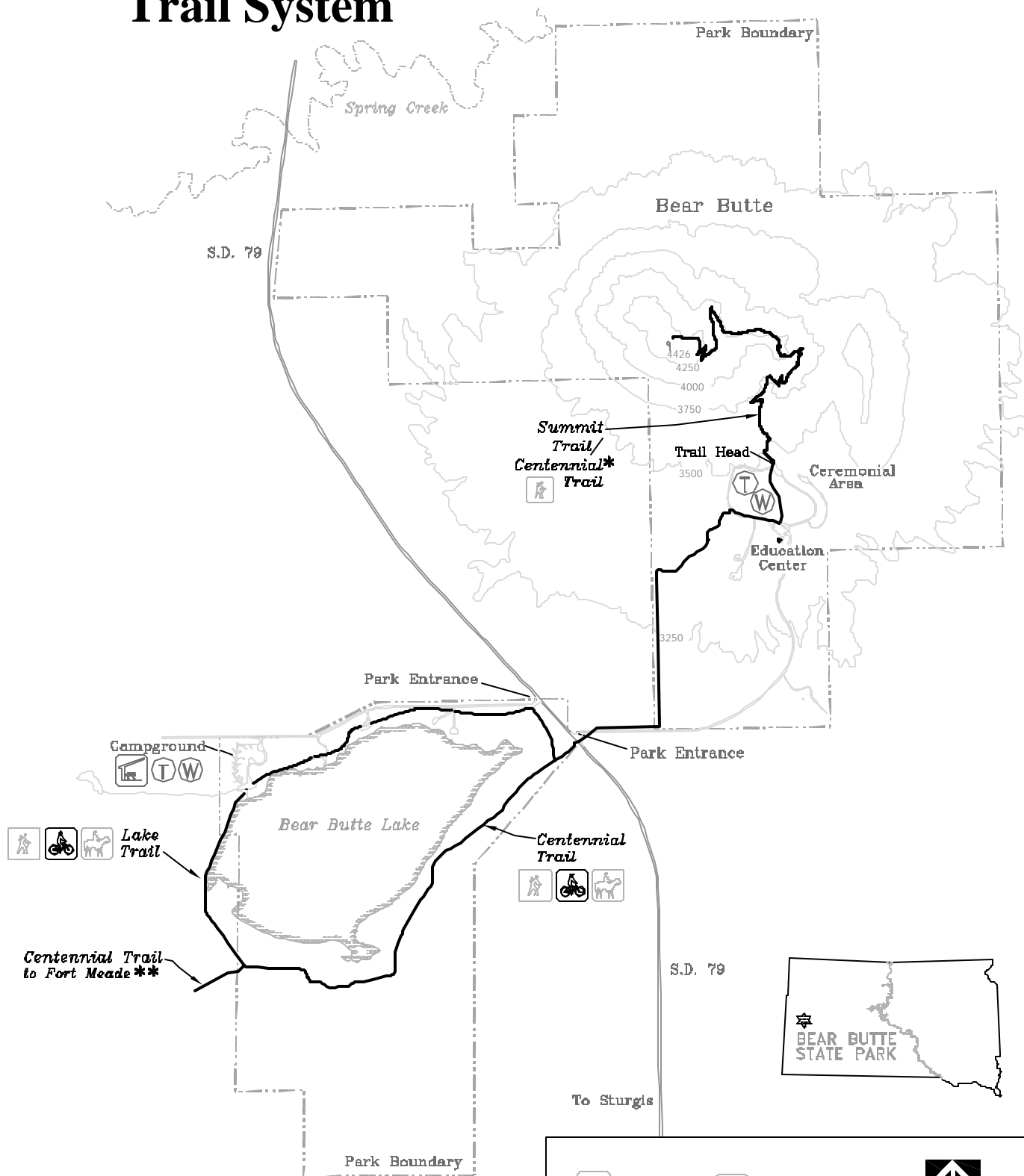


Bear Butte State Park Trail System



* Horseback riding is prohibited east of SD HWY 79.
 ** Please check with the managing authorities along other portions of the Centennial Trail for required licenses and permits.

	HIKING TRAIL		PICNIC SHELTER	 NORTH SCALE IN FEET 0 1000 2000
	BIKE TRAIL		VAULT TOILET	
	HORSE TRAIL		DRINKING WATER	

Bear Butte State Park

Summit Trail

Type of trail: Hiking

Length of trail: 1.85 miles

Trail surface: Dirt and rock

Rated: Moderate, somewhat hilly, even trail surface

Fee required: Park Entrance License

Location of the trailhead: By parking lot near Education Center

Facilities at or near the trailhead: Drinking water, toilet, and parking

Facilities along the trail: None, need to carry water and wear a good pair of hiking shoes

Special considerations: Need to carry water and wear a good pair of hiking shoes.

Pets, alcohol and the dispersal of ashes prohibited. Trail open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. (MT)

Special features: On-site education center with informative exhibits

What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park:

Tent camping, non-electrical campsites, horse camping

Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen, etc: 3-4 miles on SD Highway 34

Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park: In Sturgis, six miles SW

Nearest Chamber of Commerce:

Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 504, Sturgis SD 57785, (605) 347-2681

Emergency phone numbers:

Ambulance - (605) 347-2681

Sheriff - (605) 347-2681

Fire Department - (605) 347-2681

Do most cell phones work on this trail? Yes

Bear Butte State Park

Summit Trail

Designated a Registered National Landmark and a Registered National Trail

Mato Paha, or bear mountain, is the Lakota Indian name for this outstanding geological formation. In actuality, it is the remains of a volcano that did not erupt. Geologists call it a laccolith. Legend says that Bear Butte received its name because from a distance it looks like a sleeping bear.

Nearby campsites have been dated to be more than 4,000 years old. Through the centuries, thousands of people have come here to be inspired. American Indian people from over 15 tribes still come here to fast, pray, seek visions, present offerings to their sacred spirits and to undergo personal sacrifice. Please show your respect to the people who are here for these purposes.

Visits by notable American Indian leaders such as Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, Man Afraid, Little Wolf and Sitting Bull are recorded in Bear Butte's history.

The earliest visits by Caucasian people began with the visit of the Verendrye Expedition in 1742. A succession of mountain men and scientists followed. In 1874, George Armstrong Custer led an expedition of 1,000 men to explore the Black Hills. Although his command camped a few miles south of the butte, several men accompanied Custer to the summit of Bear Butte. After Custer and his men verified the rumors of gold in the Black Hills, Bear Butte served as a landmark for prospectors and settlers who came seeking wealth.

Reminder: Hikers are to stay on the trail in order to protect the fragile plant life that is protecting the slopes from erosion. No dogs are allowed on the trail.

As you hike, look for the following:

- ✓ *Chimney Rock* - Notice the dominant rock outcropping on the summit of the ridge ahead as you begin to walk on the trail. It served as a communications center for early American Indians. Smoke signals from this conspicuous site were visible for many miles. For personal safety and to avoid more erosion, stay on the trail.
- ✓ *Poison ivy* - This plant has three leaves, hence the rhyme, "Leaves of three, let it be." Stay on the trail to avoid touching the plant.
- ✓ *Yucca plants* - These plants grow to be 2-3 feet tall and have long, narrow "leaves." The plant, also known as soapweed, Spanish bayonet and Adam's needle, served many purposes for the Plains Indians. The yucca roots were used to make a soapy lather for washing, its tough leaves were woven into baskets and the needle-like points with the attached strands of the leaves were used for sewing.
- ✓ *Burned logs and stumps* - A fire swept the mountain in August, 1996. The new vegetation is helping control erosion on the steep hillsides.
- ✓ *Lichens* - Watch for these colorful growths on the big rocks along the trail. Pronounced "like-ens," these colonies of living plants are known to produce acids strong enough to break down rocks, thus making soil. Do you think a dye might be made from these colorful lichens?

- ✓ *Pigeons* - These birds have set up housekeeping in the cathedral-like spires of the cliffs. White settlers brought these birds' ancestors with them when they came west to help supplement their food supply.
- ✓ *Ponderosa pine trees* - Notice the needles are in clusters of two or three. This tree is the most common tree in the Black Hills, making up about 90 percent of the timber. Porcupines like to gnaw on the trunks of these trees. Some storytellers inaccurately claim that porcupines grow sharp quills because they eat pine needles.
- ✓ *Switchbacks* - The trail has several sharp turns called switchbacks. They are designed to make your walk less strenuous by decreasing the slope. Please do not take shortcuts. Footing off the trail can be dangerous and the fragile plants may be easily damaged by skidding boots or rock slides. A few minutes off the trail can be equal to years of natural erosion.
- ✓ *Junipers* - Like the pine tree, this is a conifer but its cones are berry-like pods. Can you imagine that a mouse, a rabbit or a chipmunk might be safe from predators if it were to hide under this shrub's dense cover? The juniper also protects the ground surface from beating rains that might otherwise cause erosion to start on the bare ground.
- ✓ *Layers of rock* - Can you see layers of rocks in the rock formations along the trail? Notice how they appear to be standing on end. This is evidence that Bear Butte was forced up from below during the time of the volcanic action.
- ✓ *Dead trees* - It may seem strange to look at dead trees but they are really full of life. Look for signs of fungi, insects, birds, rodents who use the tree for shelter and/or food. *Sounds* - The solitude of the hike can best be appreciated by taking time to sit quietly and listen to the wind, the songs of birds, the cry of hawks and eagles that frequent these heights and the rustle of pine needles.
- ✓ *Trail summit* - The Bear Butte summit is 4,426 feet above sea level. The trail has a vertical climb of over 900 feet from the parking lot. The summit offers a grand view of the Black Hills and Sturgis. The vastness of the plains can be seen to the east.

For additional information, be sure to visit the Education Center located by the parking lot.

Bear Butte State Park

Lake Trail

Type of trail: Hiking, biking, horseback riding (on south side)

Length of trail: 2.5 miles

Trail surface: Grass

Rated: Moderate, fairly even trail surface

Fee required: No Park Entrance License required unless parked on state park land

Location of the trailhead: Several trailheads: boat ramp, middle campground, main campground, Centennial Trail at the horse campground

Facilities at or near the trailhead: Vault toilet and parking, water during the summer at the campgrounds

Facilities along the trail: Vault toilets at camping areas

Special considerations: Watch for rattlesnakes

Special features: Excellent view of Bear Butte and the lake

What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park:
Tent camping, non-electrical campsites, horse camping

Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen, etc: 3-4 miles on SD Highway 34

Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park: In Sturgis, six miles SW

Nearest Chamber of Commerce:
Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 504, Sturgis SD 57785, (605) 347-2681

Emergency phone numbers:
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Fire Department - (605) 347-2681

Do most cell phones work on this trail? Yes

Out-of-State Horses: All out-of-state horses are required to have a valid, clean health certificate within the last 30 days, and a negative Coggins or ELISA EIA test within the last 12 months. SDCL 40-14-2. All documents must be on person.