

# DEVILS TOWER NATIONAL MONUMENT



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### ESSENTIALS:

**Address:** P.O. Box 10

Devils Tower, WY 82714

**Season:** Open year-round, though campground and visitor center open in mid-April. The campground closes at the end of October, while the visitor center stays open through November.

### VISITOR INFORMATION:

**Web site:** <http://www.nps.gov/deto>

**Phone:** (307) 467-5283

### PARK OVERVIEW:

MORE THAN 1,300 ACRES COMPRISE DEVILS TOWER NATIONAL MONUMENT IN NORTHEAST WYOMING, BUT MOST PEOPLE COME FOR ITS CENTERPIECE: THE TOWER ITSELF. THIS SENTINEL OF IGNEOUS ROCK RISES UP ALMOST VERTICALLY FROM THE LANDSCAPE TO A HEIGHT OF 1,267 FEET. STUDIED, CLIMBED, AND POPULARIZED BY HOLLYWOOD, THIS ROCK FORMATION HAS BECOME AN IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFIABLE AMERICAN LANDMARK.

The tower has also seen its share of controversy. As a sacred Native American site claimed by several tribes (each with its own ideas about the Tower), Western pioneers journeyed here in violation of Indian treaty rights. Soon, they began climbing and studying, quickly dispatching with the Indian mythology behind it. But modern science, too, is divided on the tower. Geologists agree that it was formed by the intrusion of igneous material, which has since eroded. But beyond that, there's no firm agreement. The tower holds some of its mysteries for itself.

While Devils Tower is the star here, deer and bison wander the surrounding grassland, the smell of Ponderosa pine fills the air, and hawks and eagles circle overhead. Whether climbing, hiking, fishing, or driving, the monument offers something for everyone.

### PARK HIGHLIGHTS:

It's hard to believe that Devils Tower was once hidden away in this Black Hills ecosystem, revealed only by massive erosion. But once it made an appearance, the country became enamored with the rock, and President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed in a national monument, America's first, in 1906. Below the rock flows the Belle Fourche River, which provides fishing opportunities, as well as nourishment for the park's wildlife. Pine forests, woodlands, and grasslands also beg to be explored.

It's no surprise that **rock climbing** is far and away the most popular activity at Devils Tower; it's a tempting target and one of the premier crack climbing areas in North America. People have been reaching for the top of this rock since the late 1800s, and they haven't stopped. More than 4,000 people climb here each year. But be careful: The rock is

continually eroding, and safety is of extreme importance. Rockfall is common, and entire columns have been known to crumble (though it's rare). Also, rules abound. Some climbing routes are closed to protect nesting Prairie Falcons. And visitors are asked not to climb in June, when Native Americans hold ceremonies at the ancestral rock. As mentioned above, the tower is considered a sacred site to Native Americans, who find it disrespectful to climb any time of the year.

Great views of the tower are important, of course, but that's not the only reason to lace up. Boulder fields, pine forests, and meadows, as well as the wide variety of animals and wildflowers, make any hike here satisfying. For an easy hike, try the **Tower Trail**, a 1.3-mile jaunt with interpretive exhibits that also offers great close-up views of the tower. The 1.5-mile **Joyner Ridge Trail** will take you through the full range of life zones in the monument. It's especially pretty at sunset. If you have more time, hike the 3-mile **Red Beds Trail**, which takes you through pine groves and meadows before emerging into a broad prairie with good views of the omnipresent tower.

The best way to take in the full scope of Devils Tower? Begin your drive far away in the town of **Sundance** and approach the tower at your own pace. It's a 29-mile drive, starting at the junction of I-90 and US 14. First, head northwest on US 14; you'll cross the foothills of the **Bear Lodge Mountains**, part of the Black Hills of Wyoming and South Dakota. The highway climbs through stands of ponderosa pine, and 12 miles in you'll catch your first glimpse of the tower. Continue north on Route 24 into the monument.



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Anglers, especially those who fly-fish, can wet their hook in the **Belle Fourche River**, where game species include black bullhead, channel catfish, smallmouth bass, and sunfish. Excessively hot summer days can render the river unproductive, but it's generally a great fishing spot.

**Timing Tip:** The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally takes place each August in Sturgis, South Dakota, about 80 miles from Devils Tower. Tens of thousands of motorcyclists come from all over, and many of them visit Devils Tower during the rally. The Wednesday of rally week is usually the busiest day at the park. Some visitors like the rally, while others would rather avoid it. In order to help plan your visit, check the national monument's website for this year's dates.

## NOTES:

