

Roundup Information Friday, September 27,2024

How early should I get there?

Barricades are removed to start parking vehicles on the prairie at about 6:15 a.m. the day of the Roundup (but be prepared to wait in line). The Roundup starts about 9:30 a.m., ***it does depend upon the bison cooperation***. You can enter the park and line up after midnight along the Wildlife Loop, but you cannot enter the viewing area until the barricades are removed at about 6:15 a.m.

What if I line up at midnight?

You will need to decide before you line up which viewing area you want to view from (north or south), before arriving on the Wildlife Loop Road, you cannot change your mind and travel in the opposite direction. All Custer State Park gates are open 24/7. The Wildlife Loop Road will close several adjacent roads to protect visitors from the bison and the way they will travel for the Roundup. Barricades are placed on the Wildlife Loop Road at both the north and south viewing areas around 10 p.m. If you decide you want to line up the evening prior to the Roundup you will be in your vehicles on the Wildlife Loop Road until the barricades are removed at about 6:15 a.m. **There are no restrooms or food services along the Wildlife Loop Road while waiting and wildlife are present in the area so be aware of your surroundings in the dark.**

Which viewing area is the best?

Both viewing areas have unique vantage points and visitors get great views from either location. Visitors may not move between viewing areas. It is better to go to the viewing area closest to where you are entering the park, rather than drive across the park in the dark. The bison determine the path so some years they go closer to the north, some years to the south, some to both. North viewing is where the bison will be coming at you (you will be behind the fence line) and then they turn into the corrals. South viewing is a more panoramic view of them coming over the prairie as they are moved into the corrals.

How many bison are in the herd?

There are approximately 1495. Note: The big bull bison are not included in the Roundup because they are more aggressive and are simply too hard to round up. Because of this, visitors may see them scattered throughout the park during the Roundup Weekend and wonder why they are not rounded up.

Are reservations required?

No

Does it cost anything?

There is no admission fee for the event and **a park entrance license is not required the day of the Roundup**. If you are in the park the day before or after, **you must purchase a park license**. The park entrance license is \$20.00 and is good for seven consecutive days, every vehicle must have an entrance license affixed to their vehicle, unless you are only in the park for the day of Roundup.

How many people are expected to attend the Roundup?

The average attendance the morning of the Roundup is 20,000 to 25,000 people.

Are there food and drinks available for purchase?

Pancake - sausage **breakfast** and beverages and are available at 6:15 a.m. in both viewing areas and served until they run out. A bison BBQ lunch is served in the Corral Area and served until they run out or about 1:00 p.m. Once the bison are safely rounded up, and in the corrals, visitors are allowed into the corral viewing area. You are welcome to bring your own food and drink.

What should I bring?

The weather can vary. Be sure to bring layered clothing, raingear (no umbrellas), folding chairs, cameras, binoculars, sunscreen, flashlights, snacks, and drinks. **No seating is provided, so please plan accordingly.**

What is the terrain like?

You will be parking and walking on the prairie, the terrain can be very uneven, sometimes the grass is wet and can even have snow on the ground so be aware of your surroundings, especially if you are planning on arriving in the dark, a headlamp or flashlight can be very helpful and needed.

Is there handicap parking available?

Please make sure you have your handicap parking emblem displayed so you can be directed to the designated handicap parking area. We also offer golf carts to assist handicap visitors to the viewing area. Although we offer handicap parking, it can still be a distance to walk or transport visitors to the viewing area, Park Staff will get visitors to the viewing area. *Be aware the golf cart ride can be bumpy.* When the Roundup is over we offer rides back to your vehicles, **but it does take time due to the large crowds.** When the bison are safely in the corrals, vehicles that display a handicap parking emblem may drive to the Bison Center and Corrals to get a close-up view of branding, ear tagging, vaccinating of calves as well as weighing and health and pregnancy checks on the mature bison.

Are there shuttles available?

Not to and from the Roundup itself. After the Roundup is over and the bison are safely in the corrals, we offer a shuttle from the north and south parking areas to the Bison Center and Corrals. If you are handicap and have a parking emblem displayed, once it is safe, you can drive to the Bison Center and Corrals and park there to visit the Bison Center and Corrals. Parking is limited and only available if you have a handicap parking emblem.

Can I bring my RV?

RV's are welcome but the terrain can be hilly and bumpy so be aware that you may have difficulty climbing onto the prairie and the clearance is very low, as you are parking on the prairie. **There is designated RV parking area in the north viewing overflow lot only, be aware it can be further away from the viewing area.**

What if I am coming by bus?

If you are coming by bus/motorcoach we advise you to enter on Lane Johnny Road or the south entrance of the Wildlife Loop Road, where buses and motorcoaches are parked. Entering on Lane Johnny you will be guided into the south parking area where all buses and motorcoaches are parked in a designated area. Due to the flow of traffic, it is important to enter on Lane Johnny Road, the gate will open at approximately 6:15 a.m. and closes at about 8:30 a.m.

Can I bring my Pet?

Yes, the park encourages visitors **to leave their pets at home** or in their vehicles, be aware there is no shade on the prairie, if you decide to leave your pet in your vehicle. If you must bring your pet they must be always on a leash, no longer than 10 foot.

How long does the Roundup take?

The Roundup is usually over by 11:30 a.m. Visitors need to be prepared to stay in the viewing area until the bison are safely in the corrals. After that, **patience is required if you want to leave because it does take time to get everyone safely out of the area.**

Can I use a Drone during the Roundup?

For the safety of the public, staff and the bison, use of drones is prohibited during the Roundup.

On the day of the roundup can I go to the corrals?

After the Roundup is over and the bison are safely in the corrals, you are welcome to go to the corral area and observe the Park Staff working a portion of the herd. You can get a close-up view of branding, ear tagging, vaccinating of calves as well as weighing, health and pregnancy checks on the mature bison. This usually starts after 12 noon.

Why are the bison rounded up?

The Roundup is a part of the park's management plan to maintain a healthy balance between the number of bison and the available rangeland forage. The park can only sustain a certain number of bison, based on the condition of the grassland and how much food is available. The Roundup allows for some of the animals to be sorted out of the herd, to be sold at auction in November.

When and where is the Auction held?

On Saturday, November 2, 2024, at 10 a.m. MT at the Custer State Park Visitors Center is when the park auctions off between 200 – 500 bison. They are purchased by the general public from many states, generally to supplement an existing herd, to start a herd, or to eat. Buyers come from many states to purchase Custer State Park bison.

How are the horseback riders chosen?

Some are Park Staff; others have been long time riders. Up to 25 volunteer cowboys and cowgirls are selected each year through an application process. The applications for rider positions are accepted approximately from January to the end of May (check website for details and dates). Riders are notified by the middle of June.

Are there other things happening during the Roundup?

The Roundup Arts Festival, with up to 175 plus vendors, is held Thursday, Friday and Saturday near the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center. There will be a line-up of entertainment during the Arts Festival under the Big Tent, details will be available about a month before the Roundup, check the website for details. There are also many activities for families to enjoy at the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center.