



^{61st} Buffalo ROUNDUP AND ARTS FESTIVAL

- Custer -
'65 STATE PARK '26
EST - 1965

SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 24-26, 2026



61ST ANNUAL BUFFALO ROUND UP

Long before the first bison appears on the horizon, the prairie is already awake.

Headlights wind toward the viewing areas. Guests settle beneath blankets with coffee in hand. Birds voice their opinions about the growing crowd, coyotes occasionally join the conversation, and the burros generally decide this is one morning when the spotlight can belong to someone else.

Then distant shapes begin to move, the sound builds across the prairie, and Buffalo Roundup Day officially begins.

On September 25, Custer State Park celebrates the 61st Annual Buffalo Roundup. Although the thunder of hooves draws thousands of visitors each year, the Roundup is first and foremost a working wildlife-management operation.

The Park's bison herd lives on approximately 71,000 acres of grasslands, hills and forests, sharing the landscape with elk, deer, pronghorn and many other species. While the grasslands may look endless, the amount of forage they produce is not. Park staff must carefully balance the number of bison with the food and habitat available to support them.

That balance changes each year.

Rainfall, drought, grassland conditions and the needs of other wildlife all help determine how many bison the Park can responsibly carry through the winter. With drought affecting the landscape this year, managers will likely need to reduce herd numbers more than they would during better growing conditions. This protects both the animals and the grasslands they depend upon.

During the Roundup, approximately 60 horseback riders—including Park staff, selected volunteers and invited guests—work together to move most of the herd across the hills and into the corrals. There, the bison are counted, examined and sorted according to the Park's management needs. Some remain with the herd, while others are sold at the annual buffalo auction in November and transported to new homes across the country.

The Park's largest mature bulls are generally left on the range. At well over a ton, they are simply too large and powerful to safely move through the sorting facilities. Sometimes good wildlife management means knowing when to leave the big guys alone.

Today, approximately 20,000 people attend the Buffalo Roundup each year, but it began as a much smaller

gathering. Neighboring ranchers came to help, families brought food and the day felt more like a community work project. Over time, word spread and the Roundup became one of South Dakota's best-known traditions. Some guests are experiencing it for the first time, while others return with children and grandchildren to continue a family tradition.

No two Roundups are exactly alike. Some years the herd moves quickly; during warmer weather, the pace may be slowed to protect the bison and horses. There have been dusty Roundups, muddy Roundups and even snowy Roundups. Wildlife, weather and wide-open prairie have a way of reminding everyone that they—not the schedule—are ultimately in charge.

The pounding hooves may be what guests remember most, but the Roundup's true story is one of balance, stewardship and the responsibility of caring for this remarkable landscape.

**Enjoy the 61st Annual
Buffalo Roundup.**

ARTS FESTIVAL

A three-day celebration of regional art, music, and craftsmanship set against the backdrop of one of South Dakota's most iconic events.

The bison may be the headliners of Roundup week, but they aren't the only ones drawing a crowd. From September 24–26, the grounds of the State Game Lodge will come alive for the 33rd Annual Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival—a three-day celebration of art, music, food and the creative spirit of the West.

The festival began more than three decades ago as a small gathering of regional artists. Since then, it has grown into one of Custer State Park's largest annual events, welcoming thousands of visitors and artists from across the region. What has not changed is its purpose: creating a place where talented makers can share their work and visitors can connect with the people and stories behind it.

Throughout the festival grounds, guests will find handcrafted jewelry, paintings, photography, pottery, woodworking, home décor and other one-of-a-kind creations. Some pieces reflect the landscapes and wildlife of the Black Hills, while others showcase traditions and inspiration from across the West.

It is more than an opportunity to shop. It is a chance to talk with the artists, learn how their work is created and discover the stories that make each piece unique. After all, "I met the person who made this" is a much better souvenir story than "I found it on aisle seven."

Of course, exploring that much art requires fuel. Food vendors serve festival favorites throughout the day, while live music and entertainment add to the atmosphere. Beneath the Big Top, guests can enjoy performances, educational programs and artist features. Demonstrations and family-friendly activities offer even more ways to become part of the festival.

The setting makes the experience even more memorable. Booths stretch across the historic State Game Lodge grounds as autumn begins to settle over Custer State Park. Golden leaves, cool mornings and the surrounding Black Hills create a backdrop that would be difficult for even the best artist to improve upon.

Roundup week brings people together for many reasons. Some come for the thunder of the herd. Others come for the art, music and food. Many come for all of it—and quickly discover that the Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival has become a tradition of its own.

Whether you are searching for a meaningful piece of art, hoping to meet a new favorite maker or simply looking to enjoy a fall day filled with music and community, join us September 24–26 for the 33rd Annual Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival, where the Art of the West—and the people who create it—take center stage.



THURSDAY

Welcome to the 2026 Custer State Park Arts Festival—where creativity, community, and the spirit of the Black Hills come together in one unforgettable weekend!

Big Top Tent

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.



Stringbean and Sally

Black Hills own, Stringbean Svenson, began his legendary music career on KOTA TV's live variety show in 1955. His fiddle has taken him around the world playing for US troops with the USO. Stringbean and Sally, a husband and wife duo, have been harmonizing together for nearly four decades. Their tunes are upbeat and varied; and include country, bluegrass, classic and original songs by Sally.

12:00 - 1:30 p.m.



Jalan Crossland

Hailing from Ten Sleep, Wyoming, Jalan Crossland is an award-winning American bluegrass, Americana, and alternative country singer-songwriter and musician.

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.



Johnny Hastings & Stillhouse Down

Hailed as one of South Dakota's brightest rising guitarists, Johnny Hastings has crafted an unforgettable blues experience in tandem with one of the tightest rhythm sections this side of the Mississippi. His soulful vocals and virtuosic lead playing resurrect a rare blues energy that is as danceable as it is captivating.

4:00 - 5:30 p.m.



The Wilt Brothers

Custer State Park is excited to welcome back The Wilt Brothers! Hailing from western South Dakota, this talented band brings more than 20 years of experience and a crowd-pleasing country sound to the stage. Settle in and enjoy great live music with a little hometown flavor.

FRIDAY

Buffalo Round Up Information

Please Note: These Round Up activities are near the Bison Center along the Wildlife Loop Road

Friday, September 25th

ROUND UP!

6:15 a.m.



Parking Lots Open

The Buffalo Roundup draws over 20,000 guests, so expect delays parking and bring something to help pass the time. Visitors must remain in the viewing areas until the herd is safely corralled, usually around noon. Breakfast starts at 6:15 a.m. in both viewing areas, with lunch available at the corrals after the roundup—both meals available for purchase.

ROUND UP!

~ 9:30 a.m.



Buffalo Roundup Begins

The Buffalo Roundup begins at 9:30 a.m., though timing may vary based on the herd's behavior. Guests must remain in the viewing areas until the buffalo are safely in the corrals, typically around noon.

12:00 p.m. - 3:00
p.m.



Buffalo Handling

Once the Roundup is complete and the bison are safely in the corrals, visitors are welcome to head to the corral area to watch park staff work a portion of the herd—this includes branding, ear tagging, calf vaccinations, and health checks on mature bison. The rest of the herd will be worked in October.

ARTS FESTIVAL GROUNDS

Friday - 7:00 p.m.



Hot Air Balloons

Stick around after Friday night's music for a night glow on the Arts Festival grounds—weather permitting!
Please note this event is dependent on the weather.

FRIDAY

Big Top Tent

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.



Badger Sett Band

The Badger Sett Band performs the poetry of Custer State Park's very own poet Badger Clark and sets them to music. Come and listen to these beautiful songs, i.e. Cowboy's Prayer, I Must Come Back.

11:30 - 12:30 p.m.



Ryan LittleEagle

Ryan LittleEagle is a Native American singer-songwriter and musician from San Antonio, Texas, now living in the Black Hills, South Dakota. Influenced by the likes of George Strait, Jason Isbell, Johnny Cash, Bill Miller, and R Carlos Nakai, LittleEagle blends the rich storytelling of Country/Americana music, and with the cultural roots of First Nations music creating a style called "Native Americana."

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.



Lonely Rangers

Back by popular demand, The Lonely Rangers return to the Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival! This upbeat Black Hills acoustic country-rock group has become a festival favorite and a familiar part of the Roundup tradition. Get ready for lively music, local talent and plenty of songs to keep your toes tapping.

3:00 - 4:30 p.m.



Tyler Bills

Get ready to welcome Black Hills musician Tyler Bills to the Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival! Blending country and rock favorites with heartfelt, bluesy originals, Tyler brings powerful vocals, skilled guitar work and plenty of energy to the stage. Grab a seat—or find a spot to dance—and enjoy the show.

5:00 - 7:00 p.m.



The Josh Cleavland Band

The Josh Cleveland Band brings a show that is both full energy and whole heart. Sitting directly between rock, country and soul, their original music and unique covers keep the audience engaged with a broad appeal. This is a band that will have you on your feet shouting for more and humming their hook and melodies for days.

SATURDAY

8:00 - 10:00 a.m. - Pancake feed at the Big Top (\$)

Big Top Tent

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.



Doug Figgs

Award-winning Western singer-songwriter Doug Figgs brings the authentic spirit of the West to the Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival. A working cowboy and longtime farrier, Doug draws from real-life experience to create everything from hard-driving Western songs with a touch of Southern rock to heartfelt ballads. Settle in for honest storytelling, memorable music and a performance rooted in the cowboy way of life.

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.



Allen and Jill Kirkman

Allen and Jill Kirkham celebrate the rich heritage of Western music with heartfelt performances full of humor and history. Allen's guitar and mandolin blend beautifully with Jill's harmonica and bass as they share cowboy songs and stories from the 1860s to today. Whether performing at museums, rodeo centers, or local festivals, their goal is to keep America's Western traditions alive, inspiring audiences to appreciate the unique culture of the West.

12:00 - 1:30 p.m.



Ramblin' Rangers

The Ramblin' Rangers are bringing the stories and songs of the West to the Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival. Black Hills-based musicians and retired park rangers Brad and Bonnie Jo Exton blend smooth vocals, rich harmonies and acoustic instrumentation with songs about cowboys, cattle drives and life on the land. Settle in and enjoy their signature "Boots on the Ground" sound—Western music performed by two people who have spent their lives caring for and experiencing the places that inspire it.

2:30 - 4:00 p.m.



Starr Chief Eagle's Hoop Dance

Experience the beauty and storytelling of traditional Lakota Hoop Dancing with Starr Chief Eagle. An enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota Tribe, Starr uses movement and carefully arranged hoops to create shapes and images that share messages of peace, unity, balance and healing. Join us for a powerful performance celebrating Lakota culture, tradition and the enduring connections among all living things.

Thank you for joining us at the Buffalo Roundup Arts Festival—we're so glad you were part of the fun!

ARTS FESTIVAL

ARTS FESTIVAL HOURS

- THURSDAY, SEPT 24 - 10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.
- FRIDAY, SEPT 25 - 10:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M. (NOTE: VENDORS CLOSE AT 6:00 P.M.)
- SATURDAY, SEPT 26 - 9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.



Share your 2026 #CSPRoundUp Adventure!

BISON SELFIES? YES, PLEASE!

Bison are roaming all over the Arts Festival — in paintings, jewelry, sculptures, photos, and more! If you spot a bison at a vendor booth, snap a selfie with it and share it using #CSPRoundUp. At the end of the Roundup, we'll pick a winner to receive a gift basket from the park!

Just remember — **NO SELFIES WITH REAL BISON.** The artistic ones are much more cooperative.

Find a Golden Bison, Win a Prize!

Hidden throughout the Arts Festival grounds and vendor booths are 5-inch tall golden bison toys. If you spot one, bring it to park staff at the Big Top Tent with live music to claim your unique Custer State Park prize!

Each day, a new herd of golden bison will be hidden — so everyone has a chance to join the hunt and win!

NOTE: LIMIT OF ONE PRIZE PER PERSON.



Join Starr Chief Eagle

Visit Starr Chief Eagle at the Custer State Park Tent on Friday from 10:00 - 4:00 and Saturday from 10:00 - 12:00 for a hands-on beaded necklace activity while supplies last. As guests create their own necklaces, Starr will share stories and cultural traditions that bring deeper meaning to each bead.

Make sure to close out the Arts Festival on Saturday with Starr Chief Eagle and she presents a hoop dance for the last event.

Looking for More Fun?

Come and explore a variety of engaging family activities at the Custer State Park Booth! Our dedicated staff will be offering a range of rotating activities that promise fun for everyone. Get creative with hands-on recycled crafts, practice your hand at handwriting and create a personalized postcard to send to yourself, family, or friends. Additionally, our knowledgeable Custer State Park staff will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about the park and the round-up. Don't miss out on this opportunity to learn and play together!



LOST AND FOUND

Lost and Found Items will be held at the Big Top tent. Please check there with the Park Staff.

For More Information
Call 605.394.2693
or visit
custerstatepark.com