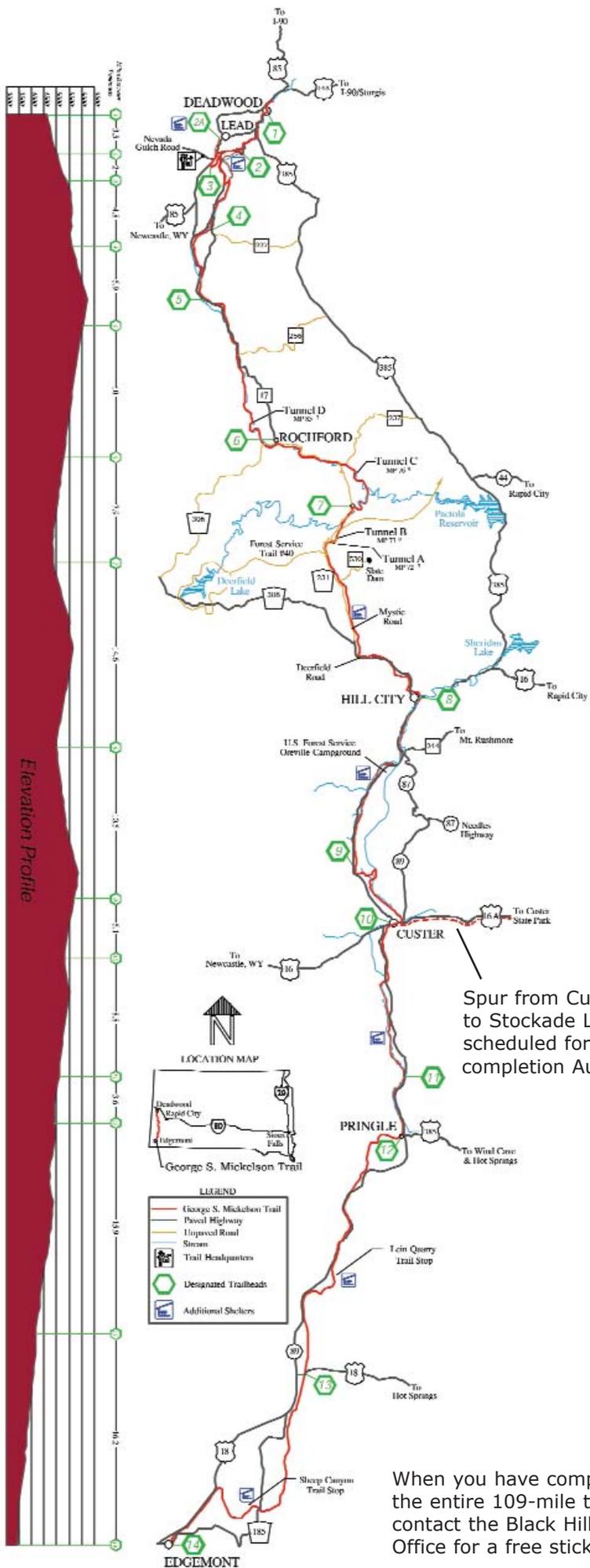


# The George S. Mickelson Trail

In the Black Hills of South Dakota



When you have completed the entire 109-mile trail, contact the Black Hills Trail Office for a free sticker.

## 1. Deadwood Trailhead: MP 108.8

Located in Deadwood near the old railroad depot on Sherman St.

## 2. Kirk Trailhead: MP 105.3

Located ½ mile south of Lead on Hwy. 85 and 1½ miles west. The trail splits here into two directions: · Go southwest where the two trail sections meet to form a loop at MP 100.5. -OR- · Go west to Sugarloaf trailhead.

## 2A. Lead Trailhead: MP 103.7

This .8 mile spur connects the trail to Lead.

## 3. Sugarloaf Trailhead: MP 103.3

Located 1 mile southwest of Lead on Hwy. 85.

## 4. Englewood Trailhead: MP 98.5

Located 6 miles west of Hwy. 385 on Brownsville Road or 1 mile east of Forest Service Rd #17.

## 5. Dumont Trailhead: MP 92.6

Located 8.7 miles north of Rochford on Forest Service Road #17.

## 6. Rochford Trailhead: MP 82.6

Located on the east side of Rochford near the fire station.

## 7. Mystic Trailhead: MP 74.7

Located 12 miles north of Hill City on the Mystic Road.

## 8. Burlington Northern Hill City Trailhead: MP 60.1

Located in Tracy Park east of the High School.

## 9. The Mountain Trailhead: MP 49.6

Located 3 miles north of Custer on Hwy 385.

## 10. Harbach Park Trailhead in Custer: MP 44.5

Across the street from the Custer Chamber of Commerce.

## 11. White Elephant Trailhead: MP 35.7

On the west side of Hwy 385.

## 12. Pringle Trailhead: MP 32.1

Located on the west side of Hwy. 385 in the center of town.

## 13. Minnekahta Trailhead: MP 16.2

Located ½ mile east of the intersection of Hwys. 18 and 89.

## 14. Edgemont Trailhead: MP 0

Located on the south end of Main St.



**Black Hills Trail Office**  
**11361 Nevada Gulch Rd**  
**Lead, SD 57754**  
**(605) 584-3896**  
**www.MickelsonTrail.com**

# George S. Mickelson Trail

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**Type of trail:** Hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, interpretive/viewing nature and interpretive history. Snowmobiles are allowed only on a section of the Deadwood to Dumont section.

**Trail surface:** Packed gravel

**Rated:** Easy to moderate

**Fee required:** Mickelson Trail Pass

**Location of the trailhead:** 15 trailheads are along the trail

**Length of trail in miles:** Entire trail from Edgemont to Deadwood is 109 miles.  
Additional side routes can add another five miles.

**Facilities at or near the trail heads:** Parking, toilets, drinking water, picnic tables and several have small shelters

**Facilities along the trail:** Benches, a few shelters with toilets, shelters and drinking water

**Will there be interpretive information available:** Yes

**What lodging opportunities are provided IN the park:**  
No camping or other lodging on the trail corridor

**Does this trail connect with any other trails:**  
Yes, Deerfield Forest Service #40 and the trail to Slate Creek Dam

**Nearest facilities for purchasing snacks, sunscreen, etc.:** Towns adjacent to the trail

**Nearest motels/restaurants OUTSIDE the park:** Towns adjacent to the trail

**Name, address, and phone numbers of nearest Chamber of Commerce:**

Deadwood Chamber of Commerce, (605) 578-1876  
Lead Chamber of Commerce, (605) 584-1100  
Hill City Chamber of Commerce, 1-800-888-1798  
Custer Chamber of Commerce, 1-800-992-9818  
Edgemont Chamber of Commerce, (605) 662-5900

**Emergency phone numbers:**

Ambulance-911  
Sheriff-911  
Fire Department-911

**Do most cell phone work on this trail:** Poor to non-existent cell phone coverage

# George S. Mickelson Trail Guide

## Introduction

The Mickelson Trail was originally the Burlington Northern rail line that took trains from Edgemont to Deadwood, directly through the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota. The line was abandoned in 1983. A group of outdoor enthusiasts recognized the trail's potential, and with support from then-Governor George S. Mickelson, it became the state's first rails to trails project. The first 6 miles of the trail were dedicated in 1991. After many years of hard work, and collaboration between the US Forest Service, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department, the National Guard, the South Dakota Department of Transportation, the South Dakota Department of Corrections, and the local Friends of the Mickelson Trail, the trail was completed in 1998.

The trail is 109 miles long and contains more than 100 converted railroad bridges and 4 rock tunnels. The trail surface is primarily crushed limestone and gravel. There are 14 trailheads which all offer parking, self-sale trail pass stations, vault toilets and tables.

For the most part, the grades of the trail do not exceed 4 percent, but parts of the trail are considered strenuous. Dumont is the highest point and the 19 mile stretch from Deadwood to Dumont is the longest incline.

## Rules of the Trail

- 🚲 All trail users age 12 and older are required to have a trail pass except on the trail within the city limits. The trail passes, \$3 daily or \$10 annual pass, are available for purchase at the trailheads. Passes must be located on the person or the bicycle. Trail users who are unable to show a trail pass will be subject to a fine.
- 🚲 The trail is open to hiking, biking and horseback riding. No motorized vehicles are allowed on the trail with few exceptions. There is a section of the trail for snowmobiles between Deadwood and Dumont. Motorized maintenance vehicles are also allowed as are ambulances and other emergency vehicles.
- 🚲 Obey all traffic signs.
- 🚲 Remain to the right side of the trail except to pass and be sure to give a clear warning before passing other users. Do not pass others in the tunnels.
- 🚲 Bicycles must yield to pedestrians and everyone must yield to horses.

- 🚲 There are parts of the trail which are called “open range” areas. In these areas cattle roam freely. If you come to an area where cattle are on the trail, in a calm voice talk so the cattle will hear you and slowly work your way around them. Try not to spook the cattle because they may run away from you, right into a group of bicyclists coming your direction.
- 🚲 Avoid disturbing wildlife including plants and animals and refrain from defacing natural features.
- 🚲 All pets must be leashed.
- 🚲 Camping on the trail right-of-way or at the trailheads is prohibited. NO open campfires are allowed because the risk of wildfires is high.
- 🚲 Smoking is not allowed on or adjacent to the trail.
- 🚲 Discharging firearms or fireworks from or across the trail is strictly prohibited.
- 🚲 Air guns and slingshots are not allowed on the trail.
- 🚲 Please respect the landowners along the trail. They have been gracious in sharing their space and deserve to have their privacy respected.
- 🚲 Stay on the trail and be considerate of other users.
- 🚲 The trail is open only from dawn to dusk.

### **Additional Information**

- 🌲 Telephones are not available on the trail, but pay phones can be found in the towns along the trail. Most cell phones do not work in the Black Hills.
- 🌲 Be sure to keep your equipment well maintained and carry simple repair tools.
- 🌲 Be conscious of changing weather conditions and dress appropriately for the weather. The day may be hot when you start biking but can turn icy cold with hail within a few minutes. The reverse can happen as well.
- 🌲 Rest often and carry plenty of water. Most trailheads do not have water available.
- 🌲 Bicyclists are encouraged to wear helmets.
- 🌲 Thin tire road bikes are not recommended.
- 🌲 Trailheads are not under constant surveillance. Be sure to place valuables out of view and lock your vehicle.
- 🌲 Report concerns to the trail office in Lead at (605)584-3896.

## Mile Post (MP) Information

The Mickelson Trail has many curves. For ease of reading this guide, “west” will be on your left when heading north on the trail and on the right when traveling south. East will be on the opposite side.

As stated previously, the Mickelson Trail is on an old railroad line. To better understand the guide, a glossary of commonly used railroad terms is provided.

-  Flag Stop – A place where people who wanted a ride, waved and flagged down the train. The train would stop and the people would get on. This was a common practice on this railroad line.
-  Roundhouse - A section of railroad track which pivots allowing train cars to be turned 180 degrees to go the opposite way on the track they just traveled.
-  Siding – A short railroad track connected with the main track.
-  Spur – A railroad line that intersects the mainline.
-  Station House/Section House - Home where the Section Boss lived who was responsible for the repair of the railroad track in that area.
-  Whistle Stop - A place on the railroad where the train engineer was to blow the whistle to warn people and animals of the train’s arrival.

MP 0 **Edgemont Trailhead.** Located on the south end of Main Street in Edgemont Edgemont was founded in 1889 as the railroad (Grand Island and Wyoming Central – a subsidiary of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy) base camp on the south side of the Cheyenne River. The next spring, several thousand construction workers and associated crews began building the railroad line that is now the Mickelson Trail. In the 1960s and 1970s, miners worked in the Edgemont area seeking uranium ore for nuclear development. Mining the ore was not profitable so mining was discontinued.

The geology of the Black Hills is a series of concentric circles. When proceeding north, the first feature to be seen is the Hogback Ridge, known as the Elk Mountains. Located inside this ridge is the Red Valley, also called the “racetrack,” which encircles the Black Hills. This valley is made up of softer sedimentary rock than that found in the Ridge.

**Beware of rattlesnakes and poison ivy from Custer to Edgemont. Stay on the trail for better safety.**

The prairie rattlesnake is found here at this low elevation but is rarely found above 5000 feet elevation. They can be found in a variety of habitats including rocky areas, grassland, and stream banks.

Poison ivy is identifiable with its three pointed leaves that are typically shiny. In the spring and summer the leaves are green, changing to yellow and red in the fall. The oil on the plant can cause a severe rash when it comes in contact with human skin.

MP3 The prairie has a variety of grasses. Pretend you are painting a picture and look at all the colors you would use in your artwork. The grasslands offer good grazing for livestock and for wild animals like deer and pronghorns.

MP4 Prairie dog towns are located on both sides of the trail. Watch to see if you can see the dogs peeking out of their holes or running on the ground. Prairie dogs are cautious of shadows, especially those made by hawks which are seeking a good meal.

MP4-5 The deep layer of crushed red rock along the trail is from a train derailment many years ago. Obviously, the rock the train was carrying never made it to its original destination.

MP5 The ponderosa pines are abundant in this area. These trees can be recognized by their long needles. The tree is very tolerant of dry, hot environments. It grows well in rocky terrain because it has a long taproot. The largest pines presently in the Hills are approximately 24 inches in diameter and are about 160 years old.

MP6-7 From this canyon overlook one can see down to the Cheyenne River bottom. Notice the red rock outcroppings and the caves on the east side which may have been left by uranium prospectors.

Through the years, several people have carved their names in these rocks. Some carvings are very old. In order to keep the site from being destroyed, present day visitors are to refrain from defacing the rock surface.

MP7 Sheep Canyon Trestle takes the rider across an earthen dam which was built over the old railroad trestle. The trestle was the largest on the rail line at 126 feet high and 700 feet long. Local historians tell about the danger of the old trestle. It was so dangerous in fact, that the engineer and the person in the caboose would walk over the trestle instead of riding on the train.

MP 7-8 The Buena Vista flag stop was an early day stop for passengers so they could enjoy the panoramic view over the Cheyenne River valley.

MP7-8 Chilson Bridge is on the old highway from Edgemont to Minnekahta. This was also a flag stop for passenger trains operating to and from Edgemont, Hot Springs, and on up the line to Deadwood.

MP8-9 Burning plays a key role in maintaining a prairie environment. An unintentional fire ignited on the SE side of the trail in the summer of 2000. Clearing out the old, dead grasses helps new vegetation grow.

MP9 As you look around this area you will see chokecherry, plum and boxelder trees in addition to sagebrush. Chokecherries and plums are valued raw, cooked as a sauce or dried. Boxelder tree sap was valued for its sweetness. The tree was gashed in the spring. The sap was collected and then boiled down to make sugar.

MP 9-10 Water finds its own course down a hill. The route it takes is called a watershed. Notice the watershed as you continue along the trail.

MP 10 The windmill reminds us of the struggle to get a continuous supply of water to this area for use by people and livestock.

MP 10-11 This old homestead encourages us to think back in time to what life might have been like in this part of the country.

The big old cottonwood trees provide much needed shade. Cottonwood trees provided food for people and animals. The young sprouts were peeled and eaten and the inner bark was appreciated for its pleasant taste and nutritive value. Early explorers and trappers were cautioned about feeding frozen strips of bark to their horses in the winter as the sharp edges could cut a horse's mouth.

MP11-12 There is an abundance of vegetation in this area because it tends to stay moist from drainage off the hills. Watch for wild turkeys that were introduced to the Black Hills in the late 1940s and early 1950s. There are two annual hunting seasons (spring and fall) for wild turkeys.

MP 12 On the west side of the trail is an interesting old two-story log house. The house is on private property so is not available for exploring.

MP 14-15 The trail passes over a small bridge which provides an underpass for cattle. The intricate rockwork underneath the bridge took a great deal of labor to construct when the railroad was built. The trail exits the Elk Mountains in this area.

MP 15 Looking to the north, it is easy to understand why these hills became known as the "black" hills. The Sioux Native Americans called the Black Hills Paha Sapa. In the Lakota language, "sapa" means "black." The word "paha"

stood for any land feature of height whether it was a high mountain or small hill. From a distance the trees appear black to trail users.

MP 15-16 The old concrete posts along the east edge of the trail are remnants of the railroad barbed wire fence.

MP 16 **Minnekahata Trailhead.** Minnekahata was originally a water stop and the junction of the Hot Springs branch of the railroad. The water in this area is so hard that water had to be brought in by tank cars, and pumped into the water tower to have it available for the steam locomotives. In the early 1890s, tourists came by train to enjoy the warm water spas of Hot Springs.

MP 16-17 The grasses provide good grazing for cattle.

MP 17-23 The red rock on the edge of the trail is an example of sedimentary rock. The plant that appears to be a cactus with many spears coming from the central part of the plant on the ground is called a yucca plant. This plant, also called soapweed, got its name because the root was used by some Native American people for soap. It was especially valued as shampoo. The leaves were used as needles or bound together to make brooms. Fibers from leaves that were pounded were used as thread.

MP 19 Notice the unique, tall building to the west. This is on private property.

MP 19-23 At various places, old railroad ties are visible along the edge of the trail.

MP 20 This site was called Ivanhoe. It was a siding north of Minnekahata that served as a flag stop and occasional cattle loading point.

MP 21-22 The Lien Quarry mines gravel on the west side of the trail.

MP 22-23 Old telegraph poles, some with wire still attached, can be seen here and at other locations on the trail.

Notice the storm damage done to trees during the heavy snow of spring, 2000.

MP 25-26 The “W” sign can be found at only 4 sites along the trail. In the old days when a train engineer saw the “W” sign he knew to blow the train whistle 2 long, 1 short and 1 long blast to warn people and animals near road crossings, tunnels and bridges.

MP 27 Instead of red rocks like found earlier on the trail, many of these rocks are white. This is indicative of the change from one geologic concentric circle to the next as we travel nearer to the center of the Hills.

Notice the rock home on the west side of the trail on the other side of the

highway. The core of this building is an old log stagecoach stop.  
The home is on private property.

MP 27-28 Limestone is mined from this quarry.

MP 27-29 Old telegraph poles are still standing.

MP 28 Loring was located five miles southwest of Pringle. It was a siding established to serve several limestone quarries and lime kilns. Some of these quarries and kilns can still be seen from the trail.

Only a few of the old railroad mile markers still exist. They were made from heavy metal, painted white and printed with the mile number to the nearest one hundredth of a mile.

MP 30-31 This is what is left of the Black Hills Lime Company. Further north on the west side there is an old cistern that was underground until the land around it was excavated for mining purposes. These are on private property.

MP 32 This sawmill cuts timber from the area.

MP 32.1 **Pringle Trailhead.** The trailhead is located in the small town of Pringle, once known as Point of Rocks. Mining and lumbering are the two main enterprises. The Buffalo Gap Lumber Company operated right in Pringle in 1904. The company turned out over 600,000 feet of lumber annually. Notice the mica in the rocks on the north edge of town. Mica is made up of mineral silicates formed in such a way that it separates easily into thin leaves. These leaves reflect the sun and appear shiny.

MP 35.7 **White Elephant Trailhead.** Feldspar was once mined at the White Elephant mine on the east side of the highway. It is easy to see where the mine once operated.

The trail continues north through the heart of the Precambrian-age core of the Black Hills. Some of these rocks are called pegmatites. They are still mined in this area for mica, feldspar and lithium.

MP 37 Concrete fence posts put into place by the railroad are still visible. This bridge is one of the only two concrete bridges on the Mickelson Trail. Why the railroad chose to make only two of this type is a mystery. An original bridge number marker is located on the southeast side of the bridge.

MP 37-38 A sign post reads "Sanator." The South Dakota state tuberculosis sanatorium operated in this area and was called Sanator. Later it was named the Custer State Hospital and was changed to the Custer Youth Corrections Center in the

1990s.

MP 39-40 The “W” sign is one of four signs of this type on the trail. When seeing this sign, the train engineer was to blow the whistle to warn people and animals.

MP 41-42 Several lumber companies and small sawmills operated in the southern hills during the heyday of the Black Hills lumbering from the 1880s until just before the Great Depression. One of the specialty items in the southern and central Hills was the cutting of lumber for railroad ties. A great number of these were shipped from Pringle, Custer and Redfern.

MP 41.8 This bridge trestle has one of the original mile marker signs which documents the location to a hundredth of a mile.

MP 43 When looking at rock outcroppings it is easy to notice lichen of many colors growing on the rocks. Lichens are made up of an alga and a fungus growing in a symbiotic (beneficial to both) relationship. Lichens grow very slowly and are important in making soil. Some Native American people extracted a green and a yellow dye to color their arrow shafts.

MP 43-44 This is a feldspar mill. Feldspar is a group of crystalline minerals that include aluminum silicates and other entities.

MP 44.5 **Custer Trailhead at Harbach Park.** Custer is the oldest town in the Black Hills. It was named after Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer whose expedition in 1874, discovered gold on the banks of French Creek which was near the present day downtown of Custer. Ten thousand miners flocked to this area to search for riches. This was the last big gold rush in the United States.

A caboose was placed in Harbach Park in September, 2000, a donation of Burlington Northern.

The remains of an old Custer lumber mill can be seen north of the trailhead on the west side of the trail.

MP 46 Aspen trees, one of several types of poplars, grow in abundance in certain parts of the Hills. The white bark and shimmering leaves make it easily recognizable.

Laughing Water Creek meanders near the trail. Buckhorn Mountain is east of the trail. The Mountain and spires provide a scenic panorama.

MP 49.6 **The Mountain Trailhead.** It is possible to view the Crazy Horse Monument from this site. Korczak Ziolkowski began carving the mounted warrior in 1948. The Crazy Horse sculpture is planned to be 500 feet high by 600 feet long. Crazy Horse was the Lakota Sioux warrior who engineered the defeat of General George

Custer's army.

MP 50-51 The old wooden fence adjacent to the trail was built years ago as a snow fence for the railroad line.

MP 54-55 Local people say there was a stagecoach road on the east side of the trail.

MP 54.7 The Black Hills National Forest Oreville Campground is on the east side of the trail.

MP 55.2 The old Oreville mine building that once stood on the west side of the trail was used as a refining mill for beryllium. Oreville was named by the Burlington Railroad upon its founding in 1890. It was expected to be a great mining center for tin and gold. Eventually, some of these minerals were found, but not in large quantities.

56.1 Horsetail is a rush-like plant that has hollow, jointed green stems with no leaves. The outer area is impregnated with silica and is rough. It was used by some Native Americans as sandpaper to make their bows smooth. Children made whistles out of the stems.

MP 56.3 Harney Peak is visible to the east. Harney Peak is the highest point in South Dakota, at 7,242 feet above sea level. Look closely to see the lookout tower at the top.

MP 56.4 There is an abundance of ferns along the creek bottom.

MP 60.1 **Tracey Park Trailhead in Hill City.**

Hill City, the second oldest town in the Black Hills, was founded in 1876. Through the years it has been known for its mining, logging and ranching. Tourism is today's most common draw to the community.

MP 61.4 Willow trees, found often on stream banks and lake shores, grow near the trail. Some Native American people used small poles of the supple willow to construct the frames of sweat lodges. Stems of willow were peeled and used in making baskets.

MP 61.8 A bearing tree is located on the east side of the trail. To find the tree, look on the south side of the trees until you find a tree that has a metal marker attached. Bearing trees typically show the compass reading from true north as well as the distance to a nearby section marker. The information found on a bearing tree is used as a reference by surveyors.

MP 64 Newton Lake, across the road from the trail, provides fishing, picnicking and restroom facilities. Harney Peak is visible to the south. This peak has an elevation of 7,242 feet and is one of the most popular hiking and mountain

climbing areas in the Black Hills.

- MP 65.8 Slate can be seen on the steep banks on both sides of the trail. This metamorphic rock was created by compressing different sediments like clay or shale. Slate is a construction material used for shingles and siding. In earlier times one of its uses was for blackboards used in schools.
- MP 68 The town of Redfern was located here. It was founded in the early 1890's named for J.N. Redfern, Superintendent of the Relief Department of the Burlington railroad. A railroad station house for the section foreman, a school, and several homes once stood at this site. The remains of the foundation of the Black Hills Silica Sand Corporation that operated in the last part of the 1950's, an old boxcar once used for a home and a occupied house are all that remain today.
- MP 69.9 Slate Creek dam is located down the road to the east a couple miles. Many people enjoy fishing for trout in the creek and lake. Special permits are required to mine the slate for personal use.
- MP 70.8 Notice the historical marker along the highway that recognizes the hard work done by the Conservation Corps in the Black Hills many years ago.
- MP 71-72 Occasionally along the trail it is possible to see original concrete posts that were used by the railroad for fence posts.
- MP 71.9 The Daugherty Trailhead that is part of the Deerfield hiking trail system is located west of the Mickelson Trail. A parking lot and restroom are available.
- MP 72.5 Trail users will pass through four tunnels between this mile post and mile post 84.1. The first tunnel, Tunnel A, was reopened by the Black Hills National Forest Service in 1997.
- MP 73 The vertical rock striations near Tunnel B are interesting to observe.
- MP 73.3 A wall made by humans is on the west shoulder of the trail. Traveling north on the trail it is easy to see tailings of an old mine on the west side of the trail near the road.
- MP 73.7 Notice the rock retaining wall on the west side. It was used for safety along the old road.
- MP 74.3 This is the second of only two concrete bridges built by the railroad on the trail. The surface is now covered with gravel.
- MP 74.7 **Mystic Trailhead.** The town of Mystic, first named Sitting Bull, had basically two claims to fame. The first dealt with gold mining along Castle Creek. An experimental plant was built in 1904 by the Electro-Chemical Reduction

Company to extract gold by electro-cyanide or electro-chlorination processes. The processes did not produce the gold expected and the plant was closed. In about 1910, a dredge was brought to the creek. It dug into the bank along the creek, processed the dirt for gold and put all of the dirt back into the creek. Those piles are visible today.

The second claim to fame was the railroad. One line, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, was a north/south railroad that went south from Deadwood. A second line, later called the Crouch Line, went from Rapid City to Mystic where it intersected with the north/south railroad. A roundhouse, still somewhat visible near the creek, was constructed to allow the Rapid City trains to turn around to go back to town. The trains were used to haul lumber, ores, coal, freight, passengers and mail. Frequent floods washed out the line to Rapid City.

The McCahan Memorial Chapel sits along the mainline in Mystic. It was built before the mid-1940s with money from Mrs. McCahan.

Interpretive signs at Mystic provide visitors with the opportunity to learn more about the town.

MP 75.5 Notice the old mine on the east side of the trail.

MP 76 An interesting old log building can be seen from this location.

MP 76.2 This is the community of Mystic. All of the homes are privately owned.

MP 76.6 Local artist Jon Crane got his inspiration for the painting entitled "In Good Company" at this site. Look carefully to the south on the west side of the trail high on the bluff to see the gnarled old tree in his painting.

MP 76,9 Tunnel C was blasted through rock.

MP 78.7 This is the largest waterfall along the trail.

MP 79.1 The "W" sign was a whistle stop for the train engineer.

MP 79-80 An abundance of wild raspberries grows along this part of the trail. The fruit ripens in July or August and is eaten fresh, made into jams and jellies or dried.

MP 80.8 It is reported that local artist Jon Crane got his inspiration for the painting "A Gift of Solitude" at this location.

MP 81.9 The house on the east side of the trail was where the railroad section boss lived. It was his job to keep the railroad line in this area in good repair.

MP 82 An old railroad car has been made into a home. Please remember this is

private property.

- MP 82.1 Notice the concrete pilings on the west side of the trail. These supported the railroad water tower.
- MP 82.4 The Standby Mill once was visible from this site. Today only the foundation can be seen from the trail. The Standby claim was founded in 1877, and in the following years a 40 stamp mill and water plume was constructed to extract gold ore. Never a great success, the Standby “stood by” until the mid-1980s when it was torn down due to safety concerns.
- MP 82.6 **Rochford Trailhead.** The Rochford Fire Hall stands near the trail. Volunteer firefighters work to keep the community protected.
- MP 82.9 Looking at Rochford today it is difficult to imagine that around 1878, the town had 100 log cabins, three saloons, six stores, two hotels, a drugstore, a butcher shop and a barber shop. Later a post office was built along with a school house where Annie Tallent once taught. By 1881, there were only three people living in Rochford. The miners had moved to other locations to find their gold.
- In addition to gold, graphite and uranium were mined near Rochford.
- The last free roaming black bear in the Black Hills was killed in the Rochford area in 1968.
- MP 84.1 North Rapid Creek joins South Rapid Creek to form Rapid Creek.
- MP 85.3 Tunnel D is the most northern tunnel on the trail. The wire mesh around the outside of the tunnel is there to help protect trail users from falling rocks.
- MP 85.8 Old telegraph wires lay adjacent to the trail on the east side. Some of the railroad’s concrete fence posts are also visible.
- MP 87.1 A remnant of the retaining wall of the old Montana Mine is on the east side of the trail. It began mining gold and silver in 1879 and ceased in 1880. It reopened in 1907 only to close for the last time in 1941.
- MP 87.8 Notice an old building to the east of the trail. It is interesting to think about when the building was constructed and about how the building was used.
- MP 88.5 Beavers are active in the Black Hills. Look for a beaver lodge on the edge of this pond.
- The town of Nahant stood to the west of the trail. It was founded in 1890 as a lumbering and mining town and had 500 inhabitants. Nahant was different from other towns because it had painted frame buildings with electricity, telephones and a water system. The town even had a clubhouse where people

played basketball, roller skated and danced. The Tie and Timber sawmill was the mainstay of the town. The mill burned in 1909 and the town faded away. It is interesting to note that the hotel remained in operation for many years.

George A. Custer shot a grizzly bear within a few yards of this site. There is some question whether or not he actually killed the bear or whether one of his expedition members did the final shooting.

In more recent times sheep were pastured here and then shipped out by train.

Lodge pole pines are rare in the Black Hills. A small stand of these pines is located in the forest to the west of the trail. Because the trees grow straight and are light in weight they are prized as tipi poles. It takes 20-25 poles, 16-20 feet long for a typical tipi.

MP 89 This is one of the few old concrete railroad markers still located on the trail.

MP 89.4 An old mine entrance is visible east of the trail. Looking west one sees an old building with round cyanide lids used as shingles and siding. The lids came from local mines that use sodium cyanide or calcium cyanide to extract gold from ores. Both sites are on private property.

MP 89.7-90 This appears to be a human-made rock retaining wall. Many things along the trail remain a mystery and this is one of them.

MP 90.7 Bulldog Ranch on the west side of the trail was once a stagecoach station, run by Mrs. Bulldog, on the Custer to Deadwood line. Local artist Jon Crane has painted a picture of this site. The Bulldog Ranch was not only a stagecoach station but also a bootlegger's depot and an inn.

MP 92 Notice the old snow fence along the trail which was built to help keep the railroad open in the winter.

MP 92.6 **Dumont Trailhead.** Dumont was named for an early French settler named Charles Dumont. The town was founded in 1890 as a lumber town and a shipping point for cattle. There was a railroad section house here. A spur of the railroad line went northwest to Hanna. Through the years the industries faded away.

In the winter, the Dumont Trailhead is a major snowmobile trailhead. Orange diamond-shaped metal markers on the trees mark the snowmobile trails. Snowmobiles are allowed on the trail only between Dumont and Deadwood during specified months of the year.

MP 93.7 This is an electric sub-station.

MP 96 Ponderosa pine with the long needles and Black Hills spruce with short needles grow in this area.

**MP 98.5 Englewood Trailhead.**

Englewood was established as Ten-Mile Ranch. It was a stagecoach stop in the late 1870s, but the name was changed when the Burlington arrived on its way to Deadwood in 1890. Englewood became a railroad center with the construction of the Spearfish branch leading from there in 1893. The narrow gauge Black Hills and Fort Pierre line just north of Englewood was constructed in the mid-1880s. A roundhouse, depot, water tower and small yard made Englewood a bustling railroad spot for many years. A man named Mr. Kelly operated a still at Ten-Mile Ranch. Supposedly, it kept Deadwood well stocked with tax-free whiskey. The town gradually died as the railroad cut back services over the years. Notice the old foundations still visible today.

MP 98.9 The trail splits into two paths. The main branch goes down to Whitewood Creek and an upper path goes to Whitetail Summit. The lower branch (east side) is the actual railroad bed but the marked trail (west side) goes to the Summit. Notice the beautiful vistas.

On the east route, the remains of the Wasp Mine are on the east side of the trail. Ore was removed from the pit and transported by railcars for processing. Probably the most famous incident at the Wasp Mine was in 1927 when a Burlington steam locomotive, its engineer, and several ore gondolas were completely covered with mine tailings and sand when a severe flood roared down the hillside. In recent years, environmental concerns have led to the removal of the tailings from in and near the creek. The white stripes to the left of the Wasp Mine are what is left of the foundation of the Bismarck Mine.

MP 100.5 The upper and lower sections of the trail meet here to form a loop from Kirk.

MP 101.9 The climate, shade and soil conditions make this a good area for ferns to grow.

MP 102.5 Take a minute to enjoy the view of Lead, South Dakota. Lead, home of the Homestake Mining Company, was originally called Washington. It was renamed Lead because of the leads of gold ore beneath the city. The Homestake Mine which has produced gold since 1876. Until 2001, the Homestake Mine operated both an open cut and an underground mine working over 8,000 feet below the surface.

MP 102.8 Look closely and you can see the downhill ski area off to the west.

MP 103.7 The trail provides a spur which is an option for going into Lead.

Old railroad ties are still in place under the gravel between Sugarloaf Trailhead and Deadwood.

MP 105.2 Kirk Power Plant was built in the 1920s to help power the Homestake Gold Mine. Coal came in by rail from Wyoming and a plume of water came from Englewood.

MP 106.5 The “W” sign indicated to train engineers to blow their train whistles to warn people and animals of the train’s arrival.

MP 106.7 Notice the mountain of tailings from the Homestake Mine.

MP 107-108 Old telegraph poles are found along the trail.

MP 108.7 This old railroad caboose is a good reminder of the fact that the George S. Mickelson Trail is on the old railroad line.

MP 108.8 **Deadwood Trailhead.**

Deadwood was named for the burned trees the miners found in this area when they came in search of gold. The town was a prosperous placer camp in 1876. It is the final resting place of Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane.

Deadwood is now known for its many gambling casinos. The First Western Bank building in downtown Deadwood is an exact replica of an original Burlington Depot.

Interpretive signs help explain the history and significance of this site and of the trail. The old CB&Q Engine House is now a visitors’ center.

*\*\*\*This Guide is a work in progress. If you have ways to improve it, please contact the Visitor Services Coordinator, Division of Parks and Recreation, 523 E. Capitol, Pierre, SD 57501.*



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