



**Black Elk Wilderness and Norbeck Wildlife Preserve Trail System**

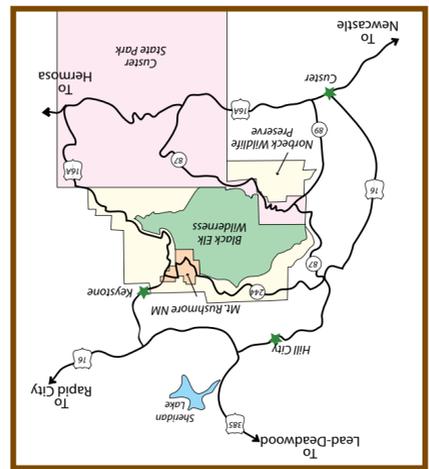


[www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills)

**Supervisor's Office and Hell Canyon Ranger District**

**More Information:**

1019 N. 5th St.  
Custer, SD 57730  
(605) 673-9200



**Location Map**

**General Information**

*Thank you for being a responsible user of your national forest!*

**Trail Ethics**  
Cutting switchbacks causes erosion. Please stay to the designated trail.

**Extreme Weather**  
Clear sunny days can quickly turn into afternoon thunderstorms. Carry extra warm clothes, and be prepared for snow or hail!

**Water**  
Streams in the forest may look safe to drink, but usually it is not. Carry at least one quart of water per hiker.

**Fires**  
Open fires are prohibited throughout the forest at all times.

**Bicycles and Motors**  
Unless otherwise noted, the trails for hikers and stock users only.

**Expect and respect other trail users.**



**Black Elk Wilderness Self Registration**



Visitors to the Black Elk Wilderness must fill out a Use Registration Form, available at any of the major trailhead portals into the Wilderness. The Registration Form provides important visitor use information. In addition, the form asks for the visitor's commitment to abide by the wilderness regulations, ensuring that visitors "leave no trace" of their visit.

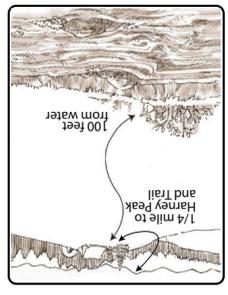
**What To Know Before You Go**



Only primitive, non-mechanized methods of transportation are allowed in the Black Elk Wilderness. Items such as bicycles, strollers, chainsaws, handcars, and hang gliders are prohibited.



To reduce conflicts with wildlife and other visitors, pets must be leashed or under strict voice control.



To keep our water pure, do not camp or dispose of human waste within 100 feet of streams or other water sources.



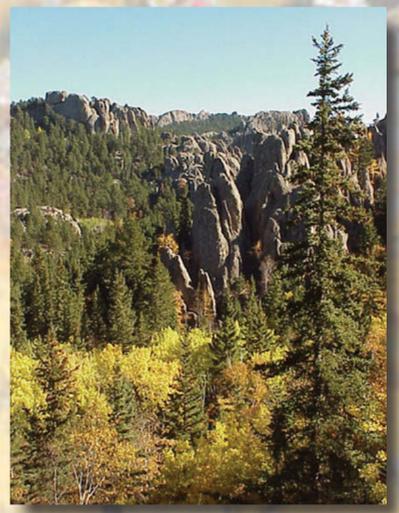
Open fires are prohibited. Bring a camp stove.

To minimize congestion and enhance wilderness solitude, group size is limited to 25 people and stock combined.

Horses must use certified weed and seed-free hay and pellets. Scatter manure before you leave. Use hobbles to tie up stock, at least 100 feet from water.

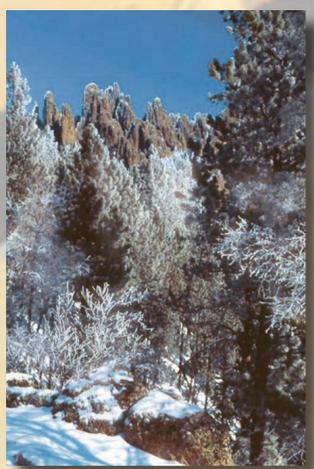
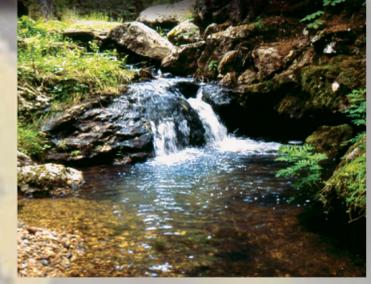
**Special Places in the Heart of the Black Hills National Forest**

*The Black Elk Wilderness* lies in the center of the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve, and in the heart of the Black Hills. Named for Black Elk, an Oglala Lakota holy man, the area is characterized by massive granite outcroppings, pungent pine, and scenic vistas across the hills. Originally established by Congress in 1980, it was increased in size to its current 13,426 acres in 2002.



*Harney Peak Trail #9* from Sylvan Lake to Harney Peak is heavily used from May 1 through September 30. If you are looking for solitude, please consider one of our less traveled trails.

Nearly everyone has a special place somewhere in the outdoors. Many have found it in the central Black Hills, within the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve and the Black Elk Wilderness.

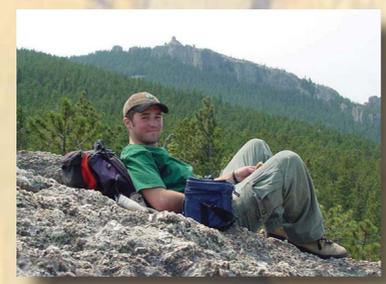
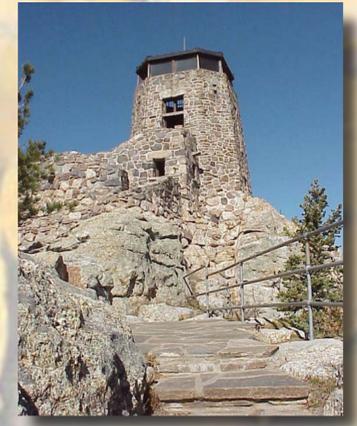


*The Norbeck Wildlife Preserve* was established in 1920 for the "protection of game animals and birds and to be a breeding place therefor." Elk, deer, mountain goats, turkeys, and mountain lions make their home amid the rugged granite peaks and small streams.

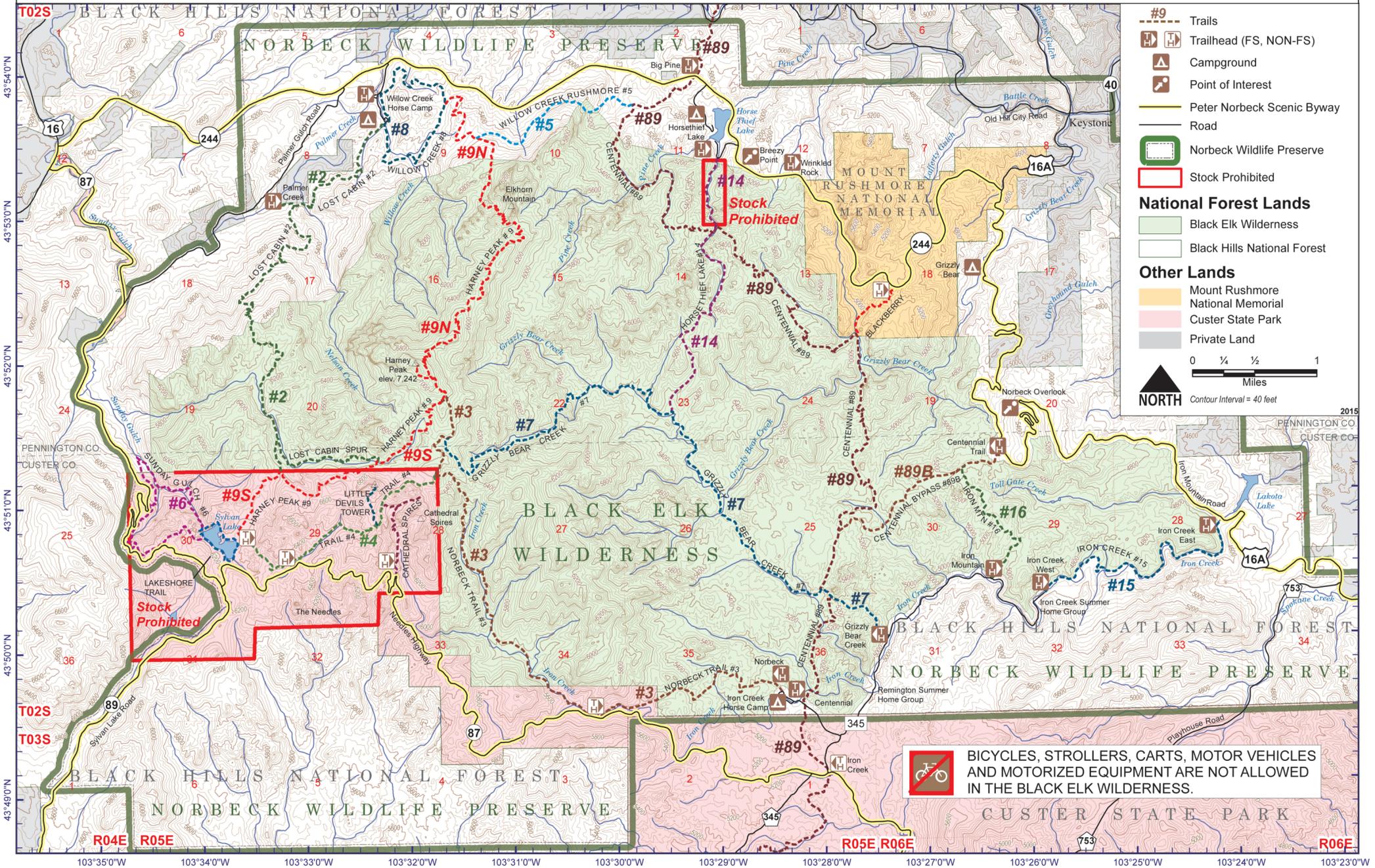


This area has a rich mining history, and you may encounter old cabin remains or mine workings. One gold deposit supported two stamp mills (\$5 million value of gold at today's prices). Never enter an abandoned mine - they are often very unsafe.

*Harney Peak* was named after General William Selby Harney, in 1855. The Civilian Conservation Corps constructed a stone tower in 1938 that served as a fire lookout until 1967. In 1982, the tower, dam, and pump house were placed on the National Register of Historic Places because of their historic significance.



# Black Elk Wilderness and Norbeck Wildlife Preserve Trail System



TRAIL	TRAIL DESCRIPTION	MILEAGE (one way)	TRAIL	TRAIL DESCRIPTION	MILEAGE (one way)
#2 Lost Cabin	One of two National Recreation Trails in the Black Hills, the Lost Cabin Trail starts with a steep climb to the Wilderness boundary. Then during a gradual descent, users are treated to numerous views of Harney Peak. This trail is a favorite of many hikers and riders, and is often used as a loop with Harney Trail #9 for a long day outing. Water is available at Nelson Creek and Lost Cabin Creek.	5.0	#14 Horsethief Lake	The Horsethief Lake Trail wanders through granite peaks and twisting spires that poke through the thick forest canopy. It crosses over two saddles where campers will find sites with sweeping views of the surrounding area.	2.7
#3 Norbeck	This steep and rocky trail provides a great opportunity to experience the solitude of the Black Elk Wilderness. Adventurous users from Iron Creek Horse Camp or the Norbeck Trailhead within Custer State Park use it in combination with Grizzly Bear #7 for a loop hike. Upper portions of the trail have no water or places to camp.	6.3	#15 Iron Creek	The Iron Creek Trail is an easy route, following an old road. There are 11 water crossings as the trail meanders through a forest of ponderosa pine, oak, aspen, and birch. Just outside the southern edge of the Black Elk Wilderness, this is an excellent trail for mountain bikers.	2.4
#4	Leaving from Sylvan Lake Trailhead or Little Devils Tower Trailhead, users will follow a small drainage with ample wildlife viewing opportunities. As the trail climbs, vistas of granite spires and the town of Custer appear. A side trail leads to Little Devils Tower.	2.3	#16 Iron Mountain	Iron Mountain Trail is an easy hike providing beautiful views of the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve and the Black Elk Wilderness. A very unusual feature can be seen from the trail near the Iron Mountain Picnic Ground - follow the signs to "Turtle Rock." There is no water along this trail.	1.4
#5 Willow Creek - Rushmore	Riders and hikers often use this trail to access Mount Rushmore National Memorial. It descends west to east, with one creek crossing.	1.9	#89 Centennial	This trail is a portion of the 111-mile Centennial Trail that travels from Wind Cave National Park, through Custer State Park, to Bear Butte State Park in the northern Black Hills. Designated as a National Recreation Trail, users on this section are treated to beautiful scenery and relative seclusion.	8.9
#6 Sunday Gulch	Sunday Gulch is a popular spur loop off of the Lakeshore Trail. It winds through a ponderosa pine and spruce-fir forest, crossing a stream in several places. Hikers should be careful of the wet, slippery rocks. Winter travel on ice flows also makes passage challenging.	3.2	#89B Centennial Bypass	Picnickers at Iron Mountain Picnic Ground often use this trail to stretch their legs. It is fairly level as it winds through a pungent ponderosa pine forest.	1.7
#7 Grizzly Bear Cr.	The rugged Grizzly Bear Creek Trail climbs sharply for a 1,500' elevation gain through the most remote areas of the Black Elk Wilderness. It winds through old growth forest, past beaver ponds, and on to towering granite formations and views of Harney Peak. Camping spots near water can be found adjacent to the lower sections of the trail.	6.3	Blackberry Trail	Located in Mt. Rushmore NM, this trail offers hikers several views of Mt. Rushmore along the way. The trail is rugged and rocky, crossing over streams and up steep steps. Hikers and horseback riders often use this trail to access Mt. Rushmore from the Black Elk Wilderness (there is a hitch rail near the top of the trail).	0.8
#8 Willow Cr. Loop	This one-hour loop is a favorite of campers in the area, and is a primary Wilderness portal for hikers and riders. Views of the Black Elk Wilderness are great year-round; in the fall, the hills are gold with aspen.	2.8	Sylvan Lakeshore Trail	This lovely and easy trail travels the shoreline of Sylvan Lake. The north side has several rocky steps and a tunnel through the rock formation that forms the Sylvan Lake dam.	1.0
#9 Harney Peak North	After traveling a mile through meadows and forest, users will begin to see Elkhorn Mountain, with dramatic peaks and rock outcrops. Climbing steeply, the trail emerges onto a ridge where users can see the back of Mt. Rushmore. Two thirds of the way to the top is a popular overlook and hitching rail. Riders take note - there is only one minor creek crossing where stock can find water.	4.7	Cathedral Spires	This trail leads to an area of spectacular granite spires which lend the area its name. Pioneer rock climbers Herb and Jan Conn were the first to climb many of the spires in the vicinity. Today the trail is used by rock climbers as a primary access route to many of the climbing areas. A level area near the end provides a pleasant picnic spot.	0.9
#9 Harney Peak South	This is the most popular route to Harney Peak - be prepared to encounter many people, especially in the summer. Hikers begin on a roadbed that leads to a fire tower built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, now on the Register of Historic Places. The trail is steep, but the rewards include stunning views of four states.	3.8	Little Devils Tower	If you want a great view and don't have the time to hike to Harney Peak, this trail is for you. At the top of this steep and rugged trail, users can enjoy views of Harney Peak, Cathedral Spires, Mt. Rushmore, and the town of Custer. Some rock scrambling is necessary to gain the final summit.	0.6



Black Hills National Forest

