

RV TRIPGEN

The Complete Guide to
RV Travel in
South Dakota

Speed limits, towing rules, Black Hills loops, Sturgis logistics,
and everything else you need to know before you cross the state line.

2026 Edition | Last verified: 25 April 2026

rvtripgen.com

RV travel in South Dakota

South Dakota punches well above its weight as an RV destination. The Black Hills cluster -- Mount Rushmore, Custer State Park, Wind Cave, Jewel Cave, Crazy Horse, Spearfish Canyon -- is one of the densest concentrations of must-stops in the country, and you can string the whole thing into a one-week loop without touching an interstate. Badlands National Park sits an hour east of Rapid City and delivers free dispersed BLM camping at Buffalo Gap National Grassland. The catch is the first full week of August: Sturgis Motorcycle Rally fills every RV park, campground, and overflow field within 100 miles of Sturgis, and bookings for hookup sites open a year in advance. Outside that window South Dakota is one of the cheapest, easiest, big-sky states in the country.

South Dakota by the numbers

Boondocking + dispersed sites	305
Established campgrounds	181
Dump stations	33
Propane refills	14
Potable water fill-ups	49
Laundromats	23
RV showers	18
Verified-bad spots (overnight prohibited)	19

Source: iOverlander community database (80% of South Dakota spots verified in the last 24 months).

Driving rules

Interstate (cars)	80 mph
Interstate (trucks + towing)	80 mph
US/State highway (cars)	70 mph
US/State highway (towing)	70 mph
Built-up areas	25-35 mph (posted)
Drive on	Right
RV passenger seatbelts	Required front-seat only (secondary enforcement)
Cell phone use while driving	Hands-free only (texting banned for all drivers)

Highways

RV-friendly corridors

Highway	Note
I-90	East-west spine across the state. Mitchell to Rapid City is 350 miles of straight, flat, big-rig easy driving.
I-29	North-south along the Minnesota border. Sioux Falls to Fargo. Wind exposure on flat plains -- crosswinds 30+ mph common.
US-16	Rapid City to Mount Rushmore. Four-lane divided most of the way. The main RV approach to the Black Hills.
US-385	North-south spine of the Black Hills via Hill City and Deadwood. Big-rig friendly, scenic, slower.
US-14A (Spearfish Canyon)	Spearfish to Cheyenne Crossing through limestone gorge. Two lanes, no shoulders, but gentle grades. RVs to 40 ft fine.
SD-240 (Badlands Loop Road)	Inside Badlands NP. Paved, well-signed, multiple pull-outs. Class A and fifth-wheels routinely run it.

RV-restricted segments

Segment	Restriction
Needles Highway (SD-87)	Inside Custer State Park. Tunnels as narrow as 8 ft 4 in wide and 9 ft 8 in tall. NO rigs over 8 ft wide or 12 ft tall. Most Class A and fifth-wheels prohibited.
Iron Mountain Road (US-16A)	Inside Custer State Park. Three pigtail bridges and three tunnels with similar restrictions to Needles. Check posted limits at each tunnel.
Sylvan Lake Road (SD-87 north)	Tight switchbacks, narrow shoulders. Not recommended for trailers over 30 ft.
Cathedral Spires/Norbeck Wildlife Preserve roads	Narrow gravel, not for any RV.

Mountain passes

Pass	Elevation	Note
Cement Ridge (US-85)	6647 ft	Black Hills high point. Open year-round but plows infrequent in winter.
Spearfish Canyon (US-14A)	5500 ft	Gentle grades, scenic, RV-friendly but no shoulders.
Iron Mountain (US-16A)	5445 ft	Inside Custer SP. Tunnel restrictions -- check size limits before entering.

National parks + monuments

National Park / Monument	Entry fee	Reservation note
Badlands NP	\$30/vehicle (7 days), \$80 America the Beautiful annual	Cedar Pass Campground reservable May-Oct via recreation.gov; full hookups for RVs to 40 ft. Sage Creek primitive campground free, first-come, no reservations, dispersed BLM-style.
Mount Rushmore National Memorial	Free entry; parking \$10/vehicle (annual)	No camping inside the memorial. Nearest RV camping at Horsethief Lake (USFS), Palmer Gulch KOA, or any of the Black Hills NF campgrounds.
Wind Cave NP	Free entry; cave tour \$14-30 per person	Elk Mountain Campground first-come Apr-Oct; RVs to 35 ft, no hookups. Tour reservations strongly recommended summer.
Jewel Cave National Monument	Free entry; cave tour \$14-32 per person	No camping inside the monument. Nearest USFS camping at Custer-Lone Star and surrounds. Tour reservations essential summer.
Minuteman Missile NHS	Free entry; ranger-led launch facility tour \$12	No camping. Day-trip from Badlands NP. Delta-09 silo always accessible; launch control facility tour reservable via recreation.gov.
Missouri NRR (Missouri National Recreational River)	Free entry	Day-use focused. Nearest RV camping at Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area near Yankton.

State parks

South Dakota State Parks operate 56 parks and recreation areas. Custer State Park (in the Black Hills) is the crown jewel -- 71,000 acres, bison herd of 1,300, four campgrounds reservable via campsd.com. State park entrance fee \$8/vehicle daily or \$36 annual. Camping \$20-35/night for electric, \$30-45 for full hookups. Reservations open 90 days in advance.

Boondocking + dispersed camping

BLM: South Dakota has limited true BLM (most federal land is National Grassland and National Forest), but the BLM that exists -- Fort Meade Recreation Area near Sturgis -- allows 14-day dispersed. The real boondocking gem is Buffalo Gap National Grassland (USFS) bordering Badlands NP: free dispersed camping along the Sage Creek Rim Road and side tracks, 14-day stay limit, no facilities, no fees. Bison wander through. Some of the best free camping in the country.

National Forest: Black Hills National Forest covers 1.25 million acres and permits free 14-day dispersed camping along most forest service roads. Popular FRs: 117, 297, 318. Fire restrictions common Jul-Sep. Established USFS campgrounds (Pactola, Sheridan Lake, Roubaix Lake) reservable via recreation.gov. Custer Gallatin National Forest extends slightly into the NW corner.

Stay limit: 14 days at any one location (federal rule, applies to BLM and NF dispersed).

Tribal lands

South Dakota contains nine tribal nations including Pine Ridge (Oglala Sioux), Rosebud (Sicangu Lakota), Cheyenne River, Standing Rock (shared with ND), and Lower Brule. Tribal lands are sovereign nations;

state laws do not apply on reservation. Some require tribal permits for stopping, photography, or off-road travel. Pine Ridge specifically has very limited services -- carry full fuel and water when crossing. Wounded Knee Memorial is on Pine Ridge and worth visiting respectfully -- no entrance fee, donation appreciated.

Propane, dump stations, fuel

Propane: Plentiful in Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Mitchell, Pierre, Aberdeen, and most Black Hills towns. Sparse on the reservations and in the central plains north of Pierre. U-Haul and Tractor Supply locations reliable for refills. Most KOA and Good Sam parks fill on-site. Sturgis week -- expect 2-3 hour queues at every propane source within 60 miles.

Dump stations: Dense in the Black Hills and along I-90. Most state parks have free dump stations for registered guests. Flying J / Pilot truck stops along I-90 have fee dump stations (\$10-15). Walmart Supercenters in Rapid City and Sioux Falls allow overnight parking and several have dump facilities adjacent.

Fuel: Diesel and gas widely available along I-90, I-29, and US-16. Long stretches without fuel on US-14 west of Pierre (Pierre to Wall is 175 miles with only Philip in between) and on the reservations (Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River) where gas stations are sparse. Carry a full tank if you're heading off-interstate into the central plains. Fuel typically cheapest along I-90 at Murdo and Wall, highest in Custer and Hill City.

Weather windows

Best months: Late May through September. Black Hills daytime 70s-80s F, nights 40s-50s F. Plains hotter (80s-90s F) and windier.

Avoid: December through March. Black Hills snow closes secondary roads regularly; I-90 closes 4-8 times per winter in ground blizzards. April and early May bring tornado risk to the eastern plains. July-August in the Badlands routinely hits 100 F with zero shade.

Climate caution

Winter ground blizzards on I-90 close the road from Murdo to Rapid City with little warning. Wind speeds 50+ mph with blowing snow drop visibility to zero. SDDOT posts gate closures at sd511.org -- check before any November-March eastbound or westbound run.

Emergency + road conditions

State patrol	Dial *HP (*47) from a cell phone or 911 for emergencies
Road conditions	https://sd511.org

How RV TripGen helps

We flag Sturgis-week bookings a year out

RV TripGen warns you if any planned overnight in South Dakota falls within Sturgis Rally week (first full week of August) and surfaces overflow campgrounds in Wyoming and Montana as fallbacks.

Black Hills tunnel-size routing

RV TripGen filters Black Hills loop routes by your rig's width and height, so you don't end up wedged in an 8 ft 4 in tunnel on Needles Highway.