-#) do vary somewhat from those listed on the maps on the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks website, but do correlate closely to those physically along the trail. GPS coordinates are listed at the beginning of each chapter.

Pre-Ride Suggestions

NOTE: The towns in this guidebook begin at the southern end and proceed north. If you hop on the trail at the northern end, you will need to begin at the back of this book and work your way forward.

WATER: Take more water than you think you will need. The southern end gets very hot in the summer without much shade for cooling. Plan on 25-30 oz. of drinking per hour. While you may not need it all to drink, you can prevent heat stroke by keeping your body wet if needed. The Game Fish & Parks department does a nice job of keeping the cisterns full of water during the summer, and are available now at all trail heads.

TRAIL SHELTERS: In addition to shielding trail users from the elements, all shelters contain interpretive signs. Take time to learn about the area as you rest.

INTERPRETIVE SIGNS: Take time to read the interpretive signs along the trail—they have a wealth of information of interest. Many of these are located inside the periodic shelters.

RESTROOMS: Available at each trailhead.

GARBAGE: Please leave the trail cleaner than you found it. A good steward of the trail always carries a small garbage bag in a bike bag, and leaves nothing behind.

MICKELSON TRAIL AFFILIATES: The Mickelson Trail Affiliates are those businesses who especially support the trail, usually laying within 2 miles of the trail. They are listed at www.mickelsontrailaffiliates.com, and have hot links to websites for details of services, and where many reservations may be made online. This companion piece is a must for any trip along the trail. Weather can be extremely variable on the trail from the cool mountains of the northern end, to the heat of the plains of the southern end. You may find current weather information for the trail also at www.mickelsontrailaffiliates.com, listing each community along the trail. Trail updates are available on our facebook page, www.facebook.com/MickelsonTrailAffiliates.

MICKELSON TRAIL PARK WEBSITE: The South Dakota Game Fish & Parks Mickelson Trail website, www.mickelsontrail.com, provides a very concise Mile Post (MP) by MP review of the trail. Most, but not all, of that information is mentioned in this trail guide.

MULTIUSE TRAIL: The Mickelson Trail is a multiuse trail. You will find hoof and foot prints from many animals such as elk, deer, cattle, horses, turkeys and occasionally skunks, raccoons, beavers, coyotes, squirrels, marmots, dogs and cats. This can be turned into a great school ground for learning. One must also be prepared for the occasional droppings from the four legged trail users.

TRAIL INTERESTS: The Mickelson Trail is rich in history and provides a multitude of interesting sites, such as:

- Many abandoned mines, used for various types of ore, contribute to the history of the area, and there is also the chance to pan for gold in several places near the trail.
- Telegraph poles can be seen in many spots along the trail.
- Cement fence posts of the railroad are still present in several places.
- Cement W signposts signaling whistle blowing are present in several places.
- Remnants of foundations can be seen at the old locations of historic communities. Be sure to mind those areas that are now private and visit by sight only.

Each of the communities along the trail has a chapter in this book dedicated to educating trail users about local flora, fauna, geology and history as well as services available. Phone numbers are listed for each town chamber of commerce for additional trailside service information.

Commonly Asked Questions

1. *Can I use my road bike with thin tires?*
   Answer: While we have known some expert riders who have decided they have the skills to manage the soft spots and are willing to risk multiple flats, it is not an activity that we believe safe.
2. *Can I camp along the trail?*
   Answer: Neither the trail right of way nor shelters allow camping overnight. Camping along the trail is available, but will need to be researched to know where it is allowed. We have added this information into our work. Many of the businesses will allow rustic camping when asked, but it doesn't include any amenities. There is only one Forest Service campground along the trail, Oreville Campground, which is located nearly half way.
3. *Where can we get water and food?*
   Answer: Water is available in cisterns maintained by the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks--**ONLY** during the summer months. Those are listed also in the sections of the book at the beginning of each section where services are listed. Our sections include that information and shelters and cisterns are noted on the maps. Food is available in all 7 towns close to the trail. Those include Edgemont, Pringle, Custer, Hill City, Rochford, Lead and Deadwood. Each side trip listed includes food availability: Hot Springs has 2 grocery stores and multiple cafes; Mount Rushmore has a café (or if doing the full loop, Keystone has multiple cafes), and limited supplies can be purchased in Silver City at the Happy Trails Cabins' small store, or they will purchase and have available any special requests made with reservations.
4. *Can we bring our dog along?*
   Answer: All animals must be on leashes but are not forbidden.
5. *Are helmets required?*
   Answer: Helmet use is advised. Most bike enthusiasts recognize the protection that is present with helmet use. I have provided first aid at two different bike crashes along the trail, both had broken helmets following the crash, along with road rash, but no long term injuries due to the protection of the helmets. I was not a full believer 20 years ago, but no longer ride my bike anywhere without a helmet.

Typical Weather, Gear and Packing Suggestions

The weather in the Black Hills can vary greatly, suddenly, and makes planning any vacation along the trail somewhat complicated. Typically, clothing should be in layers, with the ability to take off layers when needed. It is unwise to count on missing foul weather at any time during the year as it changes quickly. A rainy morning can turn into hot sunshine in the afternoon. It snowed on June 7, 2003 with almost four inches of very wet snow for the Deadwood Mickelson Marathoners run, and was gone by 10:00 a.m. the next day—the day of the race. They ran in snow, slush, water and finished in dry conditions at 70 degrees. Packing must include breathable rain gear which will also serve as a wind breaker and an additional layer. Skin layers are best if they are polyester which dry out quickly, but insulate for warmth when wet. Padded bike shorts are a must for biking of any distance. My bike bag includes the following routinely:

- **Clothing:**
    - Arm and leg warmers—lycra
    - Rain jacket and pants—breathable and waterproof
    - If riding in May, June, September or October, I add a fleece vest.
    - July and August may need the vest if camping in the evening.
    - Rain boots (I consider these a must for me personally, as when my feet become cold, I am cold all over!)
    - Some type of full gloves or warm gortex over-mittens.
    - Fleece ear band under the helmet for cold mornings.
    - Sweat band under the helmet for hot days.

- **Gear**:

Most of the time a bike shop is not available on the trail. You will need to be proficient at, and have the equipment available, to change a flat.

I carry the following:

- Spare tube
- Pump
- Basic emergency wrench kit and chain repair wrench bought at a bike shop
- Tire levers (I personally do not have the hand/wrist strength to force the tire off the rim without them. Some other folks have wrist strength and this is not a necessity.)
- Small needle nose pliers—there are several thorny-type plants along the trail which sometimes stick in the tire and need to be pulled before replacement of the tube.
- Tube repair kit

- Air gauge if there is not one on the pump. Some pumps can be purchased with this included. If you are considering buying a new pump, this is very worthwhile.

- **Food:**

This is a very individual item. Hard core bikers will know what works best for them. The following may be used as a guide for the novice. Biking uses multiple calories and the body will need to have the same amount going in as are being used. I personally prefer healthy items and do not include candy and such in my list.

- Jerky
- Granola bars
- Dried fruit, including raisins
- Oranges
- Nuts

Trail Activities

The Mickelson Trail has become a popular venue for organized rides and runs including:

Deadwood Mickelson Trail Half-Marathon start point. /Aleen Golis

- June, First Sunday — The Deadwood Mickelson Trail Marathon is held beginning in Rochford and ending in Deadwood. The run had almost 500 runners from 22 states in 2003 now at this point totals nearing 5000 from multiple countries yearly. More information at www.deadwoodmickelsontrailmarathon.com
- July, Last Sunday — Gold Rush Run. 5K run/walk is held on the trail at Custer, sponsored by the Gold Discovery Days Committee and the Custer Chamber of Commerce. 605-673-2244
- August, third weekend, the Leanhorse 100. A 30-50-and 100 mile run on the Southern portion of the trail. More information at: www.leanhorse100.com.

- September, Third Weekend — The Mickelson Trail Trek is a 3-day ride on the trail, sponsored by the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Foundation. This ride started in 1998 with the grand opening of the whole trail. Many celebrations took place that year, with celebrations and speeches in each of the towns along the trail. The trek usually has around 600 riders and has online registrations available. www.mickelsontrail.com
- Other activities are starting up each year.

Geology of the Black Hills

General

The Black Hills are an isolated group of mountains straddling the border of South Dakota and Wyoming in the northern Great Plains. The Black Hills are roughly oval in shape, extending about 120 miles in a north-south direction and about 50 miles east to west. The mountains rise 3,000 to 4,200 feet above the surrounding plains. The higher peaks in the Black Hills have the greatest elevations in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains.

The Black Hills were formed by a slow doming process that originated deep within the crust or upper mantle and probably was caused by the collisions of plates as the crust shifted during the late Tertiary times. The uplifting of the Black Hills probably occurred at the same time as the uplifting of the Laramie Mountains in southeastern Wyoming. There was some igneous (invasion of the sedimentary rock by molten rock) activity associated with the doming of the Black Hills during the Eocene period. This later igneous activity formed outlying features such as Bear Butte, Devils Tower and Missouri Buttes as well as intrusive features in the northern Hills. This Eocene igneous activity also resulted in the formation of many of the ore deposits in the Deadwood Formation. These ore deposits in the northern Hills have been mined extensively for gold, silver, and associated minerals.

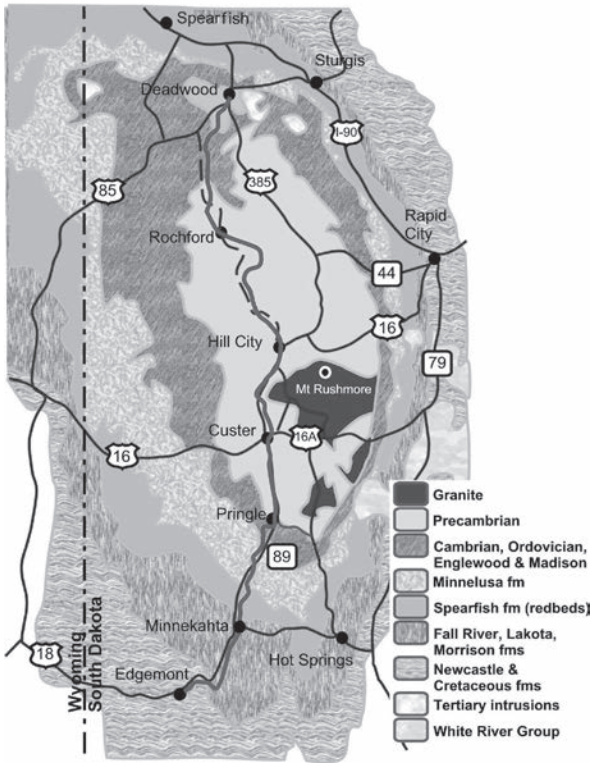
During the Precambrian Era, a sea, with accompanying deposition of sedimentary material, covered the area. Later during the Precambrian, magma upwelled from great depth, and folded and metamorphosed the accumulated sediments into the slates, schists, quartzites that are exposed in the central Black Hills. This area was then intruded with magmatic masses that became the granites and pegmatites which are exposed in the central and southern hills. The Precambrian intrusives deposited minerals including gold, silver, lead, tin, tungsten, feldspars, mica, lithium and rare earths that were later mined.

At the beginning of the Paleozoic Age, which is when numerous forms of hard-shelled creatures developed and appeared, the area was again covered with a sea from the Wind Cave area and north. The sea remained over the region through the Ordovician. There are no rocks of Silurian or Devonian Age in the Black Hills and presumably the area was above sea level with erosion of some of the previously deposited rock during this time.

This pattern of the water level rising (or the land sinking) resulting in the area being covered with the sea with consequential deposition of material followed by a fall in sea level (or uplift of the earth) resulting in the area being

dry land with erosion or deposition of terrestrial deposits (rocks formed on dry land and not from sea deposited materials) continued throughout the Paleozoic and Mesozoic Eras. Overall, about 7,500 feet of material were deposited in western South Dakota as a result of the inundations of the seas. Rocks that were deposited in the Black Hills include limestone, dolostone, sandstone, gypsum, shale, and mudstone. Many of the rock formations contain fossils including brachiopods, trilobites, corals, sea snails, clams, oysters, cephalopods, and belemnites. Some of the terrestrial rocks contain dinosaur bones, although these are mainly found away from the Black Hills.

As the area now called the Black Hills domed upward due to tectonic (pressures that develop deep in the earth) forces, the upper layers of rock were eroded, exposing older rocks in the center of the dome. A view from overhead, with the vegetation removed, would show a pattern similar to a "bulls eye" with the rings being composed of successively younger rocks as you moved away from the center. Four principal geomorphic features of the Black Hills, from the outer ring inward, are a hogback ridge, the red valley, a limestone plateau, and the central core. There is an interpretive sign along the trail describing these phenomena.



The hogback ridge rises steadily out of the surrounding plains with an abrupt face leading into the red valley. The hogback ridge is underlain by the Lakota formation, Fall River Sandstone, Fusion Shale and the Minnewasta Limestone. Inside the Hogback Ridge is the Red Valley, which can be traced almost completely around the Black Hills, including the Interstate 90 corridor west of Rapid City. The red valley is composed of red colored rocks of the Sundance and Spearfish Formations.

Along the Trail

Starting from Edgemont, the Mickelson Trail passes through almost the entire geologic column present in the Black Hills. Edgemont is located in the valley of the Cheyenne River. As the trail starts climb out of the Cheyenne River Valley, outcrops of the Cretaceous Fall River, Lakota and Morrison formations are present. As the trail climbs out of Chilson Canyon to the Minnekahta Flats, the Sundance formation is exposed. The flats around Minnekahta Trailhead are in the Red Valley of the Spearfish Formation. The Minnekahta Limestone and Opeche redbeds are present to the north of the flats, approximately where the trail is adjacent to Highway 89 and ridges of sandstone and limestone become visible, rising gently to the north.

As you travel north, the trail crosses into the Minnelusa formation near where the trail separates from Highway 89. The quarry at the Lien Quarry Stop is in dolostone of the Minnelusa formation. The old quarries and lime kilns near Pringle are in the Madison Limestone. A small expanse of the Deadwood Formation is crossed by the trail just before Pringle.

From Pringle on northward, the trail is in Precambrian Era rock. The Precambrian rocks are mainly metamorphic slates and schists with numerous quartz veins and pegmatite masses cutting through them. Many of these veins have been mined for various minerals, including gold, tungsten, tin, feldspar, and lithium. Across the valley from White Elephant Trailhead, you can see the White Elephant feldspar mine, now inactive.

North of Custer, the pegmatite masses become more numerous near Harney Peak in the schists that form the bedrock of the area. Numerous gold prospects were started in some of the pegmatites and remnants of the mines can still be seen from the trail. The Harney range to the east of the trail is composed of granite. Crazy Horse Monument is being carved in the granite, with numerous veins of pegmatite visible even from the trail.

The trail continues in the Precambrian schists and slates through Hill City, Mystic, Rochford and Dumont. Many gold mines or prospects were made in the quartz veins that cut the schists and slates. Most of the mines on public lands have been sealed due to safety concerns. Near Redfern, Precambrian quartzite was mined for sand.

North of the Dumont Trailhead the trail passes into limestones of the Madison and Englewood formations. Much of the Fantail Loop is on the Madison Limestone. As the trail climbs down to Whitetail creek, outcrops of the Deadwood formation can be seen. In this area many mines followed mineralization in the upper and lower Deadwood formation that was deposited with igneous rocks that were intruded during the Tertiary Era, long after the Deadwood formation had been deposited.

Additional Reading

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Railroad memorabilia located north of Custer 2017/Aleen Golis

Flora and Fauna of the Mickelson Trail Communities

The Black Hills is home to a greatly varied number of trees, plants, flowers, grasses, animals, insects, birds and reptiles. The close proximity of one type of species to those that grow in a vastly different environment can create a confused ecological environment. This overlapping of ecological systems is encouraged by the great variety of precipitation, temperature, soil types and elevation that is predominate for this area. Trying to pigeonhole a species to one section of the trail is impossible. Therefore, the species that are mentioned within each community along the trail are representative either by their great numbers all throughout the Black Hills, or are singled out because of their exclusivity for that particular area, rather than using a strictly scientific method of selection. For example, the mountain lions were once a predator in the western part of South Dakota. This species was detailed in the Hill City section as there have been numerous sightings of the big cat in the Black Hills and a hunting season now exists to control the population.

The section of the Black Hills through which the trail passes contains plants that are associated with three types of forest: the Rocky Mountain Coniferous Forest, which is dominated by the ponderosa pine and includes those other varieties of trees, bushes and plants that are regularly thought to cohabit with these pines, forming the under-story of the forest; the northern coniferous (also referred to as sub-alpine or boreal) forest, which is represented by the white spruce; a greatly varied and widespread deciduous forest, which includes box elder, bur oak, aspen and the like; and a highly adaptable mixed grasslands community that includes both eastern tall-grasses and western short-grasses.

Modern animals in the Black Hills area include a diverse assortment of temperate-climate species. Many animals become important throughout time due to economic significance, such as the beaver for their fur, and the coyote for its impact on livestock. The bison was important during both prehistoric and historic times, but was nearly exterminated during the late 1800s. Bison can now be found in Wind Cave National Park and Custer State Park, as well as in commercial ranching operations. Migratory waterfowl move through the Hills seasonally. Reptiles include turtles and snakes, with the only poisonous species being the prairie rattlesnake.

Logging benefited the railroad and mining, but wouldn't have been an industry without the other two. The railroad benefited logging and mining, but wouldn't have existed without the other two. Mining brought the railroad and logging industries, but wouldn't have been successful without the other two.

All three are intertwined into the history of the Black Hills from Pringle north to Deadwood, although none of our writers have specifically addressed this. Logging continues to be an industry throughout the Hills, with much political positioning about the best method to keep the forest healthy. In ancient history, natural fires kept the forest healthy, but have been repelled by the last few generations. Now, photo comparisons show that our prairies and meadows are being taken over by unhealthy forest in some areas. The habitat afforded our wildlife is in a state of flux as a result of human population expanding into the "wilds," and the protection from natural fire for the last 75 years or so. The resultant forests can be over-thick, with little sunlight and nutrition on the forest floor for grasses to flourish. The ground may become sterile for a number of years as a result of the hotter fires that do occur. It all allows for many opinions to be promoted about the forest's proper care, each with their own set of standards and the resultant political ramifications.

The Black Hills uses multiple social programs as labor toward trimming trees, thinning forests and maintaining a healthy forest. The pine beetle is creating its own damage in many areas of the Black Hills. You will see some hillsides, with multiple, sporadic dead pine trees without fire involvement, sometimes involving whole mountains. This is from the pine beetle, and this too has produced it's own controversy regarding the best forest management techniques, but it is currently very apparent that the Black Hills is loosing the battle, and within 5 years will have very few pine trees left.

Forest - Trail Solitude. 2017/Aleen Golis

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Walking The Mickelson Trail

BY Andy Smithson
Age 71, Type 2 Diabetic

I can assure everyone that the Mickelson Trail is a truly magnificent pristine walking adventure. The trail surface is finely graded crushed rock and is easy underfoot. The grades are very modest (4%, after all originally this was a railroad) and the scenery breathtaking; Black Hills rock outcroppings to lush mountain valleys; vistas around each curve; the fragrance of southern prairie sage brush to the heady scent of the pines in the northern sections. All the senses are intermingled; the tranquility and serenity mixed with the voices of the birds and the visual aspect of quivering Aspens in the light breezes. All in all 127 trestles and four tunnels; what could possibly get better than this experience?

The recreational use of the Mickelson Trail is promoted primarily for bicycle, runners and horseback riders. There are special featured events. I cannot find in the State literature any information on walking. Apparently the more verdant northern segments are utilized by day walkers but even then not often. Thus came the request from the Author, Aleen, to put together something to assist walkers for the third edition of the guidebook. I was very privileged to walk the complete 114 miles of this unique South Dakota and indeed National Treasure in August of 2010.

Background

In August of 2009, during a vacation with friends visiting Mount Rushmore, Crazy horse and places beyond, I saw the Custer Michelson Trailhead sign. The trail could just be seen against the back drop of the small river. In the spirit of the moment I announced "I am going to walk that trail". Unbelieving, everyone said "sure but do not expect company"!

From that chance encounter began a year long plan to put this unthinking statement to reality. Planning and preparation, to me, are in large measure an integral part of the total enjoyment. One has the unique opportunity to speak with, and to e-mail, many interesting people. I requested their local knowledge and needed to glean advice.

To a person, the people of South Dakota are justifiably very proud of their State and heritage and are only too glad and willing to take time to share their thoughts and experiences. They assured me the trail's organizational challenges were going to be well worth the effort. They told me about how the track became a trail and what a mammoth effort it took to get this project

completed. They told me there was an outpouring of concerted effort from dedicated individuals and groups with a huge investment of time, sweat equity and money which made the dream a reality. This could not have been possible without the Governor's backing and his considerable arm twisting.

Having obtained and read Aleen's guidebook, my interest was further tweaked as this was obviously far more than just a walk. Essentially one would follow the economic expansion of the late 1880's; the exploration of the different minerals, mines, forestry and other endeavors. Before the Burlington "high line" was constructed, communication and commerce had to be sparse. Transportation limited to wagons on rutted roads, and the Cheyenne to Deadwood stage for those few with money. People mostly on foot or on horseback. The early settlers must have been of hardy stock for this was pioneer territory. Walking the trail, one truly learns to appreciate the remoteness of the area, as well as the labors of those who built the Rail Road originally. The shear engineering effort and monumental labor utilized to build this railroad becomes very real as one traverses the area with a walking speed that is conducive to appreciating the geography. I also like being outdoors and am attracted to every facet of nature. Birds were varied and numerous, from Meadowlarks to red tailed hawks. I saw mountain sheep, turkeys, white tail deer and pronghorn antelope in the lower elevations.

With solid advanced preparation, walking the sections of the Mickelson Trail is moderately physically challenging but nothing can be considered out of reach for an average fit individual. The challenge is more in the planning logistics. So to stay focused I have divided these notes into segments dealing with one subject matter at a time.

Andy Smithson at the Mickelson Trail trail head.

Planning

Break up the 109+ miles into manageable daily walks. As I prefer walking slightly uphill (knees) I started in EDGEMONT and took seven walking days to arrive at DEADWOOD.

The other MAJOR decision is when to go! I looked at the published Mickelson Trail activities calendar and decided to go when there was not a bike/run event scheduled. Perhaps incorrectly, I was concerned as a walker about being in the way. Further, I planned to go after most of the schools vacations were over so that there was a variety of available accommodations. For me, the ideal time was the last week of August. September is also good but the weather can be changeable and it is not unknown to have a Canadian cold front with dusting of snow at the higher elevations.

Check the Mickelson Trail Affiliates web site, www.mickelsontrailaffiliates.com, for the average weather for your planned trip; this obviously will affect the items to pack. Late August is still hot on the high prairie in the south, but with wonderful low humidity. As the trail climbed in to the Ponderosa and Aspens it was generally in the high 80's. As mentioned the walk timing naturally affects your clothing choices (below)

My Walking Schedule

Day#1 Edgemont To Minnekahta Junction	**16.2 Miles**
Day#2 Minnekahta Junction To Pringle	**15.9 Miles**
Day#3 Pringle To Custer City	**12.4 Miles**
Day#4 Custer City To Hill City	**15.6 Miles**
Day#5 Hill City To Mystic	**14.6 Miles**
Day#6 Mystic To Dumont	**17.9 Miles**
Day#7 Dumont To Deadwood	**16.2 Miles**

The critical challenge is one of logistics. There are no nearby accommodations at Minnekahta, Pringle, Mystic, and Dumont. How I worked around that obstacle was to ask for advice and help from Aleen Golis, Mickelson Trail Affiliates owner, and the very helpful Chambers at Edgemont and Hill City.

Through these contacts I was able to engage an Edgemont resident to act as my southern section transportation chief. He picked me up from Rapid City Airport and took me to my southern base, Sunrise Ranch. Mark and Suzanne Hollenbeck were my generous and delightful multitasking hosts. They juggle a young family, three large ranches, federally certified organic beef herd and organic sheep flock. Mark is very involved in the Edgemont community; the Chamber and in the promotion of the town. Suzanne, the mother of four youngsters, is an assistant principal plus a teacher in music and governance as well as running the famous Edgemont summer theatre. Wow!

Mark delivered me to the 0 mile marker in Edgemont and I was on my way to Minnekahta where I was picked up and delivered back to the ranch. The next

day back to Minnekahta to walk to Pringle. I was again shuttled back to Sunrise Ranch. The next day, I was dropped off at Pringle, while they took my overnight bag on to my hotel in Custer City. Then, I walked to Hill City where I based for the balance of the trip at "Mountains to the Prairie B&B". (Ideal location as it is only a few yards from the trail). Again my host Linda and Sam Brown could not be more accommodating. Together they run an outstanding operation.

Bridge outside Deadwood" Andy Smithson

I had secured a similar northern end transportation arrangement. This time with Rabbitbicycles.com. They kindly provided the shuttles from/to Mystic and from/to Dumont and finally took my overnight bag to Deadwood hotel.

Frankly, if one was walking with a group- it is possible to stage the segments using two cars. Both go to the daily ending trailhead, leaving one car and then all in the other car back to the starting point. Be aware to allot the time to do this, as it is a distance between each that often is not along the highway of course.

As I was walking alone I depended upon the professional and reliable services of others. In my case everything worked flawlessly.

Please note to get the most out of the walk, buy and fully read the guide at least twice and refer to it prior to walking the next segment. Many of the interesting features are not easily seen as they are now muted due to time and vegetation. With the guide you are walking through history and I really did not miss anything important. This guide made the walk special and far more fulfilling.

The other daily essential is to have a very hearty cooked breakfast. I had the "works" eggs, bacon, and toast. Perhaps not a cardiologist's ideal meal but whatever one eats will be very quickly "burnt off". In my mind it's essential to have a "good start" and to be fully hydrated prior to starting out for that day's segment. Despite good nutrition I did lose 14lbs over the 7 days.

Preparation

As in any worthwhile endeavor it is sensible to realistically appraise one's own physical fitness. In my case I am a reasonably fit 71 years old but I certainly needed some toning and prior road miles. I walked maybe 4-7 miles every other day for about four months, but not always with my pack. I am a Florida

resident and live in Boca Raton six+ months of the year. So the "people trails" are essentially flat with an added bonus of good views of the Atlantic. However most of the "serious" training was in southern Indiana where we make our summer home. Here the terrain is more varied. However, whatever your locale please complete some physical preparation and remember always to stretch.

In retrospect this "training" was helpful but it really does not fully prepare for 16 mile days.

Do buy the best walking shoes, period! You do not need boots as the trail is graded. I purchased a Gortex lined (waterproof) leather upper walking shoe. IMPORTANT: I thoroughly walked them in PRIOR to going to South Dakota. I purchased the shoes ½ size larger and then used double socks; a thin liner coupled with a heavyweight polypropylene hiking sock. This combination plus clean socks every day minimized the chance of blisters. I am a type 2 diabetic so feet need to be pampered and this shoe/sock combination has always worked for me.

Equipment For A Late August Walk

I am a firm believer in the lighter the better. I like the properties of polypropylene both in underwear and "T" shirts. Polypropylene wicks away perspiration and can be hand washed and will dry overnight. The other principal is layering, go light but take layers. But what I actually included in my day pack totally depended upon the daily expected weather.

Total Inventory

Duffle bag for the overnight items
Ultra light day pack, (Kelty)
3 liters internal water bladder with on demand hose (Osprey)
Pair of telescopic walking poles (Trek)
4 short sleeved "T" shirts, (I walked in them)
4 underwear
2 long sleeved "T" shirts, part of the layering concept
2 hiking shorts (many pockets)
2 parachute nylon walking pants with zip off legs onto shorts. (Quick dry)
1 short sleeved windproof/waterproof vest
1 Ultra light waterproof jacket
1 Ultra light waterproof pants
1 Ultra Light waterproof pack cover. This often forgotten but a soggy and heavy pack is not good news.
1 cap
6 pairs, heavyweight hiking socks
6 pairs of thin under socks
1 very basic first aid kit + daily meds

Dopp kit/ wet wipes/sun screen
Good quality sun glasses
LED head lamp/flasher
Water purification kit
1 Pedometer
1 cell Phone (Verizon)
I did not bring a GPS as I was on a trail and could not get "lost"

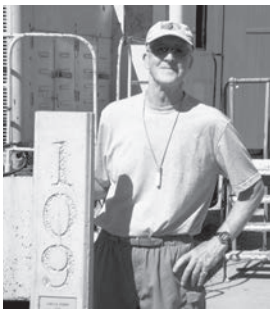
My Average Day Walking Pack Might Contain

Pack averaged 25+ lbs, mainly due to the water

Day pack with internal 3 liter water bladder.
Ultra Lightweight waterproof jacket and pants.
Ultra Lightweight waterproof pack cover
Very basic first aid kit (space blanket, Neosporin, hand aids, sunscreen bug spray) LED trouble light. Antiseptic handy wipes
Water purification kit (proved unnecessary and never used as potable well water is available at most trailheads).
Sandwich lunch, fresh fruit. (Note the sandwich was always packed dry, 100+ degree heat, no refrigeration and mayo is not a good combination! I carried individual foil packages of condiments.)
½ lb premium trail mix
2 trail bars
Head lamp (never used)
Pedometer, daily meds
Cell phone (note: in 2010 Verizon has the only service which works. Solid signal in the south to patchy to no signal in the northern hills. I purchased a non contract daily use phone for this trip) But beware, cell coverage for even Verizon was spotty at best, and more absent than present overall.

About the Author

Born in Bournemouth England (1939), traveled at age 23 on a special visa to spend a year in the US where he met his wife, Judy. They married in 1964, and five years later he become an American citizen. After working first in retailing, then in marketing and manufacturing, including election as President and CEO of a company, he retired at age 62. He reports he goes on an annual "adventure" and does a short trip, usually during the late summer. He completed the Mickelson Trail in 2010.



Trails End/Andy Smithson

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Trail sections

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Along the Mickelson Trail in the

Black Hills of South Dakota

Services ** B&Bs ** Camping ** Photos ** Maps

Bridge along trail by Standby Mine area just South of Rochford. /Aleen Golis

White tail Buck /Lynn Eyermann

Cyanide Lid Barn South of Dumont. /Aleen Golis

Edgemont Trailhead. /Aleen Golis

EDGEMONT

MP- 0
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 43.298250, Long.: -103.824724
* Camping * RV Park * Food * Gas * Lodging *
Free museum Post Office * Restrooms *
Zip Code: 57735
Population: 906
Edgemont Chamber of Commerce: 1-605-662-5900
www.edgemont.com
16.2 miles to Minnekahta Jct.

GETTING THERE: Highway 18/89 bypasses Edgemont. The trailhead may be reached by using any of the 3 roads into Edgemont. See the Access Map inset for clarifications. The trailhead is at the Edgemont City Park located at the south end of Main Street (also known as Highway 471 South).

NOTE: Businesses in **bold print** have supported this project, and they appreciate your support—check out their ads in this book for possible discounts.

Attractions:

Edgemont Theater Co. Melodrama: 809 2nd Ave., 605-662-6275 www.edgemontsd.com/theater.html June & July., Friday & Saturday

Trails, Trains & Pioneers Museum: 603 Second Ave., 602-662-5858, www.edgemontmuseum.com (next to trailhead).

Camping

Edgemont City Campground: 809 2nd Ave., 605-662-7057

Food

Edgemont Dinner-Theater Co.: 605-662-6275 - Summers Only

Hat Creek Grill: 521 2nd Ave., 605-662-7012 - Closed Monday

Victory Steak House & Lounge: 317 2nd Ave., 605-662-7334

Lodging

Cowboy Motel: 605-662-7244, www.cowboyinnedgemont.com

Sunrise Ranch: 1-605-662-5051, www.sunriseguestranch.com

Services

Mogul Mart Connivence Store

Edgemont Tribune: edgemonttribune.com

Shops

Nuts & Bolts Fabric Shop, 500 2nd Ave, 605-662-5758

Floral Depot & More, 311 2nd Ave, 605-662-5770

Ranchers Feed & Supply: (hardware store too), just off Main Street toward tracks, has basic bike repairs available, 605-662-7223.

Shuttle Service

HighLine Adventures, 605-673-2019, Christina Heisler

Other businesses may shuttle upon request depending on staffing. Just ask.

Edgemont History

Caroline Curl

Edgemont is a unique little town of people with pride, integrity, ambition and a lot of good old-fashioned western hospitality. Located in the southwest corner of South Dakota near the Cheyenne River, the town provides all the necessities for the beginning or ending of a ride on the Mickelson Trail.

In the early 1870s, the TOT Ranch was located on the north side of the Cheyenne River and later became the early stage station for all travelers going into the Black Hills by stage and wagon train. During the late 1870s and early 1880s, there were a number of stores and a post office established at this site called Dudley.

The arrival of the railroad in October of 1889 changed the location of the town of Dudley. Land could be purchased on the south side of the river for less money, and it would be safe from floods. The building of a roundhouse and depot were started in 1890. Hence, where the railroad crossed the river became the site of Edgemont. The same year a large hotel was erected, named the Burlington Hotel. Later in a slang term it was called "The Beanery." It burned in 1923.

The merchants in Dudley soon started moving their places of business to Edgemont on the south side of the river. Some of the buildings were moved in sections, others were completely dismantled. This trip across the Cheyenne River was a mighty venture as the quicksand in the river had to be navigated in some manner. Many of those businesses survived for many years, and some of the buildings still stand today.

With finances from the eastern United States several industries were started. Early in 1893 a dam was constructed in the Cheyenne River west of Edgemont, upriver next to Beaver Creek close to Dewey. A fourteen-mile long canal was made to irrigate a large number of acres of land which were plotted into farms with a small house.

The Sandstone Quarry, north of Edgemont, opened in 1892 and proved to provide very good sandstone, which was used for building stone and grindstones. The building of the Woolen Mill and the Smelter at the south side of town were started in 1897. Although the eastern financial support waned as the recession took over, people continued to come to Edgemont, many seeking railroad employment while others were homesteaders. In 1913, the first artesian well was drilled, bringing hot, running water to the city. It still comes from the ground at 126 degrees Fahrenheit under 110 lbs pressure.

Edgemont has enjoyed several boom periods. The first was when Edgemont became a terminal on the railroad in 1905. In the 'twenties the Mule Creek oil boom brought several hundred people. The 'thirties were a trying time for everyone, but it continued to survive. The Munitions Depot at Igloo began during the early 1940s, and brought an explosion of people to this fair city. It increased in population from 1,000 to about 10,000 in just a few days, causing a housing crisis in Edgemont. Every shack and shed was turned into a sleeping room. This also brought many new businesses to Edgemont. There were crowded sidewalks and no parking spaces along the street for the cars. People had to stand in line for everything. The Munitions Depot was phased out in 1967. In the ensuing years, the covered bunkers have been used for multiple purposes, including confined hog farms. The area currently is being reclaimed and the refuge left from that era moved or destroyed.

In the early 1950s, uranium was discovered and Edgemont became the Capital City of Uranium. Much ore was mined from the area north of Edgemont, processed and shipped from the mill in Edgemont. This business was phased out after several years.

Band Stand built in 1896. Aleen Golis

Edgemont was honored by three United States presidents. Teddy Roosevelt spoke from the Band Stand in the City Park and was served dinner in 1903. The visits of Taft (1911) and Coolidge (1927) were brief stops between trains. The Band Stand provided the playing stage for many bands to play as well.

Caroline Albright Curl was born to pioneering parents, Frank and Ella (Gilkey) Albright on March 29, 1914 in a log house in Red Canyon, ten miles north of Edgemont, South Dakota. Caroline has used her literary skill and sense of history to preserve the history of Edgemont and community. Authoring several works about the local history, Caroline has lived life to its fullest and passed it on for others to enjoy, a true pioneer of unwavering spirit.

Described by grand daughter-in-law, Trina Bryan Curl
Used with permission.

To the trail:

Today, Edgemont remains "railroad and rancher" oriented as these still provide the city with its' lifeblood. As a crew exchange area, Edgemont has a number of railroad folks around at any given time. Expect to wait at the tracks as you arrive in town as train crews often change at the station leaving the train over the crossing. Ranchers, on the other hand, provide the community stability through their sense of community foresightedness.

As with small towns who don't have city entertainment available, Edgemont has developed their own–the Edgemont Theater. Developed and managed by local folks, who also are the cooks for a wonderful steak meal before the show begins, the melodramas provide the citizens with their socialization. This is a fun time for all, but you'll need to get your peanut throwing arm warmed up. What a great way to spend an evening! They also have a campground there with RV sites, and showers are available in the theater building. This building was converted from an old livestock sale barn. The swimming pool is open during the summer for a refreshing dip. Local 4-H clubs are always willing to lend a hand with trail activities for groups.

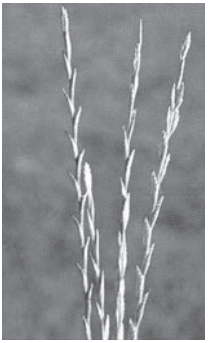
The Sunrise Guest Ranch located just a few miles west from Edgemont provides the visitor with shuttle service to/from the trail if needed, a true ranch experience, and the ability to hunt all during one visit at the right season. They also have a large lodge that provides a center gathering place, an ideal setting for family runions. Pets and horses are welcome. The owners will shuttle bicyclists as needed. This is great places to begin or end your Mickelson Trail Experience.

Flora & Fauna

Edgemont sits at the extreme southwestern boundary of the Black Hills, in the lower elevation of the range and is strongly influenced by a number of grassland and sagebrush steppe species, with a scattering of deciduous forest, as well as the ubiquitous Ponderosa pines, though they are not as dominant in this area as they are in the mid- and high-level elevations. One of the more prominent trees you will see along the trail is the bur oak. This deciduous tree will often form thickets along areas that have sandstone, limestone or shale in the soil. This tree provides a bounty for squirrels, deer and turkeys, although cattle, sheep and goats have been known to browse on buds and young leaves that introduce tannins to their systems and could possibly kill them. The acorns were often ground by the earlier peoples and used to make mush, soup or bread. Bark from the roots was also used as a medicine for bowel trouble.

Indian Hemp. /Lynn Eyermann

You will also find a flowering plant that is quite similar to the flowering dogbane–the Indian Hemp. This plant is called thus due to the fact that stem fibers were used by many tribes for making rope and nets. The leaves of this plant have a basic oblong shape that ends in a pointed tip. During the early part of the summer this plant flowers with short, bell-shaped florets that are often bunched together. In the late summer it will bear a fruit with long, narrow pods which split to release hairy, dark-brown seeds. Though stems and roots can be used to produce herbalistic medicines to a limited extent, the plant is largely unpalatable to the area's grazing animals.



Western Wheatgrass /Lynn Eyermann

The most noticeable addition to the flora of this area is the various forms of prairie grasses that have adapted to this temperate area. One of these is the western wheatgrass, which is identifiable by a blue-green, waxy appearance. The spikes also bear more flowers than other wheatgrasses. This plant prefers soil with higher alkaline content, so it is most often found in the sedimentary valley floors. It has a high forage value in early spring and fall, and is designated the state grass for South Dakota (as well as Wyoming).

The wild turkey is a frequent visitor around the trail. Although sighting one is a now a common occurrence, this bird was introduced to the area in the mid-1900s. It has become so common in fact, that there are established annual hunting seasons in the area. This bird can fly, but prefers to run and will generally stay near open meadows or fields around woodlands. The wild turkey is a large bird that measures 3 to 4 feet in length and has a 5-foot wingspan. Males weigh an average of 16 to 18 pounds, while some may weigh upwards of 25 pounds. Not only are females much smaller (they typically weigh 9 to 11 pounds), but the colors of their feathers are duller than the males. The wild turkey forages on ferns, grasses, buds, grapes, berries, insects, and nuts during the spring and summer. Acorns and other nuts of forest trees accumulated on the ground make up the majority of its diet in the fall and winter. The wild turkeys are very social birds, with anywhere from 6 to 40 birds roosting together each evening.

Bur Oak Tree and Wild Turkeys on the Mickelson Trail. /Aleen Golis

Railroad History

Edgemont: Main Line Milepost 476.1 — In the late 1880s, the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad of Nebraska, through its construction subsidiary Grand Island and Wyoming Central, was quickly constructing a line through Nebraska toward the southwestern corner of Dakota Territory. The spring and summer of 1889 saw the track laying crews proceed northwest out of Alliance and reach the Cheyenne River in southwest Dakota on October 30. Four days later, the newly created state of South Dakota was being toasted as Burlington crews assembled a camp at the southwest edge of the Black Hills. The camp was named Siding Seven.

As the railhead of the Burlington's main line, Siding Seven became a wide-open railroad camp. The settlement of Dudley was established nearby, and the railroad used the winter of 1889 and early 1890 to stockpile men, animals, materials, and machinery at that point for the resumption of construction in the spring of 1890. Siding Seven was built on the lower north bank of the Cheyenne.

The following year, a permanent terminal and related facilities were established on the higher ground south of Dudley in order to avoid possible flooding of the Cheyenne River. The new town was named Edgemont — due to its location on the edge of the Black Hills. In the spring of 1890, construction began on the branch that would wind through the center of the Black Hills to Deadwood. This Burlington line would most commonly be referred to as "the High Line." The rail crew began laying steel at Deadwood Junction, across the Cheyenne River from Edgemont, on May 15th.

Over the decades, Edgemont has remained an important terminal and crew change point for the railroad. The Burlington and Missouri River became the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy in 1904. The last CB&Q passenger train operated through Edgemont in August of 1969. The Burlington was merged into the Burlington Northern Railroad in 1970, just as the boom in coal mining and coal hauling began in nearby eastern Wyoming. Coal trains rolling through town soon outnumbered the four to six freight trains by a ten to one ratio. The proliferation of trains meant a revival for the population of the town in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1995, the Burlington Northern became a partner in the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway. In 2003, fifty-five to sixty freight and coal trains roll through Edgemont daily.

Deadwood Junction: High Line Milepost 0.0 — Built at the point of the original site of Siding Seven, Deadwood Junction was merely the location where the High Line left the main line on the north side of the Cheyenne River. A wye connected the High Line for travel in both directions onto the main, although the vast majority of trains took the left

leg to run on across the Cheyenne River bridge and into the Edgemont yard. The wye still exists, as do the first three miles of the High Line - left in place for possible use by shippers and for extra car storage. Almost immediately at milepost 3 beyond Deadwood Junction, a near horseshoe curve was built on a two percent grade in order to gain access into the foothills northeast of Edgemont.

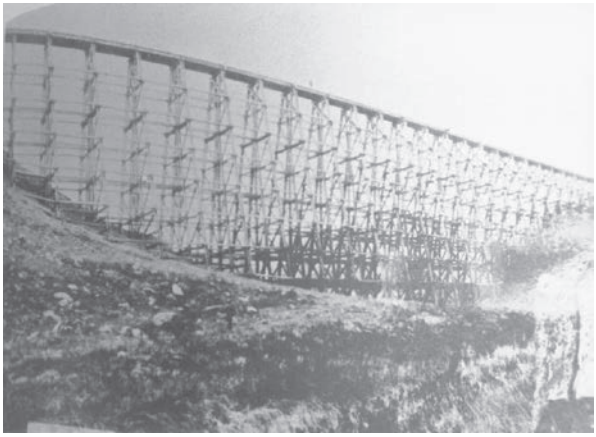
Back to the Trail:

"This bridge, located at MP-2.5, is the first of four Trekker's Bridges," Mickelson Trail Trekkers pooled their funds to purchase. /Aleen Golis

The trail leaves Edgemont City Park following town streets north, so watch carefully for signs to direct you. At the first Tee intersection, the trail turns right crossing the railroad tracks before heading out of town. You will turn left at the next highway intersection, and immediately go right after crossing the single RR track. The gravel trail begins on your right following the still used portion of the track, and also the highway for about three miles as it heads north. A bridge located here was purchased by the 1999 Trail Trekkers. A sign on the bridge gives you names and details. Several of the bridges along the trail were "purchased" through funds raised on the 3 day Trail Trek rides shortly after the trail was first finished.

As the trail breaks away from the highway, you are heading into one of the more isolated areas of the trail. One last check for full water supplies and emergency bike repair items will ensure you do not end up stranded in the middle of cow country. The area is known to harbor rattlesnakes on occasion, and also provides excellent growing medium for poison ivy. Most of the land along the trail

Fred Thurston and Sheri Wymyczak, Diane and Gregory Iverson, Mickelson Trail Trek, 2006. /Aleen Golis



Sheep Canyon Trestle. /Rick Mills Collection

between Edgemont and Minnekahta Junction is privately owned. It is wise to stay on the trail and avoid encounters with rattlesnakes, poison ivy, or irate landowners.

At MP-6.7, Sheep Canyon begins to stretch out in front of you. In the center of this area, MP-7.0, you will find the first interpretive sign telling the story of the tallest and largest trestle on the trail. This trestle was 126 feet high and 700 feet long and was reportedly dreaded by the engineers. Before the trestle was filled with dirt and stabilized, it was reported that two engineers would take the train out of Edgemont. One engineer would get off the train before the trestle and walk across. The second engineer would send the train across the trestle unmanned, to be picked up on the other side by the first engineer.

Sheep Canyon trestle, as it is today. /Aleen Golis

These canyon walls also have some old writings on them, visible to the **walking** travelers but mostly hidden by summer foliage, placed during the time the Railroad was built. A shelter and a water cistern are located at MP-7.2. Called the Buena Vista flag stop, passenger trains would stop here letting the passengers enjoy the view over the Cheyenne River valley. Also located in this area are the remnants of uranium mining activity.

Old writings on rock walls in Sheep Canyon. /Aleen Golis

The old Edgemont Highway #185 goes over the trail at MP-7.6 but doesn't include a shelter or trailhead (this road is not numbered on most SD maps, unfortunately– and the bridge deamed unsafe is currently closed to traffic). There is a path down to the trail that is easily navigated , and is best reached traveling out from Edgemont.. This is the closest point to the canyon that is accessible so that hikers can access Sheep Canyon. Be sure to stay on the trail.

Continuing north the early trail planners found heavy resistance to the development of the trail. Thousands of dollars were spent in the court systems. Today, bikers are encouraged in this particular area to be self sufficient and stay on the trail at all times to show respect for the private land.

Sheep Canyon Shelter at MP-7.2 /Aleen Golis

Chilson: High Line Milepost 8.1 — As the High Line crested the grade coming out of the Cheyenne River valley from Edgemont, the Burlington established a section house and a siding at Chilson. A section crew based here maintained their "section" of the line in both directions from this point. Passenger trains would stop here if flagged, but Chilson led a remarkably low-key existence and the section crew was abolished after World War II. (The only remains of all the old RR activities here are the visible grade lines in the cow pasture.)

Back to the Trail

As you approach MP-9, you can begin to see a large burned area. This area sustained a large fire named the "Hell Canyon" fire in the fall of 2001 started by downed electrical wires. Some of the trail fencing was burned, and during the fire the trail was used to transport firefighting equipment although it is normally closed to all motored vehicles. It burned out of control for over a week blackening many acres of both private and federal land. As often occurs after a fire, Mother Nature takes over and gives the land what it needs to replenish itself. In the year–2003, two years after the fire–we had a bumper crop of turkeys.

Mushing sled dogs near Edgemont in November. /Aleen Golis

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Looking South from the Minnekahta trailhead, the Elk Mountains can be viewed in the distance. The object to the right is a water cistern.
/Aleen Golis

Minnekahta Jct. MP-16.2 /Aleen Golis

Minnekahta Junction

MP-16.2
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 43.431725, Long.: -103.688905
* Water in Cistern , Outhouse Restroom *
* No Services *
16.2 miles to Edgemont; 15.9 miles to Pringle

12 miles to Hot Springs Via Highway.

GETTING THERE: Located off highway 18 only .5 miles east of the junction of highway 89 & 18. Trailhead is located on the south side of the highway 18.

Lodging
Country Charm Cabins and Corrals: 605-673-2686,
www.Countrycharmcabins-corrals.com
Between Pringle & Minnekahta Jct. at MP-25.9
then 2 miles W. on gravel road; borders National Forest

Minnekahta Junction Trailhead is 12 miles from Hot Springs.

NOTE: Businesses in **bold print** have supported this project, and they appreciate your support–check out their ads in this book for possible discounts.

Hot Springs

Hot Springs Chamber: www.hotsprings-sd.com, 800-325-6991

Attractions

Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, 2165 Highland Rd, 605-745-5955 www.wildmustangs.com

Evans Plunge, 304 N. River St, 605-745-5165, evansplunge.com

Mammoth Site, 1800 US-18 Bypass, 605-745-6017, www.mammothsite.com

Sandstone Buildings–architectural interest throughout town.

Camping

Allen Ranch Campground: 745-1890, www.gwtc.net/allenranch

Kemo Sabay Campground: www.kemosabaycampground.com

Food

Woolley's Western Grill, 1648 Hwy 16 Bypass, 605-745-6414, www.Woollys.com

Daily Bread Bakery & Cafe, 431 N. River St., 605-745-7687, open 6:30-2PM

The Hot Springs Valult, 329 N River St, 605-745-3342

Lodging

Super 8 of Hot Springs: 745-3888, www.super8hssd.com

America's Best Value Inn by the River: 605-745-4292, www.americasbestvalueinnbytheriver.com

Flat Iron Guest Suites: 605-745-530, www.flatIron.biz

Hot Springs Hills Inn: 605-745-3130, www.hotspringshillsinn.com

Red Rock River Resort Hotel & Spa, 603 N. River St., 605-745-4400 www.redrockriverresort.com

Shops

High Mountain Outfitters: 503 N. River Street, 605-745-4494, www.highmountainoutfitterssd.com

Black Hills Books & Treasurers: 112 S. Chicago (Main St.)

Chautaugua Artisans Market, 629 N. River St.

A ***Side Trip*** to Hot Springs allows the visitor to see the internationally renowned Mammoth Site, and swim at Evans Plunge where the water is actually 87 degrees, cool enough to encourage activity while submerged. The healing powers of its waters were known by local Indian tribes and many fights between tribes were reported. It continues to be a healing place with multiple health spas of all varieties utilizing the healing mineral water of Hot Springs.

From the Minnekahta trailhead, you may follow Highway 18 east into Hot Springs. Most of this highway now has wide shoulders although many trucks use this route. We prefer the gravel as much as possible even though it adds mileage. You may avoid some of the traffic on Highway 18 by following County Road #17, 3.6 miles east of the Minnekahta trailhead. This route adds about 1.5 miles to the trip into Hot Springs. Turn left (north) following County Road #17 for about one mile, when #17 turns east for another 3.6 miles, where you will pass the left turn to the Cottonwood Recreation Area. Other roads (17A or 17B, etc.–**do not** take these) turn from this county road and bisect or leave this main County Road #17, so watch the signs diligently. Cottonwood Dam is located here with camping available and fishing sometimes can be quite productive. Hot Springs can be reached by following the gravel road back to Highway 18 another two+ miles and turning left up the long hill. After this hard mile climb up Highway 18, you will have the joy of coasting down two miles into Hot Springs with the wind in your face.

A loop trip can be obtained by following Highway 18 into Hot Springs, and returning to the trail via County Road 333 (Argyle), which is gravel.

Argyle Loop Road crosses the Mickelson Trail at MP-23.8 from the south end and 25.7 at the north end, while at MP-25, one may exit the trail at the electric line post and, once out of the depression of the trail, you will see Argyle Road (Custer County Road #333) to the east (~100 feet). Once on Argyle Rd., it is 13.2 miles to Highway 385, turn right and go two miles south on 385 into Hot Springs.

Bob Young & son hikers of trail in 3.5 days

Camping is also available at Cold Brook Reservoir located three miles north of Hot Springs. The lake is spring fed, and very clear. Snorkeling in this lake is truly relaxing as you swim with the fish and turtles, and recently netted a fisherman a 28# catfish.

Once the sights of the town have been fully enjoyed, you can retrace your route to the Mickelson trail via Highway #18. For a more challenging return, take Highway 385 north of Hot Springs for two miles, turning left (or west) onto Argyle Road, and following it for 13.2 miles where you will see the Mickelson Trail ahead. Bring plenty of water as this is mainly uphill, through Forest Service area that is sparsely populated. Argyle Road (County Road 18 turns to 333 in Custer County) encounters the Mickelson Trail at MP-25. Of course, one can reverse this order of instructions to come into Hot Springs via the Argyle Road, and leave via Highway 18 or the gravel road #17 if you wish to stay off the highway more.

Railroad History

Minnekahta: High Line Milepost 15.4 — In the spring of 1890, construction began on the branch that would wind through the center of the Black Hills to Deadwood. This Burlington line would most commonly be referred to as "the High Line." On up the line at milepost 16, the crews reached Minnekahta on August 24th – after a delay in construction due to the spanning of Sheep Canyon with a 700' long - 126 ' high wooden trestle.

At Minnekahta, the railroad constructed a section house, depot, sidings, livestock pens and chutes, and a water tower. In 1891, a branch line was built east from Minnekahta to the booming resort city of Hot Springs. From Minnekahta eastward, the country was rolling hills until just west of the city, where the line was constructed primarily along Hot Brook into downtown Hot Springs itself. The first train rolled east from Minnekahta into Hot Springs on July 5, 1891, with regular service initiated shortly thereafter. The spring-fed warm waters made the area an attractive resort area, and the B&MR capitalized on this with its "spa excursions" in the 1890s and into the early 1900s. A wye track constructed at the Minnekahta junction allowed locomotives and trains to turn for return trips into Hot Springs or back to Edgemont.

Minnekahta Jct. Section house. /Rick Mills Collection

The depot, section house and water tower at Minnekahta were removed in the 1950s. (All water for the train stop here was hauled due to the hardness of the local water.) The Burlington Northern abandoned the branch line

from Minnekahta to Hot Springs in 1977. Following the abandonment of the remaining portion of the High Line in late 1986, salvage crews removed the remaining rails and ties through Minnekahta in 1987.

Back To The Trail

Notice at MP-20, the area had a siding that allowed cattle loading. At MP-21 the Lien Quarry supplies gravel to the local area. This section of the trail is more susceptible to rains and requires routine repairs which leaves temporary soft gravel so be alert as you ride this area. It is wise to take your time in this section and maintain control at all times. The Lien Quarry rest stop has water located at MP 22.

Lien Quarry Shelter, MP-22.5, during Trek 2003. /Aleen Golis

Mining History

At MP-25, you will pass remnants of Argyle, today only a community area, which was known for its deposits of Fuller Earth and volcanic ash. Considerable shipments of these products were made from there. As you approach Pringle, you will pass Sam Kirk's LimeKiln plant. Its slaked lime was used at the Homestake Gold Mine in lead for neutralizing the acids used in their mill. It was also used at the cement plant in Rapid City.

Back to the Trail

At MP-25.9, you can follow the country road two miles west (across Highway 89) to Country Charm Cabins and Corrals (www.Countrycharmcabins-corrals.com) for a welcome refuge among the pines. These folks really know how to treat bikers and horseback riders. They provide primitive camping, camping with electric hookups or cabins. Kitchen/dining facilities are available for all guests. Lois has a limited supply of food available for cooking, or they will purchase any groceries you order and have them available for your arrival. They have a multitude of forest single-track trails for

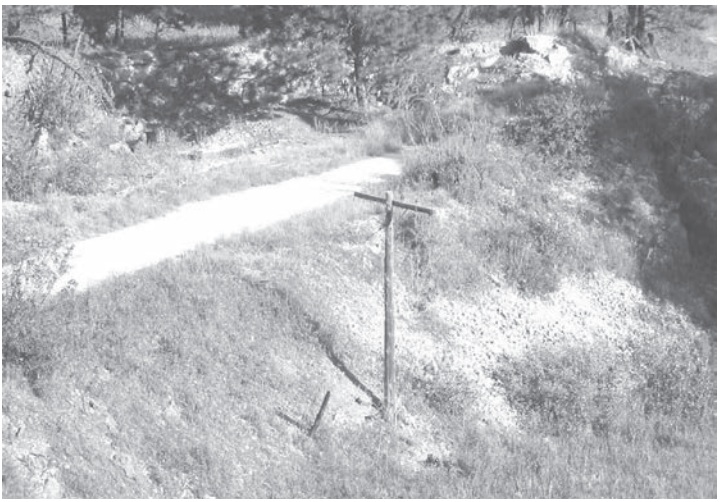
Big Mick Riders at Argyle. /Aleen Golis

the hardy bikers, and also provide trail rides on horses into the Black Hills National Forest for your enjoyment. If you are looking for a place to satisfy the interests of a family for several days, this is the place.

As you travel this section, you begin to see more forest areas. You will notice many topless trees, or broken trees in the area. A very heavy spring snowstorm caused the trees to break in the spring of 2000, and have provided the locals with warming–both in clearing the fire hazards, and in providing firewood used by many of the residents for winter warmth. This damage occurred throughout the Black Hills and together with the large amount of beetle kill lends itself to the larger forest fires of the last few years. These downed trees coupled with the lack of any controlled clearing of the undergrowth in the forests, have set the stage for many more hot burning fires in the area, and conditions should be carefully monitored.

Stage Stop, seen from MP-27. /Aleen Golis

At MP-27, be sure to note the older rock home across the highway west. The original building made of rock and log, provided a stagecoach stop. This rock home was added onto with a second story in 2000, although you can still see the original building close up on the bottom. The building is on private property. It is also along this section that the watchful eye will find telegraph poles still standing. You will also find some mine and kiln remnants visible to the wandering eye.



This photo, taken from the Highway 89 overpass, delights the eye in seeing both a telegraph pole and a quarry in the shadow to the left, above the trail. /Aleen Golis

Loring: High Line Milepost 27.8 — Loring was basically a 20-car capacity industry siding for the Burlington. The railroad served the Erpelding and F. V. Redenbaugh limestone quarries and lime kilns in this vicinity, as well as successor companies up until the late 1970s. This siding is not to be confused with the siding at Lien Quarry (MP-22.1). The Quarry was developed in the 1960s and used up until 1986.

Back to the Trail

An original railroad marker still exists at MP-28 which was made from cement and has the number printed to the nearest one hundredth of a mile. At MP-28.4 you will find another Trekkers' Bridge. This bridge was the first bridge bought by riders on the first Mickelson Trail Trek in 1998. The Mickelson Trail Trek is a 3-day ride for the full 109 miles of the trail, coordinated by the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department. "The bridge is a lasting example of how people can make a difference. What began as a spontaneous idea during the official dedication ride in September 1998 resulted in an enthusiastic fundraiser, securing nearly $5,000 to cover the construction costs for the No. 11 North Loring Bridge," states the plaque on the bridge.

People's Bridge #1, MP-28.4. /Aleen Golis

This bridge is also a memorial to a couple who participated on the trek and donated towards the bridge. They were returning home when they were tragically killed in a motor vehicle accident near Hot Springs.

Argyle area trail photo. /Aleen Golis

As you proceed toward Pringle, you will note multiple mine quarry sites of various sizes and styles, as well various minerals. This area is well known for the multiple ores available including limestone, granite, feldspar, mica, lithium and a multitude of others. An occasional kiln was also known to be in the area. There is also an occasional cement milepost noticeable along this section, as well as some cement fence posts that occasionally have some orange algae present.

Abandoned limestone mine at MP-30 /Aleen Golis

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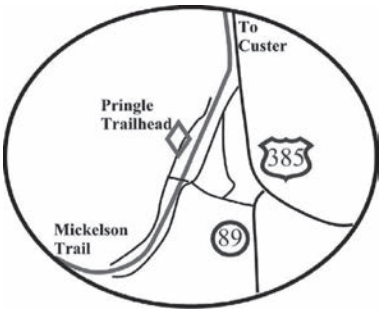
Point of Rocks, the first location of Pringle, changed to the current location (visible in the background) with the coming of the railroad. /Aleen Golis

PRINGLE

NO WATER CISTERN--WATER AVAILABLE AT LOCAL BUSINESSES

MP-32.1
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 43.609095, Long.: -103.592929
* Food * Restrooms * Post Office *
Zip Code: 57773
Population: 78
12.4 miles to Custer; 15.9 Minnekahta Jct.

GETTING THERE: Located at the junction of highway 385 and 89. One must drive into the town toward the high metal shaft building to find the trailhead.



Food

Hitchrail Bar & Restaurant: Main St., 605-673-2697, 6days/week

Lodging

Country Charm Cabins and Corrals: Between Pringle & Minnekahta Jct. at MP-25.9 then 2 miles W. on gravel road; borders NF, 605-673-2686, www.Countrycharmcabins-corrals.com

Plenty Star Ranch, 25991 Hwy 385, 605-673-3012

Primitive Camping **may be** available through arrangements with Hitchrail Bar & Restaurant – **IF** folks ask first.

Pringle History

Anna Marie Evans

There is evidence that Indians camped near the Pringle town site making arrowheads and waiting for wildlife to come for water. As an ideal location for checking entry into the Black Hills, Brigadier General George Crook in 1876 set up Post V for soldiers and mules near a point of rocks. The soldiers were to evacuate miners, and settlers, and subdue raiding Indian Parties. The location was called Rocks by the Department of Dakota.

During the next ten years, Jack Skinner, an ill Englishman, started a hay-station stage stop. Bill Fenwick arrived and built a two-story log house which served as the post office. During this interval the name became Point of Rocks. Skinner and Fenwick quarreled bitterly, starting with ownership of ducks on the local pond. The local epic reports Skinner had taken too much "acifidity" for pain, developed side effects and went to tell Fenwick in his underwear he was dying. He did die and was buried with his wife and nephew at the Point of Rocks small cemetery. The local authorities became suspicious due to the long history of quarreling, and exhumed the body. They did not find any apparent foul play. (This gravesite is on private property).

The Pringle family came in route to Custer, but stayed in Pringle purchasing the stage stop buildings, out buildings, and an unknown amount of acreage. Mrs. Anna Pringle was accustomed to hardship and hard work. She served

meals at the Stage Stop utilizing items from her garden. The railroad survey crew boarded at the Pringle home in 1888-1889. It was believed that the soft water of Point of Rocks would surely rate a train stop.

Once again, the water source that attracted the Indians, the Calvary, and the wildlife, now was the deciding factor for the train station. The railroad purchased land from the Pringles, and the right to pump water to the rail station. The location of the train stop took the town from its' original Point of Rocks location to the current. The train station was named Pringle after the Pringle family. It included a water tower, depot, stockyards, coal shoot, and section house. A two-story store structure with 12 rooms above was planned by the locals who refused to pay the exorbitant price wanted by the railroad for town land. This structure was originally built outside the "town" and later moved, by 8 teams of horses pulling the structure over rolling logs, to a location on Main Street. Later it was added onto for a dance hall, and other public functions. The dances caused the kerosene to slosh in the lamps. This building burned in the 40s.

With the money from the sale of the land to the railroad, the Pringles built a larger home near the Skinner home. Today, after 100 years, it stands as it was built, with banister and stained glass windows, and carved front door. The railroad provided Mrs. Pringle with running water in the home, quite a luxury for 1890. W.H. Pringle passed away before living in the bigger home. However, Mrs. Pringle and two young children kept the early day Bed and Breakfast operation going for 15 years.

Early mining in the area was made by hopeful gold seekers generally operating a spindles winch and shovel. A rather large gold operation set up on Beiver Creek (named for an Army man who was drowned here–but today known as Beaver Creek), east of the Fenwick home. This company used teams of horses, slips and drags to trench off a waterway along the creek. No large amount of gold was ever found in this area.

The Lime Kiln was a mainstay for years, and eventually shipped lime to the Homestake Mine in Lead via the railroad. The Granite Company didn't operate for any length of time, although the intent was to cut up and polish the granite from the Point of Rocks into tombstones. Luckily, it didn't materialize, and the Point of Rocks still remains. Abington Pottery shipped Feldspar out on the rail cars. When the Feldspar Company started operating in 1934, it opened up an entire new industry for the area. Feldspar was abundant and the company would buy a ton or 10 tons. Trucks lined up for a long distance to load the feldspar. Mining became an industry for anyone who didn't mind hard work.

Agriculture was, and is, the mainstay industry, with fertile valley land, sub-irrigated fields, abundance of water, and hard working people eking out a living in the area. The stockyards nearby allowed stock shipping to the Omaha markets.

Early sawmills were abundant and moved around in the timber to the most convenient location, dependent on the season. Lumber was hauled in lumber wagons by horse teams originally. Later, three stationary mills were operational in Pringle as well. Each mill had a specialty; shingles, plaining mills, gain doors, railroad ties, telegraph or telephone poles, pitch posts, and later treated posts.

Pringle is geologically unique in its location. It is bordered on all sides with different formations. There are granite sills, Deadwood formation, Limestone deposits, and Demereau Mountain which attracts geology students from around the world with its unique variety of minerals.

The Pringle cemetery has been special to many generations. Some may be in Pringle for only a short time and request to be buried here, as the best years of their lives were in Pringle. Others have no further wishes than to live and die in Pringle.

Railroad History

Pringle: High Line Mile Post 32.3 — Continuing northeast from Loring, the Burlington's rails extended on to Pringle. Sidings (additional parallel short tracks on which railroad cars or engines could sit idle, or on which one train could pass another) built at Pringle allowed for the loading of many commodities and materials over the years including grain, cattle, horses, and feldspar. Several sawmills in the area also provided bridge timbers, railroad ties, and lumber in earlier days.

Thirsty steam locomotives were treated to water at the Pringle tank, a fixture in the community noted for its obvious leaks and icicles in the winter (the tank was torn down in the 1960s). The depot was also a fixture in the community until the 1950s. A siding for loading feldspar remained in place until the track was torn up following the line's 1986 abandonment.

Leaky water tower in Pringle. /Rick Mills Collection

Virginia wild rye grass. /Aleen Golis

At lower elevations, particularly those areas along drainages, the deciduous woods cohabit with a variety of wild rye grasses, the one shown here is the Virginia Wild Rye. This type of grass prefers open habitats, which also includes grasslands and ravines, especially where the soil is sandy, gravelly or rocky. This grass can reach two to four feet high, and is easily recognized by the green pointed leaves as well as its nodding flowering spikes after the plant has matured. It is desirable for cool season pasturing because it resumes growth in both spring and the fall. Due to its frequent growth periods, it is also highly used to replenish vegetation in range and prairies areas.

Ox-eye daisy. /Aleen Golis

The Ox-Eye Daisy is very common along disturbed areas such as roadsides, railroad embankments and trailsides. The stem can grow to as much as 2-feet and support a solitary flower head. Even though this plant was originally introduced as an ornamental from Eurasia, it has become quite at home across the temperate zones of the States. It is so at home in the Black Hills that many consider it undesirable. Grazing animals don't particularly like it due to its taste, and the root system spreads more rapidly due to overgrazing.

Another plant species that prefers disturbed areas is the poison hemlock. This biennial was also introduced to North America from Eurasia and has quickly acclimated itself to its surroundings. The whole plant is extremely poisonous (after all Socrates' final drink came from this plant!) and can easily be confused with innocuous plants like parsley when it is shorter.

Poison hemlock. /Lynn Eyermann

American elm tree (right) and leaf detail (above). /Lynn Eyermann

One tree that is found in abundance in this area of the Black Hills is the American elm. Throughout the years, this tree has seen many uses: wood for fuel, posts of earthen lodges were made from forked trees; chunks were made into mortars and pestles, small woodland animals' feast of the seeds, buds and flowers, and larger game browse on its leaves.

Truly wild elk have been absent in the Black Hills since the late 1800s. A reintroduction project was begun in 1900, and continued over the next twenty years. We now have close to 5,000 in the Black Hills. Nationally, this species was near to being wiped out later in the early 1900s, but the numbers have increased to a population of over 500,000 animals, contained mostly in the west and mountain regions of the continent. These animals are a great help in maintaining the forest habitat by eating small shrubs and saplings. Their shed antlers are also beneficial to the smaller creatures, providing minerals and salts. They are also very important to the state's economy, as sportsmen must purchase licenses from the state for hunting. These hunters then also provide much needed revenue in those communities where hunting is allowed in season.

Bugling elk. /Lynn Eyermann

This fellow was within 3 feet of us when this was taken, and had come up to us from about 20 feet down the trail /Aleen Golis

Back to the Trail

The small town of Pringle is a laid back reclusive type of town that currently thrives on lumbering and elk hunting. Known as "The Elk Capital," the locals can tell you where to find multiple hunted species: elk, turkeys, and deer–both white tail and mule deer. If you are one that likes to chance seeing wildlife along the trail, it goes without saying that early morning and late evening are the times for most wildlife to be out and about. Cottontail rabbits are plentiful on the trail in multiple places, and it is not unusual to find they run under your bike and occasionally prove to be very curious.

The trail leaves Pringle going north along the highway for a few miles. The traffic nearby tends to interrupt the usual quiet of the trail, but is short-lived. It is along this section that the old homestead buildings are viewed. The tall barn is curious in that it is shaped so differently and is one of the more photographed barns.

Barn located about 1 mile North of Pringle. /Dan Putney

Plenty Star Ranch (MP-34) is known to on occasion host vacationers who bring their own horses, having multiple corrals, and living next to the National Forest for lots of trail riding area. He is a long time resident of Pringle, having been raised in the area, and are well-versed on the local history, while she is a great local artist with a small shop along the trail where she sells her paintings.

Buffalo are grazed in the next ranch, but at no time is the Mickelson Trail in their pasture. They are usually nearby and easily visible. At the White Elephant trailhead (MP-35.7) (GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 43.653867, Long.: -103.590417), the remains of White Elephant mine across the road may be seen where feldspar was once mined. These hillside disturbances, or holes, are common for the rest of the trail, some large, some small.

White Elephant trail head with trail bikers. /Aleen Golis

Sanator was first named after the South Dakota state tuberculosis sanatorium. It later became the Custer State Hospital, then the Custer Youth Corrections Center and currently is being sold, and not inhabited. Along this section you will find one of four 'W" signs signaling the engineers to blow their whistles, and also several concrete mileposts remain visible. The trail has retained two concrete bridges, and one of these is found at MP-37.

Rocky outcroppings jutting into grassy meadows are common. You may notice some llamas and alpacas along this section of the trail. Although they should be used to the sight of bikers along the trail, I have yet to pass by that they don't want to visit over the fence. They seem to enjoy the attention.

Some of the areas along the northern portion of trail next to Custer and again just south of Hill City have wild raspberries along the trail the last of July. Wild blueberries are found occasionally, but they are not common. You will find chokecherries plentiful most years.

Wherever one finds berries, of course, the birds are also more plentiful and varied. Multiple varieties of finches, blue jays, blue birds, and many others are visible to those with glasses and the inclination to spend time bird watching. A good birdwatcher book along will give the rider time to rest and take in the tranquil beauty of the trail. There are multiple benches along the trail in specific historic spots that are made just for sittin' and mussin'.

As you approach Custer and top the hill ready to coast into town, you will note the old mill setting beside the trail. This area is currently a lumber mill, but was at one time a feldspar mill and loaded its mined ore into the trains. The trestle over the trail here provides the bed for a country road into a housing development, but it also touts one of the original mile marker signs documenting the location to a hundredth of a mile.

Barn between Pringle and Custer, at MP-36. /Aleen Golis

Harbach Trailhead in Custer. The Chamber of Commerce building is behind the caboose, across the street. /Aleen Golis

CUSTER

MP-44.5
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 43.765129, Long.: -103.597869
Trailhead: Harbach Centennial Park
* Food * Gas * Lodging * Parking *
* Post Office * Restrooms * Shops * RV Parks *
* Attractions * Custer State Park * Crazy Horse Memorial *
MP-44.5
15.6 miles to Tracy Park, Hill City — 12.4 miles to Pringle
Zip Code: 57730
Population: 1,860
Custer Chamber of Commerce: 1-800-992-9818
www.custersd.com Email: info@custersd.com
www.mickelsontrailaffiliates.com

GETTING THERE: Located one block south of the Main Street in Custer on highway 385/16. Turn south one block east of the center stoplight in town. Multiple signs direct the way. Visitors Center & Chamber are the same building across street from Harbach Park.

NOTE: Businesses in **bold print** have supported this project, and they appreciate your support–check out their ads in this book for possible discounts.

Attractions

Crazy Horse Monument: www.crazyhorsememorial.org

1881 Custer County Courthouse Museum: 411 Mt. Rushmore Rd., www.1881courthousemuseum.com

Custer State Park: www.custerstatepark.info

Buffalo Ridge Theater; Music, magic and more: www.buffaloridgetheater.com

Camping

Fort Welikit Family Campground: 24992 Sylvan Lake Road Hwy. 85, 1-877-673-4790, www.blackhillsrv.com

Big Pine Campground: 1-800-235-3981, www.bigpinecampground.com, 2 miles w. of town.

Black Hills National Forest Oreville Campground: MP-54.7, www.reservations.gov

Buffalo Ridge Camp Resort: www.blackhillsvacations.com/BuffaloRidgeCampResort

Custer's Gulch RV Park & Campground: 800-531-5923, car & 4-wheeler rentals, www.custersgulch.com

French Creek RV Park: 605-673-3161, www.fcrvpk.org

Wheels West RV Park: 605-673-2570, www.wheelswest-rv.com

Food

Begging Burro Mexican Bistro, 529 Mt. Rushmore Rd., 605-673-3300

Buglin` Bull Restaurant, 511 Mt. Rushmore Rd., 605-673-4477

Custer Corral Buffet: 140 Mt. Rushmore Rd., 605-673-4402

Mt Rushmore Brewing Co., 140 Mt. Rushmore Rd, 605-673-4200

Baker's Bakery & Cafe': 541 E. Mt. Rushmore Rd., 605-673-2253

Custer County Candy Company, 506 Mt. Rushmore Rd..

Sage Creek Rille, 611 Mt. rushmore Rd., 605-673-2424

Lodging

Best Western Buffalo Ridge Inn: 605-673-2275, www.bestwestern.com/prop-42004

Chief Motel: 605-673-2318, www.chiefmotel.com

Days Inn: 1-800-DAYSINN, www.blackhillsdaysinn.com

Econo Lodge: phone 605-593-0872

Holiday Inn Express: 605-673-2500, www.hiexpress.com/custersd

Rock Crest Lodge: 605-673-4323, www.rockcrestlodge.com

Shady Rest Motel:1-800-567-8259, www.gwtc.net/-shadyrst

The Roost Resort: 1-800-294-4603, www.blackhills.com/roost

Shops

High Mountain Outfitters: 516 Mt. Rushmore Rd, 605-717-2982, www.highmountainoutfitterssd.com

Wine Tasting:
Calamity Jane, 512 Mt. Rushmore Rd., 605-673-2269,
www.calamityjanemercantile.com

Custer History

Ann Marrow

No documented white men had ever entered into the spiritual Lakota territory; that is, until 1874 when General George Custer led a U.S. Government-commanded expedition into the Black Hills. He brought with him more than 1,500 men, including geologists, a photographer, hunters, two miners and news writers.

The expedition traveled from Fort Abraham Lincoln in North Dakota, entering the Black Hills from the west, which is now Wyoming. The expedition reached the (Custer) area on July 30th. Setting up camp in what they named Golden Valley, just three miles east of what is now Custer City. General Custer and his men were fascinated with the Black Hills, with their unique rock outcroppings and winding streams. In fact, members of the Cavalry climbed a rocky knoll just south of the camp and carved "G.A.C. 74" into the hard granite.

Gold was discovered by a prospector named Horatio Ross in French Creek. As history would have it, Mr. Ross rushed into General Custer's tent, excited over his discovery. He sprinkled the bits of shining metal on the general's desk, exclaiming, "gold!" Custer immediately reported the news to the War Department.

The 7th Cavalry stayed in Custer for only two weeks before the troopers traveled back to Fort Abraham Lincoln. By then the news of the successful venture had spread like wildfire.

In December of that same year, a group of gold-seekers, known as the Gordon Party journeyed west from Sioux City, Iowa. Twenty-five men, one little boy and one woman made the 460-mile trek to the area in hopes of finding gold, and striking it rich, and making a better life for themselves. Behind their slow oxen carts, it took them nearly two months to reach Custer's camp. One man died along the way.

After reaching the Golden Valley, they rushed to build a stockade. This stockade, a replica of which still stands at the head of Stockade Lake has been called the Plymouth Rock of the Black Hills.

All winter, the men of the party worked in the cold gravel and ice of French Creek, panning gold and dreaming of their fortune. But in the spring of 1875, United States Government troops found them and forced them to leave the Black Hills. They were transported to Fort Laramie. Members of the group were so cold and hungry that they did not put up a fight. Why did the U.S. Government force the Gordon Party to leave? Because the Black Hills were the sacred land of the Indians, promised to them forever by the United States.

Annie Tallent, the first white woman in the Black Hills was a member of the Gordon Party. She later returned and worked to create schools for the miners' children. She became the first school teacher in the area, and wrote a book about her travels and the early history of the Black Hills.

By this time, many more gold-seekers were moving into the Black Hills. The U.S. Government tried to turn them back, but there were too many. The prospectors outnumbered the troops and the hills were soon bustling with people. In the spring of 1876 the population of Custer reached an amazing ten- thousand. But rumor of a great gold strike in Deadwood Gulch caused people to pull out and move north. Within a few weeks, very few residents remained in Custer.

Congress opened the Black Hills for settlement in February, 1877 and after Custer quit "booming", the remaining townspeople began to build. Soon, the little community was home to city and county officials, houses, schools, merchants, and churches.

Information collected and compiled by Ann Morrow;

Custer Area Chamber of Commerce.

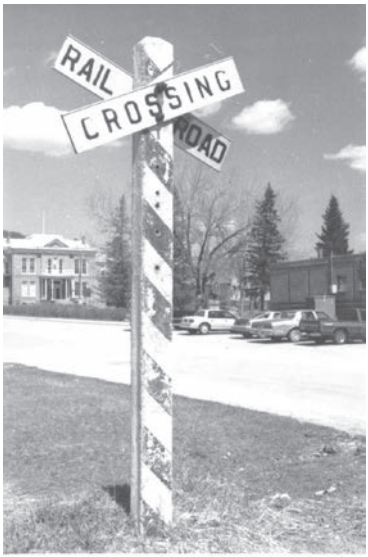
Mining History

Custer was the first mining community in the Black Hills. Main Street was made wide enough to be able to turn around a freight wagon being pulled by a double team of oxen. French Creek runs through Custer, and was in this creek that Horatio M. Ross found gold while he was with Lt. Colonel Custer's expedition through the Black Hills in 1874. As you enter Custer from the south, you will pass the Feldspar Mill. Mica and feldspar are still being mined and milled in the Custer area by the Pacer Corporation.

Going north out of Custer you will come to the Burn Siding where the Heritage Village now stands. Burn Siding was the shipping point for several mines in that area: the Old Bill, the Saginaw, the Gold Fish and the Tenderfoot, to name a few. Moving on past Crazy Horse Mountain, the going gets easier. About five miles south of Hill City on Spring Creek, there was a place called Oreville, close to where the Oreville Campground is now. Spring Creek is another creek where some rich deposits of placer gold were found during the gold rush days. A couple of mines worth noting in this area were the St. Elmo and the Clara Belle located on the road to Sylvan Lake just over the hill to the east from Oreville.

Railroad History

Custer: High Line Milepost 44.5 — The rails of the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad reached Custer on October 6th, 1890. Once the rails entered the oldest town in the Black Hills, a new form of rush was on in Custer, the rush to haul passengers and goods from the central Hills by rail. The Burlington built a depot, section house, livestock shipping pens, and several sidings one block south of the city's wide east-west Main Street. A great deal of mining and logging related shipments originated at Custer, as well as livestock movements in and out of the lush central Hills grazing pastures.



Custer. The two-story building in the background is the current site of the Custer County Museum, a great exploration into the history of the area. /Rick Mills Collection

Over the years, feldspar processing and loading became big business in Custer. The two feldspar plants shipped a great deal of product out by rail up until the last load, a single car, shipped out on the last train from Custer on October 29, 1986. Feldspar loading was then transferred to a transloading facility three miles northeast of Edgemont at the end of the former High Line.

RR Reminates/Andy Smithson

Flora & Fauna

Two woody plants that are in abundance in and around the city of Custer are the western red currant and red raspberry. While the currant bush will grow in practically any type of soil and at all elevations, it is especially common in the southern section of the Hills. This plant is one of the earliest bloomers, usually for a short time in May, and will bear fruit throughout the area's temperate summer. The branches are usually stubby and quite gnarled, giving it a rough and rugged appearance. While the berries serve as good summer food for the smaller woodland rodent mammals and birds, it also provides hardy winter browse for the larger grazing creatures. By contrast, the red raspberry forms low-height growth thickets near the edges of tree groves where there is plenty of water. Raspberries grow wild along multiple sections of the trail and are usually ripening about the last week of July. People aren't the only mammals who relish this colorful berry; birds and mammals of all sizes take advantage of the tasty food. Large deer and such will browse on the leaves, but to a limited extent, while humans use the leaves and flowers for teas. The thickets themselves provide useful camouflage for many of its four-footed neighbors.

Western red currant. /Aleen Golis

Wild red raspberry. /Aleen Golis

One of the more colorful herbal plants in this area is the wild bergamot (often called bee balm or horsemint). It can grow quite tall (3 foot or more), and has a simple, square-shaped stem. This plant creates a dazzling display during the late summer when it densely blooms with lavender to light blue flowers. Wild bergamot contains a natural antiseptic compound, which, was used by some, as a vapor treatment for colds and other upper respiratory illnesses. It could also be used topically in the treatment of wounds and infections. Mixed with other choice medicinal plants and prepared as a tea, the plants have been used to treat other minor ailments such as gastritis and stomach discomfort, headache and fever.

Wild Bergamot. /Aleen Golis

American bison. /Aleen Golis

Even though you are not likely to see a bison wandering on the trail, the bison (or more commonly and mistakenly called "buffalo") is still of great importance to this region. Although the wild, wide-ranging creature was practically annihilated by the 1890s (the total population had been reduced to a mere 1,100 animals), large public herds can now be found in many national or state parks. There are also a growing number of private herds throughout the country. Having rebounded from being an endangered species, the bison is highly regarded and has always been very essential to the humans who co-existed with the massive beasts. The plains peoples wasted very little of each kill; besides meat, there were bones for weapons and tools, and hides for shelters, blankets and clothing. Today, these animals play a vital role in maintaining the prairie ecosystem. To many visitors from other countries, these beasts also represent the free and open spirit of the western prairie.

Back to the Trail

The Mickelson Trail trailhead in Custer is at Harbach Park. Located within Custer's city limits, the park has several covered picnic areas, an appealing gazebo, and a Burlington Northern donated caboose. The Chamber Building located across the street from the trailhead has memorabilia and information about attractions in the area. Custer history dates back to the 1880s era, and you will find an amazing well organized and informative Custer County Museum on main street that is worth a visit. As the oldest city on the trail, Custer has many of the original buildings remaining

Hot air balloon lift-off. /Aleen Golis

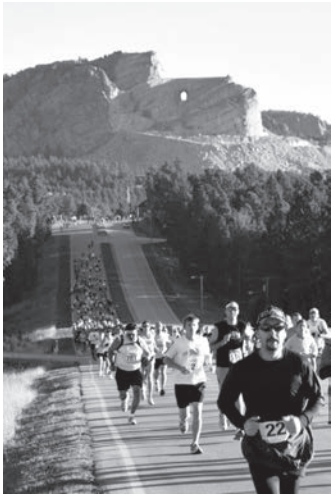
that you'll want to see while in Custer. Many of the buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and there is a self guided tour pamphlet available at the chamber office located at the trailhead.

Today, Custer presents a proud heritage of Gold Rush times celebrating Gold Discovery Days during the last weekend in July with multiple activities to please the visitor. Activities include hot air balloon flights with usually 10-14 participants, and a very nice parade with regional participation, a huge craft show, etc. The Custer Lions organization serves a pancake breakfast in the main-street park, a volksmarch walk and a 5 K Run use the Mickelson Trail, arts and crafts booths, and a Court House Parking lot dance are part of the festivities. Check out the Custer Chamber website for more details each year. The season is rounded out by the Buffalo Round-Up and Arts Festival that occurs in Custer State Park the last weekend in September.

A relatively new spur of the trail completed in 2006 extends the trail from Custer going east 3 miles to Stockade Lake. This paved spur will get bikers closer to Custer State Park where other short excursion trails already exist. Custer State Park is known for its wildlife, especially buffalo. Each summer finds one or more tourists has a confrontation with the buffalo where the buffalo always score 1, visitors 0. Sometimes this has included motorcycles being tossed into the air with the rider, as occurred in the 2003 summer, and sometimes it involves tourists getting too close while trying to get a good picture. The buffalo are very fast, and unpredictable. As the trail extends into the Custer State Park, I would be remiss if I did not warn readers that the buffalo are NOT pets, and are dangerous. Bikers in the park MUST NOT have timelines, so that if buffalo are on the road/trail, one sits down a long distance away, and waits for the buffalo to move–- OR – some nice tourist takes pity and offers a ride in the back of a pickup truck through the herd. It is not safe to ride near buffalo at any time.

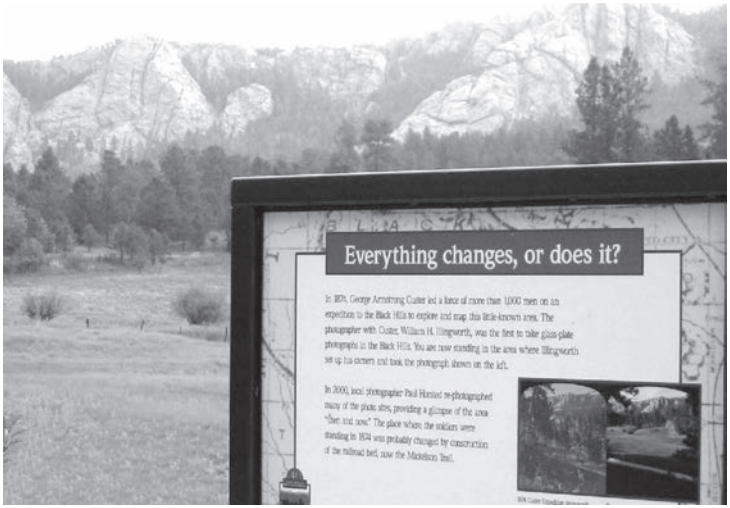
There are several commercial campgrounds located in Custer: French Creek RV Campground near the trailhead, Fort Welikit Family Campground is located at 24992 Sylvan Lake Road and sports over 100 RV sites with full hook-ups and horse corrals,and has supported this book through advertising. Custer has numerous motels, and hotels that are all open during the summer, but if you are traveling in the winter, it is best to call ahead to the chamber to find lodging that is open.

As you leave Custer going north, the trail has several areas with soft gravel which has been placed into ruts left by rain runoff, or just plain rough areas where the runoff has chose to run down the trail. Either of these could spill a rider quickly if they were not aware and watching. Because the trail is a multiuse trail, you may find yourself sharing with horses, or what they have left behind. The South Dakota Game Fish & Parks trail patrol ride the area on bike, work on trail maintenance, and check for trail passes.

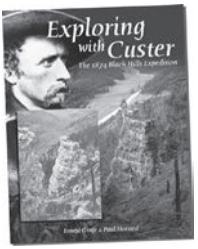


Crazy Horse Run. /Aleen Golis

At MP-49, an interpretive sign marks the area where, in 1874, photographer W.H. Illingworth took a photo during General George Custer's Expedition to the Black Hills. The original photo is shown on the sign with a modern matching view by local photographer Paul Horsted, co-author with Ernest Grafe of a book entitled, "Exploring With Custer: The 1874 Black Hills Expedition". The book contains nearly 50 "then and now" photos of the Black Hills, along with a guide to following Custer's trail (which crosses the Mickelson Trail in several locations). It will interest anyone who enjoys the Black Hills and local history. More info at www.custertrail.com or the book can be found at local galleries and book stores.



Trail interpretive sign at MP-49 shows "then and now" pictures from the Custer Expedition in 1874 and 2001. /Aleen Golis



(www.custertrail.com)

The visitor may hike, bike, or horseback ride, and see the Crazy Horse Memorail (MP -51.0) from the trail. The vision of Crazy Horse sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski included a full university and each stage of expansion of the memorial is with that goal in mind. The Sculpture is planned to be 500 ft. high and 600 ft. long. Crazy Horse was a Lakota Sioux Chief who defeated General George Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. They have a great visitor's center with a grand museum, gift shops and café. Each year on the first weekend in June there is a 2 day Volksmarch up to, and on top of, the arm of the monument. This walk of 6.2 miles takes several hours and is considered strenuous. Starting in the fall of 2013, a second day volksmarch has been added due to the high demand. Held during the Custer State Park Buffalo Round-up, it gives the public a second chance to enjoy walking up the monument.

A shelter with a picnic table with interpretive signs lies at MP-55.4. Shortly after this at MP-55.7, almost exactly half way of the entire trail is the ability to camp in a developed National Forest Service Campground named Oreville Campground. Leaving the trail just before Oreville shelter, ride out and take the oil road north for about 0.2 mile where you will see the Oreville Campground on your right. There are no showers at this campground. This area was named Oreville by the Burlington Railroad and refined beryllium. This is the only NFS Campground located very near the trail for the entire length of the trail.

Side Trip to Mount Rushmore. If you are heading north from Crazy Horse, leave the trail at about mile post 58.1 at Rafter J Road. It's 0.3 mile to Highway 244, and another 9 miles uphill to Mt. Rushmore. While this ride is very rideable for experienced riders, the difficult uphill ride on a narrow busy highway precludes it being a safe, young child/family activity. There is a planned trail expansion to Mount Rushmore in progress, and currently waiting for construction funding as the necessary studies have all been completed. Currently, this side trip uses the current highway.

From the trailhead at Tracy Park in Hill City, turn left on the sidewalk and follow the trail south for 2.6 miles. You will have just crossed the bridge over highway 385. Look for a small path on the right side of the trail leading down to the road. Go under the bridge and head south for 0.2 of a mile to Highway 244 east. It is then 9 miles to Mount Rushmore. A bike rack may be found on the right side of the entrance pillars. For a nice break, try a monumental scoop of ice cream at the Mount Rushmore concessions.

Return to the trail by retracing your ride up or for a loop, continue down Highway 244 into Keystone. This is a quick 2 mile screaming downhill ride. At the stoplight in Keystone, take a left onto Old Hill City Road. This is a 10.2 mile uphill ride on a paved road with little traffic back to Hill City. It also follows the route of the 1880 train so you will cross the tracks several times. Once in Hill City, you're back on the Mickelson trail. Take a left on the sidewalk and follow the trail by the 1880 Train Depot for 0.3 mile to Tracy Park. The loop is 23 miles long. Many of the Hill City businesses are big supporters of the Mickelson Trail, and many people are working toward a trail extention going up to Mount Rushmore that will keep people off the highways in the future. While the initial studies have been completed, and fundraising began, the actual construction has not yet began in Spring 2016

Back to the Trail

The Rafter J-bar Ranch (www.rafterj.com) MP-57.1, have full amenities including a swimming pool and is located on the trail near the highway intersection with Hwy 244 that goes to Mount Rushmore. Pine Rest Cabins MP-58.5, (www.pinerestcabins.com) is located in the same area, without a swimming pool. Tour companies pick up folks from the local Campgrounds to tour the area and Mt. Rushmore if desired. All the above lodgings are within 3-5 miles of Hill City. Another full service Campground with a pool is located 6 miles from Mt. Rushmore on highway 244 named the Mt Rushmore KOA (www.palmergulch.com). They also have cabins, campground, and vacation homes available, and are on the side trip to Mt. Rushmore. As you near Hill City, Crooked Creek Resort has multiple facilities available, ie. motel, cabins, RV and tent sites as well as a breakfast , all making reunions here quite feasible. At the South edge of Hill City one finds the newest campground facilities that includes a few hostel type rooms, a few cabins, and spacious RV sites that are big rig friendly called Trailside Park Resort, www.trailsideparkresort.com. They are friendly folks who have helped support this endeavor, so be sure to use them as you stay in Hill City.

Suggested For Young Riders

The trail between Hill City and Custer climbs from either town toward a peak ¼-mile S. of Crazy Horse. These wonderful downhill runs either 6 miles into Custer or about 11 miles into Hill City, both making an easy successful riding area for the very young or the older rider. Bicycle shuttle businesses often take riders to this area.

View of Crazy Horse from the Mickelson Trail. /Aleen Golis

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Hill City, SD
605-574-2344

High Mountain
Outfitters
740 N Main Street
Spearfish, SD
605-717-2982

High Mountain
Outfitters
503 N River Street
Hot Springs, SD
605-745-4494

High Mountain
Outfitters
516 Mt. Rushmore Rd.
Custer, SD
605-717-2982

HIGHMOUNTAINOUTFITTERSSD.COM

BEGGING BURRO
MEXICAN BISTRO
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529 Mt. Rushmore Road
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Authentic Mexican Cuisine
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RESTAURANT AND SPORTS BAR
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511 Mt. Rushmore Road

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Featuring a 55 Foot Long Buffet
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605-673-4200
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Mt. Rushmore
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Monumental
Food & Brew

Monumental Food & Brew

Locally Crafted Beer Paired
with Delicious Food

Not all trailheads have these yet, but some do. /Aleen Golis

To see these and many more pictures of the Mickelson Trail visit our Flickr page at: http://www.flickr.com/photos/97281418@N07/

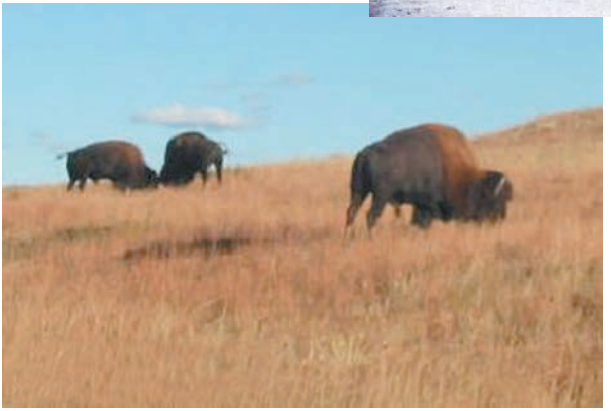
Rochford stored bikes for Trail Trek.

Author, Aleen Golis shows sign post along the trail which was "purchased" by Mickelson Trail Affiliates. The MTA has purchased 4 milepost markers, MP 16, 24, 25, and 32.

A deer and some turkeys on Argyle Road, between Minnekahta Junction and Hot Springs.

Prairie North of Minnekahta Jct.

Fall colors near Mystic.



A grazing buffalo in the foreground, with two others "fighting" in the background.

Tailings are still visible at Castleton.

Fall colors along the Kirk Loop Junction.

Falls on Rapid Creek along the trail, near Rochford.

Tailings mound from the Homestake Mine at Lead.

Trail at Milepost 7, near Edgemont.

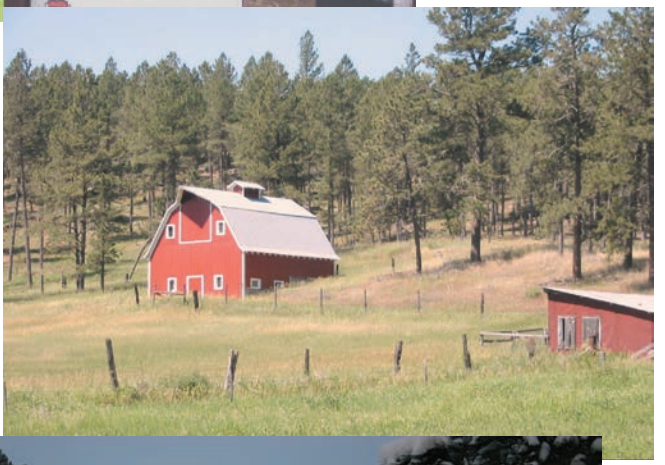
Another bridge along the trail near Mystic.

Mickelson Trail Trek 2006 Enjoying Sheep Canyon.

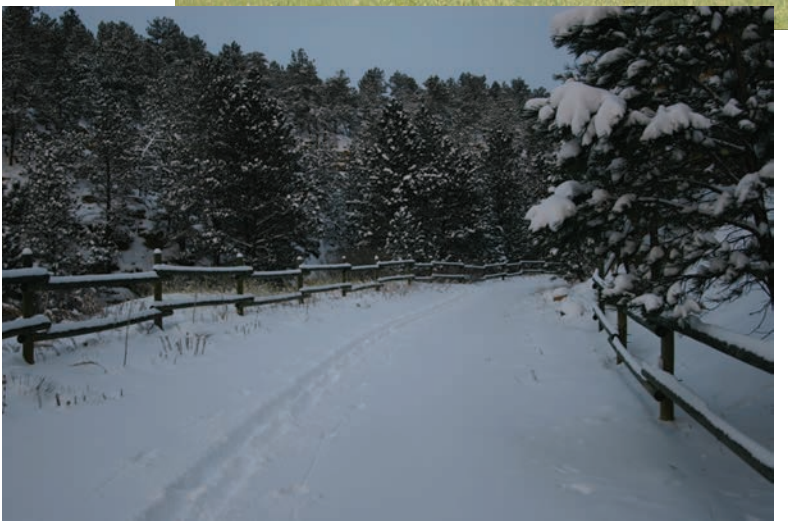
Leanhorse 100 Mile run support station in August 2006. It was cold, and raining, and about midnight when this picture was taken of the 2nd and 3rd place runners who had completed 91.2 miles at this point in 17-18 hours.

Fall colors at Kirk Trailhead.

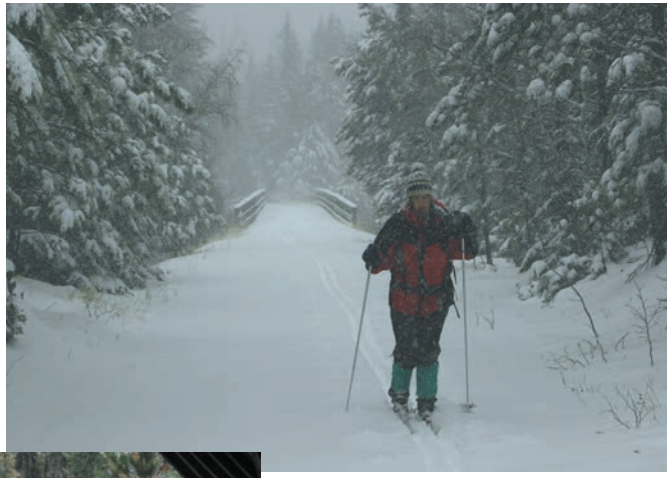
Interpretive sign at milepost 49.



Red barn near milepost 36, between Pringle and Custer.



Winter playground



February Ski Trip between Custer and Hill City.

A tunnel frames a few trees showing off their new fall colors.

Mystic chapel.

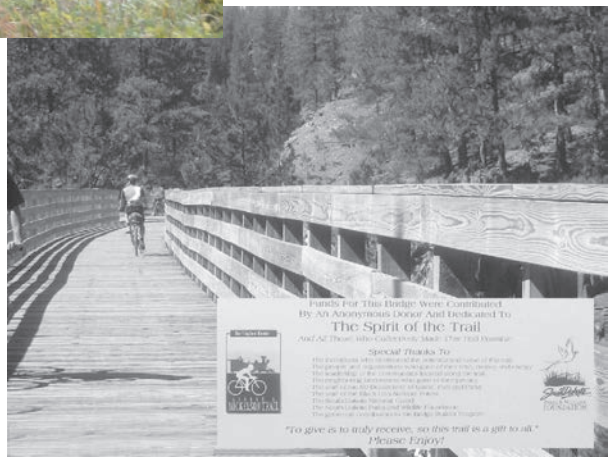
Fall colors along the trail near Mystic.

Trailhead at Mystic.

Barn near Pringle. (Photo courtesy of Dan Putney.)

A biking family, who also camped along the trail, took a break near Rochford.

Remnants of the Standby Mine, near Rochford, are seen from the trail.



"Spirit of the Trail" bridge.

A trail bridge, near Deadwood, is reflected in the creek. This scene was changed with a road change in 2005, and now doesn't exist.

Snow-covered trail north of Hill City.

These turkeys are making use of the trail too, between Edgemont and Minnekahta Junction.

Fall Ride in September.

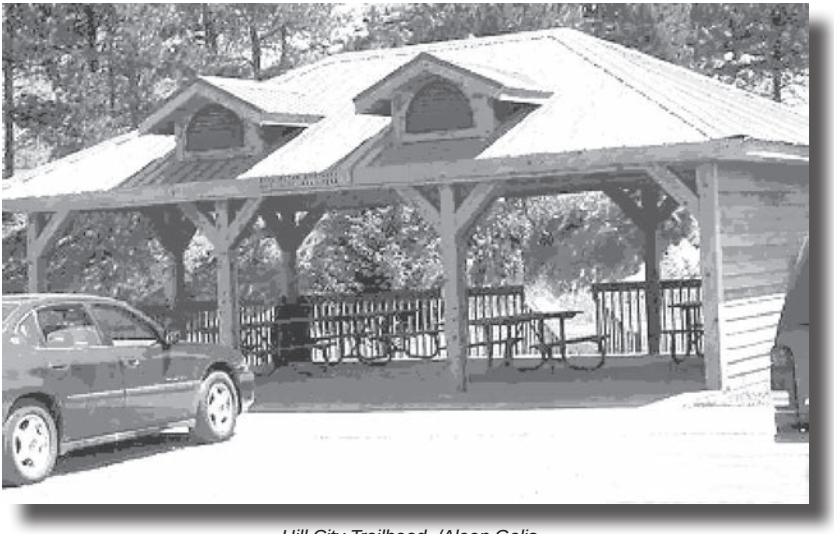
Trekkers are reflected in Beaver Dam during the 2003 Trek.

The approach to Tunnel B.

Big Mick Lunch Break

A small flock of turkeys enjoying the sunshine near milepost 12.

Winter Wonderland, February. Located between Custer and Hill City. Picture was included in the National Rails to Trails Calendar 2005.



Hill City Trailhead. /Aleen Golis

HILL CITY

MP-60.1
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 43.927400, Long.: -103.573983
Trailhead: Tracy Park
* Bike Shop * Shuttle Service * Food * Gas * Lodging * Camping *
* RV Park * Restrooms * Post Office * Art Galleries *
* Attractions: * 1880 Train * Mt. Rushmore *
Zip Code 57745
Population: 948
Hill City Chamber: 605.574.2368,
www.hillcitysd.com E-mail: info@hillcitysd.com
14.6 miles to Mystic;
15.6 to Harbach Park in Custer

GETTING THERE: Hwy 385, Take Bypass loop around Main Street of Hill City. Tracy Park is well marked & lies just south of the 1880 Train Station. Turn east into the Trailhead Park. The majestic shelter pictured above can be seen from the bypass loop.

NOTE: Businesses in **bold print** have supported this project, and they appreciate your support–check out their ads in the book for possible discounts.

Attractions

1880 Train/Black Hills Central Railroad: 605-574-2222, www.1880train.com

Jon Crane Gallery: 256 Main St., 605-574-4440, www.joncranegallery.com

Crazy Horse Memorial, www.crazyhorsememorial.org

South Dakota State Railroad Museum: 605-574-9000, www.sdsrm.org

The Black Hills Institute: 605-574-3919, 117 Main St., www.museum.bhigr.com

Xanterra Parks & Resorts, Mount Rushmore Concessions, Mount Rushmore National Memorial

Bike Shop/Rental/Shuttle

Mickelson Trail Adventures: 605-574-4094, located along the trail, www.mickelsontrailadventures.com

Rabbit Bicycles & Repair: 175 Walnut Ave. 605-574-4392, www.rabbitbike.com

Campground/Cabins

Black Hills Trailside Park Resort: 605-574-9079, www.trailsideparkresort.com

Newton Fork Ranch: 605-574-2220, www.NewtonForkRanch.com

Crooked Creek Resort, Inc: 24184 Hwy 385/16, 605-574-2418, www.crookedcreekresort.com

High Country Guest Ranch: 605-574-9003, www.highcountryranch.com

Rafter J Bar Ranch Camp & Cabins: 605-574-2527 or 1-888-723-8375, www.rafterj.com

Food

Heart of Hills Exxon Convenience Store: 201 Main St.

Heart of West Amoco Food Shop: 700 Main St

Alpine Inn: 133 Main St., 605-574-2749, closed Sundays, www.alpineinnhillcity.com

Bumpin'Buffalo Bar & Grill: Main St., 605-574-4100

Desperados Cowboy Restaurant , 301 Main St., 605-574-2959

Lodging

Black Hills Trailside Park Resort: 605-574-9079, www.trailsideparkresort.com

High Country Guest Ranch: 605-574-9003 www.HighCountryRanch.com

Hill City/Mt.Rushmore Super 8 Motel: 1-800-800-8000
www.hillcitysd.com/supereighthome.html

Mickelson Trail Lodging: 605-574-4000,
www.mickelsontraillodging.com

Newton Fork Ranch: 605-574-2220, www.NewtonForkRanch.com

Best Western Golden Spike Inn & Suites: 605-574-2577

Deerview BnB: 1-888-622-5274, www.deerviewbb.com

Harney Peak Inn: 605-574-2544, www.harneypeakinn.com

Heart of the Hills Vacation Homes: 1-800-493-7977,
www.blackhills.com/vacation

Lantern Inn: 1-800-456-0520, www.lantern-inn.com

Pine Rest Cabins: 1-800-333-5306, www.pinerestcabins.com

Robins Roost Cabins: 605-574-2252, www.robins-roost-cabins.com

Service

Heart of Hills Car & Truck Wash: Hwy. 385 N

Heart of Hills Laundromat: 201 Main St.

Shops

High Mountain Outfitters: 227 Main Street, 605-574-2344,
www.highmountainoutfitterssd.com

Granite Sports (outdoor & climbing): 301 Main St. 605-574-2121,
www.granitesports.biz

Hill City Visitor Center, NE Hill City at 23935 Hwy 385/Chamber supplied

Hill City History

Ed Gerken

Entering the Black Hills from the south, gold seekers took the route of Custer's earlier expedition. Enticed by stories of 'gold down in the grass roots' they prospected the many streams and gulches of the southern hills, making their way north. Gold was to be found, but most often not in paying quantities. Here and there, the gold was more plentiful and the richest ore belts were soon located. In typical frontier fashion, a town quickly sprang up whenever some lucky miner hollered "pay dirt!"

Photos from Ed Gerken's CD, "Black Hills Trails of Time" are reproduced with permission

That shout was no doubt heard when placer gold was found in rich pay streaks on the gravel bars and dry gulches along Spring Creek and Newton Fork. In no time, Hill City grew from a tent city to a cluster of cabins and businesses. Three streets were laid out on the present town site, and construction began in earnest. Many of the cabins had fireplaces and were ready to occupy, while others were in all stages of completion, a large number still lacking a roof. The roofs in those days were of either sod or split shingles called shakes. At first everything was built of logs, but soon a sawmill was harvesting the excellent timber that surrounded the town.

Built by Harney Peak Tin Mining & Manufacturing Company, and is currently the world famous Alpine Inn. /Ed Gerken Collection

Current Alpine Inn porch. /Aleen Golis

Some of the buildings on Main Street were quite large, intended for business. The anticipated business never arrived. Before the summer of 1876 had passed, the place was abandoned almost completely, as the stampeders had moved north to Deadwood Gulch. They joined the throngs of men who hoped to stake a claim in the rich new diggings.

Although the town almost ended then and there, the people soon returned when they learned all the richest deposits were already claimed. With the town's Main Street squarely on the wagon route that bisected the Black Hills, a solid community of businesses was soon built up. Many of these buildings have survived the years, and still serve both families and shopkeepers. In the 1890s, the famed Harney Peak Tin Mining & Manufacturing Company was responsible for erecting many structures in town, the best known of which is the Alpine Inn.

Once the placer gold in the streams and nearby "dry diggin's" had played out, hard rock mining began to develop. These mines attracted the attention of investors. Hill City's biggest boost came when the Harney Peak Mining Company sunk millions into the town between the years 1883 to 1893. Tin was discovered near Harney Peak in '83, and many claims were filed. The Harney Peak Co. was soon founded, and bought some 1500 claims, thus securing their hold on what they assumed would be rich deposits. Despite warnings, huge plans were laid, and investors jumped in. The management lived in luxury, all bought with the unseen investors' money. The end came when the promoter, a Mr. James Wilson of New York, scammed millions by overcapitalizing the stock, and angry investors pulled the plug. Hill City lived on, however, as by this time it had timbering, mining, ranching and a brisk mercantile market.

Hill City, circa 1908. /Ed Gerken Collection

Through the early years, Hill City was known as one of the roughest towns in the territory, eventually earning itself the nickname of 'One Mile of Hell.' It was said the town had 'a church on each end, with one mile of hell in between.' This no doubt referred to the 15 or more bars in town, and the gunfights, gambling, and rowdy behavior associated with them. By the early 1900s, however, things had pretty much settled down, with reports of court settlements outnumbering obituaries in the local newspaper.

Numerous fires claimed many of the earliest homes and businesses, and other buildings simply have not withstood the test of time. Entire blocks were wiped out in the fires of 1891 and 1902. When John Truax started his brick factory south of town in the 1900s, Hill City rebuilt in the reddish-colored native clay bricks, and today retains much of its look from that era.

The pictures below show how the town has grown and changed over the last century. And so many changes there have been!

Hill City THEN (1908). /Ed Gerken Collection

Hill City NOW. /Ed Gerken Collection

Hill City NOW (1998). /Ed Gerken Collection

Hill City THEN (1934). /Ed Gerken Collection

The permanency of brick provides the visual anchor for many of the classic views shown here, and of course, the silhouette of surrounding ridges helps locate the frame. Beyond that, however, little else has escaped at least some change. The forest has grown immensely near town, and the near-constant growth in population has homes and businesses rushing out to meet the trees head on.

Hill City today is in the midst of yet another expansion as we continue a new century of change. While it embraces the new, it is proud of its past and welcomes visitors with open arms to come enjoy the 'Heart of the Hills'.

Further reading:

Gerken, Ed; *Black Hills Trails of Time,* Computer CD-ROM: 2002

Gerken, Ed; *Hill City Then & Now*: 1998

Gerken, Ed; *One Mile of Hell, A Photographic History of Hill City*, South Dakota & the Heart of the Black Hills: 1996

Gerken, Ed; *Pioneer Journalism in the Heart of the Hills*: 1997

Wedge, Lucille; Gold Gave Birth to Hill City South Dakota: Hill City Historical Society, The Printer's Shop/Don Gerken, First Printing, July 1979.

Mining History

The second mining town in the Black Hills started out as Hillyo, but its name was later changed to Hill City. As placer gold diggings petered out, and reports of richer deposits found in Deadwood filtered in, the population of Hill City dwindled to, some say, "a man and a dog." Hill City later boomed again when rich deposits of tin were discovered in the area. The Harney Peak Tin Mining Co. built a big mill on Tin Mill Hill east of Hill City. Tin mining flourished from 1880 to 1894, at which time the Harney Peak Tin Mining Co. was forced into bankruptcy. The Mateen Mine, once a part of the Harney Peak Tin Mining Co., continued in operation, producing spodumene, a lithium ore, into the 1950s. The lithium mill building, on the south side of town, is now being used by the U.S. Forest Service as an equipment and maintenance building. Hill City's main industries now are lumber and tourism.

Moving north from Hill City, about 3/4 mile along Newton Fork, you will see on the right Wade's Gold Mill and Mining Museum. In 1980 Les and Idella Wade built a gold placer mill in the back yard as a retirement project. A few years later after the mill became a successful operation, they noticed there were a number of people interested in mining history of the Black Hills. Les had, over the years, visited a large number of the old mines throughout the hills and had accumulated considerable knowledge about them. With this information, he started collecting antique mining equipment from some of these old mines, putting together a museum. He was able to restore enough of this antique equipment to complete a working single stamp mill used to grind hard rock to release the gold from the rock so it could be recovered. In 2001 both Les and Idella passed on to the gold lined streets of heaven. Their son, Bob, and his wife, Anne, operated the placer mill and the working museum between Memorial Day and Labor Day giving tours and teaching people how to pan for gold until 2013.

Wade's Gold Mine Museum. /Aleen Golis

Farther on up near the head of Newton Fork was a thriving community known as Tigerville. This town served the King Solomon Mine and many small placer gold diggings in the area. As you reach the point where you go down hill again, you will be at Redfern Siding. In the early days, it served as a shipping point for several mining operations, such as King Solomon, Queen Bee, Gold Hill, Sunbeam and others. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was the site of the Black Hills Silica Sand Mill.

Railroad History

Hill City: High Line Milepost 60.4 — Northward from Custer, the grading and track laying crews continued to Berne, just below the present site of Crazy Horse Memorial, and on into Hill City in early November of 1889, 60.42 miles from Deadwood Junction. The railroad built a depot, water tank, and other related facilities along Spring Creek. Mining and logging quickly became sources of business in Hill City along with a steady passenger trade.

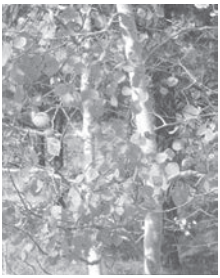
At Hill City, a spur line left the main line to serve mining operations east of the city. The spur was completed as far as Addie Camp in 1893. It was not until January 1900, that the line was extended into the mining camp of Keystone. Once the rails reached Keystone, heavier mining equipment and out going shipments were made possible – expanding the town's potential and population.

A four percent plus grade immediately out of Hill City limited tonnage considerably on the ten-mile spur. This grade necessitated that some trains doubled (taking part and coming back to get the rest of the train), or double headed (the use of two or sometimes three locomotives to take a train over the steep grade). Keystone was equipped with a small depot, several sidings, and a small turntable capable of turning the smaller steamers of that era. Locomotives could also be turned on the wye track that was constructed at the point where the spur left the High Line at Hill City.

In the early days, direct trains occasionally operated directly from Edgemont or Deadwood to Hill City and Keystone to provide service, but it was more often done as a side trip from a freight operating on the High Line between the two main terminals.

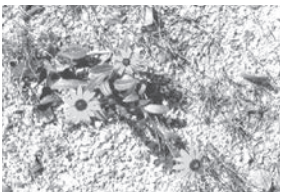
In 1982, the Burlington Northern Railroad filed to abandon the High Line from Custer, through Hill City, and north to Deadwood and Lead. The Interstate Commerce Commission approved the request in early 1983. The last train from Deadwood to Edgemont ran through Hill City on November 8, 1983. Today, the 1880 Train continues the Burlington's railroading tradition in the Black Hills by operating an original 1880 steam engine pulling same-era passenger cars from Hill City to Keystone on the Keystone standard gauge spur line.

Photo courtesy of the 1880 Train.



Aspen in it's fall golden colors. /Aleen Golis

The quaking aspen provides a spectacular splash of color against the coniferous trees when observed on the hillsides during the early part of autumn. The isolated golden color trees can almost be mistaken for gold nuggets–how appropriate for the Hill City area, where many small mining operations went belly-up looking for the elusive vein of gold. The tree often serves as the demarcation point for the transition from grassland prairies to coniferous forest. This particular species is very aggressive and propagates itself through a root sucker system. The suckers are sent out every yearly cycle. Those suckers eventually become growing trees that send out their own suckers, and so on. Obviously, when there are stands of aspen amid the evergreens, it is quite likely that most of the trees will be connected through this system of common roots. The aspen is highly susceptible to fire threats–even light fires can cause injury to the bark of the tree, which in turn allows decay fungi to set in–but it also tends to take advantage of a recently burned area and establish itself to begin a whole new stand. The aspen also has importance to the wildlife of the area, providing food and cover for many species. While the tree typically has no timber value, it has become useful for paper production.



Black-eyed Susan. /Aleen Golis

The blackeyed-Susan is very common throughout the Hills. This species grows well in areas that have been disturbed–roadsides and trailsides particularly. It seeds itself very easily and can quickly take over and become widespread. Probably due to the harsh hair-like growths on the stem, this plant is not particularly considered good forage or palatable by the wildlife, although it is considered an herb by early settlers that would use it as a stimulant for the kidneys by drinking tea made from the leaves.

Purple reedgrass. /Lynn Eyermann

Purple reedgrass (also called purple pinegrass) usually grows as isolated clumps in the midst of the needle-covered forest floor of the Harney Range, where there is little other vegetation. It can be good graze early in the growing season, providing fair energy value and poor protein, but becomes even

less palatable after midsummer. Because of its hardiness (it can grow on open ridges, dry rocky hills and woods, or even meadows) and it fibrous roots, it is valued as a restorative tool in rebuilding soil and controlling erosion.

This mountain lion made a neighborly visit to the Neal Larson family.
Photo courtesy of Neal Larson

The mountain lion is the largest of the cat species found in North America and has been classified as a threatened species in South Dakota since 1985. Since this big cat sits at the top of the food chain (their natural enemies are other large predators and humans), the early settlers saw them as a threat to their livestock and aggressively hunted and trapped them for many years. Now it's feared that they are experiencing a loss of habitat as well. There have been more reported sightings of the cat itself, and not just signs that are left, over the past few years. These sightings have been troubling to the Game Fish and Parks department because they have occurred more frequently in densely populated areas rather than the usually obscure hiding places within a territory in rugged, sparsely populated areas. This increased activity out of a normally secretive existence cannot bode well for the mountain lion in this area. A current mountain lion hunting season is held each fall to help maintain the numbers at acceptable levels.

Back to the Trail

Hill City has a number of hotels, motels, and places to eat throughout the city. As the city itself is not a large place, bikers can ride to any of the amenities easily. The Comfort Inn www.blackhillsbadlands.com/comfortinn) lies next to the trail, and has a pool for cooling off, and a bike rack in the basement to protect bikes overnight. The Super 8 is located on Main Street one block from the 1880 train station. Rabbit Bicycle and Repair located across from the 1880 Train station outfits groups with bike rentals of all types and sizes, and provides shuttle service. They stock a wide range of clothing, accessories and bicycles, and have a mechanic on duty to keep bikers rolling down the trail. Mickelson Trail Adventures will shuttle your bicycles in an enclosed trailer the length of the trail and also can provide you with rentals. They will shuttle vehicles, or people also.

"In Good Company," MP-76.7. /Jon Crane

Jon Crane, a well-known artist has long been a staunch supporter of the trail. He has donated

proceeds from two different prints toward the trail; "In Good Company" at MP-76.7 and the "Gift of Solitude" at MP-80.8. Other paintings of sites along the trail include the Moonshine Gulch in Rochford, The Bulldog Stage Stop, and the Standby Mine. His gallery is on Hill City's Main Street (605-574-4441). You can also visit his web site, at www.joncranegallery.com.

"In Good Company" bridge, MP-76.7 /Aleen Golis

Hill City has been working hard to become the 'Telluride' of South Dakota. Many artists of various media have moved to Hill City to make their home, including multiple wineries. Hence, Hill City has multiple art galleries, and unique shops, set apart with sculptures of wild animals along the street, and now many include wine tasting as part of their offerings. The new South Dakota train and railroad history museum sits in the 1880 Train yard. You'll want to save several hours for wandering this quaint town.

Eating a meal at the Alpine Inn (605-574-2749) is a must, and has long been a tradition in the hills. Their evening menu is simple, a big steak or a little steak, cooked to your liking, served with baked potato and salad. The desserts, many of German heritage, are out of this world, and all are served with your favorite beverage. Visiting during the summer demands a relaxed evening of town-touring while you wait for your table. Due to the renowned reputation of the Alpine, long waiting lines are the routine. The covered porch also gives folks a relaxing place to sit outside to eat if you wish.

If an afternoon beer is more to your taste, the Bumpin Buffalo 333 Main Street is a likable place with ambience, and an upstairs outside dining area. If you'd rather have a flavored coffee drink, hot or iced, then the Coffee shop is the place. And north of town closeby are several wineries, and the Berry Berry has routine summer entertainment to accompany their wine tasting.

Hill City is lucky in that they have a great prehistoric museum, the Black Hills Institute, with locals being the experts. It features STAN, a Tyrannosaurus Rex. If fossils are of interest, this museum is a must! Curators are very knowledgeable and have much to share. And next door is the Super 8 Motel (605-574-4141), newly remodeled to include a pool and spa. These are only one block from the trail.

The 1880 Train (www.1880train.com) uses steam engines to power the standard gauge train into Keystone and back. Take a break from your bike riding and let the train power you back in time. The scenic ride passes old tin mines and mining encampments that were the foundation of early Hill City. They also have the new SD RR Museum in their rail yard.

NOTE: As the Mickelson Trail goes north from Hill City, it follows the sidewalk around the 1880 Train yard, and then crosses highway 385 left. If coming in from Mystic to Hill City, the trail follows the sidewalk around the 1880 Train yard. At the end of the train yard the trailhead is located on your left. The trail continues south on the sidewalk for a short distance and returns to a gravel trail behind the Comfort Inn. While well marked with signs, it has caused some riders dismay thinking they had not followed the right path.

Once out of town, the rider is again treated with open vistas and meadows. Be sure to watch your surroundings as you ride to catch sight of disruptions in the hillsides marking old mine sites. There are many of these throughout the Black Hills, and few are well marked. The surface of the trail from Hill City north to Deadwood is very well packed and generally not as susceptible to washouts as much as some of the southern half.

Wades Gold Mill and Mining Museum at MP-61.6 is on the trail about 3/4 mile from Hill City with its' large collection of old mine equipment from the hills. While no longer an open tourist destination, the mill was used to separate gold from ancient riverbed gravel from their mine southwest of Custer. They are also the authors of the mining history in this book.

Newton Fork Cabins (www.NewtonForkRanch.com) MP-61.5, and High Country Guest Ranch (www.highcountryranch.com) MP-65 and Mickelson Trail Lodge (Mickelsontraillodging.com) MP-65 are all located along the trail north of Hill City, and provide country charm in lodging that is conducive to rest, weddings, and family reunions & vacations. High Country has nightly family entertainment of 'Brule' or the 'Circle B Cowboys'. Deerview BnB has a back entrance into their property at MP-65.8 from the trail of under 1⁄2 mile.

Harney Peak, the highest point in the hills at 7242', is visible on the southern horizon at MP-63.5. Look closely as there is Conservation Corp constructed fire tower on top built totally out of rock. The hiking trails to Harney Peak are the most used hiking trails of the Black Hills. Newton Lake at MP-64 has bathrooms, and picnic sites available. No overnight camping is allowed here. Winter snow coverage on the trail, at times, from Crazy Horse north allows for winter snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

NOTE: If you are trying to follow the trail with a vehicle, this section from Hill City to Dumont can be tricky to find without a good map and directions. Leave Hill City on Deerfield Highway # 308 for 5.5 miles, following the asphalt until you find a county gravel road turning right (#C318) where it is 9 miles to Mystic. This gravel road parallels the trail most of the time. At Mystic, turn right on George Frink Road to find the trailhead. Be sure to take in Mystic to view the local historic church which has been the focus of multiple paintings, photos, and is still used occasionally for weddings.

Redfern: High Line Milepost 68.2 — Redfern is nearly another nine mileposts north from Hill City. A section point and flag stop for the High Line, Redfern was named for Albert Redfern, a Burlington Railroad employee during the line's construction. The sidings in the vicinity allowed railroad employees and other contractors the space to load many carloads of railroad ties hewn in the area in the early years. Later, railroad cars were loaded with silica sand from the nearby Black Hills Silica Sand Corporation. Just north of Redfern, the line descended at a maximum grade of three percent through two of the line's four tunnels before reaching Mystic.

Redfern section house. /Rick Mills Collection

Back to the Trail

Early Redfern remnants are visible at MP-68 and the trail has a shelter and picnic table with interpretive signs. The Railroad car located here was a section house. Today, there is not much left.

Redfern shelter. /Aleen Golis

The Trekker's Bridge, 1999, located at MP-69.3. /Dan Putney

At MP-70.8, to your left (west) you will note a historical sign depicting the area of a Conservation Corps Camp. This is only one of the many camps throughout the Hills utilized by these hardworking men, as many of our park dams and buildings were completed by these groups during the depression era.

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, MP-70.8 /Aleen Golis

Areas along this section are both private land and National Forest (NF) Land. Many of the NFS roads are very rideable and are another way to extend your stay in the beautiful Black Hills. If you are going to do some exploring in the Black Hills however, be sure you get accurate Forest Service Maps as each summer the Search and Rescue folks are brought out to find someone lost in the hills. This is a large area, and the unprepared can become lost quite easily once they leave the Mickelson Trail.

At MP-71.8, the Deerfield Trail No. 40 intersects and follows the Mickelson Trail for a short distance. The Daugherty Gulch trailhead located here allows access to Mickelson Trail or the Deerfield trail No. 40. This trailhead has bathrooms, but no water cistern. Another Mountain Bike Trail called Lake Loop trail No. 40L, actually circles Deerfield Lake and is 10 miles in length.

Deerfield Trail #40. /Aleen Golis

Happy Trails Cabins in Silver City. /Aleen Golis

Silver City Side Trip — At MP-71.8 you are on a hiking/mountain biking trail that intersects for a short distance with the Mickelson Trail. The Deerfield Trail No 40 is 18 miles long. The Black Hills are interspersed with many multiuse trails. Some multi-use trails follow creek beds, making some remote trips for the more advanced bicycle rider a challenge. Deerfield Trail 40 is one such trail. It follows Rapid Creek, and actually allows you to end in Silver City, if you wish, leaving the Mickelson Trail at MP-72.6.

At Silver City–another gold mining town, as you may have guessed from the name–the history is golden as are the local bikers of the area who own Happy Trails Cabins (www.happytrailscabins.com). The hosts are very happy to help make your trip memorable, and go out of their way to see to your every need. They will have food on hand for you when you get there if you give them a grocery list and some reservations. This side trip is well worth the time, and fishing is great around here too. The locals can tell you all the hot spots for fishing and locations of the local old mine areas of interest. The laid back atmosphere of the small community will allow your stresses to fade away.

Back to the Trail

The first of the four tunnels on the trail is found at MP-72.5. Notice the difference in the architecture of each tunnel as you proceed. These tunnels are magnificent when one realizes they were made with manpower and black powder–and very little machinery. None of the tunnels require flashlights, although taking sun glasses off and slowing down is a good idea before entering the tunnels as some have very rocky edges with water drainage ditches alongside the trail.

Tunnel Restoration History

Michael Cody

Tunnel A

All the tunnels were constructed in advance of the rail line approaching. So the tunnels were over excavated in floor depth to allow for any minor grade change in the line. It was easier to adjust the level of the grade by adding rock and earth fill back into the tunnel than it was to remove any solid rock encountered. So the portals and all the timber sets were constructed before the rail line got there and then the grade through the tunnel was adjusted.

Tunnel A is on National Forest Land. Work was accomplished through cooperative funding between the South Dakota Game Fish & Parks, Black Hills National Forest, and private donations.

The estimated cost to retrofit and upgrade the structure was $229,098.00 with an additional engineering and planning estimate of $68,730.00. Actual construction costs were very close to this estimate.The rail company used the tunnel for about 85 years. The tunnel was closed around 1986 and reconstructed in 1997. The tunnel was originally constructed around 1890.

Tunnel A with tracks. /Rick Mills Collection

Bedrock is Precambrian schist and quartzite. The length of the tunnel is 270 feet, 12 feet wide and 19 feet high. Surfacing in the tunnel is fine gravel.

Tunnel A is on a slight curve adding to the darkness at mid point. Since the surveyors and engineers were so good at what they did there was very little adjustment needed. The entrances to the tunnel have the heavy 12” x 12” treated timber portals. Both portals on this tunnel were in good condition so there was very little repair work done. There was some but to the average person looking at the portals it is not noticeable.

This tunnel is the only tunnel on the trail that is completely timber lined. The timber workmanship is beautiful if you are one to admire the heavy timber construction involved. The style of the timber structures vary throughout the tunnel. Each complete timber unit is called a set. These sets vary from the beautiful eight piece timber sets to the more common three piece timber sets. Inside the tunnel the horizontal timbers for the wall portions are called "lagging", and between the entrance portals and the roof of the rock tunnel there may be visible timbers that are smaller and often square in shape, these are call "blocking" as they block the open area or void between the rock and the timber sets. Behind the lagging the area was sometimes filled with compacted rock material or was filled with blocking. The rock fill was easy to fill in the lower porting of the wall but as the lagging was higher up the wall then blocking was used to fill the void.

Tunnel A, MP-72.5. /Aleen Golis

The restoration of this tunnel involved the replacement of several of the internal three piece sets that had been damaged by a rock slip. The replacement of these sets was a very complicated and dangerous under-taking but the contractor accomplished this with no problem or incident.

As one enters past the portals the new eight piece timber sets are obvious as they are inside the original timber sets. Due to the historic nature of the tunnels the original timber sets were required to be left in place. This of course causes a future maintenance problem for the tunnel as soon those old sets will rot away leaving a decayed material void between the actual rock wall of the tunnel and the new eight piece timber sets. At some point in time there will have to be some remedial work to fill that rotted void that is being created. It is of utmost structural importance that this created void be filled. The timber sets only support the rock in the tunnel as they do not allow any rock movement. So as the decayed material produces more of a void the less support the timbers have for the tunnel.

Routine costs involve, gravel replacement, grading & shaping and every four years the tunnels should be inspected for structural integrity.

Castleton dregs. /Aleen Golis

Castleton History

(no trailhead, no trail access, no shelter, no service)

Russel Frink

Castleton was founded in 1876 due to the vigorous and fruitful placer mining activity along the banks of Castle Creek. It quickly surpassed its nearest neighbor, Sitting Bull (Mystic), in size and services with several hundred residents, especially when the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad construction crews were encamped in the area (around 1889). But all was quite short-lived as the miners could not overcome the waters of Castle Creek to get to bedrock.

The Evans Dredge Company from Denver arrived in 1910 and built a large boat that re-routed Castle Creek and operated until 1915. They were able to dig down to bedrock (32 feet) and made the many large tailing piles all around the ponds. The remains of the dredge's hull are visible today, along with two of the original three ponds created by the mining process.

Evans Gold Dredge at Castleton. /Russel Frink Collection

The large trout therein are a continual teasing temptation to fishing enthusiasts as they drive by.

July 10-12, 1939. The "McVey Burn" on the south hill at Castleton (The cabin in the photo is now the Russel Frink residence.) /Russel Frink Collection

In 1939, the infamous "McVey Burn" forest fire had topped the southwest hill and seemed unstoppable as it bore down on the valley. Providentially, the wind changed and Castleton was saved from damage.

No signs of that bustling town are discernible today. A homesteader and family acquired the 160 acres that encompassed the former community. Today a few friendly families share the delightful valley and adjacent gulches. Instead of the chugging of the nearby trains, occasional voices waft through the air from users of the Mickelson Trail that follows the former railroad grade (Highline) through two tunnels that skirt the eastern edge of the community.

Tunnel Restoration History

Michael Cody

Tunnel B

Tunnel B is on National Forest Land. Work was accomplished through cooperative funding between the South Dakota Game Fish & Parks, Black Hills National Forest, and private donations. The estimated cost to retrofit and upgrade the structure was **$62,030.00** with an additional engineering and planning estimate of $**18,610.00.** Actual construction costs were very close to this estimate. The rail company used the tunnel for about 85 years. The tunnel was closed around 1986 and reconstructed in 1997. The tunnel was originally constructed around 1890. Bedrock is Precambrian schist and quartzite. The length of the tunnel is 228 feet, 12 feet wide and 19 feet high. Surfacing in the tunnel is fine gravel. Tunnel B is straight and slightly dark at mid point.

Tunnel B was in reasonably good condition. The south portal had some damage to the top timbers and these were repaired and reset. The tunnel has timber set supporting portions of the tunnel. This tunnel provides a good view of the blocking mentioned in tunnel A. As one enters from the south portal and about midway through the tunnel there is as section between the natural rock roof and the timber portals that has the blocking in place. This also shows how much the tunnel was over excavated. Looking at the blocking one appreciates the craftsmanship involved and the importance of the blocking in supporting the rock roof of the tunnel against the timber sets.The sections of the tunnel that do not have timber sets have rock bolts that were installed during the tunnel restoration. It was determined by the consultant that this was needed to support the rock roof and as safety for public use. These rock bolts vary in length from 4 feet to 12 feet in length. Each bolt is 1.5 inches in diameter and has a 6-inch by 6-inch steel plate that holds and supports the wire mesh in place. In 2005 the north portal was replaced as the timber sets had deteriorated.

Tunnel with train. /Ed Gerken Collection

Tunnel B at MP-73.0. /Aleen Golis

Back to the Trail

Not everybody has given up on the possibilities of finding gold here. There are several claims staked and still being worked along Castle Creek and Rapid Creek from Mystic to Rochford. The Gold Prospectors of America Association has several claims in this area where members of that association can try their luck at panning out some color.

At Castleton, MP-73.5, one is far above the creek bed, and is afforded a bird's eye view of the tailings left in the creek bed by the gold mining era. Careful viewing will find some old machine parts left behind. To reach this area, trail riders must continue to the Freedom bridge at MP-73.8, and take a well worn trail just past the bridge on your left at its' northern end (within ~ 25 yds.). Follow this trail down to the road, and then travel back south on the road to Castleton–under 1/2 mile. These same folks have a second mining area with easier trail access at MP-79 closer to Rochford. Interested riders could

conceivably utilize both camps for camping and spending the remaining time enjoying the creek for fishing or prospecting, or riding some of the single track mountain bike trails in the area, such as Deerfield named above. The two rustic camps are about 8 miles apart. The second cement bridge on the trail is found at MP-74.5, and this brings us to the current location of Mystic at MP-74.7.

Tunnel History TRIVIA

Michael Cody

How did the tunnels become known as Tunnel A, B, C & D? This was accomplished by a panel of two persons using the complicated engineering formula still known today as the alphabet. Starting from Edgemont at mile post 0.0, and preceding north the first tunnel encountered was designated as A, the next B, and so on. For reasons unknown they have never been designated otherwise. It would be a daunting task to change their designation at this time, considering the complicated process that was undertaken to determine their original alphabetical names. Just think of all the options.. Name them after the Presidents at Mount Rushmore? Or after local towns nearby? Or maybe after old train engines, or the engineers, or the engineers hard working gals they loved and cussed so dearly?

Consider this: Tunnel A does not have pedestals noted in old photographs of tunnel D, and A is completely timber lined, with no rock roof sections. Tunnels B, and C have some timber sets and portions of rock roof sections. Tunnel D only has the rock roof, and no timber sets. In an old tunnel D photograph, a post is attached to the pedestal of about 12-15 feet high, with boards that protrude out about 2 feet toward the center of the rail. These appear to be on about 2-foot spacings up the full length of the post. Picture a ladder with wood rungs, but remove one side rail of the ladder.

Having asked several RRKIA (rail road know it alls), the theme appears time and time again; that the pedestals held rope or chains attached to the top of each across the rail line to alert riders on top of the train, to the approaching tunnel. Thinking about this ideas at first sounds like a plausible idea, but thinking upon it further, one realized the engines had tall smoke stacks, and if one imagines what the person walking on top of the train would do when the rope caught them just above the shoulders. This whole idea seems a little wacky!

Consider instead the possibility of a wire network connecting one end of the tunnel to the other, and if that network was broken by a ROCK FALL inside the tunnel there would be a signal sent on the overhead telegraph line alerting the rail yard. Thus a great train wreck in the tunnel was prevented. Tunnel A has no exposed rock roof, and no pedestal. Tunnel B, C, and D all have some exposed rock roof and would be subject to rock falls inside the tunnel, and they are the only ones with remains of structures 100 feet before the tunnel entrance. What do you think?

Stories of The Trail Today

In 2001, the three-day ride sponsored by the South Dakota Game Fish & Parks was the weekend after the 9-11 Disasters. The following was written and read by Dave Snyder as the 3 day ride started.

"Historically, the Sioux Indians have always acknowledged the spiritual nature of the Black Hills. Although in perhaps not exactly the same way, many of us who now live in these Hills also experience this spirituality. For those of you who have come here for the first time, you are about to experience a very special place.

This is a place of healing and it is my hope that as this tragic week comes to an end, those of us here can let the landscape and the forest help with our individual healing.

Let the ride today to Edgemont, with its sweeping vistas, enable us to see beyond this week. Let the breeze in our faces dry our tears. Let the flowers still surviving, now almost out of season, remind us of our human tenacity and resolve.

Freedom Bridge, south of Mystic, MP-73.8. /Aleen Golis

Let the streams we pass give us solace in their rhythmic undulations and let these streams, that seem as we view them, to have no beginning and no end, give us comfort that all life extends beyond any one moment in time. Let us remember, as we view the beautiful fall colors in the grasses and the trees that everything has its season and all that has come before will pass away and come once again. Let the majesty of the trees envelop us with their strength as we ride through their midst. Let the ancient rock formations we pass remind us of our strength and our eternity.

Let the joy, the laughter, the camaraderie, and the community we enjoy this weekend remind us we are loving beings and without love we would feel no pain, no anguish, no grief for the events of the past week.

Photo from the Ed Gerken Collection

One of the original posters made for the Mickelson Trail is an appropriate mantra for this weekend. In the poster the Trail speaks to all of us. The captions reads, 'Come to me, I will awaken your spirit and restore your soul.' May this be a joyous and healing weekend for all."

It was with heavy hearts that many of us came to ride that weekend, but somehow the sharing of the moment by all lightened the load. And the first day was a beautiful day, just the right temperature, not too hot, not too cold. The second day found us drenched in rain for most of the morning. At a mixer on Friday night, my daughter, Judy Hengel had won a Bass Fish as a door prize. Being the fun loving free spirit that she is, she rigged up the Bass Fish on the

back of her bike, with a sign “Pay me a dollar and I’ll shut up– all proceeds to go toward the trail”. As she went speeding by riders, the bass would begin to sing with the motion, what else– but of course–“Take me to the water”! At the end of the three days, this bedraggled Bass Fish had collected a large share of the $8,500.00 toward the purchase of the largest bridge. It is named the Freedom Bridge–MP-73.8, with a plaque from the Trekkers 2001, in honor of the lives lost in the attacks on the United States that September, and those who now protect our freedoms.

Trail Trek on the Freedom Bridge, MP-73.8. /Aleen Golis

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Looking west through Mystic, circa 1910. Depot and store are in foreground. Section house is to the right and up the hillside a bit. The Black Hills Chemical Reduction (cyanide) Plant is in the center. Russel Frink Collection.

MYSTIC

MP-74.7
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 44.076611, Long.: -103.639388
NO Services
* Trailhead has restroom & water cistern *
Population unknown–few families
14.6 Miles to Hill City, 7.9 miles to Rochford

GETTING THERE: From Hill City: Take Highway #17 (Deerfield Road) at the northern end of Hill City, toward Deerfield Lake. Travel west for about 5.5 miles until you get to County Road (gravel) #231, which will go north, while the pavement continues in a westerly direction. Follow #231 for about 9 miles to Mystic. The trailhead is located east of Mystic church, or turn Rt. on George Frink Road.

From Lead/Deadwood: Take Highway #85 south from Interstate 90 through Deadwood and through Lead. About 4 miles out of Lead, Highway #17 will turn to the left just past the closed Presidents Park attraction. Take Highway #17 to Rochford, turning Left at the Moonshine Gulch Saloon. This road will soon turn to gravel, which you will follow for approx 5 miles where you will

find the intersection of Mystic Road and Rochford Road. At the intersection of Mystic and Rochford Road #231, turn right on Mystic Road #231, following it until you come to Mystic. To reach the trailhead, you will need to turn left at the George Frink Road.

Mystic Memories

Russel G. Frink

Mystic was originally named Sitting Bull by the early-day placer miner settlers in 1876, but the railroad and postal department changed it to Mystic in 1889. There were 5 tracks in the switchyard besides the main line. Seven 'carded' (nationally scheduled) trains a day went through Mystic, prior to the advent of the impressive articulated Mallet locomotives in the 'teens.

Mystic Chemical Reduction Plant.
Gregory Walters Collection

The Mystic Chemical Reduction Plant, built in 1898, was the largest hard-rock gold operation. They were one of the first to use cyanide and processed ore that was shipped in from as far away as Colorado. By that time, most of the placer miners had moved on, leaving behind the remnant 'diggins' all up and down Castle Creek which are still evident today. (If you are hiking the area 'off trail', watch out for the many old prospect holes!)

The George Frink residence, circa 1932. Originally built in 1898 as the home for the superintendent of the Black Hills Chemical Reduction Plant. /Russel Frink Collection

My grandfather, William Frink, came to Mystic in 1900 and bought the store by the railroad depot. He ran that until his death in 1923 and also had crews in the woods cutting cordwood, pilings, and home fuel supplies. Following the fading gold mining efforts, timber resources became prominent and a sawmill was built in 1918. My father, George Frink, bought the mill in 1919 and operated it until the '50s under the name of the Mystic

Tie and Logging Company. Ties and grain doors were cut and made for the Burlington Railroad, plus regular lumber. Supplies were ordered and delivered via the railroad, and any needed machine work was completed in Deadwood.

A short line, connecting the 'Q' with Rapid City, was completed in 1908. Originally named the Crouch Line, it was later changed to the Rapid City, Black Hills and Western (or Rattle Clatter, Bump Hard and Wiggle, as Ma Daniels used to say), and it had 105 bridges in its 39-mile route. My sis and I rode the train to Rapid City to attend high school, boarding during the week and returning to Mystic on weekends. Due to poor maintenance, we were often 'on the ground' and hence called that line 'The Dinky'.

The wagon road to Hill City was made passable (kinda) for automobiles when my father, George, took his mill crew out and swamped a road in from Redfern to Mystic, all so he could get his Chevrolet Baby Grand Touring Car home. That meant bridges instead of fording the creek. But still there was little travel in the spring, when the frost was going out. Later, he used to race the train into Hill City, much to my mother's and sister's chagrin and my delight!

President Calvin Coolidge arrived in Mystic via the RCBH&W in 1927. My father drove the wagon that took the president over the hill to Slate Creek, to visit his friend, Governor McKelvie of Nebraska. That visit and accompanying worldwide exposure started the tourist trade in the Hills.

Mystic, 1927. President Calvin Coolidge with his wife, Grace. Driver of the Wagon is George Frink. /Russel Frink Collection.

My Uncle Bill Frink built a new store and home on the "main road" through Mystic in 1930. (The McCahan Chapel was built next door at that time.) Automobile services were also available, though not always expertly administered. Once my dad roared up to the store and asked my Aunt Ilene for a quart of oil. She brought it out and poured it into the engine, into the glass reservoir, while I was pumping gasoline. She kept standing by the engine, waiting for the oil to drain out of the glass jar. My father impatiently asked what was taking her so long. She responded with "I don't know. It keeps spilling out onto the engine!" We both ran over to "See what" and found she had the oil dispenser stuck into the carburetor!! I looked at my dad and he looked at me and I said, "we've only got one chance to make it out of town and that's if we FLOORBOARD it!" So we did, leaving a trail of blue smoke about a half mile long, but we punched through!!!

Now called the Mickelson Trail, the line will always be the 'Q' for the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad to me. As a boy, my heroes were the engineers and firemen who handled my steady girlfriends – the four-cylinder, articulated Mallet locomotives. There were two engines to a freight, one in the front and the other in the back. When they whistled out of Mystic, southbound, they were looking at a 3% grade to the top of the hill at Redfern. This beautifully scenic run through the Hills was very popular and much coveted by the railroad men.

Burlington History

Mystic: High Line Milepost 74.8 — When the Burlington Railroad arrived in Sitting Bull, the name was changed to Mystic, possibly by some Burlington official with connections to Mystic, Connecticut. Mystic is near the junction of the Rapid City and Western Railroad which followed Rapid Creek from Rapid City to the town of Pactola (now under the waters of Lake Pactola) to just north of Mystic where the waters of Castle Creek and Rapid Creek merge. Part of this route of the Black Hills and Western Railroad, defunct in 1947, is Trail Number 40 out of Silver City, which proceeds toward Canyon City.

Mystic in 1920s. /Gregory Walters Collection

Passenger service on the RCBH&W ended in 1947 and in 1949 for the "Q." Freights continued to run until 1983.

Mystic in 1980s. /Gregory Walters Collection

The CB&Q Railroad provided coal for the Mystic steam powered generating plant until 1915. A sawmill also was serviced by the railroad. The best view of what used to be at the Mystic railroad yard is seen in the before and after photos taken from the north rim of the canyon overlooking Mystic.

Flora & Fauna

The ponderosa pine is the dominant tree over most of the Black Hills. Even though the tree is considered an intolerant species (it tends to over-shadow other plants, inhibiting growth, it does associate with several other plants in its understory to form distinct communities. The ponderosa prefers drier growth areas, making it more common on west and south-facing slopes. Although the tree forms a deep root system during its early growth, the majority of its roots are quite shallow, extending only a foot or so. If it is surrounded by taller, overshadowing trees early on, it will not die off, but continue to grow slowly, until some of the other trees are removed, then the growth will occur more rapidly and develop into healthy specimens. Although fires are a serious threat to the young ponderosa by seriously damaging or killing them outright if the fire scours the crown, fires also eliminate weaker trees so the stronger ones can grow. Instead of fire performing this thinning, however, most of the forest is now thinned by harvesting management practices. Another, larger, threat to the ponderosa is the mountain pine beetle, which is one of the most destructive insects in the western states. These pests can destroy over one billion board feet of pine during a single outbreak (the average single family home uses 10,000 board feet of lumber)! This tree is by far the most abundant and important of the timber species, being the second most important softwood for lumber production for construction of homes or even as furniture.

Ponderosa pine. /Lynn Eyermann

Fringed loosestrife.

The fringed loosestrife is not to be confused with its noxious cousin, the purple loosestrife. Besides the color of the flowers (the fringed loosestrife is yellow), the stem on the fringed loosestrife is simple or sparingly branched. The purples loosestrife stem can grow to over four feet tall and are quite densely packed with prolific seed-bearing fruits and flowers. The less-problematic fringed loosestrife has short hairs on the edge of its flower petals and leafstalks, which could be the reason that most grazing animals find it unpalatable. This herb is found in thickets and other moist growing areas, often in shady areas. The deep yellow, five-petal flowers bloom during the late

summer, with petals lasting only a few days. After shedding petals, berry-type fruit develop which contain several dark-colored angular seeds. There seems to be no particular use for this flowering plant, other than the aesthetics of its blooming period.

The blue grama is an important range grass as well as filling other dry grassland habitats such as open forest and shrub communities. It is noticeable by its curly, narrow leaves which can be three to six inches long, with simple seed stems that give the appearance of straight, fine eyebrows or the teeth on a comb. It can reproduce by seeding or by producing short, underground stems which will grow into new plants. Even in heavily grazed areas, it will continue to reproduce because of the growing points near the ground surface, which forms thick matting which also aids in building soil and preventing erosion. This matting also retains moisture which aids in the survival of drought, making the grass a major part of range animals' diet, especially during dry periods. It also cures well to provide winter grazing. It is used extensively in mixtures for reseeding roadsides and re-establishment of native ranges.

Blue grama grass. /Aleen Golis

Throughout this portion of the Hills, you are surrounded with a hard stone called slate. Extremely hard, historically it was used as a chalkboard; hence the name of "slate boards" in early schools. Many locals use this stone for construction projects, and the black coloring lends itself to very attractive decorative enhancements.

Slate rock. /Aleen Golis

Living near the Mystic area, one develops a special affinity for the cry and yip of the lone coyote or the chorus of the pack, which occurs nearly every morning and evening. Prior to the 1980s, coyotes were common only in western South Dakota or along the eastern side of the Missouri River. Due to the increasing populations in all the western states, the coyote's range has expanded into the whole state. One government agency gives the estimated population as being nearly one coyote per square mile! Although these animals prefer very remote areas, they can adapt to human activity when necessary, especially if these areas are encompassed within their established home range to 10 to 20 square miles. The coyote's diet is regulated by seasonal availability, so while they are considered carnivores, they will also eat wild and domestic fruits and plants. The coyote is important in managing rodent and rabbit populations as well. The coyote is now considered the dominant predator in South Dakota, since

Coyote. /Lynn Eyermann

the near extinction of the wolf in the 1900s. Although the coyote is pursued by hunters and trappers, this control is inadequate in maintaining a desirable population level, especially in areas where there is a serious livestock predation problem. Because of the ability to easily adapt to a changing environment, this species is sure to survive for many years, providing the rewarding photo opportunity for amateurs and professionals alike.

Back to the Trail

Jon Crane has painted the chapel located in Mystic, and many other vistas around this area. His home is located near here, so it is not hard to understand his love of the trail. The Jon Crane "Solitude" picture is of the trail at MP. 81, and his painting "In Good Company" bridge and tunnel picture are located at MP-76.7. He has also painted the, the Standby Mine, the Mystic Chapel, the Moonshine Gulch, and many others. Be sure to take time to enjoy his pictures, many prints of which are displayed in Rochford at both businesses. The residents of this area are trail lovers, and it is common to find grandchildren or children out selling lemonade along the trail during hot summer days known to be busy.

Mystic's McCahan Chapel. /Aleen Golis

Looking right at MP-75 you can see old falling down buildings and some irregular shaped mounds of dirt and rocks of an old mine site. At MP-75.2 there is another trail that intersects the Mickelson Trail that avid mountain bikers use to get to Silver City that is recommended for experienced mountain bikers. At MP-75.6 there is a cement post standing along the creek, a remnant of the original fence line. MP-76 is the location of the Mickelson

Mickelson Bridge signs. /Aleen Golis

Bridge which always touts a welcome sign. This bridge was bought by and named for the then-Governor who was foundational in retaining and converting the railroad bed to a recreational trail. This housing development calls itself the Mystic Home Owners Association, and always treats the annual trek bike riders with homemade cookies, warm or cool drinks (depending on the weather), and welcomes them to the area. In all the years of the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks sponsored Mickelson Trail 3 day trek, they have not missed one day, and in fact, it seems they get bigger and better each year!

Tunnel C is located at MP-76.9.

Tunnel Restoration History

Michael Cody

Tunnel C

Tunnel C is on National Forest Land. Work was accomplished through cooperative funding between the South Dakota Game Fish & Parks, Black Hills National Forest, and private donations. The estimated cost to retrofit and upgrade the structure was **$57,922.00** with an additional engineering and planning estimate of $**17,376.00.** Actual construction costs were very close to this estimate.

The rail company used the tunnel for about 85 years. The tunnel was closed around 1986 and reconstructed in 1997. The tunnel was originally constructed around 1890. Bedrock is Precambrian schist and quartzite. The length of the tunnel is 166 feet, 12 feet wide and 19 feet high. Surfacing in the tunnel is fine gravel. Tunnel C is straight and slightly dark at mid point.

Tunnel C at MP-76.9. /Aleen Golis

Tunnel C was in good condition except for the north portal had a very large rock fall that had broken off the top horizontal timbers and broken three of the longitudinal timbers. Those are the long braces that run from the ground up at an angle to the face of the first portal timber set.

There are timber sets supporting portions of this tunnel. The remainder has natural rock roof and walls supported by 12 foot rock bolts. It is interesting to note that during the installation of the rock bolts in this tunnel there was about a 10 ton section of the wall on the west face that fell as soon as the contractor started to drill into the rock. It was a sudden fall and startled the operator but there was no damage to the equipment nor the operator. After a short discussion with others and a cup of hot coffee the operator decided it was now safe to return to work.

Near the north portal it appears one timber set is missing. The horizontal timbers are in place and it appears that it would have been an easy hour's work to have placed one more set. With all the work that was involved in putting a set in place it is interesting that one is missing. Note the blocking between the rock wall and the timber sets.

In addition to the work inside the tunnel there is wire mesh on both the portals to prevent rock falls. Rock falls were identified as a safety hazard by the consultant. Since the north portal had extensive damage from a rock fall, the wire mesh seems to be a good idea. The wire mesh is anchored in place using 4 foot rock bolts. It is designed such that falling rocks are held between the rock face and the wire mesh. The rock will still fall, but not on the trail.

Look at the old timber sets about 200 feet away from the north portal. On the right you can again see some of the old timber sets that were once used. Stop and look at the craftsmanship that was involved in making these timbers all fit together. Maybe someday these can be salvaged and set up along side the trail and have an information sign placed near them.

Back to the Trail

Right after the tunnel you will find the first of several small waterfalls on Rapid Creek with the biggest falls at MP-78. The Glory Hunters mine and rustic camping area are located at MP-79. There is a beaver dam with a hut at 80.9. Multiple small placer mines are active in this area as well.

Rapid Creek waterfalls at MP-78. /Aleen Golis

The site of the Stand By Mine at MP-82, with part of the old rock foundation built in 1878-79 still visible across the backed-up waters along the opposite hillside. Beavers are quite busy in this section. There is a tall chain link fence here, to maintain the public on the trail. There is an interpretive sign here, with history of the mine. The mill was torn down in the 1980s, but is also the site of another one of Jon Crane's prints before its demise. The mill never had a railroad spur leading up to the mine. Goods were transferred by truck or wagon to and from the mine.

Rochford trailhead comes into view at MP-82.6 and is located to the right of the trail. Brush lines this portion of the trail, and you won't have time to blink, or you will miss the turn out. Be sure to peddle on the pavement up to the Rochford Moonshine Gulch Saloon, another well-noted trail site for a meal or drink. A simple meal is available seven days a week. They are not

Stand By Mine at MP-83. /Gregory Walters Collection

open till after 11:00. Due to the creek, there is only the one area that allows you to reach the trailhead and the ability to travel the pavement west to find the business area of Rochford. The Rochford Mall is also worth your time to investigate. These painters do wonderful work, and have began to provide some simple meals. They have a variety of souvenirs available.

If you are looking toward a fall trip, the air can be brisk in these mountains, so take layers. The leaves usually start to turn about the second week in September, and are on the ground usually by the last of September. You can see some colorful fall leaves in photos from along the Mystic section of the Mickelson Trail in the center full-color picture section of the book.

Bikes "stored" for overnight at Rochford on the Game Fish & Parks 3 day trail trek. /Aleen Golis

Picturesque trees in the fall. /Aleen Golis

My favorite photo op..South of Mystic..Aleen Golis

Rochford Mall. /Aleen Golis

ROCHFORD

MP-82.6
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 44.122247, Long.: -103.713435
Trailhead: E. of Rochford next to fire station
* Food * Restrooms * Art Gallery & Souvenirs *
Zip Code: 57745
Population: 25 or so, depends on the time of year.
7.9 miles to Mystic; 10 miles to Dumont

GETTING THERE: From Lead take Highway # 85 south ~ 4 miles and then turn left on Highway # 17 S. to Rochford. From Mystic, continue on Country road #231 all the way to Rochford. About half way, you will come to a junction, where you will turn left to continue following #231.

Food

Moonshine Gulch Saloon & Grill: 605-584-2743, opening during summer generally 7 days/week at 11:00 am, cash only.

Lodging

Carsten Cottages & Campground: 605-584-2248, www.CarstenCottages.com

Shops

Rochford Mall: Art, food n drink, 11678 Rochford Rd., 605-584-4727

Rochford History

Rochford was a gold mining camp, with the most familiar structure being the Standby Mill at Milepost 83. Rochford began in February of 1877, with the discovery of gold by MD Rochford and company (hence the name). It soon grew to 100 cabins and boasted 3 saloons, 6 stores, 2 hotels, a drugstore, a butcher shop, a barbershop, and other enterprises. By 1881, miners had moved onto other areas for their gold hunting, and Rochford had only three people still calling the town home. The town totally burned on Thanksgiving Day in 1897. While some rebuilt, the town never regained its furor. The gold rush passed, and gold mining trickled down to gold panning and part-time exploration by the 1950s.

A Cyanide-lid roofed building at MP-89.4, with its own interpretive sign as well. /Aleen Golis

Local businesses currently consist of the Rochford Moonshine Gulch store/restaurant/saloon, and the Rochford Mall, a showcase of local artwork. Four-wheelers, snowmobilers, hunters, bikers and hikers all enjoy the ambience of the Moonshine Gulch Saloon & Grill year around, and soak up some of the old time atmosphere. The Moonshine crew are willing to cook at any time, and do offer a varied menu. They have been known to allow tenters when asked, and a fire pit is available. The Rochford Mall offers a variety of souvenirs and local art, as well as a t-shirt designed for the trail riders, all the usual small general store and camp supplies, with some food items available, including ice cream. The Rochford Fire Hall today provides not only fire protection for the area, but also the community spirit of this little burg. They are supportive of many trail activities.

Mining History

Rochford was surrounded by several gold mining and milling operations in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Other minerals mined included graphite and uranium. Some of the larger mills in the area were the Montezuma, Evangeline, Minnesota, and, one of the last ones to disappear, the Stand-By. Traveling north from Rochford, you will come to the town of Gregory, the site of the Montana mine. Remains of the foundations of the mill there can still be seen. On up the line a little further, you will come to Nahant. About all that is left of the town is an old barn that has one side and part of its roof shingled with old cyanide can lids. Cyanide was used in the milling process at the local mills. The gold rush passed, and gold mining trickled down to gold panning and exploration by the 1950s.

Burlington History

Rochford: High Line Milepost 82.05 — It was not until the fall of 1889 that the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad built through Rochford and located a siding at milepost 82. Up until the 1980s, the railroad still had a passing siding and section house. Along the trail (MP-82) one can see the remains of the water tank port and foundations of the Rochford section house. The Burlington Northern ran from 1889 to 1984, over a century. Other than an occasional work train parked at its convenient siding, Rochford really did not have much railroad activity going on. Yet it is a favorite place for many today because of its continuance as a meeting place for all who enjoy the Black Hills.

The needles of a lodgepole pine are very short and attached to the twig in pairs, making it easily discernible from its cousin, the ponderosa pine. This tree is only found in one small area of the Black Hills, growing on the northern aspect of a ridge, just below the crest near Nahant at MP-88.5. Fire is very important to the establishment of this species as it does not release its cones until after a fire, scattering thousands of seeds on the freshly exposed mineral soil. This species grows quickly and can live for 200 years or more. Although this pine can reach great heights, the trees in the Black Hills are much shorter. Because the trees grow tall and slender, with few branches along the lower trunk, the wood makes it an ideal pole. The lightweight, strong wood of this pine was specifically used by the American Indians for lodge poles.

Juvenile golden eagle flying past a stately lodgepole pine. /Lynn Eyermann

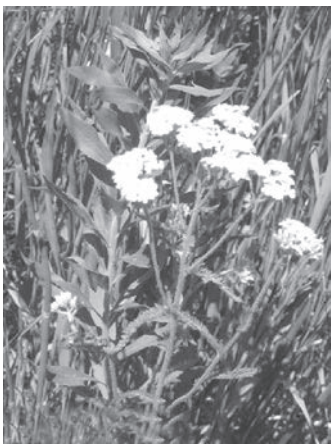
The Golden Eagle is named for the golden buff-colored feathers on the crown and nape of the neck. The adult body color is usually dark brown, and the dark-tipped tail is either darkly barred or spotted. Immature Golden Eagles have white wing patches and white at the base of the tail while the adult plumage comes from a gradual reduction in the amount of white coloration that is acquired over a three to four year period. This bird has a wingspan of 6-7 feet and can weigh 8-12 pounds. This raptor can carry a weight of up to 7 pounds, but prey will usually average around two pounds. These birds mate for life, and return to the same area each year to nest. (However, if a mate dies, it will be quickly replaced by another!) Nests can be as much as three feet thick, and up to five feet wide. They prefer mountainous and hilly areas, nesting in trees at lower elevations, or on rocky ledges under overhanging cliffs at higher elevations. In some parts of their range, Golden Eagles are not migratory but remain in their territories all year, as they do in the Black Hills. Common in much of the West, these majestic eagles prey mainly on jackrabbits and large rodents but will also feed on carrion. Federal and

state laws protecting the Bald Eagle also apply to the Golden Eagle, making possession of this species illegal. Increasing human disturbance of eagles and remote area development leads to the loss of undisturbed habitat that seems to be the most serious threat to maintaining healthy populations of Golden Eagles.

The redtop grass is so named due to the reddish cast that the seed head shows during much of its development. It is a long-lived perennial grass which grows to a height of about three feet. The root system is made up of shallow, vigorous root stalks that form a loose, coarse turf where an individual plant may spread to a diameter of two to three feet. This grass is very tolerant and can grow easily on most any kind of soil, and will generally be very abundant along waterways. This grass is another example of a species that is native to Europe, but has become naturalized throughout most of North America since its introduction in the early 1800s. It is even used to bulk-up pastures, although it ranks among the lowest in palatability, and to thicken sparse growth of other grasses on golf courses.

Redtop grass. /Aleen Golis

The common yarrow is easily identified by the many segments of compound leaves with give this perennial a fern-like appearance before it blooms in clusters of small white flower heads. It grows easily in disturbed soils: waste places, overgrazed pastures, roadsides and trail sides. This plant, also, is naturalized, coming from Europe where, for centuries, it has been used as a medicine. The leaves produce an aromatic volatile oil and was steeped for tea (used to treat coughing, sore throat and earache). It may be chewed for toothache, or generally used as a stimulant or tonic (to stimulate sweating and urination and as a mild laxative). If applied as a poultice to wounds it is purported to stop bleeding and, if rubbed on skin, to relieve itching. It also makes good graze for livestock and large wildlife, especially early in the growing season.



Common yarrow. /Aleen Golis

Back to the Trail

Once at the fire station trailhead, Rochford may be reached via the oil road heading west. Trail access is only at the Fire station located next to the Rochford shelter.

Rapid Creek. /Aleen Golis

Much of the trail follows Rapid Creek where fishing is ideal during parts of the year. As the trail goes north, it parallels the upper reaches of Rapid Creek where North Rapid Creek joins South Rapid Creek. The trail meanders through this pristine valley until it reaches the tunnel at milepost 85.3 where you encounter tunnel D.

Tunnel Restoration History

Michael Cody

Tunnel D

Tunnel D is on National Forest Land. Work was accomplished through cooperative funding between the South Dakota Game Fish & Parks, Black Hills National Forest, and private donations. The estimated cost to retrofit and upgrade the structure was $172, 606.00 with an additional engineering and planning estimate of $51,782.00. Actual construction costs were very close to this estimate. The tunnel was originally constructed around

1890 and was used for about 85 years. The tunnel was closed around 1986 and reconstructed in 1990. Bedrock is Precambrian schist and quartzite. The length of the tunnel is 70 feet, 12 feet wide and 19 feet high. Surfacing in the tunnel is fine gravel. Tunnel D is straight and slightly dark at mid point.

Tunnel D is the only tunnel that did not have any internal timber sets. The salvage operator had removed the original timber portals and dirt, rock, and other debris had been pushed into the entrances to block access. In the late 1980's a Black Hills National Forest ranger decided that since the rail line was abandoned and on National Forest lands, that it needed to be closed completely for public safety. It was decided to contact the South Dakota National Guard and use explosives to close the tunnel for a guard training exercise. The weekend that this was to be accomplished the National Guard had a training conflict. This was postponed with intentions to do it during another weekend training exercise.

Just a few months later the concept of converting the rail line into a trail had been set in motion. The tunnel was saved, at least for the present time. Later when the trail was in the design stage and the tunnel was evaluated for reconstruction it was determined that reconstruction was too expensive and the trail would be constructed around the hill along the river for a substantial savings. This was not an acceptable alternative as the proposal would destroy the whole

Tunnel D at MP-85.3. /Aleen Golis

historic value of the trail, not to mention the loss of the tunnel. During a long discussion, another alternative was to reconstruct the tunnel and not reconstruct the portals. It was argued that the portals should not be replaced as they were not needed for the tunnel to be structurally sound. Again this argument was not accepted due to the keeping within the historic value. It was decided that the portals were to be reconstructed. Multiple ideas were discussed, but the existing portals constructed today are a duplicate of the original portals. As they exist today they have no structural support for the tunnel itself, they are there only to duplicate the original portals.

The tunnel was originally a rock roof and walls with no timber supports. It exists that way today with added 12-foot rock bolts supporting the tunnel for public safety. The portal head walls have wire mesh added for public safety as well.

If there is a nice wet fall and an abundance of cold weather, this tunnel is a winter wonderland. Water seeps down through the rock above and the dripping water inside the tunnel produces beautiful ice stalactites and stalagmites. Some even connect from the roof to the floor. There is a little section near the south portal that has an ice water fall on the left side. This icing has only been observed on rare occasions, and never photographed.

Back to the Trail

At MP-85.9 there are old mine remnants located off to the right with an excavation and some left over lumber, building parts, etc. There is an extended area for the next few miles, MP-86 through MP-92, that finds multiple orange colored cement posts, interspersed with wood posts or occasionally a metal post. These concrete posts are remnants of the original railroad fence. You may also occasionally glimpse some of the telegraph wires that are adjacent to the trail.

MP-87.1 touts an interpretive sign, “Just give it up.” A remnant of the Montana Mine lies on the east side of the trail at MP-87. It began mining gold and silver in 1879 and ceased in 1880. Another owner opened it in 1907 and operated it for 33 years. This area has been updated with a pit toilet, and an occasional fire ring, and has access from the trail by a small walk through gate. It is believed the property is now part of a nonprofit, and that trail-side rustic camping is allowed. To the north, the trail passes through forested areas as well as some smaller open meadows. This section of the trail has the log post fencing along it for the next few miles. Please stay on the trail.

As you ride along the creek, your watchful eye could encounter the sighting of beaver which are still active in the hills in some places. A lodge can be seen at MP-88.5 at the edge of this pond.

Look west at MP-88.5 and you will note the remains of the town of Nahant. Founded in 1890, it boasted frame buildings with electricity, telephones, and a water system. Nahant was founded by McLaughlin Lumber Company, who ran a standard-gauge line west almost to Moskee, Wyoming, which connected to the CB&Q at Nahant. A very progressive community, it had a clubhouse for community activities, including basketball, roller skating, and dancing. However, in 1909, the Tie and Timber sawmill burned and the town faded away, except for the hotel. It remained in business for a number of years. George A. Custer shot a grizzly bear in this area, an event covered in the Exploring with Custer book mentioned earlier.

The Bulldog Ranch Stage Stop is located at MP-90.5. An interpretive sign is here named "Wine, Women and Song." This stage stop had a reputation of

Barn at the Bulldog Ranch/Aleen Golis

being the local bootlegger stop, the red light district, and who knows what else. This is currently on private property and the owners do not give tours, so please stay on the trail. Jon Crane has painted a picture of this site.

Carsten Cottages are located at MP-91.2 and are very trail-friendly folks. They encourage family reunions, weddings and larger gatherings with their covered pavilion and kitchen area. They have recently added RV 50 amp camp spots in addition to their cabins and will furnish tents if requested. There is a play area for the kids, and animals that like extra attention. Open year around, they will stock food on request, and go the extra mile to make your stay the best.

Dumont is located at MP-94, and the trailhead is across the highway from the trail. Multiple snowmobile trails split off at this shelter, which is used as

a warming hut in the winter for snowmobilers. Those wintertime trails for snowmobiles provide great single-track bicycle trails in the summer for those interested. Snowmobiles are allowed during winter months, from here north to Deadwood, as part of the multi-use trail system.

Bridge by Carsten Cottages, North of Dumont. /Aleen Golis

Dumont Trail Head /Aleen Golis

Dumont on June 7, 2003. Yes that's snow! Even the robin thought it was cold. /Aleen Golis

DUMONT

MP-92.6
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 44.227063, Long.: -103.786111
Trailhead: on west side of Highway #385
No Services
* Restrooms * Warming Hut*

Carsten Cabins & RV Campground, 605-584-2248, 605-584-3321
www.cartsencottages.com

Pathways Spiritual Sanctuary: 21793 Juso Ranch Road,
www.pathwayspiritualsanctuary.org

10 miles to Rochford; 5.9 miles to Englewood

GETTING THERE: Dumont trailhead is located on Highway #17, ten miles south of Lead. Dumont trailhead is also a major snowmobile trailhead in the winter for the area where snowmobiles can use the trail. There is a large parking area here with pit toilets, and a warming hut for snowmobiles in the winter.

Dumont History

Dave Snyder

Historically, this area was also mined so you will see some evidence of gold mine activity along the trail. Charles Dumont, who was a French settler, founded Dumont in 1890. It was a lumber and cattle shipping center. To facilitate these two industries, a railroad spur was constructed that went west from Dumont to Hannah.

Although Dumont was never a very big place, in the 1890s it had a store, post office, railroad section house, several homes, a school and a saloon run by Napoleon Dumas. The saloon did a brisk business, which didn't make the railroad brass too happy. They complained their employees patronized the place where they "succumbed to the flowing bowl." They contacted the sheriff who warned Dumas that he would have to close the place. Dumas ultimately complied. Unfortunately for Dumont, several dry years diminished the cattle trade and the lumber industry ceased to be profitable.

Many of the settlers in the area were Finnish immigrants. One of the more colorful residents was Susanna Wainionpaa. Gus Wainionpaa and his wife Susanna immigrated to the Black Hills in the 1870s from Finland. They lived about one-half mile east of Dumont. Susanna was well known as the "Finnish Doctor Lady." Many came by train to the flagstop near her place, and those unable to walk were carried in by horse-drawn buckboard. It is said most of her patients left "cured" or at least feeling better. The focal point of her treatments was sauna baths and a form of bloodletting called "cuppa" in Finnish. Another of Susanna's treatments involved either immersion or soaking the individual's body in preparations she made by hand from herbs and such that grew in the area. She also used a special snuff mixture on herself and others that suffered from head colds. The mixture consisted of ground tobacco and liquid peppermint drops from the mint that abounds throughout the area.

Another of the more famous local Finnish families was the Juso family. Nels Juso lived at the end of what is now the Juso Ranch Road, which is directly across the Rochford Road from the Dumont trailhead. Nels and his many sons were well known in the area for building log homes with great excellence. They imported their Finnish trade and were known as "artists with an axe and saw." They were known for their square log construction with double dovetail corners. Some of their buildings that still stand today are the church in Rochford, the rodeo grandstand in Deadwood and Ranch A in Beulah, Wyoming. The original log home of Nels Juso, constructed in 1897, is located 1.3 miles from the Dumont trailhead on the Juso Ranch Road. This home is now on the South Dakota State Historical Register.

Side Trip:
Pathways Spiritual Sanctuary

By Wade Burns, deceased

"This we know....The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites a family.

Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web he does to himself."

–Chief Seattle, 1854(Attributed)

Located about a mile and a half from the Dumont trailhead, this side trip of 1.5 miles leaves the Dumont Trail Head and heads east on the gravel road named Juso Ranch Road. Pathways Spiritual Sancuary is open to the public as a place to reflect, be at peace, and is very worthwhile the time to visit.

Pathways feels as though you enter a private, sacred place. The welcome prayer, isn't religious so much as spiritual. When you walk along the designated trail you simply feel lighter. The path first leads through an aspen grove, then up a slight hill and through the woods. Along the way are nooks with plaques with quotes to contemplate and benches to sit in wonder. There were many religious quotes from a wide variety of regions, each emphasizing one-ness. It felt like a very positive place. It really is something to see, and is totally unexpected to find such a wonder in the woods.

The Invocation

The walking path is wide and easy to navigate and natural to follow. The first stop is a majestic statue called "The Invocation". It's a larger than life depiction of a warrior of the back of a bucking horse with only a buffalo hide between them. Raised to the sky, the warrior holds a buffalo skull. The statue has begun to patina and it is awe inspiring. It is impossible not look look at it from all sides in wonder. As the walking path continues you come across various other statues of native Americans and horses with buffalo that are a sight to behold. There is also a arbor modeled after a New England Arbor that sits in a secluded area just made for meditation. The area is being added to yearly and currently has three very large wind chimes in addition to additional statues, and a few wild mustangs now also call the area home.. This area truly must be seen and experienced to be believed.

Railroad History

Dumont: High Line Milepost 94 — Dumont had a section house and a twenty-car siding. The McLaughlin Lumber Co. ran a standard-gauge connector line to Dumont, which ran to Hannah, Wyoming, where Homestake Mining Co. had its pumping station. Coal was hauled to the pumping station on that line. Dumont was also a shipping point for cattle, and some of the cattle pens are still here.

Back To The Trail

Located in the heart of aspen country, the Dumont trailhead is located at MP-92.6. The highest point on the trail is approximately 1.5 miles north of the Dumont trailhead at MP-94.4 with an elevation of 6,240 feet. From this high point the trail descends 1,710 feet to Deadwood over a distance of nearly 13 miles. The trail also descends to the south to Rochford descending 970 feet in 10 miles. The trail continues down another 415 feet to Mystic in a distance of 7.9 miles. The above elevation changes make the Dumont trailhead a favorite destination place for bicyclists who catch a shuttle from either Deadwood or Hill City and then enjoy the downhill rides in either direction. These are very easy rides for riders of all ages.

The elevation does not allow for deciduous trees except for beautiful groves of aspen. Large groupings of aspen are found among the pine, as well as along the many wide-open mountain meadows. The temperature is generally 10-15 degrees cooler than the lower elevations surrounding the Black Hills. Due to the elevation and the weather patterns of the northern Hills, the Dumont area generally receives an abundance of moisture, with high snowfall in the winter and nice rains through the first half of summer. For this reason, the

area generally remains green and lush throughout the summer and is replete with mountain wildflowers. The trail from Dumont to Deadwood is part of the snowmobile trail system in the winter, numbered 7A, and provides snowmobiles with connectors to multiple other Forest Service roads if the season is right. There has not been much snow the last few years, but these roads, of course, in the summer provide excellent mountain bike trails. A good FS map and snowmobile map will keep you orientated if you'd like to try some new areas.

At MP-94.2 is a piece of original snow fence for the railroad. Several concrete "W" signs are found along the full 114 miles. These "W" signs signaled the engineer to blow his train whistle as he crossed roads, etc.

Concrete "w" sign. /Aleen Golis

The balancing rock at Rochford (MP-83.2)/Aleen Golis

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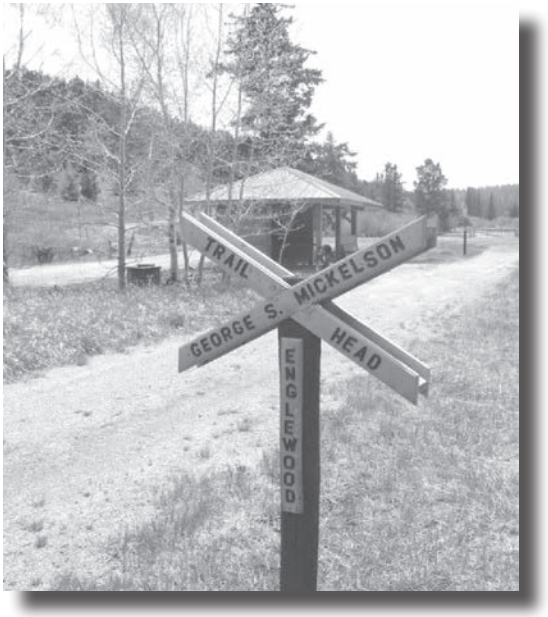


Englewood shelter. /Aleen Golis

Englewood

MP-98.5
GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 44.29703, Long.: -103.784300
Trailhead: 6 miles west of Hwy 385 on Brownsville Road,
or 1 mile east of Forest Service Road #17.
No Services
Restroom available
5.9 miles to Dumont; 4.8 miles to Sugarloaf; 6.8 to Kirk (via Sugarloaf);
10.3 miles to Deadwood

GETTING THERE: Englewood trailhead lays between two paved roads, Highway #385 and #17. There really isn't any advantage of one over the other from Deadwood.

Leaving Lead: Travel on Highway 14A/385 for 2 miles, turning left on Highway #17 right after the Presidents Park at the top of the hill. Follow #17 until you find Brownsville Road, where you will turn left (east) and proceed about one mile to Englewood.

Leaving Deadwood: Travel on #385 going south up Strawberry Hill, turn right (west) about 8 miles south of Deadwood on Brownsville Road (gravel) and find Englewood, about 6 miles west.

Englewood History

Jim Wilson

In the late 1870s, the Ten Mile Ranch was established primarily to serve as a stagecoach stop for travelers going southwest from Deadwood. It also served as the site for Mr. Kelly's still which provided tax-free whiskey to Deadwood.

In 1890, the Grand Island and Wyoming Central reached the Ten Mile Ranch on its way north to Deadwood. The name of the site was changed to Englewood around 1891, as the Railroad preferred one-word names for use by its telegraphers. The Grand Island and Wyoming Central was part of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. The arrival of the Burlington in Englewood, and its continuation north on the right of way of the Deadwood Central Railroad, spurred the growth of Englewood as a community since this was the point where the north–south line intersected with the older Black Hills and Fort Pierre Railroad. The narrow-gauge Black Hills and Fort Pierre had been established by the Homestake Mining Company in 1881 to connect its operations in Lead to its timber operations in Woodville. This line was later extended to Piedmont.

Homestake had a generating plant here to help regain some of the power used to pump water over the divide from Hannah, Wyoming. The Homestake Mine's main power plant was at Kirk, about five miles north of Englewood. It provided the power for the Homestake Mine and the city of Lead.

Englewood, circa 1890. /Gregory Walters Collection

Englewood was a thriving community with a post office/general store, numerous taverns, boarding houses, a dance hall and a one-room schoolhouse. The community flourished until after World War II when improved transportation and road systems led to the decline of many of the smaller communities in the area. There was also a significant decline in railroad traffic. The last coal train ran through Englewood to Kirk in 1983, five years after the last railroad building had been removed from the town. Englewood now consists of a pleasant rural valley and some foundations. Once the railroad ceased to be a viable means of transportation in the northern Black Hills, Englewood lost the reason for its existence as a community.

Railroad History

Englewood: High Line Milepost 98.5 — Englewood was the junction of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad and the Black Hills and Fort Pierre Railroad, as well as the junction of the CB&Q line that went to Spearfish via Annie Creek down to Elmore in Spearfish Canyon constructed in 1892. By the end of 1892 Englewood was the railroad center of the northern Black Hills with line extending to Deadwood, Lead, Elmore in Spearfish Canyon in the north, and Piedmont on the east and all points south on the Burlington. Englewood was ideally situated to be a railroad junction as there was sufficient room to build the necessary facilities. The large engines used on the Burlington from Edgemont to Englewood were unable to make it from Englewood to Deadwood, hence the need for a junction to switch equipment. Eventually there were over thirty railroad structures in Englewood and a considerable community had grown up in the valley. The rail yards themselves had as many as nine sidings to allow for the transfer freight or cars from one line to another, or service the equipment. A four-stall

Englewood remains, as seen today. /Aleen Golis

engine house was situated between the legs of a locomotive turning wye (the grade is still visible to the south and east of the large concrete foundation). The circular concrete was the foundation for a 15,000-gallon oil tank. The oil provided fuel for the large 2-6-6-2 Mallet steam engines.

Most everything is gone, yet the foundation of the CB&Q depot is still a main source of interest for trail users. The depot was a 20 by 62 foot two story structure. One can stand in the area that juts out toward the trail and visualize how the trainmen would be able to look up and down the track to spot an approaching train from their bay window. The area where the Mickelson Trail Englewood information shelter is located was a depot parking lot in 1905 and next to that are the remains of the foundation of a 15,000-gallon water tank.

The trail that leads north out of Englewood follows the old Black Hills and Fort Pierre railroad grade as soon as it crosses the gravel road. Here the Mickelson Trail climbs out of the Whitewood Creek valley, past the old brick Homestake generating plant on the right. Near the generating plant, one can spot the remains of stone bridge abutments that supported the railroad bridge over Whitewood Creek and the CB&Q line to the Kirk Power plant. At this point, the Black Hills & Fort Pierre Railroad traveled to Woodville, Nemo and Piedmont. This section of railroad grade is private access-only today. The Burlington roadbed follows Whitewood Creek to the north and the Trail does not rejoin the Burlington route until a point south of Kirk at the base of the Wasp and Bismarck Mines.

Back to the Trail

Be sure to take time at the Englewood Shelter to look around at the remains of the once thriving village and station as described above by others. Without deliberately looking for the change in soil grades, and taking time to study the area, much of the remains here will be missed. Approximately one-half mile north of the Englewood Shelter at about MP-98.5, a sharp corner occurs where the trail crosses the creek and a gravel road. It turns sharp right to cross a bridge, followed by a sharp left to cross the road and has spilled more than one rider.

North of Englewood on the trail, just after crossing the Englewood Road, one can look to the right and see the roof of Homestake's Power Plant #1 built in 1906. This was the first generating plant constructed by Homestake, and remains intact today.

The trail begins to climb again steadily for a short distance. As you ride up the hillside MP-100, the hill provides multiple areas of shade, and an ideal growing medium for the fan ferns. These turn sharp red in the fall providing a really glorious change of colors from the yellows, browns, and oranges of the trees.

At MP-100.5 (GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 44.331497, Long.: -103.788501) you will encounter a split in the trail. Continuing on straight will take you to the Sugarloaf Trailhead in 2.7 miles, and then Kirk Trailhead at a longer, gentler grade. At Sugarloaf trailhead, the trail again makes a HARD right into the trailhead and continues along Whitetail creek. If you miss the hard right, you will end up on the paved highway in 100 feet. At MP-103.7, note the left spur that takes you into Lead.

. *Wasp/Bismark Mine shelter. /Aleen Golis*

Turning right at MP-100.5 written of above, takes you into shortcut steep trail route which will take you by the Wasp and Bismark mine areas where there is another Mickelson Trail shelter and interpretive signs with the history of the area. Many relics are here as well. The Bismark mine was marginally profitable working gold, tungsten and silver, underground from 1893-1920. In 1913, a mill and a cyanide production plant were added at the site with the hope of making mining gold more profitable. A dilute cyanide solution was used to separate the gold from the mined ore. The Wasp Mine was the cyanide plant, operating on surface and underground from 1893 to ~1920. Its fame includes being the first in the world to use cyanide leaching, and was known locally as the wonder mine of the Black Hills. The mines produced 100,819 oz. gold and 158,780 oz. silver in their last 20 years of operation.

Starting in the 1920s snow and rain caused the cyanide from the mine operation to begin contamination into the local creeks. In 1930 Homestake bought the mine, but never found any more gold. The tailings and the environmental problems of the area became Homestake's to solve. Homestake has cleaned up much of the area, although a huge amount of tailings along with some cement foundations remain.

A beautiful display of the lush foliage along the trail. /Aleen Golis

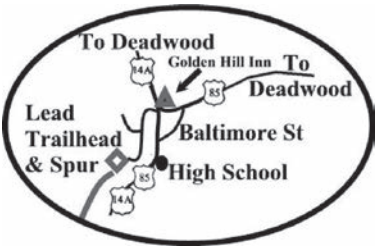
Steamy Morning/Aleen Golis

Lead Trailhead – note the ore cars that are being used for planters. /Aleen Golis

Lead

Lead is 0.9 mile RR. spur from the Mickelson Trail at MP 103.7
GPS Coordinates: Lat: 44.346644, Long: -103.780634
* Food * Gas * Lodging* Camping *
* Restrooms * Post Office * Casinos *
ZIP Code: 57754
Population: 3,027
Lead Area Chamber of Commerce: 605-584-1100
160 W. Main St., Suite A
Lead, SD 57754, www.leadmethere.org
11.6 miles to Dumont; 1.5 miles to Sugarloaf;
2 miles to Kirk, Deadwood 5.5 miles

GETTING THERE: The Trailhead in Lead is located next to the cemetery in the center of Lead along highway #85 and 14A. The trailhead is located across the street west of the school parking lot; follow the signs to the trailhead.



NOTE: Businesses in **bold print** have supported this project, and they appreciate your support–check out their ads in the book for possible discounts.

Attractions

Sanford Lab Homestake Visitors Center: 160 W Main St., 605-584-3110. The center is open year around and offers seasonal guided bus tours, as well as bikes may be rented here, www.sandfordlabhomestake.com

Bike Rentals/Shuttles

Black Hills Discovery Tours, 605-920-1020, email: discoverytours@rushmore.com

Sanford Lab Homestake Visitors Center Bike Rentals: 160 W Main St., 605-584-3110

Food

Stampmill Restaurant & Saloon, 305 W Main St., 605-717-0554

Lodging

Carsten Cottages & RV Campground, 605-584-2248, www.cartsencottages.com

Ponderosa Pines Inn & Cabins : 605-584-3321, www.blackhillsponderosapines.com

Black Hills Vacation Homes: 605-722-9950, www.blackhillsvacationhomes.com

Shops

Edge Sports: 605-722-7547, www.grabanedge.com
Winter open only

Homestake Mine in 1885./Ed Gerken Collection

Lead History

Jim Wilson

Lead (pronounced Leed) is the slightly younger and often less rowdy sister of Deadwood. Larger, and historically more sedate than Deadwood, it was originally called Washington. In the spring of 1876, brothers Fred and Moses Manuel and two partners discovered the Homestake, quickly recognized as one of the most promising mines in the region. Soon, American mining magnate George Hearst bought out the Manuels and their partners for the sum of $105,000.

Lead grew and developed to serve and support the Homestake. The Homestake was eventually the largest, deepest and richest underground gold mine in the western hemisphere. As the mine developed, the company acquired water and timber rights throughout the northern Black Hills. The company also developed extensive power generating facilities one of which was near the Englewood Trailhead. The power was generated in hydroelectric facilities and coal fired plants. Homestake was responsible for the development of Lead and most of the public facilities in town. The hospital, the parks, the opera house, library and recreation center were all developed by the company for the residents of Lead.

Lead was primarily a residential community with strong ethnic neighborhoods populated by those groups with mining experience. The downtown was relocated once after major subsidence caused by underground mining caused severe settling. The two most visually striking characteristics of Lead were the extensive set of mill buildings used to process the ore and the large open cut developed over the years through extensive surface mining. Over the years the Homestake became the primary gold producer in the Black Hills with other mines opening and closing depending on the fluctuating price of gold.

After World War II, employment in the mine declined slowly but steadily as mining became more automated and less labor intensive. The company began divesting itself of various properties and community responsibilities. The mine finally closed in 2001. Lead and all the Hills are dotted with the physical remains of Homestake and other mining endeavors.

Lead is now the home of The Sanford Laboratory at Homestake which has multiple international universities and research institutions working on experiments for the Sanford DUSEL (Deep Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory) used neutrino lab, using the Homestake mine remains. They also give tours.

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The Black Hills spruce is the dominant species of the conical evergreens that populate the upper elevations of the Black Hills. These trees prefer cooler, wetter sites on north facing slopes. This particular spruce is more dense and compact in its growth, making it more appealing than the standard white spruce. Although wood from spruce trees as a whole is primarily used as a source of pulp for paper, the Black Hills spruce is not an important timber species. Rather, this tree has great value as an ornamental in landscape design, mainly due to its color and dense shape, but also because it is very tolerant of alkaline soils and winter winds. The Black Hills spruce provides forage for many smaller woodland creatures, such as squirrels and birds; porcupines favor the bark and deer browse on the foliage. There have been many uses for people as well: the inner bark can be used as a thickener, spring shoots can be boiled and eaten, and sap can be hardened and used as a gum.

Black Hills spruce. /Aleen Golis

The smooth bromegrass was originally introduced from Europe in the late 1800s and was planted along roadways and around fields and pastures to help bind the soil. You can easily identify this plant by its flat, veined leaves and long, multi-branched flowering panicles. This grass is aggressive and long-lived, doing most of its growing in the cool-season. It will even flower again if it has been cut early in the season. Smooth bromegrass is very useful as productive forage grass and soil binder, and can survive periods of drought and extreme temperatures. However, the dense sod that this plant forms can effectively eliminate native grasses and other plants, taking over native grassland habitats.

Smooth bromegrass. /Aleen Golis

Rubber rabbitbrush is an erect round or pyramidal native shrub that typically reaches heights of 12 to 90 inches. Several more or less upright stems rise from the base and branch out, giving the plant a rounded appearance. This plant exhibits a number of

adaptations for surviving in an arid environment with a deep taproot, and establishes either from seed or by sprouting. Rubber rabbitbrush favors sunny, open sites throughout a wide variety of habitats and is particularly common on disturbed sites, is cold hardy and tolerant of both moisture and salt stress, and can grow on a wide range of soil. In general, wildlife and livestock forage only lightly on this species during the summer and fall use is variable, but winter use can be heavy. Rubber rabbitbrush is considered an important browse species on depleted rangelands and provides good nesting cover for several species of nesting birds. Rubber rabbitbrush is excellent for soil stabilization and erosion control and is also well suited for use on degraded winter ranges. This plant produces large quantities of leaf litter which, in turn becomes soil mulch. In poor growing areas, this litter is important as a means of recycling nutrients to the soil surface from the deeper rooting profile. Rubber rabbitbrush was first tested as a source of good quality rubber during World War II; in recent years, there has been renewed interest in the potential of this species as a source of rubber and other chemicals. Compounds present in rubber rabbitbrush are being tested for medical applications including use as a nematocide and for anti-malarial properties. It is also a possible source of natural insect repellents. Rubber rabbitbrush has been tested for suitability as a potential energy source from biomass. Some Native American peoples used rubber rabbitbrush latex as a source of chewing gum, and as a source for medicines, dyes, fuel and basket making.

Rubber rabbitbrush. /Lynn Eyermann

A very inquisitive porcupine. /Lynn Eyermann

The porcupine is the second largest rodent in South Dakota, weighing between 15 and 30 pounds. These critters not only have quills, but they also have a thick, fine, dark-colored under-fur that provides warmth. Between the under-fur and quills is a protective coating of long, coarse guard hairs on the back and tail. Porcupines are nocturnal herbivores,

waking at dusk to browse for food and, at dawn, will look for a tree or den in a hollow log or among rocks to sleep away the daylight hours. In the spring and summer, they eat buds, flowers, leaves and small twigs. In the winter, the inner bark of trees forms the main part of their diet. These rodents also crave salt and can be attracted to objects that have salty, human sweat on them – ax handles, boat oars, tools and car parts. One year, a couple Black Hills campgrounds had to be closed during the summer because the porcupines were chewing through brake lines and radiator hoses. Contrary to popular theory, porcupines do not throw their quills, instead they will tuck their head and turn the rump towards the attacker, or slap with the tail. The biggest threat to a porcupine is falling out of a tree or getting hit by a car, although a coyote or mountain lion will think of the animal as a tasty morsel. The Lakota people use porcupine quills as decoration on hair accessories and for decorating leather and traditional clothing.

Back to the Trail

At MP-103.7 a spur route takes to the left across the road into Lead. The Mickelson Trail skirts Lead from the Sugarloaf Trailhead through Kirk to Pluma where the Trail crosses Highway #385. From the Trail one can see the head shafts of the Homestake gold mine as well the giant black slag pile between Kirk and highway #385. There are numerous other visual indicators of the mine including adits, ventilating equipment and pipelines.

Homestake Mine, date unknown. /Ed Gerken Collection

The Lead trailhead is worth visiting with some impressive interpretive signage about the area and its' past mining history. Lead has the remains of the last open-pit gold mine, Homestake, which shut down in 2001. Some of the mines history is being preserved in the Sanford Lab Homestake Visitor Center. Started in 1876, it was the world's oldest continuously operated gold mine. Located at the edge of the Open Cut at 160 West Main, the center is open year around and offers seasonal guided bus tours. More information may be found at www.homestakesanfordlab.com. The mine has been turned into an international neutrino lab where deep underground there is not the gravity that effects experiments. Interestingly, even deep underground the lab utilizes extreme cleanliness. The laboratory provides many students a grand research arena, and also does routine tours. Another Black Hills Mining Museum is present in Lead on Main Street which has a great collection of information about the mining era within the hills. A visit to the Roundhouse in Lead and their living map theater gives a great historical view of the Black Hills and the Dakota Territory of 1861. It makes the various dates, and areas come alive through combining video, colored lights on a giant physical map measuring 28 feet wide by 24 feet deep, capturing over 28,000 square miles of the Northern Plains. Housed in the original roundhouse is also a gift shop, a great steakhouse where one can dine in booths simulating a dining car of a train. The loft area houses a full spa.

Suggested for Young Riders

The trail from Englewood Trailhead to Deadwood drops in elevation approximately 1000 feet. In fact, for a very easy ride that anyone can handle, shuttle up to the top at Dumont. Following the trail from Dumont, you will climb a very short gentle grade to the pass and then drop a continuous 13 miles into Deadwood. While one does have to peddle some because of the gravel, it is not strenuous and is a great kids' beginner ride. Be sure, along this route, that you do take time to stop at the great picture-taking spots for photos (examples of which are in the book's center pages), and to study the mining-era remains. These are great history lessons for kids too.

Bridge near Kirk, scenery changed with road change in 2005, and this scene no longer exists. /Aleen Golis

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Perfect for Couple Getaways or Large Groups

www.blackhillsponderosapines.com

Kirk Trailhead sign. /Aleen Golis

Kirk Trailhead

GPS Coordinates: Lat.: 44.342424, Long.: -103.758172
No Services
Restroom
Kirk-Sugarloaf Loop (Kirk, Sugarloaf, Summit & back to Kirk = 8.3 miles).
From Kirk to Deadwood: 3.5 Miles.

GETTING THERE: From Lead, take Highway #85 south for ½-mile where you will find the Kirk Road on your right, which is gravel. Follow this gravel road for 1.5 miles to the Kirk Trailhead. From Deadwood, take Highway # 385 south. At the point where the trail crosses the pavement, the Kirk Road is on your right. Follow Kirk Road and watch for signs to the trailhead. Remember, the trail splits at Kirk and a loop is formed.

Kirk History

Jim Wilson

The Kirk trailhead is named after the Kirk Power Plant which was constructed by Homestake in 1934-1935. It is a 12,000 kW coal fired steam turbine plant that provided most of the power for the Homestake mill and mine. The plant was sold to Black Hills Power and Light in 1954. It ceased operation in the late 1980s. It has been sold to private owners who are developing plans for its rehabilitation. The Kirk junction is where the Deadwood Central and the Burlington railroads joined. The standard gauge Burlington, and the narrow gauge Deadwood Central led to a track with 3 rails.

Flora & Fauna

Whitetail Creek meanders along a portion of the trail in this section. When you pass, you may notice a mound of sticks in the water that seemingly have no place there. What you are seeing is quite likely the dam of one of our local beaver communities. What an amazingly adaptable creature the beaver is! Even though they can't really breath underwater, they have a special respiratory system that allows them to store enough oxygen so they can swim underwater for half a mile. Their ear and nostril openings can be closed to keep out water, and their eyelids are transparent so they can see through them as they swim underwater. Their lips seal behind their front teeth so that the beavers can carry objects underwater while keeping their mouths closed. A special waterproofing oil, called castoreum, helps to keep them dry even underwater. These energetic creatures are plant eaters and do most of their eating at night. In the spring, they will eat fresh buds, grass, leaves and water plants. During the fall, however, you can tell when a beaver has been around by the gradual thinning of cottonwood and willow trees, which are trimmed, cut into easy to handle sizes and then stored in a food cache close to their damn where they can be easily retrieved even if the water has frozen. One of the reasons the beavers build dams is to protect the colony from predators, such as coyotes, dogs and mountain lions. But their tenacious hold on survival is more affected by drought, floods and human interference rather than by predators. It may be hard to believe, but those dams are also favored habitats to over fifty other species of animals that move in and adopt the waterlogged area for other resources, as well. Beavers have always been a widely sought-after resource throughout history. The waterproofing oil has been regarded as a cure-all health remedy and used as a fixative in perfumes. The pelts however are a much more valuable commodity, which in itself was highly responsible in the settlement of the South Dakota Territory. Many of the first Europeans to settle here were French fur trappers.

Beaver. /Aleen Golis

Back to the Trail

Kirk signpost. /Aleen Golis

At MP-100.5, a choice will have to be made between routes down the mountain. If you take the right path, this is a steep descent of 17% for about 1 mile. If choosing this route, be sure to check your brakes before starting down the trail. This is not a trail for real young riders without prior demonstration of good speed control ability. If you are riding up the trail from Deadwood using this route, you will need to choose at the Kirk trailhead whether you have the strength to ride up this grade, or if you wish to push the bike for the steep portions of this trail. For those who like a challenge, taking the left branch or Kirk trail going up, will definitely get you warmed up! It is possible to ride from Deadwood and make a loop back to the Kirk Trailhead. This loop is ~12 miles, half uphill!

Taking the left path at MP-100.5 follows a much gentler grade to the valley floor. Watch the sharp switchback as you get down the hill at the Sugarloaf Trailhead. It sneaks up on you, and the corner is impossible to navigate at a high rate of speed. From here, the trail follows Whitetail Creek into Deadwood. This is a beautiful section of the trail, winding along the creek, often utilized by locals for all forms of exercise. At MP-103.7 a spur route takes to the left across the highway into Lead.

The trail is marked by snowmobile #7 diamonds, as they are allowed on this portion of the trail from December 1 to March 31. The backside of Homestake is noted at MP-107.3, with multiple waterlines and the hillside of tailings. While some will think the tailings unsightly, they also have their own majestic look. The Black Hills Inn and Suites is located along the trail in this section.

Homestake Mine tailings. /Aleen Golis

The trail here still has the rails buried under the gravel in this section, as that was a condition of the "Rails to Trails" agreement. Hence, the bridges have iron laid over the rails, and boards build up the bridge floor to the level of the rails. These flat sheets of iron can sometimes catch thinner tires causing some loss of balance. At MP-107, the outskirts of Deadwood is

encountered. There is a new trail head called Pluma at the 385 crossing with great bathrooms, interpretive signs and with nearby parking. The trail crosses a gravel road several times, and the highway a couple times, so be car conscious. The traffic doesn't stop for trail users, and caution must be maintained at all times. The last one to two miles are paved.

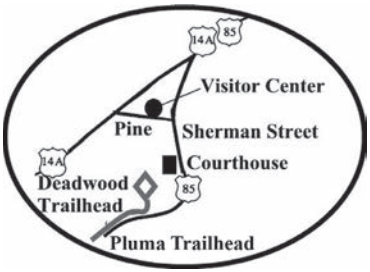
Deadwood Gulch Resort (www.deadwoodgulch.com) is located at MP-108.2, and has a great creek view patio to enjoy. The Whister Gulch RV Campground, www.whistlergulch.com, is located just up the hill right at this point. The Deadwood Super-Eight (www.deadwoodsuper8.com) at MP-108.5 has a pool and a great view of the trail from their deck that overlooks the trail and the creek.

In the hot July summer of 2002, an electrical short caused a forest fire burn along the trail for several miles. The burn challenged firefighters as it threatened the city of Deadwood. You will note several areas where it actually burned into the town area. Several homes were lost to this fire in the first two days, and the city had to be evacuated. The resultant loss of soil-preserving cover allowed multiple hillsides to wash and fill gullies, and even the streets of Deadwood on occasion, with soil and fire remnants. While at this point, the soils no longer wash as badly, remnants of the fire remain visible.

The trail ends just before the Deadwood railroad freight warehouse. The large parking lot here provides room for area events to set up grande' finalee endings with tents, vendors, and food.

NOTE: If riding from Deadwood, I suggest using the Sugarloaf Trailhead route which has a lighter grade going up. Leaving Deadwood, one has 13 miles of continuously uphill trail. If one is very hardened and likes a challenge, then going up the 17% grade from Kirk Trailhead is well in order. If only doing a section of the trail out of Deadwood, this loop can be completed for a shorter ride. Many locals use this eight-mile loop as their daily routine. (The eight miles is Kirk, Sugarloaf, Englewood and Kirk–12 miles total if you add in miles from Deadwood.)

Deadwood Trailhead, MP-108.9. /Aleen Golis



Deadwood

MP-108.8
* Shuttle Service * Food * Gas * Lodging* Camping *
* RV Park * Restrooms * Post Office * Casinos *
ZIP Code: 57732
Population: 1380
Deadwood Chamber: 1-800-999-1876
501 Main Street, www.deadwood.com,
E-mail: visit@deadwood.org
16.2 miles to Dumont; 5.5 miles to Sugarloaf; 3.5 miles to Kirk

GETTING THERE: Trailhead is located near Sherman St. old railroad freight depot. Follow Highway 85 coming from the north, and Interstate 90 or Highway 14A coming from Sturgis to Deadwood. In Deadwood, stay on Highway 85, AKA Sherman Street. You will see the Old Freight Depot on your right just before Pine Street. Coming from the south on Highway 385, turn right at the intersection between Lead and Deadwood. Follow 385 for ~1.5 miles. The Old Freight Depot is on your left, but is at this writing totally closed up and not used.

NOTE: Businesses in **bold print** have supported this project, and they appreciate your support–check out their ads in the book for possible discounts.

Attractions

Adams Museum: 54 Sherman St., 605-578-1714

Days of '76 Museum: 17 Crescent Dr., 605-578-1657

Deadwood Mountain Grand Event Center, Hotel, Casino: 605-559-0386, toll free-877-907-4726, www.deadwoodmountaingrand.com

Tatanka- Story of the Bison: 605-584-5678, www.storyofthebison.com

Bike Rental/Shuttle

Deadwheels Bike Rental & Shuttle: 311 Cliff St., 605-484-6592, www.deadwheelsbikerentals.com

Discovery Tours: 605-722-5788, www.blackhillsdiscoverytours.com

Camping

Days of 76 Campground: 605-578-2872, www.daysof76.com

Deadwood KOA Camping: 800-562-0846, www.deadwoodkoa.com

Whistler Gulch RV Park & Campground: 1-800-704-7139, www.WhistlerGulch.com

Food, Casino, Lodging

Carsten Cottages, 605-584-3321 or 605-584-2218, www.cartsencottages.com

Deadwood Gulch Gaming Resort: 304 Cliff St., 800-695-1876, www.deadwoodgulchresort.com

Ponderosa Pines Inn & Cabins: 605-584-3321, www.blackhillsponderosapines.com

Black Hills Inn &Suites: 605-578-7791, www.BlackHillsInn.com

Cadillac Jack's Gaming Resort/SpringHill Suites by Marriott, 322 Main St., www.cadillacjacksgaming.com

Deadwood Super 8 Motel: 196 Cliff St., 605-578-2535 www.deadwoodsuper8.com

First Gold Hotel Gaming: 800-274-1876, www.firstgold.com

Mineral Palace Hotel & Gaming: 800-847-2522, www.mineralpalace.com

Shops

Pump House @ Mind Blow Studio: Hot glass blowing, coffee & beer, 73 Sherman St., 605-571-1071

Mining History

When you get into the Lead and Deadwood area, the history of all the mines and mills gets very complicated and entangled. This was a large area around Lead and Deadwood that was rich in gold-bearing ore. Many claims were staked, and many mines and mills were built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. There were many disputes over claim boundaries, many mergers, takeovers and lawsuits. In the end, Homestake became the dominant mining company in the area.

To learn more about the Homestake Mining Company and all the mines and mills in the Lead-Deadwood area, I suggest a book by Mildred Fielder called *The Treasure of Homestake Gold,* and a book by Joel Waterland called *The Spawn and The Mother Lode*. To get a feel for what all was involved in mining around Lead and Deadwood, visit the Black Hills Mining Museum or the Homestake Visitor Center in Lead.

Deadwood History

JIM WILSON

Deadwood is the northern terminus of the Mickelson Trail. Deadwood was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1964 because of its significance in western history. This was based on its role in the exploration and development of the Black Hills, its association with prominent individuals in western history, and its outstanding collection of residential and commercial Victorian architecture.

Gold was first discovered in the northern Black Hills in late 1875 at the present location of the First Gold Hotel. By 1876, there was a number of booming mining camps established in the Whitewood Creek Valley. These quickly consolidated into the town of Deadwood, a magnet for heroes, villains, and ordinary citizens trying to make a living. James Butler, "Wild Bill" Hickock, Calamity Jane, Preacher Smith, Seth Bullock, Colorado Charlie Utter, Phatty Thompson, W. E. Adams, Nathan Franklin and assorted others arrived in Deadwood to prospect, gamble, drink, carouse, and build a new community.

Wild Bill was assassinated by Jack McCall after being in Deadwood for six weeks, and was eventually buried in Mt. Moriah Cemetery where he became the leading tourist attraction in Deadwood. In 1878, Wild Bill and others were removed from Ingleside Cemetery, in what is now the President's neighborhood,

and reburied in Mt. Moriah. This transfer took place because the original cemetery was too valuable as build-able land to be used for burials. In 1903, Calamity Jane was buried next to Wild Bill at Mt. Moriah, thus acquiring a closeness to Bill in death that she never achieved in life.

Deadwood TinShop, Main Street, Deadwood, 1876. /Photographer, SJ Morrow, reprinted with permission from The National Archives.

In 1879, downtown Deadwood was devastated by fire and was rebuilt much as you see it today. The wooden false-front buildings and boardwalks portrayed in movies and on television were destroyed, to be replaced by the brick and stone Victorian buildings lining Main Street. Most of them were built between 1880 and 1910. The Franklin Hotel celebrated its 100th birthday in 2003 and was said to be the most impressive hotel between Minneapolis and Denver.

There was a substantial Chinese community in Deadwood from 1876 until about 1920 that was centered on lower Main Street. The City has been carrying on archeological investigations of the Chinese area since the year 2000. In its early years, the town was afflicted with small pox epidemics, fires and floods.

The city soon ceased to be a mining camp and became the center of economic activity for the northern Black Hills. This vigorous economy included banking, wholesale and retail supply businesses, saloons, theaters, and houses of ill repute. The latter maintained their economic viability longer than the former with the last three houses closed under duress in 1979. Like the houses of ill repute, illegal gaming existed and was tolerated as simply another service for visitors. The city flourished in the period between World War I and World War II, and then settled into a slow decline with the closure of the railroads and the development of a good road system that allowed people in Deadwood to trade and shop in larger towns such as Rapid City and Spearfish. Deadwood did remain a magnet for tourists that were visiting the Black Hills, as it retained its aura of western romance and the historic connections with mining, gunfighters and the old west. Seasonal tourism was the most productive part of the economy. The Days of '76 Rodeo was a major attraction from the 1920s to the present day, and many visitors returned to see the "Trial of Jack McCall" re-enactment more than once.

In 1987, Deadwood suffered from another devastating fire which destroyed the Syndicate Block at the corner of Lee and Main, where the Holiday Inn Express presently stands. A group of energetic and concerned citizens organized

a committee to establish legalized gaming in Deadwood. An amendment to the South Dakota Constitution was passed that permitted legalized gaming if all of the net proceeds of gaming to the state and city were used for historic preservation in Deadwood. Gaming began November 1, 1989, and the city has undergone a massive transformation. Deadwood is now the entertainment and events capital of the northern Black Hills, with over 1.2 million visitors a year. Both commercial and residential buildings have been restored and rehabilitated with a great deal of historical accuracy on the exterior. Individual residences have been assisted with grants to paint their historic homes, and grants to restore historic retaining walls.

The city has restored Mt. Moriah Cemetery to near-original condition and has also restored the Adams House as a museum. The railroad station has been converted to the extensive visitor's center. The Adams Museum holds a number of interesting collections and artifacts ranging from unique dinosaur remains to unique folk art collections. The Days of '76 Museum has one of the finest collections of restored wagons in the Midwest and is the home of the Clowser Collection of western memorabilia. Hills area model train enthusiasts have a full basement at the Wild West Casino (622 Main Street, 605-578-1100), with multilevel tracks, and they are often there working on their designs. Coins in a slot will power the trains where young and old alike can spend a good bit of time trying to take it all in. Admission is by donation only.

The one remaining building related directly to gold mining in Deadwood is the old Homestake Slimes Plant, located two blocks north of the trailhead. This enormous building was constructed in 1903 to house a newly-invented method of removing gold from previously untreatable fine sands known as slimes. The process was in use until the mid 1970s. This great building, empty for many years, have recently been renovated into the Deadwood Mountain Grand Hotel, Event Center, and Casino, showcasing many great singers normally thought to only do Shows in metropolises.

Deadwood. /Reprinted with permission from The National Archive.

Located just up the up hil just north of downtown Deadwood. *Tatanka* consists of an interpretive center telling the story of the bison and a magnificent 17-piece bronze assemblage showing a herd of bison being driven over a cliff. The sculpture by Peggy Detmers is larger than life size, and the site includes living history exhibits by Native Americans during much of the summers.

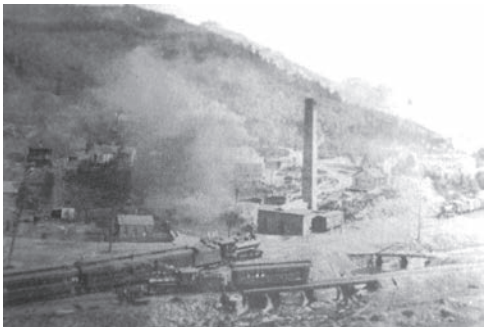
Deadwood has transformed itself from a rough and ready mining camp, providing every conceivable pleasure to hordes of visitors and transients, into a capital of commerce and finance, and then once again into a center for entertainment and a place to experience our old western heritage.

It is entirely appropriate that Deadwood is the last milepost on the railroad line that forms the Mickelson Trail because Deadwood was the last untamed frontier in the continental United States.

The Deadwood Depot is the site of the current Deadwood Visitors Center. /Rick Mills Collection

Burlington History

Deadwood: High Line Milepost 106.8 — The Burlington's primary goal for the High Line was to tap the mining regions of the northern Black Hills, including the cities of Deadwood and Lead. The narrow gauge Deadwood Central Railroad (established in 1888) controlled the only practical right of way following Whitewood Creek from Englewood down to Deadwood. The Burlington's management concluded that it must deal with the Deadwood Central for access to Deadwood.



Pluma, MP-105.1. /Rick Mills Collection

The two companies came to an agreement that was mutually advantageous. The Burlington built its standard gauge line northward through the Hills to Englewood, the point at which it met the Deadwood Central right of way. The Burlington purchased the right of way from Englewood to Kirk, and placed a standard gauge line down the canyon. The Deadwood Central completed a spur on this alignment from Pluma (High Line Milepost 105.1) to Kirk in October of 1890. The Burlington then placed a third rail on the existing narrow gauge line from Kirk to Deadwood to allow for standard gauge operation, and brought its first train into Deadwood on January 24, 1891. The town again celebrated the arrival of a railroad from the outside world; barely a month after the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad had arrived in town from the opposite direction. The total cost to construct the 106-mile High Line was estimated at $2.3 million dollars.

Over the years, the Burlington maintained a variety of narrow and standard gauge facilities in and near Deadwood and Lead. Burlington trains were switched out, cars were spotted at different points in the city for loading and unloading, ore cars were taken from the mines to the mills for processing, and passengers arrived and departed from the Burlington's depot on lower Sherman Street - all combining to make the yard, locomotive roundhouse, and the freight house busy places.

Freight house in Deadwood. /Rick Mills Collection

The "list of lasts" for the Deadwood area Burlington (Burlington Northern after March 1970) include the last passenger train in September of 1949, the last steam locomotive in 1951, and the final train leaving Deadwood on the north end of the High Line on November 8, 1983. Some of the original track has been left in place in the yard and engine house area near upper Sherman Street in Deadwood. The remaining rails could be used by the city in a future tourist-related railroad project.

The narrow-leaf cottonwood is a close relative to the willow and quaking aspen. A deciduous tree which looses its leaves each fall, it grows quickly. The tree prefers to grow along a water source in moist, sandy soils and will generally crowd out any other trees as it grows at a much faster rate. This tree is very susceptible to fire, as even a light burn will kill the seedlings and saplings very quickly and a heavier fire will severely injure the bark of older trees, promoting decay. A long-term dry spell will likewise cause sever damage to this tree. The lightweight wood was important to the earlier peoples and settlers alike as forage for horses and as construction material for shelters, furniture and even canoes. Some people even ate the sweet inner bark of young sprouts in the spring. Today, it is mainly used for pulp and lightweight furniture.

Narrowleaf cottonwood. /Lynn Eyermann

Canada goldenrod. /Aleen Golis

The yellow flower heads of Canada Goldenrod have a characteristic arrangement and shape, and can sometimes reach heights of about six feet. The flower clusters are erect and form a cylindrical shape with the branches being ascending and balanced, forming a pyramid shape. The leaves become progressively smaller toward the top of the plant. The stems and narrow leaves look grayish-green because of their short surface hairs. This native perennial is most common in thickets, open fields and on roadsides, but can become a bothersome weed in poorly managed pastures, forest nurseries perennial gardens and crops. It can tolerate a fairly wide range of soil fertility and types, but prefers sites that are damp with periods of drying out. Although this goldenrod does not tolerate shade well, it is usually one of the first species to reproduce in an area that has experienced a burn, giving over to shrubs as the site recovers. The Canada goldenrod is a versatile plant for humans. The leaves can be cooked and eaten like spinach, while a tea can be made from the dried plant parts and used for various health remedies, including as an antiseptic. It can even be used to produce several shades of dyes. However, there is little forage benefit for livestock, unless other graze has been depleted. It is selectively grazed by deer, usually in late summer and early fall.

Bluejoint reedgrass. /Lynn Eyermann

The bluejoint reedgrass is another native plant species found throughout the mid- to high-level elevations of the Black Hills. This cool-season grass is sod-forming, and can be very long-lived; well developed fields may persist for 100 years. Occasionally it occupies considerable areas to the exclusion of other native grasses. This plant will grow in a wide range of habitats but prefers moist sites, such as wet meadows and prairies. Although this plant cannot germinate under drought conditions, it is very drought resistant once established. It can also become a serious competitor of conifer seedlings on disturbed moist sites where a thick "mulch" of litter has developed which insulates the soil surface. This insulation causes the soil temperature to decrease, thus partially explaining the resultant poor growth of conifer seedlings in these bluejoint reedgrass-dominated sites. Bluejoint usually sprouts from surviving rhizomes following a fire, but it can also establish itself on burned sites by wind-dispersed seeds. Bluejoint reedgrass furnishes forage in varying degrees for many big game species and livestock as it is most palatable when young and succulent. It is grazed lightly by deer in early summer, but makes up a major part of the diet of elk in the winter. Since it often grows in wet habitats, use by livestock is often limited until late in the season when the grass is tough.

Grazing whitetail deer. /Lynn Eyermann

Before pioneer settlement in the mid to late 1800s, deer numbers in South Dakota were very low as they could not compete with the larger herbivores, such as bison and elk, for the limited graze available at the time. Through progressive wildlife management, however, the deer population is at record levels and is now regulated annually by hunter harvest. The Black Hills is home to two species of deer: the white-tiled deer and mule deer. Although the white-tailed deer produce more fawns and are more easily adapted to a wider variety of habitats, the mule deer are more sought after by the hunters, due to the elaborate characteristics of their antlers. Landowners prefer to have more mule deer than white-tailed deer because the mule deer generally cause less crop damage. Both deer have long been used as food sources, to craft tools and utensils, fabrics and ornaments.

Back to the trail:

This section is covered in the Kirk section as you arrive in Deadwood. The book is written starting with MP 0 and ending at MP 108–at the end of the Kirk Section. If you are leaving from Deadwood the book will need to be used from the back forward. For this reason, I have attempted to insert MP numbers often, and while they may read redundantly, they will prove helpful as you ride the Mickelson Trail. You will find community and trail folks all very helpful, and willing to answer any questions you may have. If you wish to enjoy the history as written guest authors in their own voices, those can be downloaded from the MTA website for your MP3, or smart phone at www.mickelsontrailaffiliates.com. Enjoy!

Toni from Deadwood Bicycles (bike shop has since closed) at the 2006 Game Fish & Park Trek /Aleen Golis

DEADWHEELS
Bike Rentals and Shuttle Service
Affiliated with Rabbit Bicycles (Hill City, SD)
Full-service bike rental business
We shuttle the full Mickelson Trail!
Mickelson Trail merchandise on-site
Open 9-5, 7 days a week (other hours by request)
2 and 4 hour rentals, daily and weekly
Bicycle tours: 2 or 3 day packages
(Bikes, shuttle service and motel provided)
605-484-6592
311 Cliff Street | Deadwood, SD
deadwheelsbikerentals.com or rabbitbike.com

Trail quick references

Getting From A to B

Shuttle Services

Full or partial trail shuttle service is available from these major suppliers. They will shuttle you and your bikes, or your vehicle whichever you prefer. Many other businesses, motels and BnBs along the trail may also help shuttle vehicles upon request if they have the staffing coverage available. Businesses change, call before you come and plan to use their shuttle service to assure they are still in business.

Shuttle service can sometimes be arranged with the local businesses on an individual basis.

Edgemont

Highline Adventures: Christina Heisler, 605-673-2019

Pringle

Nothing available.

Hill City

Mickelson Trail Adventures - 605-574-4094 • 605-391-4491 • 866-574-4094, www.mickelsontrailadventures.com, Email: danpulse69@msn.com

Rabbit Bicycles: 605-574-4302, 605-484-6592--Bike Shop, Rentals & Shuttle, www.rabbitbike.com or www.deadwheelsbikerentals.com.

Deadwood

Deadwheels Bicycles: 605-484-6592; www.deadwheelsbikes.com; Rental & Shuttle

Discovery Tours: 605-722-5788, www.blackhillsdiscoverytours.com

Rapid City

Black Hills Bicycle Shop: 1401 Omaha St.; 605-716-4497, www.blackhillsbicycles.com--Bike Shop & Repairs

Scheels All Sports: 605-342-9033--Bike Shop & Repairs, www.scheels.com

Acme Bicycles: 1727 West Main St.; 605-343-9534, E-mail to acmebicycles@rushmore.com. Wonderful folks to work with when flying into the area with a bike.

Businesses in bold supported this guide through advertising.

Campground Quick Reference Guide

Edgemont

- Edgemont Campground: 800 2nd Ave. RV sites, tents welcome, Phone 605-662-6275.

Between Minnekahta & Pringle

- Country Charm Cabins & Corrals: MP-25.9, phone 605-673-2686, www.Countrycharmcabins-corrals.com. Tents welcome, shower house.

Hot Springs Side Trip:

- Allen Ranch E. of Hot Springs 1 mile, phone 605-745-1890, tepees available, www.gwtc.net/~allenranch/
- Camp Sites available at 2 lakes:
  - Cottonwood Lake on South Loop off Highway 18--corp of engineers
  - Cold Brook Lake on North Loop off Argyle Road--corp of engineers
- Kemo Sabay Campground: www.kemosabaycampground.com.

Pringle:

- Limited Number at Hitchrail if not full, available on request.
- Plenty Star Ranch: 4 campsites, one cabin.

Between Pringle and Custer

• Tc Ranch Horse Camp: 25749 V Rd.; Phone 605-673-3249; cell-605-209-2747--Horse camp.

Custer

- **Fort Welikeit Family Campground: 877-673-4790, www.blackhillsrv.com.**
- Big Pine Campground: Phone 1- 800-235-3981, 2 miles W. of Custer. www.bigpinecampground.com.
- Buffalo Ridge Camp Resort: www.blackhillsvacations.com/Buffalo RidgeCampResort
- Custer Gulch RV Park & Campground, 605-673-4647, www.custergulch.com
- French Creek RV Park: 1 block from trailhead-ON TRAIL, phone 605-673-3727, www.fcrvpk.org. RV sites, tents welcome, showers.

Between Custer and Hill City

- **Crooked Creek Resort & RV Park: 800-252-8486, www.crookedcreeksd.com**
- Heritage Village Campground: MP-49.7, 605-673-4761
- National Forest Service Campground/Oreville: MP-55.7-just cross Hwy 385

Mt. Rushmore Side Trip

- Mt. Rushmore KOA: 605-574-2525, E-mail info@palmergulch.com, www.palmergulch.com.
- National Forest Service Campground/Horse Thief.

Hill City

- **Crooked Creek Resort &RV Park: 605-574-2418, 3 miles S. of Hill City, www.crookedcreeksd.com, on trail.**
- **High Country Guest Ranch: 4 miles N. of Hill City, Phone 605-574-9003, www.highcountryranch.com.**
- **Mickelson Trail Lodging: 605-574-4000, www.mickelsontraillodging.com**
- **Newtonfork Ranch: 605-754-2220, www.newtonforkranch.com, MP-61.5.**
- **Trailside Park Resort Campground: S. edge of Hill City on trail, cabins, RV sites, tents, 605-574-9079, www.trailsideparkresort.com, on trail.**
- Rafter J Bar Ranch: Phone: 2 miles S. of Hill City, 605-574-3950, E-mail info@rafterj.com, www.rafterj.com, on trail.

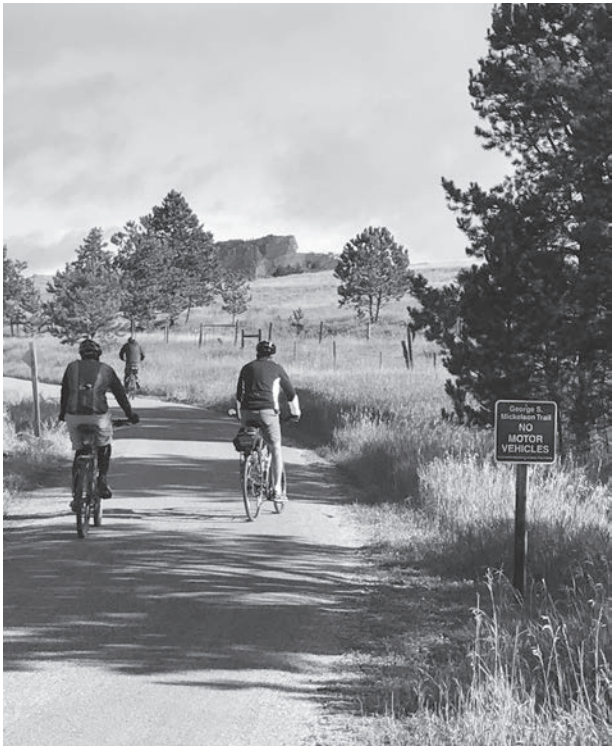
Rochford

- **Carsten Cottages & Campground: 605-584-2248, www.carstencottages.com**

Deadwood

- Days of 76 Campground: 50 Crescent Dr., 605-578-2872, www.daysof76.com.
- Deadwood KOA Campground: 1 mile west of Deadwood on Hwy 14A, 1-800-562-0846, www.deadwoodkoa.com, have cabins too.
- Whistler Gulch RV Park and Campground: MP-107, short distance from trailhead, 800-704-7139, www.whistlergulch.com.

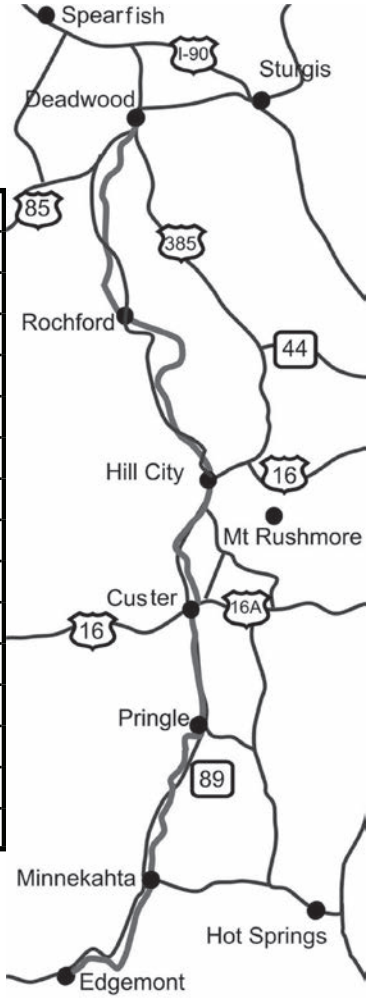
Businesses in bold supported this guide through advertising.



Crazy horse view north of Custer/Aleen Golis

Aleen & Tom Golis 2017 Trek Finish at Deadwood /Aleen Golis

MILEPOST	CITY	DATE RIDDEN
0	Edgemont	
16.2	Minnekahta TH	
32.1	Pringle	
35.7	White Elephant TH	
44.5	Custer Harbach Park	
49.6	The Mountain TH	
60.1	Hill City, Tracy Park	
74.7	Mystic TH	
82.6	Rochford	
92.6	Dumont TH	
98.5	Englewood TH	
103.3	Sugarloaf TH	
105.3	Kirk TH	
108.8	Deadwood	
0.9	Lead Spur	

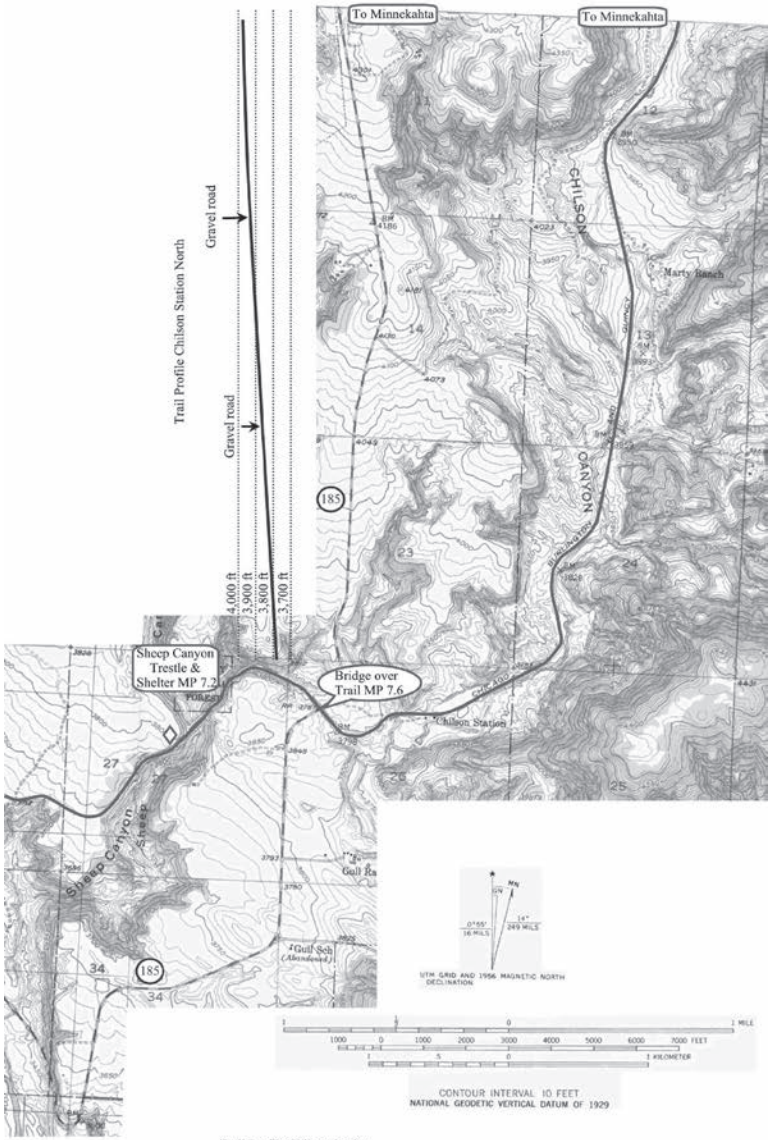


The following chart may be cut out of the book covered with laminating material, hole punched and attached to bike handle bars with a twisty tie for quick review and ready reference as you are riding.

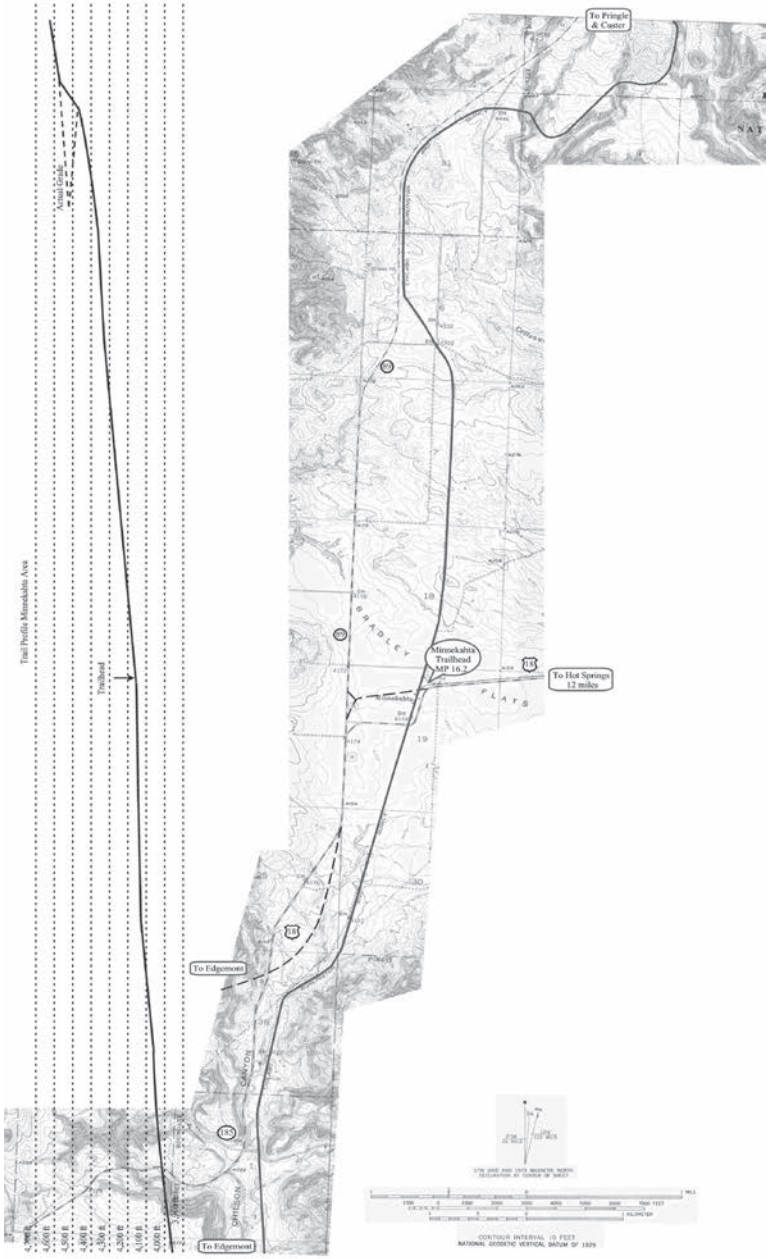
TRAILHEAD	MILES TO NEXT TRAILHEAD	MILEPOST
Deadwood	3.5	108.8
Kirk	4.4	105.3
Lead	6.1	104.6
Englewood	5.8	98.5
Dumont	10	92.6
Rochford	7.8	82.6
Mystic	15.5	74.7
Tracy Park (Hill City)	10.9	60.1
The Mountain	5.1	49.6
Harbach Park (Custer)	8.8	44.5
White Elephant	3.6	35.7
Pringle	16.1	32.1
Minnekahta	16.0	16.2
Edgemont	0.0	0.0

Map 1 — Edgemont — MP 0

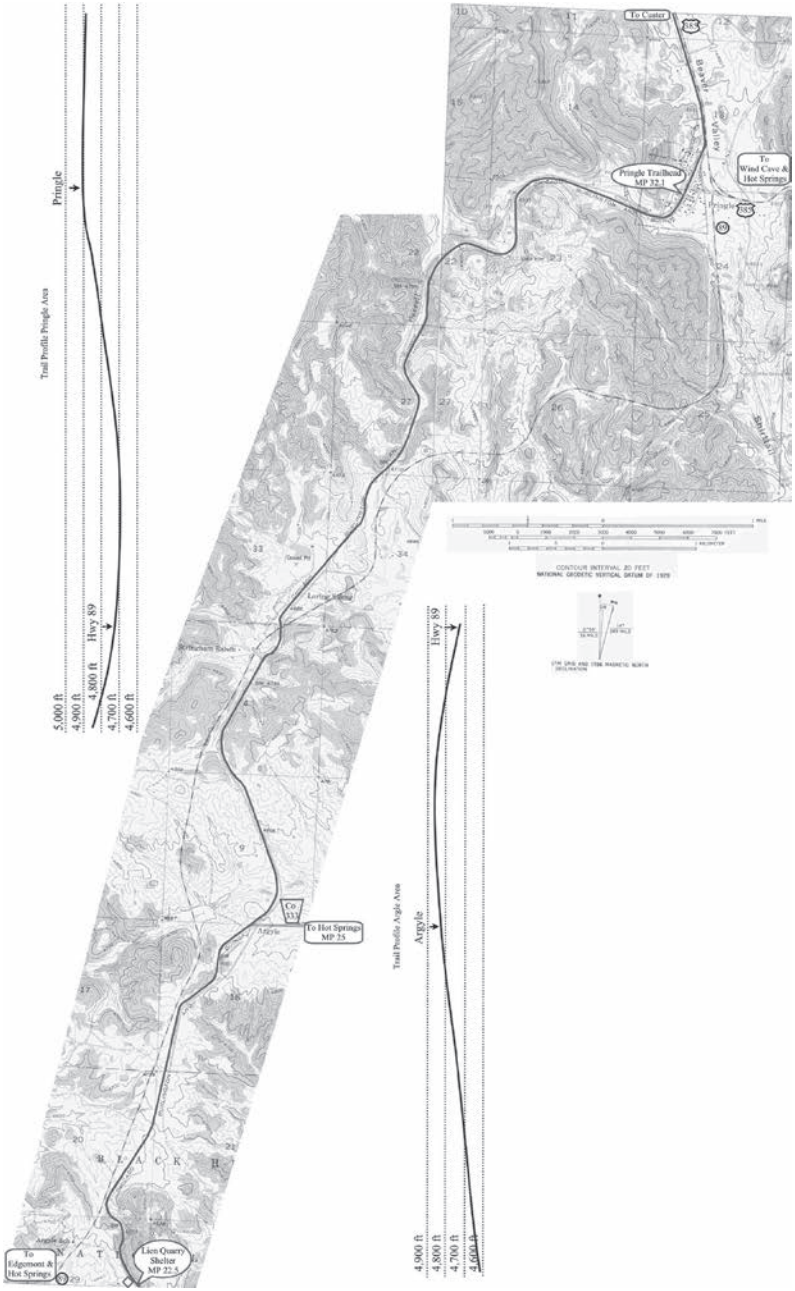
Map 2 — Sheep Canyon — MP 7



Map 3 — Minnekahta Jct. Trail Head— MP 16.2

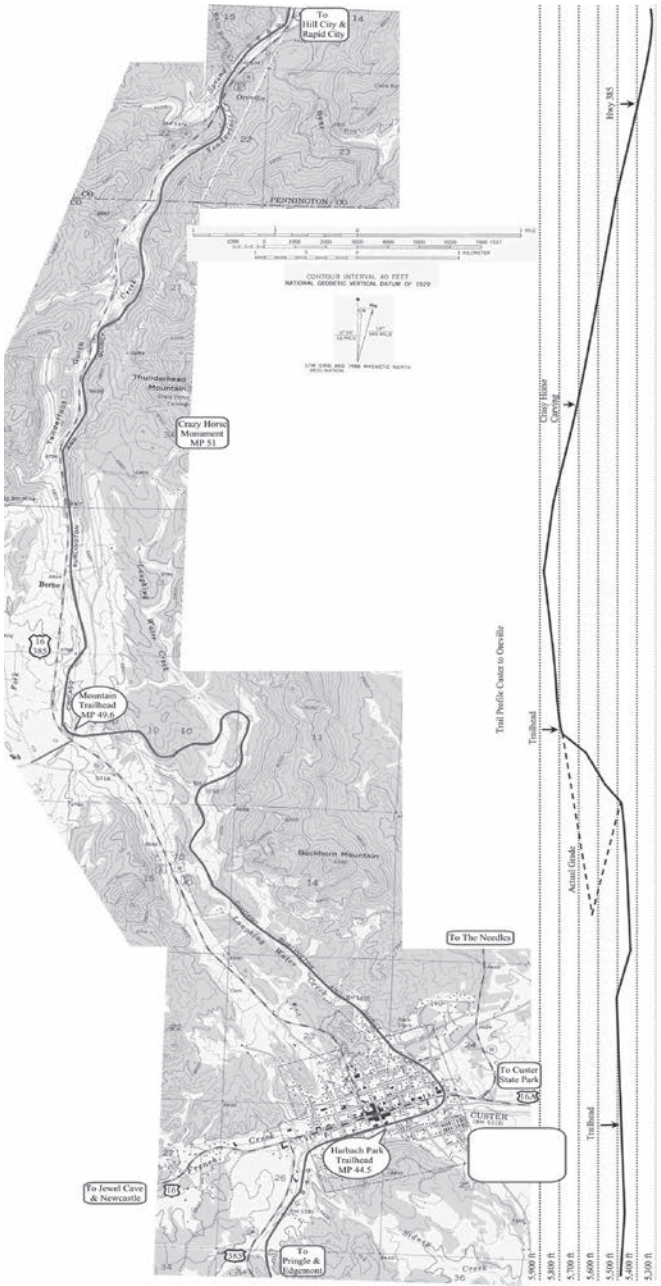


Map 4 — Pringle Trail Head — MP 32.1

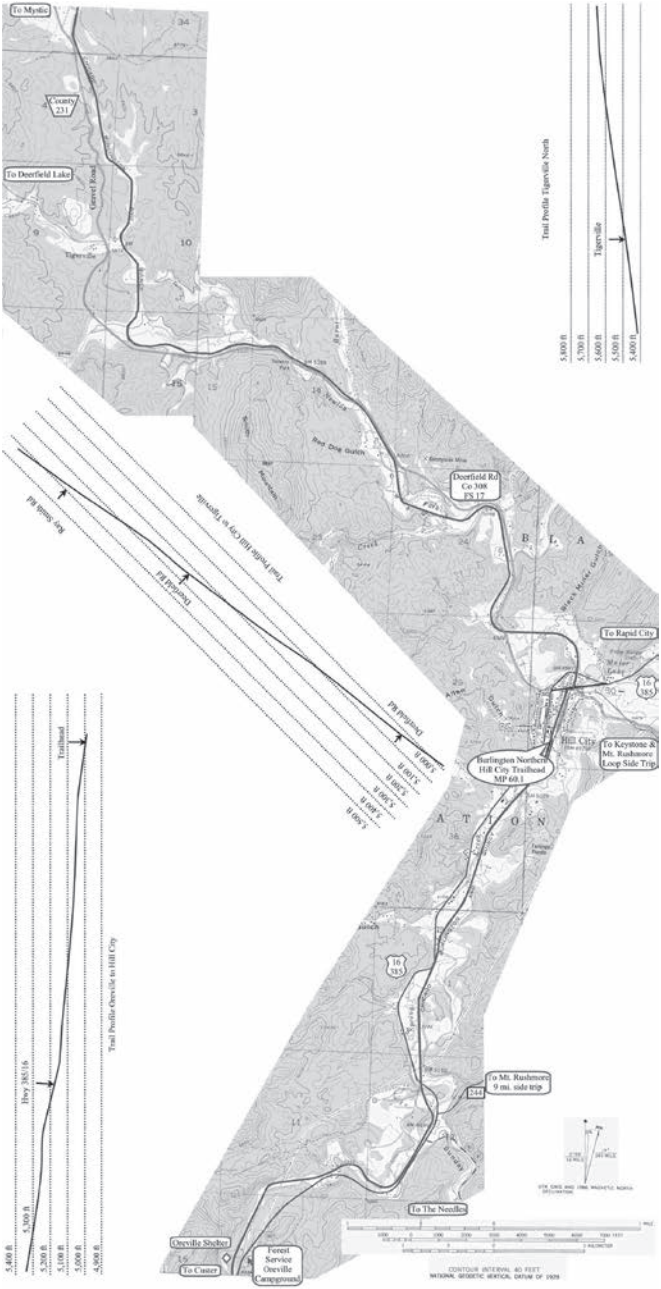


Map 5 — White Elephant — MP 38

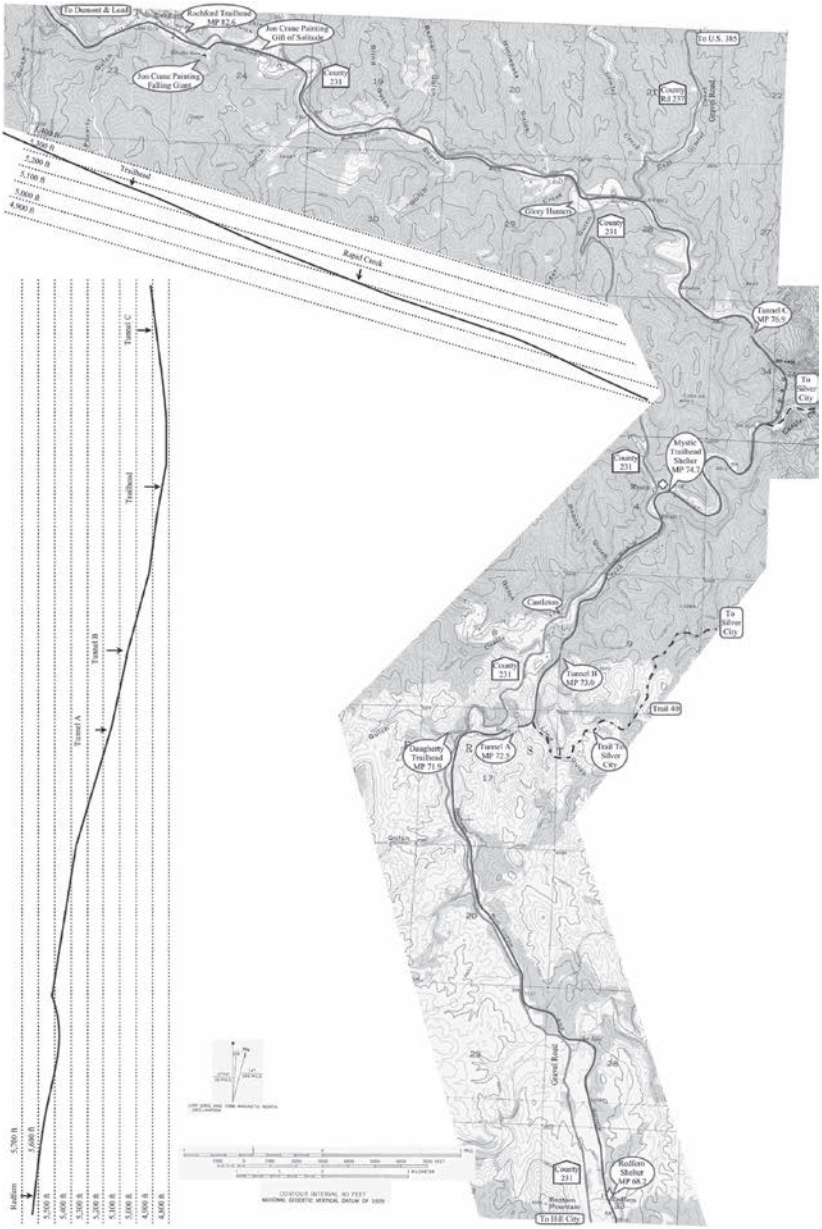
Map 6 — Custer & Mt. Trail Heads — MP 42 & MP 49.6



Map 7 — Hill City — MP 60.1

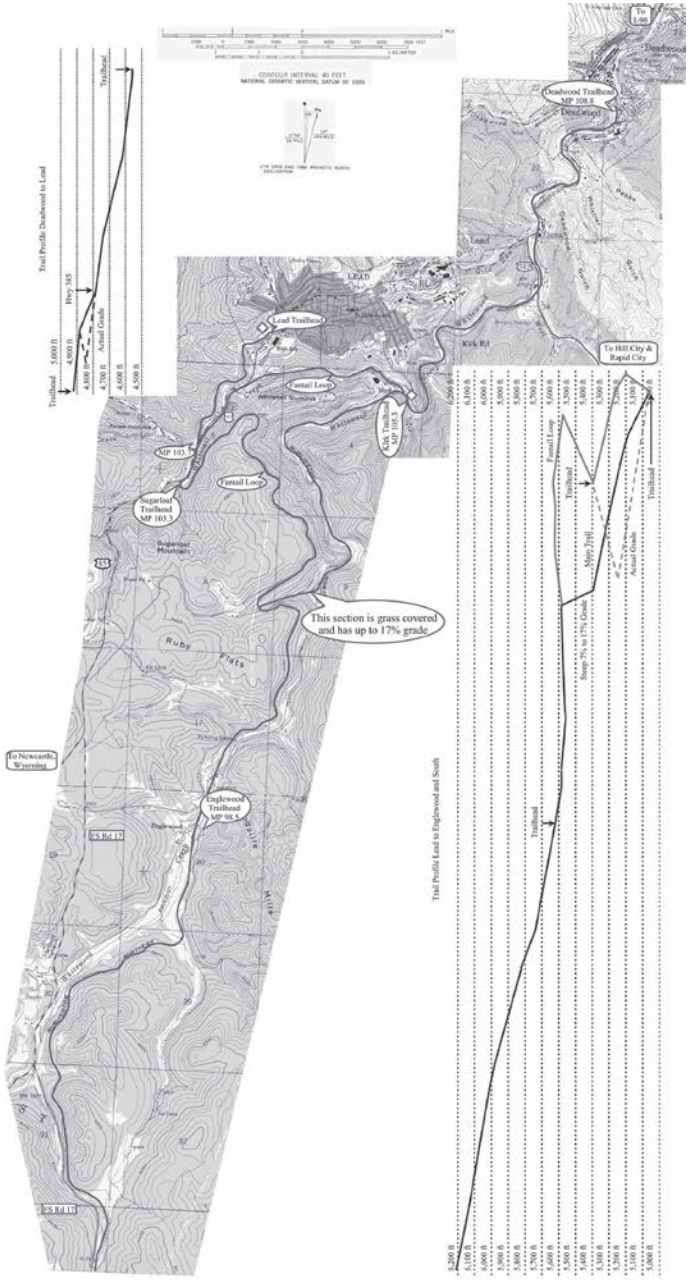


Map 8 — Mystic & Rochford Trail Heads — MP 74.7 & MP 82.6



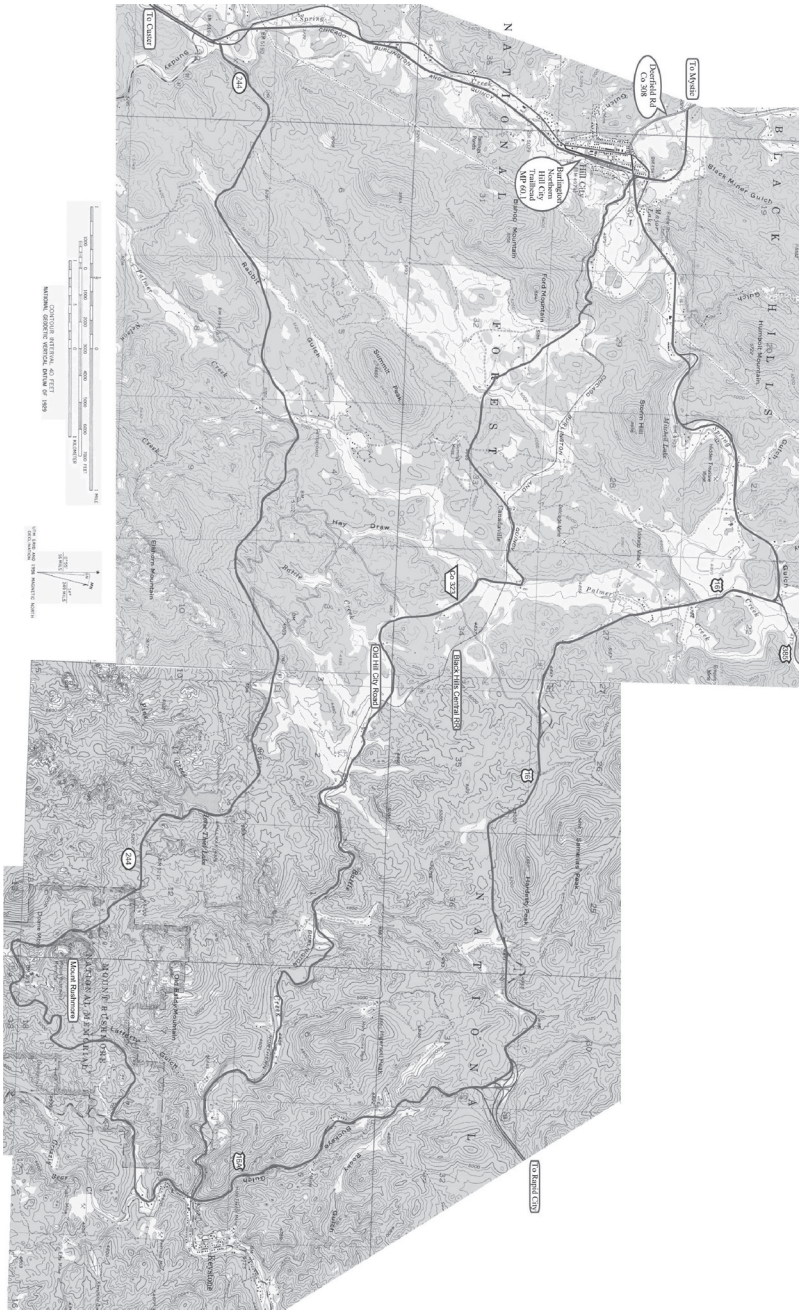
Map 9 — Dumont Trail Head — MP 92.6

Map 10 — Englewood/Kirk/ Deadwood — MP 109

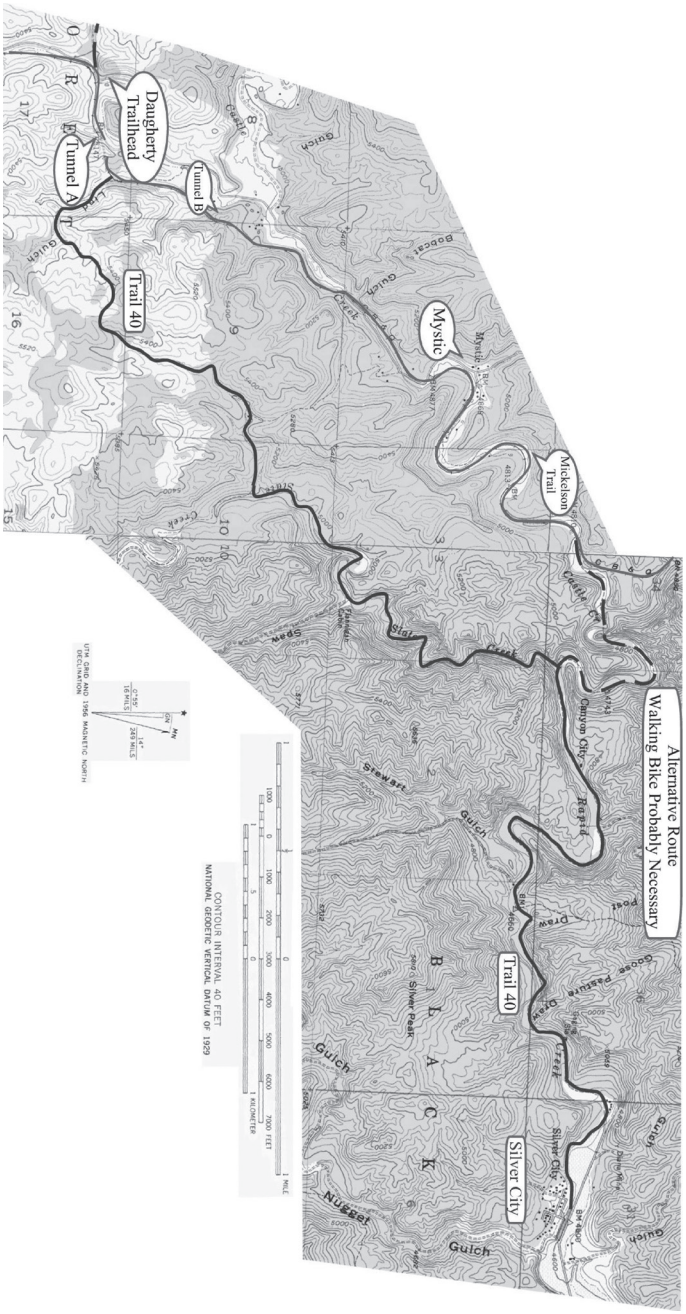


Side Trip 1 — Hot Springs

Side Trip 2 — Mt. Rushmore



Side Trip 3 — Silver City



This mileage chart is also repeated on the last book page before the maps, in a format conducive to cutting out, covering with laminating material, hole-punching and attaching to bike handle bars with a twisty tie for quick review and ready reference as you are riding.

TRAILHEAD	MILES TO NEXT TRAILHEAD	MILEPOST
Deadwood	3.5	108.8
Kirk	4.4	105.3
Lead	6.1	104.6
Englewood	5.8	98.5
Dumont	10	92.6
Rochford	7.8	82.6
Mystic	15.5	74.7
Tracy Park (Hill City)	10.9	60.1
The Mountain	5.1	49.6
Harbach Park (Custer)	8.8	44.5
White Elephant	3.6	35.7
Pringle	16.1	32.1
Minnekahta	16.0	16.2
Edgemont	0.0	0.0

RIDE + RUN + WALK + SKI

From the Edgemont Trailhead at Mile Marker 0 to the Deadwood Trailhead, 109 unforgettable miles to the north, this guide provides a comprehensive overview of the Mickelson Trail in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

The fourth edition provides town histories and contemporary material, local business information, maps, photographs and complete descriptions of distinctive features along the way. The guide also includes train and mining history, flora, fauna and geological information and much more to make your Mickelson Trail experience both interesting and educational.

"Just wished to thank you for your Book! We merged up with some cyclists from Minnesota and after several history lessons and info about the tunnels, they asked how I knew so much! All I did was pull up your book from my bike and said "I cheated" Hilarious! They didn't wish to spend the money to learn about where they were exploring. Well, I did and could not have been more excited about the 3 ecosystems of the trail. We couldn't have enjoyed ourselves more and thank you for your dedication to getting the information out there."

— Mame from Florida

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