



My Drift

Title: North and South Dakota

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Date: 18 August 2019

Article Number: 316-2019-14

In my last article we learned about the six New England states. This article is about two states I have never visited – North Dakota and South Dakota. At this rate, I will be able to cover all 50 states in no time. I'm trying something different in this article – I'm using "Landscape" format for only the second time in 316 articles.



North Dakota

The Great Plains



South Dakota

Mount Rushmore

History

North Dakota was first settled by Native Americans several thousand years ago. The first Europeans explored the area in the 18th century establishing some limited trade with the natives. The land that today makes up North Dakota became U.S. territory as part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The region was originally part of the Minnesota and Nebraska territories, until, along with South Dakota, it was organized into the Dakota Territory in 1861. The state was very sparsely populated until the arrival of the railroads in the late 1800s, and finally became a state in 1889. During the run-up to statehood, there was an intense rivalry between North and South Dakota over which state would be admitted to the union first. When the time came for their formal admission, President Benjamin Harrison selected at random which bill to sign first and did not record the order in which the bills were signed. The state is renowned for its scenic “badlands,” which are part of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park.



Dakota Territory in 1861

The Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota Indian tribes are collectively called the Sioux. It is believed the Sioux Indians actually came to North America from the continent of Asia thousands of years ago. The Sioux, Cheyenne, Assiniboiné, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara were the first Indian inhabitants of the Dakota Territory. The Chippewa, Cree, Blackfeet, and Crow moved to the area in the 1800's.

Human beings have lived in what is today South Dakota for at least 17,000 years. These early settlers were nomadic hunter-gatherers, using primitive Stone Age technology to hunt large prehistoric mammals in the area. In 1679, France was the first European nation to hold any real claim over what would become South Dakota. In 1762, France granted Spain all French territory west of the Mississippi River. The first permanent American settlement was established at Fort Pierre by the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804. White settlement of the territory in the 1800s led to clashes with the Sioux, as some of the land had been granted to the tribe by an earlier treaty. Nevertheless, the territory was incorporated into the union on November 2, 1889, along with North Dakota. Today, tourism—visitors flock to the state to see Mt. Rushmore, which features 60-foot-tall sculptures of the faces of Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln.



Sitting Bull

Speaking of Indians, Sitting Bull was probably the most powerful and famous of all Native American chiefs. He was born in 1831 in what is now called South Dakota. Sitting Bull was the Teton Dakota Indian chief under whom the Sioux tribes united in their struggle for survival on the North American Great Plains.

In 1868, the Sioux accepted peace with the U.S. government, but confrontation with American soldiers escalated in the mid-1870s after gold was discovered in the Black Hills, a sacred area to Native Americans that the American government had recognized as their land following the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. The government didn't abide by the treaty and this led to several battles that Sitting Bull won. He fought American soldiers in the Battle of Killdeer Mountain and in 1865 he led an attack on the newly built Fort Rice in what is now called North Dakota. His skills as a warrior and the respect he'd earned as a leader of his people led him to become chief of the entire Lakota nation in 1868.



**General George
Armstrong Custer**

In June 1876, Sitting Bull engaged in battle against General George Armstrong Custer in the now famous Battle at Little Bighorn. There, Sitting Bull led thousands of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors against Custer's undermanned force, wiping out the American general and his 200-plus men.

For the U.S. government the defeat was an embarrassment, and the Army doubled down its efforts to wrest control of the territory from Native American tribes. To escape its wrath, Sitting Bull led his people into Canada, where they remained for four years. In 1881 Sitting Bull returned to the Dakota territory, where he was held prisoner until 1883. In 1885, after befriending Annie Oakley, he joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show.

Sitting Bull was killed by Lakota police on December 15, 1890. His remains are buried in Mobridge, South Dakota.

General Information

North Dakota



761,000
70,761 square miles
Bismarck (pop. 73,000)
Fargo (pop. 122,400)
Grand Forks (pop. 57,100)
White Butte (2,965 feet)
Red River (864 feet)
Missouri – James – Yellowstone
Devils Lake and Lake Sakakawea
North Dakota Hymn
Buffalo
Western meadowlark
Wild prairie rose
Northern pike
American Elm
White 82% - Indian 8% - Black 5%
Lutheran 35% - Catholic 30%
English 95% - German 1.4%

Population
Area
Capital
Largest City
Next Largest City
Highest Point
Lowest Point
Primary Rivers
Biggest Lakes
State Song
State Animal
State Bird
State Flower
State Fish
State Tree
Race/Ethnicity
Religion
Languages

South Dakota



883,000
77,116 square miles
Pierre (pop. 13,700)
Sioux Falls (pop. 154,000)
Rapid City (pop. 68,000)
Black Elk Peak (7,244 feet)
Big Stone Lake (968 feet)
Missouri – James – White
Lake Oahe and Lake Francis Case
Hail, South Dakota!
Coyote
Ring-necked Pheasant
American Pasque
Walleye
White spruce
White 85% - Indian 9% - Black 2%
Lutheran 27% - Roman Catholic 25%
English 94% - Spanish 2%

The Badlands

(Both North and South Dakota have their own Badlands)

The landforms of western North Dakota have long been called by this strange name: badlands. But what does this name mean? And are the lands really that bad? The first humans to see this area were Native Americans who called this land "mako sica". This has been translated into "badlands." Some of the first European explorers came up with similar names. French traders called it a "bad land to travel."



Imagine traveling east to west across the Great Plains. You see flat, rolling, grass-covered land for miles. This is pretty easy to travel through. Then you come across canyons of loose rock and mud. There is no more grass and the land is not flat. Strange landforms and hills make it hard to get across this area. This stretches on for miles. There is little water and not much to eat. What was an easy journey is now very difficult. You are in a bad land!

Badlands National Park is located in southwestern South Dakota. This badlands park is 244,000 acres wonderland of bizarre, colorful spires and pinnacles, massive buttes and deep gorges. Erosion of the Badlands reveals sedimentary layers of different colors: purple and yellow (shale), tan and gray (sand and gravel), red and orange (iron oxides) and white (volcanic ash). It is desolation at its truest, where you can look for miles and see no sign of civilization.



It also preserves the world's greatest fossil beds of animals from the Oligocene Epoch of the Age of Mammals. The skeletons of ancient camels, three-toed horses, saber-toothed cats and giant rhinoceros-like creatures are among the many fossilized species found here. All fossils, rocks, plants and animals are protected and must remain where you find them.

Interesting Facts

The smallest city in North Dakota is Maza, with a population of 5 people. North Dakota does not have towns or villages. Each place is officially a city, no matter how small it is.

North Dakota is the least-visited state in America.

The state that grows the most sunflowers is North Dakota.



Huge herds of bison once roamed the plains of North Dakota. By 1900, fewer than 600 were left. President Roosevelt spearheaded efforts to save the bison, and today about 90,000 live in North Dakota.

Lewis and Clark spent more time in North Dakota than in any other place they visited on their expedition.

South Dakota has more miles of shoreline than the state of Florida. Hard to believe but true. This is due mostly to the major rivers running through the state.



Wild Bill Hickok was killed in Deadwood, South Dakota in 1876 and is buried in a cemetery there.



North Dakota farmland would cover over 12 million city blocks. Farmers there produce enough wheat each year to make 12.6 billion loaves of bread.

North Dakota ranchers produce enough beef to make 113 million hamburgers each year. There are approximately three times more cattle than people in North Dakota and Angus is the most popular variety of cow.



North Dakota has the highest percentage of church-going population in the country. It also has more churches per capita than any other state.

Less than 1% of North Dakota is forest, the smallest amount of any state. Comedian Red Skeleton once quipped that North Dakota is “the only place I’ve been where I didn’t have to look up to see the sky.”

North Dakota is the 2nd-highest oil-producing state behind Texas. Despite its oil boom, agriculture or farming is still North Dakota’s top industry.

Mount Rushmore took 14 years and only \$1 million dollars to build. It was called Mountain of Rock before the faces of our presidents were carved into the side of it.

One of largest and most complete skeletons of a Tyrannosaurus Rex on Earth was excavated near Faith, SD.



The Prairie Rattlesnake is the only venomous snake that is actually native to South Dakota.

Shooting animals from an airplane is a crime.

The U.S.S. South Dakota was the most decorated battleship during World War II.

South Dakota has one of the largest American Indian populations, with nine tribes and an estimated 60,000 people currently living there.



Due to its oil boom, North Dakota has the lowest unemployment rate in the U.S

Must-See Places

LAKE SAKAKAWEA AND GARRISON DAM

The largest lake in North Dakota and the largest manmade lake within one state, Lake Sakakawea is 609 square miles of water behind Garrison Dam. It's named for the young Indian woman who accompanied Lewis & Clark on their expedition.



Crazy Horse Memorial

This has been a work in progress since it was begun in 1947. The head and upper body portion of Chief Standing Bear have been carved into this mountain, like the Mount Rushmore carvings.



LEWIS & CLARK CENTER AND FT MANDAN

This is a world-class interpretive center along the very route Lewis & Clark traveled. Exhibits focus on artifacts from every tribe the explorers encountered, showcasing the culture of the Mandan Indians.

HERITAGE CENTER AND STATE MUSEUM

The collection of Plains Indians artifacts found here is second only to the Smithsonian's.

DAKOTA ZOO

See more than 600 animals -- and more than 125 species -- at the Dakota Zoo, home to mountain lions, moose, grizzly bears, river otters and more.

WORLD'S LARGEST BUFFALO

The World's Largest Buffalo Monument towers over the city of Jamestown and the National Buffalo Museum, live bison herd and Frontier Village.



Mount Rushmore National Monument

South Dakota's most prominent tourist attraction. The carving was begun in 1927, halted for several decades, and finally completed in 1991. In its creation, more than 400,000 tons of rock was blasted from the side of the mountain. (See picture on page 1)

Custer State Park

A large herd of bison roams the peaceful landscape, which is also home to a wide variety of other wildlife. Granite peaks tower over the forests, lakes, and streams. Scenic drives, like the Needles Highway and Iron Mountain Road, provide easy access to the park with great views along the way.

Wind Cave National Park

Explore this vast, underground Wind Cave, with chambers like the Post Office and the Elks Room.



DEVILS LAKE

North Dakota's four-season recreational area boasts excellent open-water and ice fishing, boating, camping and hunting.



INTERNATIONAL PEACE GARDEN

The tribute to peace between the U.S. and Canada encompasses 2,300 acres of natural beauty; two pristine freshwater lakes, scenic hiking and driving trails, wildflowers, waterfalls and a large variety of North American birds and animals.



The Mammoth Site

This Hot Springs site features a large number of Columbian mammoth bones. More than 60 mammoths, including three woolly mammoths, have been discovered in this area.

Deadwood

Nestled into dense Black Hills scenery is the city of Deadwood. Deadwood's Wild West origins are on full display and waiting to be experienced right from the streets.

Black Hills National Forest

Located in southwestern South Dakota, the forest has an area of over 1.25 million acres. Predominantly ponderosa pine, the forest also includes hard woods like aspen, bur oak, and birch. Within the forest is Black Elk Peak which is the tallest mountain in South Dakota.



Summary

I will probably never visit North and South Dakota at my advanced age but I think you will agree that there are many great things to see and do in these states.

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