

## Information for Climbers

Hundreds of parallel cracks divide Devils Tower into large hexagonal columns. These features make it one of the finest traditional crack climbing areas in North America. The cracks vary in length and width: some are wide enough to fit your entire body, others barely have room for your fingers; the longest crack extends nearly 400 feet upwards.

### Register to Climb



Registration is **MANDATORY**.

Climber registration has existed since 1937. This makes you part of a historical legacy. By registering for each climb, you assist us in creating good statistical models of climbing trends on the Tower. Register for each day you climb or scramble above the boulder field. Information obtained via the registration card

can be used for search and rescue purposes.

Climbers may self-register at the kiosk near the visitor center parking area, in the climbing office or visitor center. Please park vehicles in the lower gravel lot before you leave to climb.

Failure to register is a federal violation and subject to a \$130 fine.

### Climbing Closures



There is a voluntary ban on all travel inside the Tower Trail during the month of June. Northern Plains Indians regard Devils Tower as a significant sacred site. Some see climbing as a desecration and an offense to their culture. The Climbing Management Plan implemented a June voluntary ban, where climbers can choose to respect American Indian beliefs.

A mandatory closure to a section of routes on the Tower starts March 15<sup>th</sup> each year. This closure protects nesting sites for peregrine

falcons. The closure is lifted about three weeks after the chicks fully fledge, typically by mid-August. Route closures are posted online, on bulletin boards and on the Tower Trail. Falcons are territorial and will dive at intruders near their nest. Please help us protect these birds by reporting sightings, especially aggressive behavior.

Other closures are rare; check the park website or call the park for current closure status.

### Regulations



- Registration is mandatory.
  - Remove all gear after use.
  - Observe all closures.
  - No camping or bivouacking is permitted on the Tower.
  - No installing new bolts or pitons.
- To replace aging bolts, request a permit from Devils Tower climbing staff. An anchor inventory log is on the Black Hills Climber Coalition website ([www.bhclimbers.com](http://www.bhclimbers.com)).

#### Practice Leave No Trace:

- Stay on approach trails (see reverse).
- Do not stash gear, leave fixed ropes or other equipment, including anchors.
- While on the summit step on rocks, not plants or soil (it is a fragile ecosystem).
- Pack out all waste; use rest rooms at the trailhead; wag bags are sold in the park.
- Chipping or gluing holds is prohibited; trundling/dislodging is prohibited.

### Safety



- Routes are long and sustained in grade. Carry lots of gear; a double or triple rack and a second rope are common.
- **Rappel routes** have fixed anchors. Anchors are not maintained by the NPS. Inspect anchors and back them up if necessary. Know where your rappel route is before your climb.
- **Stuck ropes** are common at Devils Tower. Take care your rope does not get stuck in a crack while rappelling. Alert other climbers when you are pulling a rope. Rappel over the face of a column, not into cracks.
- Wear **climbing helmets**. Common

hazards include dropped gear and falling rocks.

- Beware **wildlife hazards**. Rodents, birds and reptiles live on the Tower. You may encounter prairie rattlesnakes, stinging insects or defensive birds. Spiny plants and poison ivy are also present.
- **Weather** changes quickly. Check the forecast before your climb. Most storm systems move in from the west or north.
- In an **emergency**, call 911. If a phone is unavailable, yell loudly and clearly for help. Beware that professional rescue may take several hours to reach you.

## Approach Trails

Note: to access all approach trails, take the right fork at the start of the Tower Trail.

### West Face Approach:

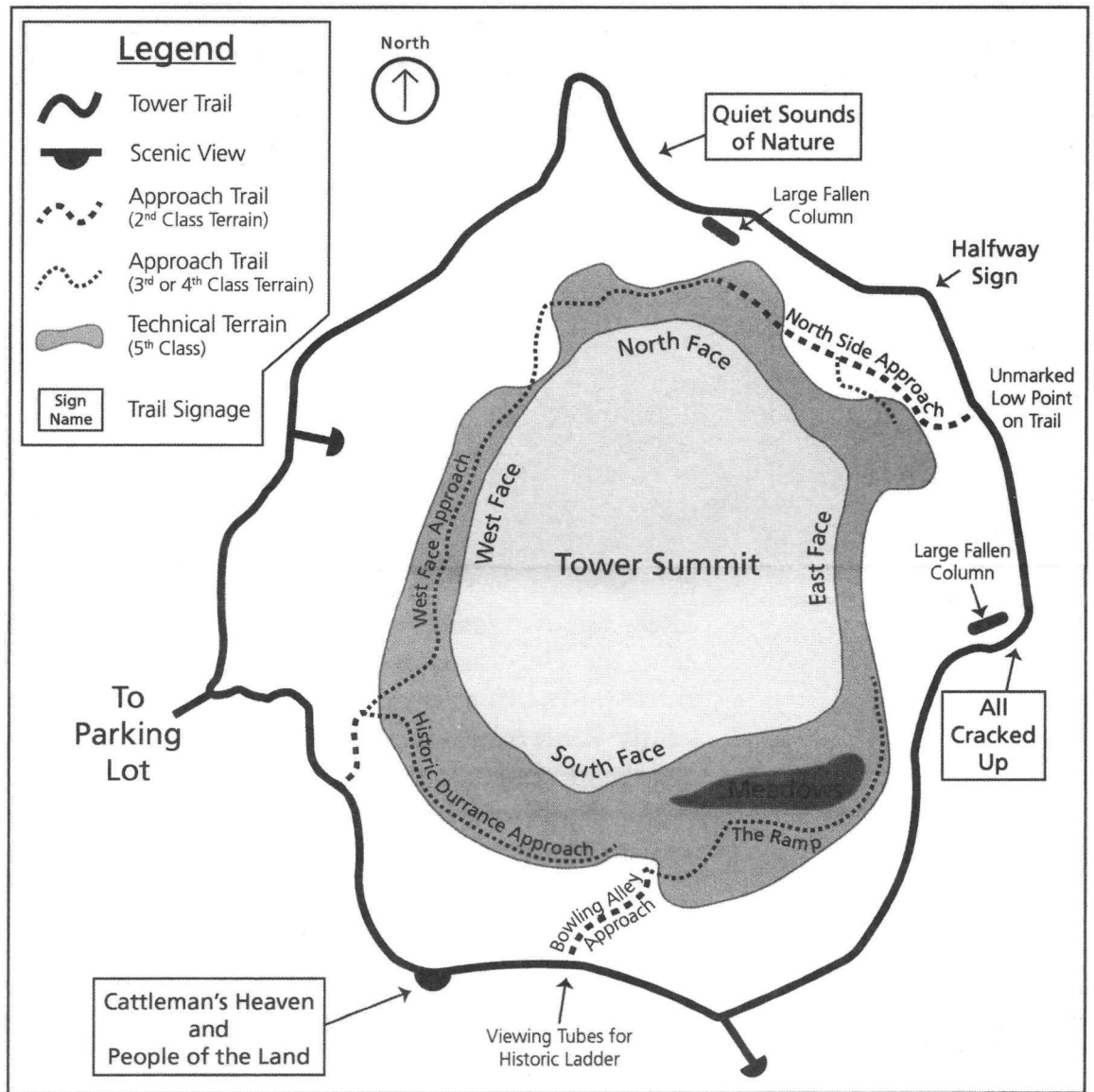
Enter the boulder field at the first group of large pine trees on the left. Continue straight up the boulders to the tree line. Continue directly up 2nd/3rd class terrain to the base of *El Matador* and *McCarthy West Face*. Go left for *Mr. Clean* and right for *Direct Southwest*.

### Bowling Alley Approach:

Look for the viewing tubes on the Tower Trail. Follow the path behind viewing tubes to access *Durrance*, *El Cracko Diablo*, *Walt Bailey*, *Soler*, and other climbs on the south face.

### North Side Approach:

Continue past the large fallen column and "All Cracked Up" sign to the low point in the Tower Trail. A "registration required" sign is easily visible from the trail. Access to *Belle Fourche Buttress*, *Assembly Line* and *New Wave*.



## What's in the Shade?

Hot summer temperatures increase your risk of exposure. Wear sunscreen and bring plenty of water. Consider the time of day you will climb, and what routes offer shade.



Climbing Area	Shade Time (July/August)
Southeast Face (Durrance, Wiessner, etc.)	Before 9:00 am and after 4:00 pm
Southwest Buttress (Tin Tin, Little Fingers, etc.)	Before 11:30 am
West Face (El Matador, McCarthy West, etc.)	Shade before 1:30 pm
North Face (New Wave, Assembly Line, etc.)	Shade after 1 pm
Northeast Corner (Belle Fourche Buttress)	Shade after 11 am

## Summit Rappels



Two 70 meter ropes are adequate for all rappels, and freeing stuck ropes. There are a limited number of rappel routes from the summit. Below is information on the most popular rappel routes:

- **Meadows Rappel:** 70 meter rope with 3-4 meters of 4th class down climbing on last rappel. Tie knots!
- **Bailey Direct Rappel:** two 60-meter ropes

- **West Face Rappel:** two 50-meter ropes; following the *Tulgey Wood* route
- **North Face Rappel:** **USE CAUTION!** two 50 meter ropes. For first rappel anchor move ~50 ft climbers right from the top of *Assembly Line*. Then down-climb ~50 ft of exposed and loose 4th class to the edge. Rappels then follow *Maid in the Shade* and *Teachers Lounge* routes

## South Face Classics: Recommended Gear

The south and southeast faces of Devils Tower hold the highest concentration of moderate routes to the summit. This is home to the earliest routes and the historical stake ladder. Climbing on the stake ladder is prohibited.

This area also has the most popular route on the Tower - the *Durrance* route (5.7), pioneered in 1938. The busiest time of year is May-September. Expect multiple climbing parties lining up for this route. Have an alternate route (or two) planned if the line is too long. The list to the right shows classic routes with gear requirements. They are in order from *Durrance* to the right. Refer to the guidebooks for exact locations of routes.

- **Durrance (5.7):** doubles #0.3 - #4, nuts
- **Pseudo-Wiessner (5.8):** doubles #0.3 - #4, nuts, optional #5 and #6
- **Bon Homme Variation (5.8)** doubles #0.5 - #3, #4, nuts, recommended #5, optional #6 and #0.3 offset
- **Walt Bailey Memorial (5.9):** doubles #0.2 - #2, #3, nuts, optional extra #0.5 and #0.75
- **Soler (5.9):** same as above
- **Tad (5.7):** doubles #0.4 - #4, nuts
- **El Crack Diablo (5.8):** doubles #0.4 - #4