Welcome to Devils Tower National Monument!

Welcome to America’s first national monument! Devils Tower is an iconic formation, a monolith rising above the surrounding countryside. As you explore the monument today, the Tower you see will be remarkable, everlasting in its powerful appearance. Yet depending on the time of day and the weather, the formation can look dramatically different. Often, it is yellow-green against a clear blue sky, but in shadow the Tower is black and seems to stand a little taller. When fog rolls in, it is shrouded in mist, only peeking out occasionally to say hello. If you visit in the winter, the Tower will be covered in a dusting of snow. And if you stay for the sunset, the sun’s rays will turn its face orange, reflecting the colors of the sky. In this way, the formation is remarkably dynamic, appearing different as the day progresses and the seasons change – if you come back, you may see a different Tower than the one you see today. But Devils Tower is also timeless, changing only on a scale imperceptible to human eyes.

Since people first arrived at Devils Tower more than 10,000 years ago, the monolith has remained essentially unchanged. The Tower you are seeing today is the same formation that Theodore Roosevelt protected as the nation’s first national monument in 1906, the same landmark that explorers and settlers used as they moved west across the country, and the same stone monolith where Native Americans have gathered and prayed for thousands of years. The sense of awe that the Tower gives us is truly timeless. As you explore the monument today, we invite you to reflect on this timelessness. What does Devils Tower mean to you? We hope that you will carry this meaning with you as you continue to explore America’s public lands – so get out there and Find Your Park!

Things To Do

- Explore the visitor center
- Watch the prairie dogs (p. 4)
- Attend a ranger program (p. 5)
- Become a Junior Ranger (p. 5)
- Take a hike (p. 8)
- Look for wildlife (p. 4)
- Climb the Tower (p. 6)
- Camp in the Belle Fourche River Campground (p. 5)
- Visit the Sacred Circle of Smoke Sculpture
- See the stars (p. 5)
- Take beautiful photographs
- Listen to nature

Parking at Devils Tower

During the summer, parking around the visitor center between 10 am and 3 pm is often limited. Consider parking in other designated areas during these peak visitation hours. For vehicles with trailers, long-vehicle parking spaces are available to unhook your rig before heading up to the visitor center - find them on the way to the picnic area.

The picnic area provides access to the Circle of Sacred Smoke sculpture and the prairie dog town. You can also find parking at Joyner Ridge trailhead (accessible to most RVs and other large vehicles). From these areas, you can choose to hike to the visitor center.
Devils Tower is a unique geologic formation that defies expectations and explanations. The formation of the Tower has fascinated and inspired geologists and other curious people for hundreds of years.

Geologists agree on a couple of main points on the origin of the Tower. They agree that the Tower is composed of an igneous rock called phonolite porphyry. The Little Missouri Buttes, a formation to the northwest of the Tower and made of the same rock, were probably formed from the same body of magma as the Tower only a few thousand years earlier. Phonolite porphyry is relatively rare on the surface of the Earth and is found in a few other places worldwide. The Tower formed about 1.5 million years ago. What geologists still debate is how that process took place and whether or not the magma ever reached the land surface. Numerous ideas have evolved since the first geologic studies of the Tower in the late 1800s. Today, there are four primary theories, but geologists continue to search for more detailed explanations.

### Four Theories of Tower Formation

- **Volcanic Igneous Intrusion (Laccolith) Theory** - The Tower could be a laccolith formation, a type of igneous intrusion. Laccoliths are large, dome-shaped bodies of magma that form when magma pushes up through the Earth's crust, creating a dome-like structure. The magma that formed the laccolith would have solidified before reaching the surface.

- **Igneous Stock Formation Theory** - The Tower could be the remains of a stock, a large igneous intrusion called a stock. It would have been formed when magma cooled and crystallized before reaching the Earth's surface.

- **Remnant of a Diatreme/Lava Remnant Theory** - The Tower could be what is left from a diatreme, a large volcanic crater formed by an eruption. Magma would have flowed up into the crater before the eruption ended, creating a lava remnant.

- **Remnant of a Diatreme/Lava Coulée Theory** - The Tower could be what is left from an explosive event known as a maar-diabreme. Magma would have followed the path of the explosion, creating a dome called a lava coulée.

Despite the uncertainty of how the Tower formed, geologists do agree on how it came to appear the way it does today. Until recently began its geological history, the Tower was hidden underground by the overlying sedimentary rocks. But the forces of erosion, particularly the water, began to wear away the soft sandstones and shales above and around the Tower. The much harder igneous rock of the Tower survived, the outline of erosion, and the gray columns of the Tower began to appear above the surrounding landscape. As a result, and snow continue to erode the sedimentary rocks surrounding the Tower's base, and the Bighorn Mountain range above the debris at the base of the Tower will be exposed. Rocks do not often fall from the Tower's edifice, but occasionally do. Pieces of rubble, broken columns, boulders, small rocks and stones lie at the base of the Tower, indicating that it was once larger than it is today. The forces of erosion continue to shape the Tower today.

Stories of the Tower

Kiowa Oral History of the Tower's Creation

The following is a translation of a Kiowa story told in 1897. Included in the novel by the British author, is one of the stories compiled by historian Dick Tomes.

Before the Kiowa came, they were camped on a stream in the far north where there were a great many bears, many of them. One day, seven little girls were playing in the distance, and were chased by some bears. The girls ran toward the village and the bears were just about to catch them when the girls jumped on a low rock, about three feet high. One of the girls was proud to the rock. “Rock take pity on us, rock save us!” The rock heard them and then began to grow very large, pushing the girls higher and higher. When the bears jumped to reach the girls, they grabbed the rock, broke their claws, and fell on the ground. The rock rose higher and higher, the bears still jumped at the girls until they were pushed up into the sky, where they now are, seven little stars in a group (The Pleiades). In the winter, at the middle of the night, the seven stars are right over the high rock. When the people came to look, they found the bears’ claws, turned to stone, all around the base. No Kiowa living has ever seen rocks like the old men have told about it: they are very far north where the Kiowa used to live. It is a single rock with scratched sides, the marks of the bears’ claws are there yet, many, many, very, very high. They are no other like in the whole country, there are no rocks on it, only grass on top. The Kiowa call this rock “‘Tso-aa”, a tree rock, possibly because it grows tall like a tree. Told by Joe-Many-Camp-Per-Plains, Kiowa elder at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, 1897.

Tower Trivia

- **How high is the Tower?** The Tower is 3,117 feet (950 meters) high, making it the highest free-standing granite monolith in the world. It is also the tallest rock feature in the United States.

- **How old is the Monument?** Devils Tower National Monument was created in 1906.

- **How old is the Visitor Center?** The Visitor Center opened in 1939.

- **How big is the top of the Tower?** It is about 49 acres, or the size of a football field.

- **What kind of rock is in the Tower?** The rock is composed of phonolite porphyry, which is similar to granite but does not have quartz.

- **Is rock climbing allowed at the Tower?** Yes, rock climbing is allowed at the Tower. Climbers must follow all regulations to ensure safety.

- **How long does it take to climb the Tower?** The climb takes around 4-6 hours to complete.

- **Was the first person to climb the Tower?** Yes, the Kiowa nation is credited as the first group to climb the Tower.

- **What is the best time to see the Tower?** The best time to see the Tower is during the summer months.

- **How big is the mansion?** The mansion was built in 1919 for the wealthy merchant, John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

- **What is the best activity to do in the Tower?** The best activity to do in the Tower is hiking, rock climbing, or bird watching.

Geoffrey Nettles - A Unlikely Parachutist

In October 1941, during the international upheaval and strife of the Second World War, Devils Tower National Monument made headlines across the nation. A professional parachutist named Geoffrey Nettles was stranded atop the Tower with no way down.

Early in the morning on October 5, 1941, without the consent or knowledge of the National Park Service officials, Hopkins parachuted from an airplane to the top of Devils Tower. He wanted to prove that a parachutist could land precisely on a small target - the Tower summit being just over one acre in size. He planned to descend using a 1,000-foot rope which would be dropped from the plane after him. Hopkins hit his mark, but his rope landed out of reach on the side of the Tower, leaving him stuck at the top.

The National Park Service now had a problem to solve, and newspapers around the country ran with the story. They wanted to rescue the stranded man, airplanes dropped food, water and warm clothing to keep Hopkins alive. Letters written by concerned citizens, corporations and the military urged the Park Service to get him down. Eventually they decided on sending a climbing team to rescue Hopkins. Jack Durarnse, one of the early technical climbers to scale the Tower, offered to lead a rescue party that included several famous climbers including Chappell Cranmer and Paul Petzoldt.

On October 5, Durarnse and his party arrived at the monument. Working closely with the park service, they laid out a safety climbing route for rescue operations. On the following day, Durarnse led the team to the summit of the Tower. They found Hopkins who, in spite of his ordeal, was in excellent physical condition and in good spirits. The descent was made without major incident. The stranded parachutist and the rescue operations attracted many spectators; during the six-day period, some 3,000 people came to the monument to witness events firsthand.

Devils Tower 3
Porcupines
Porcupines are common at Devils Tower, as they can be hard to spot. They are the second-largest rodent in North America, weighing up to 40 lbs. Porcupines are nocturnal, coming down from the trees at night to eat the corn, irrigation water, and beetles, which are well equipped for their browsing lifestyle.

Wild Turkey
Wild Turkeys are one of the most iconic birds in the United States and at the Tower. They can be seen year round at the monument. Turkeys spend most of their time in the forest floor scavenging for food. If you keep a sharp eye out you might even get to see a turkey in the distance without their appearances, turkeys are capable of flight at the base of the Tower.

Exotic Plant Control
Exotic species are introduced by human activity, either intentionally or accidentally. Agricultural crops, landscape ornaments, recreational, and tourism are all vectors for exotic introduction.

Special Presenter Series
The Special Presenter Series highlights the different ways in which various cultures relate to the Tower, while also offering a shared vision for all of us who find meaning in a visit here. The programs are offered during the weekend evenings in the month of June, July, and August at the Campground Amphitheater. If you might meet Theodore Roosevelt, a Chyenne champion Grass Dancer, or a world-renowned rock climber on a summer evening at Devils Tower.

An Astronomical Place...
...With Astronomical Events!

Devils Tower National Monument is committed to educating the public about astronomy. During major astronomical events the park will host free night sky programs. The park is open 24 hours, so come late to enjoy the stars because “Half the fun is after dark”!

Devils Tower National Monument is prohibited and pets and the park at Devils Tower. Run-ins with wildlife like rattlesnakes can cause injury to pets. Our new Bark Rangers program lets your pets be involved in your trip, without putting them in harm’s way or breaking park rules. Ask about how your pet can become a Bark Ranger and earn their B.A.R.K. Badge today at the visitor center.

Where Can Fido Go?
Pets are a part of the family, but taking them on trails here at Devils Tower is prohibited and pets and the park at. Run-ins with wildlife like rattlesnakes can cause injury to pets. Our new Bark Rangers program lets your pets be involved in your trip, without putting them in harm’s way or breaking park rules. Ask about how your pet can become a Bark Ranger and earn their B.A.R.K. Badge today at the visitor center.

Exploring the Tower
Ranger Programs
During the summer, join a park ranger or park volunteer for a short program to learn more about the Tower. For more information about the daily schedule, topics, and any special events, please stop by the visitor center.

Tower Walks (1.15 hours) - Join a ranger on a short 1.3 mile hike around the base of the Tower. Individual topics vary but can include ecology, geology, history and cultural information.

Ranger Talks (20-30 minutes) - Join a ranger in front of the kiosk in the center of the parking lot for a short program of the ranger’s choice.

Evolution Programs (19 minutes) - Join a ranger in the amphitheater by the picnic area for a program about the Tower. The Special Presenter Series is a part of this program.

Hey Kids, Become a Junior Ranger! 
Discover Devils Tower National Monument through our Junior Ranger program. Ask for a Junior Ranger booklet at the visitor center. Return your completed booklet, and earn a Junior Ranger badge and certificate. You can also mail this booklet to the park to get your badge.

Most National Parks and Monuments have their own Junior Ranger Program, so you can earn more badges at each place you visit!

Stay The Night at the Campground
Make lasting memories at the Belle Fourche River Campground at Devils Tower! Situated above the Belle Fourche River near Prismatic Dog Town, staying at the campground is a wonderful way to experience this park.

There are 50 campsites available, including 4 accessible sites and 3 group sites for groups between 10 and 20 people. The campground is open from May through October. All campers are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and fees are $20/night for individual sites and $85/night for group sites. For more information, ask a camp host or other park staff.
Rock Climbing at Devils Tower

The History of the Climbing at the Tower

For over a hundred years, climbers have tested their skills on the vertical walls of Devils Tower. Using various techniques and specialized equipment, climbers have pushed their way up and down the steep walls. Today there are over 200 routes around the Tower. It has been climbed by a variety of people including a nine-year-old boy and an eighty-seven-year-old man.

The first recorded climb of Devils Tower occurred ten years before it was established as a national monument. William Byrd and William Rogers were two brothers who reached the summit in the 1890s. Working together, the two managed to construct a simple stake ladder which they used to climb to the Tower’s summit. The first recorded climb of Devils Tower occurred on July 4th, 1893 and has since been removed, with the top 200 feet restored by the park service in 1972.

The next evolution in climbing at the Tower occurred in 1937 when a group of rock climbers sought to make history by scaling the sides without the use of a ladder. The following year, Jack Durrance began the second expedition up the Tower columns. He studied the route that his cohorts pioneered in 1937, the Weissner route. Wiessner used the year before, and determined there were over 200 routes around Devils Tower. Considering the least difficult route, it still provides a challenge to experienced climbers. Considered by many to be the least difficult route, it still provides a challenge to experienced climbers. It could be a slightly easier option. What became known as the Weissner route.

How Do You Get to the Top?

The majority of climbers “free climb” the Tower, meaning climbing without the use of artificial aids, mechanical means or ladders. They climb up by stepping onto cracks and ledges. Climbers use precautions to protect themselves in the event of a fall, such as ropes, harnesses and removable pieces of equipment placed in cracks or ledges. The first, or lead, climber places removable equipment like cams or nuts, while the second climber keeps the rope taut (expressed known as belaying). If the lead climber falls, the belayer catches them with a friction device on the rope and they are held up by the equipment that they have placed. Once the lead climber has reached the end of the route, they make an anchor and bid the second climber up. The second climber removes the gear as they ascend.

Interested in Climbing the Tower?

Check in at the Climbing Office. Office or register at the parking lot in the parking lot in front of the Visitor Center to obtain a map, voluntary closure permit. The office has information on climbing routes and weather conditions. Routes are “TRAD” (traditional climbing) and are generally long; plan for 6-10 hours round trip.

- Take plenty of gear - a rope, double rope, helmet, tools. Talk to a ranger or refer to a guidebook if you aren’t sure what you need.
- Make plans for self-rescue or assistance from other climbers for unexpected incidents.
- Use caution in crowded areas - Durrance, BowlingAlley, Meadows Rappel, etc.
- Watch the weather. Storms can develop quickly.

Voluntary June Climbing Closure

Northern Plains Native Americans regard the Tower as a sacred site. Out of respect to Northern Americans, the monument’s Climbing Management Plan provides a voluntary closure to climbing during the month of June, an important ceremonial event among the first inhabitants to the diversity we all share. Call (605) 574-4600 for additional information. www.nps.gov/wica

Jewel Cave National Monument

Custer State Park

Mount Rushmore National Memorial

Badlands National Park

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site

Wind Cave National Park

The Devils Tower is a sacred place to many Native American Tribes.

Supporting Partners

Thanks, Partners!

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Wind Cave National Park

The Devils Tower is located 126 miles east of Devils Tower on US Hwy 16. With more than 180 miles of surveyed, it is the third longest cave in the nation. It has many lakes, and hiking opportunities. Call the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center at (605) 253-4535 to plan your visit. www.custerstatepark.info

Custer is located 115 miles East of Devils Tower via US Hwy 16. At 71,000 acres, it is one of the largest state parks in the nation. It has many lakes, and hiking opportunities. Call the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center at (605) 253-4535 to plan your visit. www.custerstatepark.info

Mount Rushmore is located 26 miles east of Devils Tower via US Hwy 16 and SD Hwy. 244. From the history of the first inhabitants to the diversity of America today, Mount Rushmore brings visitors closer to face with the rich heritage we all share. Call (605) 574-2523 or visit www.nps.gov/moru

Badlands National Park is located 190 miles east of Devils Tower on US Hwy 385. It is one of the world’s longest and most complex caves. It is famous for its boxwork, an unusual calcite cave formation resembling honeycomb. Call (605) 745-4600 for additional information. www.nps.gov/wica

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site

Minuteman Missile is located 182 miles east of Devils Tower on US Hwy 385. It is one of the world’s longest and most complex caves. It is famous for its boxwork, an unusual calcite cave formation resembling honeycomb. Call (605) 745-4600 for additional information. www.nps.gov/wica

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Devils Tower National Natural History Association

Devils Tower National Natural History Association supports interpreters and educational programs at Devils Tower. The association operates the bookstore located in the visitor center.

When you make a purchase at the bookstore, proceeds are donated to the monument that support park programs, such as the Junior Ranger Program, and many other services. You can become a member of the association. Membership benefits include a 15% discount in the bookstore and a discount on items purchased at other national park cooperatives.
Hiking Trails at Devils Tower

The Tower Trail - 1.3 miles (2 km), moderate with a steep start and rolling hills - A short rolling hike around the base of the Tower. This is the easiest and most popular trail at the monument. Enjoy close-up views of the Tower as you walk through the boulder field and ponderosa pine forest around the base. This is the only paved trail at the monument.

Red Beds Trail - 2.8 miles (4.5 km), moderate with significant elevation changes - The longest and most intense trail at the monument. This trail meanders through pine forests and meadows, with views of the valley floor, distant hills, and Belle Fourche River. It also features spectacular views of the bluffs known as the Red Beds, the formation from which the trail gets its name.

Joyner Ridge Trail - 1.5 miles (2.4 km), moderate with some elevation change - This trail traverses the ridge top and descends a sandstone cliff into a secluded meadow. The north and west faces of the Tower are visible from the trail.

Pets are welcome to walk in the parking areas or gravel lot on a leash. They may not be walked on trails or left unattended at any time.

Collection of rocks, plants, or any other natural material without a permit is prohibited by law.

Collection of archeological artifacts is prohibited by law.

It is illegal and dangerous to feed wildlife, including prairie dogs.

Travel above the boulder field can be dangerous and requires a permit.

Speed limits are strictly enforced for the safety of visitors, park wildlife and employees.

If you have any questions about park regulations, feel free to ask a uniformed employee.

Devils Tower Park Map

Hours
The park is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Please call the park or check our website for current visitor center hours.

Fees & Passes
All passes can be purchased at the park entrance and are good for up to 7 days. See p. 7 for information on annual passes.

Private vehicle: $20.00
Motorcycle: $15.00
Individual (foot or bike): $10.00

Devils Tower rises 1,267 feet above the Belle Fourche River. Also known as Bear Lodge, it is a sacred site for many American Indians. President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Devils Tower the first national monument in 1906.

Devils Tower National Monument
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