Mount Rushmore

Mount Rushmore National Memorial
South Dakota

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Let us place there, carved high, as close to heaven as we can, the words of our leaders, their faces, to show posterity what manner of men they were. Then breathe a prayer that these records will endure until the wind and the rain alone shall wear them away.

—Gutzon Borglum

© PAT AND CHUCK BLACKLEY
PHOTOS THIS SIDE NPS UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED

George Washington

Served 1789–97

Sculptor Gutzon Borglum selected the four presidents to be memorialized on Mount Rushmore. George Washington was a natural first choice: He commanded the Continental Army in the American Revolution, building a cohesive fighting force that won independence from Great Britain.

Unanimously elected first US president, he served two terms and laid the foundation for today's democracy.

Washington was the first figure started and, because his face is in higher relief than the others, remains the most prominent.

Thomas Jefferson

Served 1801–09

In 1776 Thomas Jefferson was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, a document that continues to inspire our nation today and encourage democracies around the world.

He was Secretary of State under George Washington. As the third president, he spearheaded the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. The acquisition doubled the size of the US, adding all or part of fifteen present-day states, including South Dakota.

Theodore Roosevelt

Served 1901–09

The youngest man to become president, Theodore Roosevelt led the nation into the 20th century. He was instrumental in negotiating the construction of the Panama Canal, linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. He earned the nickname "Trust Buster" for his work abolishing corporate monopolies and ensuring the rights of ordinary citizens. He championed conservation legislation and set aside millions of acres of public land.

Borglum greatly admired the 26th president and considered him a friend.

Abraham Lincoln

Served 1861–65

Abraham Lincoln took office on the eve of the nation's greatest trial and devoted his presidency to ending the Civil War and restoring the Union. In 1862 he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the first step toward ending slavery. His 1863 Gettysburg Address is still one of the most compelling American speeches. Lincoln died on April 15, 1865, shot by an assassin.

Widely considered one of the greatest Americans, Lincoln was a favorite portrait subject for Gutzon Borglum.

George Washington · Thomas Jefferson · Theodore Roosevelt · Abraham Lincoln

The Mount Rushmore Story

A monument's dimensions should be determined by the importance to civilization of the events commemorated.

—Gutzon Borglum

1867 John Gutzon del la Mothe Borglum born March 25 in St. Charles, ID, to Mormon Danish immigrants. Later studies art in Paris and New York and becomes well-known portrait sculptor.

1885 New York attorney Charles Rushmore goes to Black Hills to inspect mining claims; Mount Rushmore named for him.

1889 South Dakota and North Dakota become states.



Gutzon Borglum



Lincoln sculpture by Borglum, 1908, now displayed in the US Capitol.
ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

1923 SD state historian Doane Robinson proposes carving Old West heroes in the Needles—spirelike granite formations in the Black Hills. Robinson approaches sculptor Gutzon Borglum, then at work on Confederate memorial on Stone Mountain, GA.

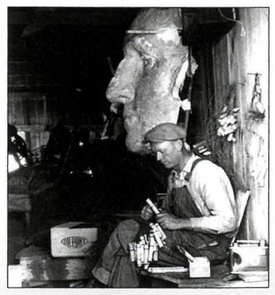
1925 Federal and state legislation authorize carving of memorial in Black Hills. Borglum quits Stone Mountain project and goes to SD. Chooses Mount Rushmore as site because of its size, orientation to the morning and midday light, and fine-grained granite. To appeal to national audience, Borglum proposes US presidents as subjects. Fundraising begins.

1927 President Calvin Coolidge spends summer in the Black Hills; dedicates memorial. Borglum begins carving.

1929 Mount Rushmore National Memorial Act provides matching federal funding and creates commission to raise funds and oversee operations. Stock market crashes in October; ensuing economic collapse threatens project.

1930 Dedication of Washington head July 4.

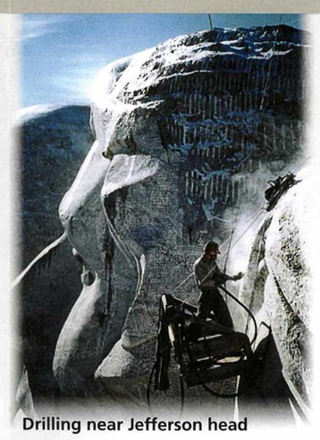
1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt places Rushmore under jurisdiction of National Park Service. After 18 months of carving, Jefferson head relocated to Washington's left because of flaws in granite. Original Jefferson figure is blasted away. Gutzon's son Lincoln Borglum begins full-time work at Rushmore.



Art Johnson prepares dynamite for blasting granite.

1934 Borglum and Hearst newspapers sponsor national essay contest for text inscription on entablature near presidents' faces. William Burkett, a Nebraska law student, wins contest and scholarship for his 500-word history of the US.

1935 As work on the monument continues, Lincoln's head is sited where the entablature was intended to be placed; entablature is never carved.



Drilling near Jefferson head

More and more we sensed that we were creating a truly great thing, and after a while all of us old hands became truly dedicated to it and determined to stick to it.

—Otto "Red" Anderson, driller and assistant carver

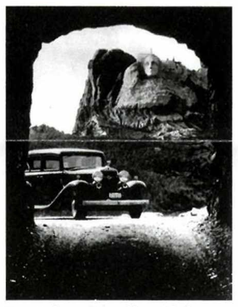
1936 President Franklin D. Roosevelt attends a dedication of Jefferson head August 30.

1937 A bill is introduced in Congress to add Susan B. Anthony's portrait on Rushmore. Separate legislation requires that money be spent only on those figures already begun, thus ending the Anthony proposal. Lincoln head dedicated Sept. 17.

1938 Work focuses on Theodore Roosevelt head, with details of Washington's neck also in progress. In the granite behind the heads, excavation begins for Hall of Records, Borglum's planned storage vault for important national documents and an American history time capsule. Original commission disbands; Borglum chooses members for new commission.

This can be a monument and an inspiration for the continuance of the democratic-republican form of government, not only in our own beloved country, but, we hope, throughout the world.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1936



Tunnel on Needles Highway

1939 Roosevelt head dedicated July 2. Memorial officially transferred to National Park Service. Work ceases on Hall of Records.

1941 March 6: Gutzon Borglum dies. Lincoln Borglum oversees carving until its completion on October 31.

1959 Mount Rushmore is the site of a climactic scene in movie *North by Northwest*. (Filming actually takes place in a studio.)

1975 Bronze plate with Burkett's entablature essay placed at the site of Borglum's original studio.

1991–98 To commemorate 50th anniversary of the completion of carving on the memorial, Mount Rushmore undergoes major redevelopment. Museum, Grand View Terrace, Avenue of Flags, restaurant, gift shop, and parking decks built.



Evening Lighting Ceremony and Avenue of Flags
© VINEETH MEKKAT

More on Rushmore

Every year, nearly 3 million people from all over the world visit Mount Rushmore. Some become citizens here.



Naturalization ceremony, 2007
US AIR FORCE / MICHAEL B. KELLER

The original cost of carving was $989,992.32; about 85 percent was federal funds. The price tag for the 1990s redevelopment was $56 million.

Around 400 laborers, mostly from the ranks of the unemployed, worked on the memorial. There were few injuries and no deaths. Hourly pay ranged from 35 cents to $1.50.

About 450,000 tons of rock was blasted from the mountain.

Cracks are patched as needed with silicone sealant. The faces were "washed" for the first time in 2005 using pressurized water.

Noses are about 20 feet long, eyes about 11 feet wide, mouths about 18 feet wide.

Your Guide to Mount Rushmore

PLAN YOUR VISIT

Parking The parking facility is concession-operated and charges a fee. National Parks and other federal recreation passes do not apply to parking.

Things to See and Do You can view Mount Rushmore from the roadside year-round. It is best viewed and photographed in the morning light.

The information center has staff available and displays to help you plan your visit to the memorial and the Black Hills.

The 0.6-mile Presidential Trail begins at Grand View Terrace, with access to viewing sites near the talus (rocky) slope below the faces. There are 422 stairs on this trail. Trail may be closed in winter.

The Evening Lighting Ceremony is held in the outdoor amphitheater nightly in summer. The rest of the year the sculpture is illuminated at sunset for a couple of hours. Check schedules in summer for ranger-led programs.

The Sculptor's Studio (closed in winter) has models and tools used in the carving process. Programs conducted daily in summer. The concession building, open year-round, has food service and a gift shop.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information, ask a ranger, call, or check the park website.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Please observe these regulations: Federal law protects all cultural and natural features; do not disturb or collect rocks or other items. • Pets are prohibited. • Stay on trails while walking. • Drive carefully on Black Hills roads. You must wear seatbelts in all National Park System areas. • Camping is prohibited. • For a full list of regulations, including firearms information, check the park website.

More Information
Mount Rushmore National Memorial is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more, visit www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

Mount Rushmore
National Memorial
13000 Hwy 244,
Bldg. 31, Suite 1
Keystone, SD 57751-0268
605-574-2523
www.nps.gov/moru

LINCOLN BORGLUM VISITOR CENTER



Directly underneath the Grand View Terrace is the Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center. It has exhibits on the carving, a short film, information desk, and bookstore operated by the cooperating association. Open 8 am to 5 pm in winter; until 10 pm in summer.

MUSEUM—NPS; ILLUSTRATED MAP—NPS / INTERNATIONAL MAPPING

Youth Exploration Area
Presidential Trail
Stairs
Stairs
Stairs
Stairs
Amphitheater
Visitor Center entrances
Grand View Terrace
Avenue of Flags
Stairs
Borglum View Terrace
Stairs
Presidential Trail
Gift Shop
Cafe and Ice Cream
Nature Trail
Stairs
Sculptor's Studio
244
Audio Tours and Restrooms
Information Center
Park Entrance

AT HOME IN THE BLACK HILLS

Ponderosa pines dominate this dry, rocky landscape. The Black Hills takes its name from the illusion of darkness and density the pines create when viewed from a distance. The forest is not really dense, though; its open understory is ideal for pine saplings.

Besides ponderosa pines, common trees are birch, cottonwood, spruce, and aspen. Trees are homes for birds, insects, and small mammals. Woodpeckers, nuthatches, and northern flickers nest inside dead standing trees and feed on insects that live in the bark. Red squirrels, chipmunks, and mice feed on seeds and cones.

Where the forests are disturbed by fire or pine beetles, the cycle of forest succession begins anew with aspens, shrubs, and mixed grasses. Meadows have their own habitat. In spring look for wildflowers here: blanket flower, prairie cone flower, purple cone flower, golden pea, wild blue flax, wild bergamot, and smooth beardtongue. Elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer browse on grasses, shrubs, and saplings.

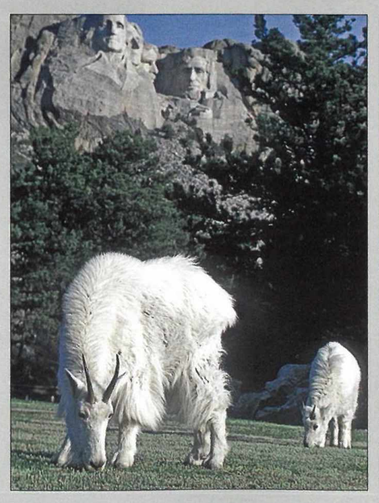
Yellow-bellied marmots sun on rocks throughout the park and under the sculpture on the talus slope in morning and evening. They spend hot days in their burrows and hibernate through the winter.

Predators are less commonly seen by visitors. Coyotes hunt in meadows, while mountain lions and bobcats prowl wooded areas at night.

During the Evening Lighting Ceremony, you might see bats hunting bugs attracted by the lights. Black Hills bats are crucial to controlling insects like mosquitoes and moths. Bats also contribute to the pollination process. Recently, white-nose syndrome, a fungus that affects hibernating bats, threatens bat populations.

Some mammals that thrive in the Black Hills are not native. Today's mountain goats descend from a group of six donated by Canada to nearby Custer State Park. They escaped from their pens and took to the craggy slopes.

In the developed area of the park, look for mountain goats, marmots, and other wild animals. They may appear tame, but for their sake and yours, do not feed, touch, or approach them.









From left: Mountain goats make themselves at home in the park; northern flicker; yellow-bellied marmot; purple coneflower; goldenpea; mountain lion; little brown bat. *Upper right:* Townsend's big-eared bat

GOATS—TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA; FLICKER—USFWS / TOM KOERNER; MARMOT—© DAN AND LIN DZURISIN; FLOWERS—NPS; MOUNTAIN LION—© SARAH BARTELL; BAT—MERLIN TUTTLE'S BAT CONSERVATION; BAT FAR RIGHT—© MICHAEL DURHAM





☆GPO:2015—388-437/30578 New in 2015
Printed on recycled paper.