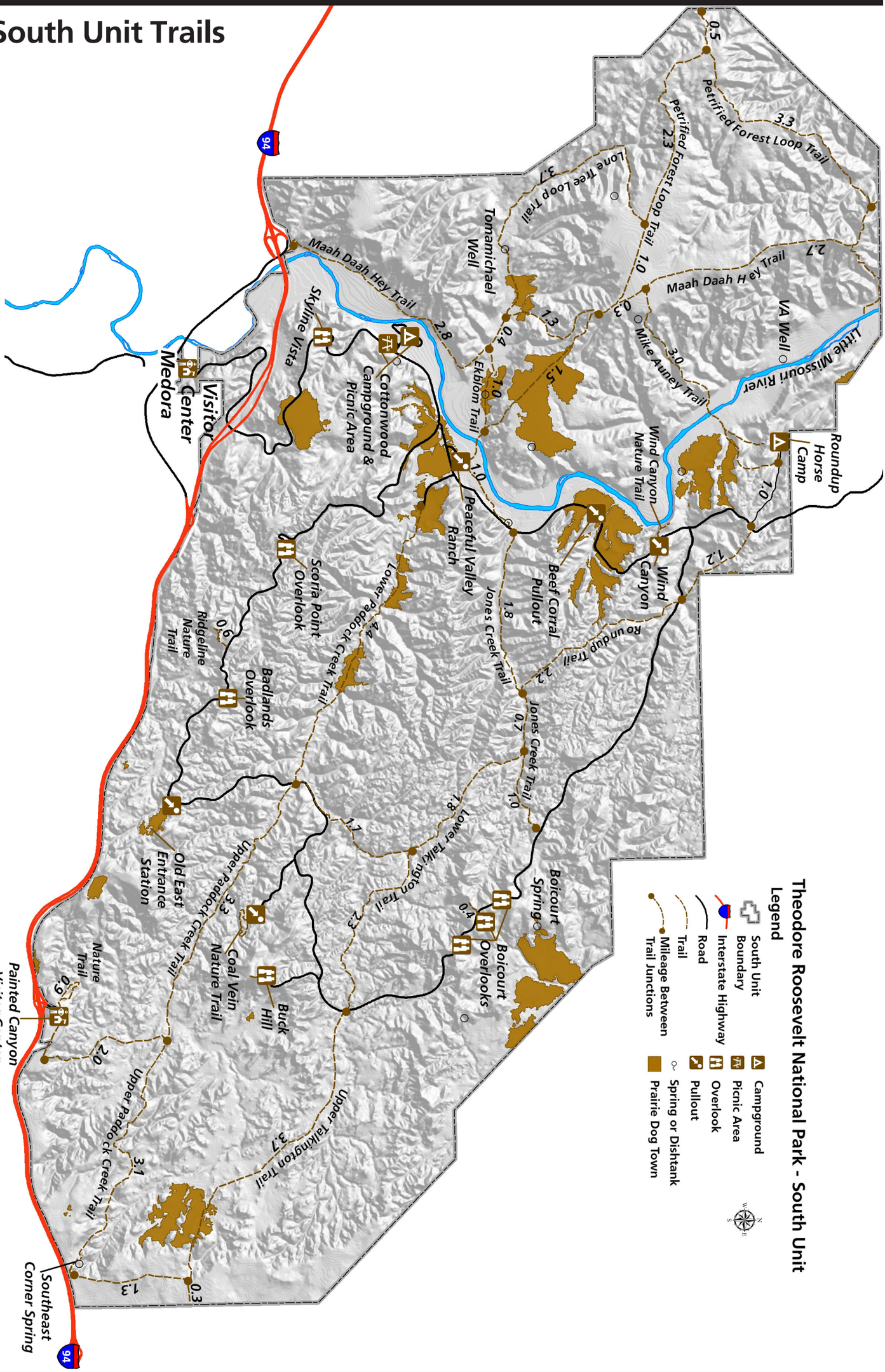
# Theodore Roosevelt

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Theodore Roosevelt National Park

## South Unit Trails



## Hiking Trails

### Short trails focus on the area's natural history:

### Wind Canyon
**0.3mi, 20 min**
**A short walk up a ridge leads to a view of the Little Missouri River and the wind-sculpted canyon. Steep drop-offs.**

### Buck Hill
**0.2 mi, 15 min**
**Short, steep climb to a panoramic view.**

### Coal Vein
**0.8 mi, 1 hour**
**From 1951 to 1977 a coal seam burned here. The trail travels through badlands terrain and dry washes. Trail brochure available.**

### Ridgeline
**0.6 mi, 1 hour**
**A moderately strenuous hike focuses on badlands ecology. Trail brochure available.**

### Painted Canyon
**0.9 mi, 1 hour**
**A moderate hike into the canyon below the overlook.**

Over 60 miles of interconnecting trails present hikers with spectacular badlands scenery. Some of the more common routes are described below. Trails traverse a mixture of grasslands and badlands topography with some trails requiring steep climbs or descents. Water sources are unreliable; carry all that you anticipate needing. Trails are marked with carsonite posts with signs at intersections.

### Jones Creek
3.7 mi, one way
Easy trail through the badlands with several creek crossings.

### Paddock Creek
12.1 mi total, Lower 4.4 mi, Upper 7.7 mi (all one-way mileages)
This moderately strenuous trail is divided into Upper and Lower sections by the Scenic Loop Drive. The trail traverses through the heart of the South Unit badlands and crosses Paddock Creek numerous times. The two sections can be combined with other trails (Upper Paddock, Upper Talkington & Lower Talkington or Lower Paddock, Lower Talkington & Jones Creek) to make two long loop day hikes. Combining all five to make one big loop is a good 2-3 day backpacking option (approximately 24 miles depending on starting point).

### Talkington
7.8 mi total, Lower 4.1 mi, Upper 3.7 mi (all one-way mileages)
This moderately strenuous trail is divided into Upper and Lower sections by the Scenic Loop Drive. The trail traverses through the heart of the South Unit badlands. This trail can be combined with Paddock Creek and Jones Creek Trails for loop options as described in the Paddock Creek section.

### Painted Canyon
2.0 mi, one way
Starts at Painted Canyon Visitor Center and provides access to Upper Paddock Creek Trail. This is a very steep trail down into the canyon.

### Petrified Forest
3.0 mi, round trip to the petrified wood area and back, 2-3 hrs
A moderately strenuous hike to the park's largest collection of petrified wood located in the Theodore Roosevelt Wilderness. The trail travels through grassland and badlands habitat.

Several access points offer a variety of options for loop routes, long day hikes or overnight trips in the west side of the park in the South Unit. Options are moderate to strenuous depending on routes chosen and traverse grassland, badlands, and river bottom topography.

## Backcountry Regulations

Use Leave No Trace principles when hiking or camping in the backcountry.

Free permits are required for all overnight stays in the backcountry and can be obtained at the visitor center.

Backcountry camping is limited to 14 days. There are no designated backcountry campsites. Camps must be at least 1/4 mile from any road or trailhead, not visible from roads or trails, and 200 feet from any water source.

Bury human waste in a hole 6-8 inches deep and at least 200 feet away from any water source. Pack out all toilet paper.

Open fires are not permitted in the backcountry. Gas fueled cooking stoves can be used but may be restricted during times of high fire danger.

Water is limited. Plan to carry in all of your water. Springs may be found in the backcountry but all water must be purified.

Pack it in, pack it out. All trash must be packed out including toilet paper.

Pets, bicycles, motorized vehicles and equipment are prohibited in the backcountry.

All plants, animals, natural and cultural features are protected. Do not disturb or remove them. Collecting of any kind is prohibited.

Firearms must be out of sight, unloaded, and rendered inoperable. Fireworks are prohibited.

### Protect Yourself
Drink at least one gallon of water each day.

Carry a topo map, adequate clothing, and a flashlight.

Crosscountry travel is permitted but can be difficult without a map.

Remain in one place if you become lost or separated from a group.

Park animals are wild. Never approach bison. If you meet bison on the trail, give them the right-of-way. Watch for rattlesnakes and ticks.

Keep an eye on the weather. Rain can cause the trails to become extremely slick or impassable.

Wear proper footwear. The terrain is uneven and rocky and will become slippery when wet or icy.

River and creek crossings can be hazardous during high water. Check at the visitor center before attempting crossings and to get the latest information about the river depth.

### Protect Your Park
Pets are not permitted on hiking trails.

Vehicles and bikes must stay on roads.

Horseback travel is not allowed on the short Nature Trails.

Horses are not permitted in the Cottonwood Campground. Check at the visitor center for camping options.

**For more information:**
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**www.nps.gov/thro**