

Badlands

Badlands National Park
South Dakota



Bicycling in the Badlands



Rules of the Road

Bicycles are allowed only on designated paved, gravel, and dirt roads within Badlands National Park. They are not allowed on hiking trails, closed roads, off-road, off-trail, or in the backcountry. The existing road system provides cyclists with a variety of opportunities for the cyclist. For your convenience, bicycle racks are provided at the park visitor centers, key overlooks, and the Cedar Pass Lodge.

Use extreme caution when riding on park roads. Traffic is quite heavy from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Many recreational vehicles have extended mirrors that create hazards for cyclists riding along the sides of the roads. Drivers may not be watching for cyclists.

Wear a helmet and appropriate protective clothing. You will need sunglasses, a hat, and sunscreen. Gloves, long pants, and long sleeved shirts or jackets are recommended for protection in case of a tumble.

Carry plenty of water in all seasons – at least one gallon of water per person per eight hour day. Water is available at the Visitor Centers, Cedar Pass Campground, and the Pinnacles Ranger Station. There is no water available along the Loop Road. Distance riders should be prepared for up to a thirty mile stretch with no water available to refill containers.

Bring additional equipment such as a bicycle lock, tools, a tire repair kit, and an air pump. The Badlands terrain and general remoteness does not provide for good cell phone coverage. Know that if you need assistance, you may not be able to use a cell phone to call for assistance. In case of an emergency, contact 911. You can also try the park's dispatch number: 605/433-5361.

Remember that dirt and gravel roads, as well as paved road shoulders, can be extremely muddy and frequently impassable. Badlands receives heavy spring and summer rains. Snow can fall up to eight months of the year. Check on weather forecasts and road conditions before setting out.

Badlands Loop Road

Cyclists who prefer paved roads may want to ride on a portion of the Badlands Loop Road. It surprises many cyclists to discover how much more impressive the Badlands are without a wind-shield between you and the landscape. Remember that the Badlands Loop Road is very steep in several places, most notably the following passes: Cedar Pass, Norbeck Pass, Dillon Pass, and Pinnacles Pass. The change in elevation can be over 250 feet in less than 500 meters.

Badlands Loop Road
22 Mile, Mostly
Downhill Option

If you have a vehicle available to provide a shuttle service, you may want to begin your ride at the Pinnacles Overlook, eight miles south of the town of Wall, and end your ride at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center. Although this route is primarily downhill, there are still at least two distinct climbs to be made en route. During summer, traffic is quite heavy during all daylight hours. Be a defensive rider at all times.

Badlands Loop Road
8 Mile, Downhill
Option

This route also requires a vehicle to provide shuttle service. Cyclists should be dropped off at the Fossil Exhibit Trail and ride to the Ben Reifel Visitor Center. This route is all downhill or level but does include stretches with narrow shoulders.

Sage Creek Rim Road
Gravel Road

“Fat tire” cyclists – those suitable for gravel roads – may want to take a ride on the Sage Creek Rim Road, located in the northwestern corner of the park. This gravel route winds along the northern edge of the Badlands Wilderness Area, past Roberts Prairie Dog Town, and includes a trek through the oldest exposed layers of the White River Badlands. You can start from any pull out along the Sage Creek Rim Road or the Sage Creek Campground. The entire road is 22 miles long (one way). Wildlife is abundant, including the American bison. Watch for ruts and loose gravel. Sage Creek Rim Road may experience heavy traffic during the summer months.

Loop Rides Crossing
Park Boundaries

Riders who are interested in longer day trips may want to try a loop route, combining roads within Badlands National Park with roads outside park boundaries. Here are some possibilities:

Northeast-Big Foot Loop (27 miles total)

A long but fairly easy ride after the initial hill climb, this route takes you through ranch land and badland formations. Starting from the Ben Reifel Visitor Center, ride up the steep Cedar Pass along the Badlands Loop Road. Once at the top of the Pass, turn left on the gravel Old Northeast Road. Follow this road six miles past the park boundary to a junction. Continue straight (north) for one mile, then follow the road as it turns left. Stay on County Road CH12 through ranch country for 6 miles until you reach a T-intersection at the Big Foot Road. Turn left (south) and continue into the park to the paved Badlands Loop Road. Turn left and return to the Ben Reifel Visitor Center. 11 miles paved, 16 miles unpaved. *Enlarged version of this map available.*

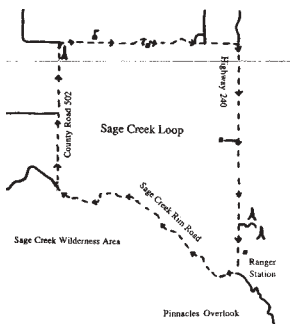


Northeast Loop (17 miles)

This is also a fairly easy ride after the initial climb up Cedar Pass. Start from the Ben Reifel Visitor Center, riding up the steep Cedar Pass. Once at the top, turn left on the unpaved Old Northeast Road. Follow this route for 6 miles past the park boundary to a junction. Bear right (east), paralleling Interstate 90 until you reach Cactus Flat. Here you will find a convenience store, a campground and motel, gas, and the offices for Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. Turn south on Highway 240 and continue past the park entrance to the Ben Reifel Visitor Center. If you entered the park by car, remember to bring your entrance receipt with you. You must present this at the entrance station or you will be expected to pay \$7 per person. 9 miles paved, 8 miles unpaved. *Enlarged version of this map available.*

Sage Creek Loop (23 miles)

A fairly easy ride through rolling grasslands, this route offers good opportunities for wildlife viewing. Start at the junction of the Badlands Loop Road and the Sage Creek Rim Road. Follow the unpaved Sage Creek Road west for seven miles to the junction with County Road 502. Follow the signs to Wall until you reach a paved road. Turn right on the paved road and travel until you reach Highway 240. Inside Badlands National Park, Highway 240 is called the Badlands Loop Road. Take Highway 240 south through the Pinnacles Entrance and back to the junction with Sage Creek Rim Road. If you entered the park by car, remember to bring your entrance receipt with you. You must present this at the entrance station or you will be expected to pay \$7 per person. 12 miles paved, 11 miles unpaved. *Enlarged version of this map available.*



Other Opportunities

Numerous tracks and dirt roads crisscross the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. Stop at the National Grasslands Visitor Center in Wall for information on accessing these lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service. Additionally, the state of South Dakota provides off-road travel in some areas near but not in Badlands National Park. For more information, contact a park ranger.