

South Dakota: Wild and Free [C1]

È conosciuta soprattutto per i suoi parchi naturali abitati da grandi mandrie di bisonti e per i famosi quattro presidenti scolpiti nella roccia.

Known as the land of infinite variety, South Dakota has [plenty](#) to offer the adventurous traveller, from vast [flatlands](#) to famous monuments to [quirky](#) attractions that celebrate the culture of the Wild West. This [landlocked](#) state, in the country's North Central region, is part of the Great Plains: a vast expanse of [flatlands](#) with prairie, steppe, fields of [corn and wheat](#) and [grassland](#). However, it also has thousands of miles of shoreline around lakes, too. And, at 7,244-feet, Black [Elk](#) Peak is the highest natural point in the Midwestern United States.

HUGE PARKS

The state's highest concentration of famous attractions is in its western region, which is where you will find its biggest national park: Badlands National Park. Colourful, dramatic and [surreal](#), this lunar landscape has a maze of buttes, canyons and pinnacles that are incredible to see.

UNUSUAL CAVES

At Wind Cave National Park, you can visit the densest cave system in the world. Here you can explore a section of the cave, and see the [boxwork](#) formations that it is famous for. From there, travel north to see the bison [herd](#) at Custer State Park, and then continue north to the mountain town of Deadwood, which is the [burial place](#) of the legendary Wild West figures Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane, who inspired the TV series of the same name.

SPECTACULAR HIKES

Here and [throughout](#) the state, you can find fantastic places to go hiking, camping and [rock climbing](#) participate in water activities and other adventure sports and create memories that will last a lifetime. To find out more, Speak Up contacted Katlyn Svendsen, the global media and public relations director with South Dakota Tourism Industry. Svendsen lives in the state capital. We began by asking her about the city and what she especially loved about the state. **Katlyn Svendsen (American accent):** I live in Pierre, South Dakota, that's in the middle of the state. And we have the Missouri River that flows through our state, and it's [dammed up](#) in four areas across South Dakota. One of them is the Oahe Dam, just north of our state's capital, Pierre, and that provides water recreation that is [unlike](#) any other in South Dakota. So, that water gets [dammed up](#) all the way into North Dakota by Sakakawea Dam. So we love to go out boating and exploring along the beaches. And it surprises people that we have so much shoreline in our state. In the western half of the state, I love the Badlands National Park. It really is a stunning location as you're travelling from any direction; its basic plains, where you would see [cattle roaming](#), and all of a sudden the Badlands just [pop out](#) of nowhere. And it literally feels like you've landed on the moon. And it's fascinating to know the history of that beautiful place and the Native American culture that's associated with Badlands National Park, and its proximity to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. It's a fascinating place. The bison explore the park, and there's prairie dogs and antelope, [bighorn sheep](#)... So you're sure to find something unique in that national park.

SEASONAL VISITS

South Dakota has four seasons, with snow common in winter and hot and humid summers. We asked Svendsen when the best time was to visit. **Katlyn Svendsen:** I love winter, so I love it here when it's cold and snowy and beautiful and there's far less [fewer] people. So I do love the winter months. However, I would say most of our travellers enjoy to come to our state from May until October. And perhaps if you're looking for good weather, warmer weather, but less crowds, September or October are a fantastic time to come

to our state. The leaves are changing colours. When you're in the Black Hills region, it's just a scene of all [forested pines](#), and then you'll have [pops](#) of these yellow colours from the [birch](#) and [aspen treespeeking out](#), changing leaves, and there's waterfalls... So that's a fantastic time to visit, it's September and October.

WILDLIFE

So, what kind of wildlife can people expect to see as they drive around and visit these attractions? **Katlyn Svendsen:** So many [deer](#) in our state! And as you're in western South Dakota, there's a large number of antelope or [pronghorn](#), they are also called. Bison are a very popular animal that you'll see in the Black Hills. They are within Custer State Park and the Badlands National Park. You can actually take a buffalo safari jeep ride, and you get into a small jeep, it's open air, so you'll feel the wind blowing through your hair and smell all of the beautiful pine trees out in the region. And you'll have a tour guide, and they take you through the park and will take you right to the bison. So close they're oftentimes against the vehicle. So it's a fun experience, a safe experience, a good way to immerse yourself into the culture of Custer State Park. But prairie dogs are also fan favourites. They're little tiny prairie dogs that are down in the grass and they're [chirping](#) all the time, and people have a fascinating time watching them. There's elk, and people might see a coyote in Custer State Park. So, really a fascinating amount of animals.

CURIOSITIES

South Dakota has a number of iconic, [quirky](#) attractions. Among them, Wall Drug Store, a roadside attraction and tourist stop located in the town of Wall. We asked Svendsen to talk more about this, and other curiosities. **Katlyn Svendsen:** We love to have fun here in our state. And I think where that quirkiness comes from is South Dakota has long been a road trip destination. Visitors from our neighbouring states often have long travelled by car to South Dakota. So, our tourism industry was built on the fact that you needed to stop and get gas at various places along the way. We have long drives,

beautiful wide open spaces, but certainly along the way there's something for everyone. So our tourism industry is built on having fun, getting out of the car and going to explore something new. So Wall Drug is a great example of that. That's right on the [edge](#) of Badlands National Park. So many times people were coming to the Badlands National Park, they're on their way to Mount Rushmore, they stopped at Wall Drug, which was a pharmacy when it first began, and a woman entrepreneur, the wife of the pharmacist, decided that she wanted to start this business and get people to come into the town of Wall. And now it takes up an entire city block. Similarly, there's places like Reptile Gardens, which is one of the world's largest reptile collections. Nearby is Bear Country, USA. So you stay in your vehicle and you drive along this route and you can see bears and wolves and bison and elk and all sorts of animals just from your car. There's other unique attractions, like a massive dinosaur sculpture situated up on the top of Rapid City's tallest hills. And that is an old-time South Dakota favourite, too. So there's so many places to just get out of the car, stretch your legs, [pull over](#), be spontaneous. These attractions really speak to... that we're fun, we're [laid-back](#). We want you to come and relax while you're here, and try something new. Surprise yourself and find that you might enjoy something that you didn't expect to.

PEOPLE POWER

So, does Svendsen have any top [tips](#) for visitors who are travelling to South Dakota for the first time? **Katlyn Svendsen:** Top tip is talk to the locals. We are one of the most friendly states in the entire United States. We are well known for our hospitality. We love to take care of people. So stop at the gas station, visit with the people that are working at the gas station, talk to someone on the street – they might recommend a great [diner](#) down the way or the best place to go get dessert or a cup of coffee, and just really enjoy the people of our state. www.sdvisit.com

Glossary

- **pronghorn** = antilocapre americane
- **quirky** = peculiari, particolari
- **herd** = mandria
- **edge** = bordo, margine
- **Elk** = wapiti
- **forested pines** = boschi di pini
- **throughout** = in ogni parte di
- **rock climbing** = arrampicata
- **pops** = scoppi
- **laid-back** = rilassati
- **landlocked** = senza sbocchi sul mare
- **corn and wheat** = mais e grano
- **dammed up** = costruire una diga su
- **flatlands** = pianure
- **burial place** = luogo di sepoltura
- **aspen trees** = pioppi tremuli
- **pull over** = accostare (con la macchina)
- **bighorn sheep** = pecore delle montagne rocciose
- **birch** = betulle
- **pop out** = emergere
- **peeking out** = spuntare
- **tips** = consigli
- **plenty** = molto, parecchio
- **grassland** = distese erbose, praterie
- **deer** = cervi
- **chirping** = cinguettare
- **diner** = ristorante economico, piccolo ristorante
- **surreal** = surreale
- **boxwork** = riquadri
- **roaming** = vagare
- **unlike** = non essere proprio di
- **cattle** = bestiame