



Horse Use in Badlands National Park



French fur trappers labeled them “les mauvaises terres a traverser” - bad lands to travel across. Riding through this untamed land will let the equestrian judge the accuracy of this description. Besides spectacular views of strangely carved badlands interrupting a sea of prairie, the horseback explorer in Badlands National Park has the opportunity to see buffalo, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and coyotes. This modern day landscape also protects ancient features and fossils dating from 26 million years ago or earlier.

Where to Ride

The Badlands Wilderness Area is located in the Sage Creek drainage and consists of 64,000 acres of eroded spires and mixed grass prairie, offering the prime horseback riding terrain in the park. Although most riders to confine themselves to the Wilderness Area, horseback riding is allowed anywhere in the park except on marked trails, roads, highways, and developed areas. For day ride access, vehicles and horse trailers may be parked at overlooks and parking areas. Off road driving is strictly prohibited. There are no designated riding trails in the park but maps are sold at the Cedar Pass Headquarters Area in the park bookstore to assist backcountry riders in planning a trip. Topographic maps are also available by mail order from Badlands Natural History Association at P.O. Box 47; Interior, South Dakota 57750

Regulations Regarding Horse Use

- Only certified weed free hay or processed horse feed products may be brought into the park.
- Horses and pack animals are not allowed to run loose, be loose herded, or trailed.
- The tying of horses and pack animals to any living or dead feature that causes damage to the feature, vegetation, or soil is prohibited.
- Picketed horses and pack animals shall not be kept within 100 feet of trails, camp-sites, or water source.
- Picket pins should be packed in. Picket pin sites must be moved frequently to prevent overgrazing or other damage to vegetation. The pins must be pulled out of the ground prior to leaving camp.
- Horse and pack animal manure must be completely removed from the campground and must be well scattered in any other grazing areas in the park.
- If a horse or pack animal is lost or dies within park boundaries, the loss must be reported as soon as possible to park staff.
- Dogs and other pets are not allowed in the Badlands Wilderness Area.

Sage Creek Campground

A portion of the Sage Creek Campground is designated horse use. A watering hole known as CCC Spring is located about ½ mile southwest of the campground. Hitching posts are provided. Riders must provide weed free hay or pellets for feed. Horses should not be allowed to run free or be picketed in the campground. No fires are allowed except in contained grills. The campground limit is ten consecutive nights.

Sources for Weed Free Forage in South Dakota

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|---------------------|------------|------------------|---------------|
| Frank Bloom | Rapid City | (605) 343 - 0025 | Alfalfa-grass |
| Robert Humphrey | Spearfish | (605) 642 - 2116 | Alfalfa |
| Dana Iversen | Ft. Pierre | (605) 223 - 2621 | Native grass |
| Steve Keller | Oral | (605) 424 - 2135 | Alfalfa |
| Gene Russell | Oral | (605) 424 - 2741 | Alfalfa |
| Edward Kirschenmann | Ipswich | (605) 426 - 6149 | Alfalfa |
| Robert Lantis | Rapid City | (605) 343 - 7608 | Alfalfa-grass |
| Bart Ramsey | Philip | (605) 859 - 2737 | Native grass |
| K.F. Reimann | Midland | (605) 843 - 2108 | Native grass |

For Your Safety

There is no potable water for human consumption in the Badlands backcountry. Water sources for domestic livestock are scarce. Horses not accustomed to Badlands water probably will not drink it. You must pack in all drinking water for human, using the rate of at least one gallon per person per day. It is also strongly recommended that you pack in drinking water for your horses and pack animals (at least five gallons per animal per day).

Badlands weather is very unpredictable. Sudden changes can occur in any season. Summer riders should be prepared for extreme heat and the onset of severe thunderstorms accompanied by high winds, rain, dangerous hail, and possibly tornadoes. If a lightning storm should occur, dismount immediately and seek a low area.

Badlands winters can be pleasantly mild and comfortable at times but sudden blizzards can bring deep snow, high winds, and sub-zero temperatures. Spring and fall are favorites in the Badlands when days are warm and nights are cool. Spring is quite rainy with deep mud conditions. Late spring and early fall blizzards are always a possibility.

Buffalo roam through the wilderness area. Do not approach buffalo. They are potentially dangerous especially during calving and breeding seasons. The Badlands is also the home of the prairie rattlesnake, the only poisonous snake in the park. This species of rattlesnake is not aggressive but give all snakes a wide berth. Remember that all wildlife is protected in the park and should not be disturbed.

Overnight Horse Use in the Badlands Backcountry

Adventurous riders may want to try an overnight expedition into the Badlands. Backcountry camps must be at least ½ mile from all roads or trails. Backcountry grazing is allowed for livestock of overnight campers. Because fire hazard is very high, no fires are allowed at any time in the backcountry. Always use a backpacking stove. All other horse use regulations apply to backcountry users.

Commercial Use

No commercial horse rental or day rides are available in Badlands National Park. However, outfitters may offer overnight backcountry trips under a commercial use license. To learn more about licensed outfitters, contact the park at (605) 433-5361. Ask for the Special Uses Coordinator or visit the park website at <http://www.nps.gov/gov> Click on IN DEPTH to get to the park's expanded website that includes extensive trip planning information.