SOUTH DAKOTA

THE MOUNT RUSHMORE STATE *Became a state November 2, 1889 (40th)*

The Missouri River cuts South Dakota in two, with farms to the east and ranches, badlands and the Black Hills to the west. Nine tribal nations make their homes here.



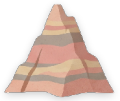
Four Faces in the Granite

In 1923 the state historian, Doane Robinson, wanted a giant carving in the Black Hills to bring visitors to South Dakota. The sculptor Gutzon Borglum and about 400 workers began in 1927. They blasted away most of the rock with dynamite. Each face is 60 feet tall. Each nose is 20 feet long. The work ended in 1941.



A Park Built of Stone Trees

In the town of Lemmon, Ole Quammen had a strange idea. In 1930 he hired as many as 40 local men to haul in petrified wood, which is ancient wood that has turned to stone. They stacked it into about 100 towers and a small castle. The tallest tower is 32 feet high. The park fills a whole city block.



Why the Badlands Are Bad

The Lakota called this place mako sica, which means bad lands. French trappers called it bad land to travel through. The rock is soft, so rain washes away about an inch of it a year. That leaves sharp ridges and striped towers. The rock holds fossils of ancient horses, rhinos and saber-toothed cats around 30 million years old.



A Palace Covered in Corn

In 1892 the town of Mitchell built a palace decorated with corn to show off South Dakota's rich soil. The building standing today went up in 1921. Its outside walls are covered with pictures made from about 325,000 ears of corn in twelve natural colors. The pictures are changed every year. Inside is an arena where basketball is played.



The Burnt Thigh Nation

The people of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe are Lakota and call themselves the Sicangu Oyate, or Burnt Thigh Nation. Their reservation was set up in 1889 and covers about 1,970 square miles. The tribe has its own university, named for the leader Spotted Tail. In 2020 it set aside nearly 28,000 acres of grassland for bison.



A Bird from Across the Sea

South Dakota's state bird is not from America at all. The ring-necked pheasant comes from China and is named for the white ring of feathers around the male's neck. In 1908 a few pairs were set free in Spink County. By 1935 the state had an estimated 12 million pheasants. The pheasant became the state bird in 1943.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 935,000 (5th fewest)
Size	About 77,100 square miles (17th largest)
Highest point	Black Elk Peak, 7,242 feet
Counties	66
Neighbors	North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana

DID YOU KNOW?

- The word Dakota means friend or ally in the language of the Dakota people.
- Lake Oahe is about 231 miles long. It stretches from near Pierre almost to Bismarck, North Dakota.
- Black Elk Peak is named for a Lakota holy man. Until 2016 it was called Harney Peak.
- South Dakotans speak of East River and West River, the two halves of the state on either side of the Missouri.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to Mount Rushmore?
3. In what year was Oahe Dam finished?

Answers: 1. Pierre 2. Rapid City 3. 1962