

DRINKING WATER

There are no approved drinking water sources in the backcountry. There are springs and wells, which supply water for wildlife; but, none are certified safe for human consumption. Plan to carry in all your drinking and cooking water.

"As the sun rose higher and higher the shadows of horse and rider shortened, and the beams were reflected from the short, bleached blades until in the hot air all the landscape afar off seemed to dance and waver. Often on such trips days went by without our coming across another human being, and the loneliness and vastness of the country seemed as unbroken as if the old vanished days had returned - the days of the wild wilderness wanderers . . ."

Theodore Roosevelt,
Outdoor Pastimes of an
American Hunter

"... the wilderness, selected portions of it have been kept here and there in a state of nature, not merely for the sake of preserving the forests and the water, but for the sake of preserving all its beauties and wonders unspoiled by greedy and shortsighted vandalism."

Theodore Roosevelt,
Outdoor Pastimes of
an American Hunter



Trail Marker Sign

BACKCOUNTRY GUIDE to THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK

The popularity of backcountry hiking and camping has increased across the country. With the increased backcountry use at Theodore Roosevelt National Park it has become necessary to set some use regulations in an effort to protect the very values which attract persons to the backcountry. Only through visitor cooperation, compliance with regulations, and adherence to good backcountry practices can the wilderness character of the backcountry be preserved and the park continue to provide for the enjoyment of present and future users. This guide is intended to acquaint you with the park trail system, the backcountry use regulations, and special considerations to make in planning your trip.

BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS & CAMPING

Persons wishing to camp overnight in the backcountry must register and obtain a free backcountry use permit. The permit serves two purposes. First, if properly filled out, it may provide important information which will help to locate you in an emergency, that is, if you follow your trip plan. Second, the permit provides the park rangers with data used in managing the park's resources and visitor use. There are no established backcountry camp sites at this time. Camping in the backcountry is limited to 14 consecutive days.

For the South Unit (and the Elkhorn Ranch Unit) backcountry permits should be obtained at the Medora Visitor Center between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Mountain Time, each day.* (Funding permitting, the hours of the center may be as late as 8 p.m. in the summer.)

For the North Unit permits should be obtained from the information ranger station between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., Central Time, in the summer months, and between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. the remainder of the year.*

*Both the Medora Visitor Center and the North Unit station are closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. Plan your registration accordingly.

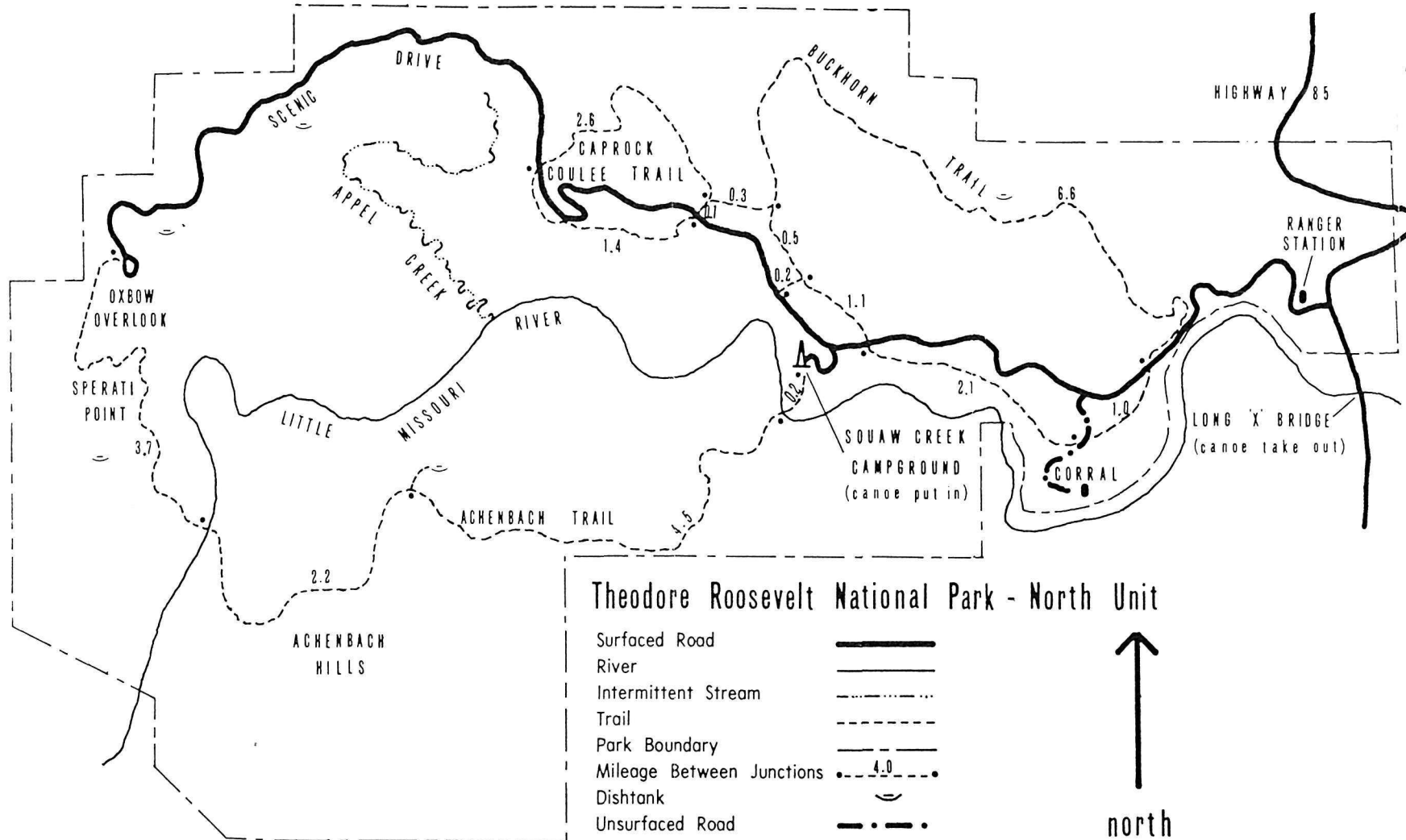
When you have completed your backcountry camping trip, please stop by the visitor center or ranger station to advise rangers of your safe return and to comment on your backcountry experience.

HORSE USE

The park trail system is open to horse use, and crosscountry horseback travel is also allowed. However, horses are not allowed on the park roadways or in developed campgrounds and picnic areas. Horse parties wishing to camp in the park should inquire about the group camping areas or should consider camping in the backcountry. Like all other users, horse parties must obtain a free backcountry use permit for overnight backcountry camping, and they are subject to the general backcountry regulations and the length of stay limitation of 14 days. Overnight parties in the backcountry are limited to a maximum of 8 horses and 8 riders per group. Horse users must leave their camp in a clean and sanitary condition and must pack out all trash. In order to avoid damage to trees and brushes, hobbles or a rope hitching rack must be used.

RIVER & STREAM CROSSINGS

Although the Little Missouri and its tributaries are not fast flowing streams, they are subject to high water, especially during the early summer when they are accommodating runoff. Most of the time they can be waded; however, a hiker or rider should use caution because of areas of soft bottom. Consult rangers as to good crossing sites.



BUFFALO

Park buffalo are wild! Remember the wilderness is their home. Buffalo are usually shy; however, do not attempt to get too close to them or to feed, tease, or otherwise molest them in any way. Camping within close proximity of water sources may prove dangerous, as buffalo often frequent these areas.

CANOE USE

The canoeing opportunities on the Little Missouri River are quite seasonal, primarily limited to the months of May and June. Canoeists intending to camp overnight in the park and outside of the developed campgrounds must obtain a free backcountry use permit and must observe the backcountry regulations. A handout on floating the Little Missouri River is available to interested persons who write or ask for it.

WINTER HIKING & CAMPING

Exploring the park's backcountry in the winter can be an exciting and rewarding experience. It also offers new challenges in meeting the environment on its own terms. To insure that your winter experience is as safe and pleasant as possible you should be well prepared for your trip, whether it be a day hike or an overnight stay.

Between November and March sudden storms and extreme weather and temperature changes can result in hypothermia and frostbite, if hikers and campers are not properly equipped and knowledgeable about winter survival. Group leaders should verify the adequacy of their party's equipment for survival and personal safety. Special attention should be given to footwear, outer clothing, sleeping gear, and stoves which are operable at low temperatures. Plan your trip; know your limitations; keep your group together.

Items recommended as essential include: rugged, over-the-ankle hiking or pac boots, and clothing of good quality, layered to allow adjustments for weather conditions. Shirts, pants, underwear, socks, and gloves should be wool, which retains warmth even when wet. Include a good quality wind and/or rain jacket, matches in a waterproof container, high energy food with an extra ration per person, drinking water, a good map, preferably a topographic map, and a sharp, heavy-duty knife. In addition campers should have a sleeping-bag adequate for -30° F. temperatures, a ground cloth, and a sleeping bag pad. Other recommended items include: extra wool socks and clothing, a backpack stove and fuel, nylon cord, a small portable shelter or tent, a flashlight, snowshoes and gaiters for deep snow, and a first aid kit. A portable radio can also be carried by campers as a means of monitoring local weather forecasts.

BACKCOUNTRY USE REGULATIONS

1. All plants, wildlife, natural and cultural features in the park are protected. Do not disturb or remove them. Hunting is prohibited, as is feeding or molesting of wildlife.
2. Pets, bicycles and motorized equipment are prohibited in the backcountry.
3. Firearms, fireworks, and explosives are not allowed in the park.
4. Open fires (wood, charcoal, etc.) are not permitted in the backcountry. Cooking must be done on a self-contained stove fueled by a commercial product.
5. All material packed in must be packed out.
6. Camping within 100 feet of any stream, spring, or water source is prohibited. Do not wash dishes or use detergents in water sources.
7. For proper sanitation make toilets in a shallow hole 100 feet or more from camp or water source. Cover with dirt after use.
8. Be considerate of others. Keep noise low. Hikers must yield the right-of-way to horseback riders.
9. Overnight parties in the backcountry are limited to a maximum of 10 persons without horses, or 8 persons and 8 horses.

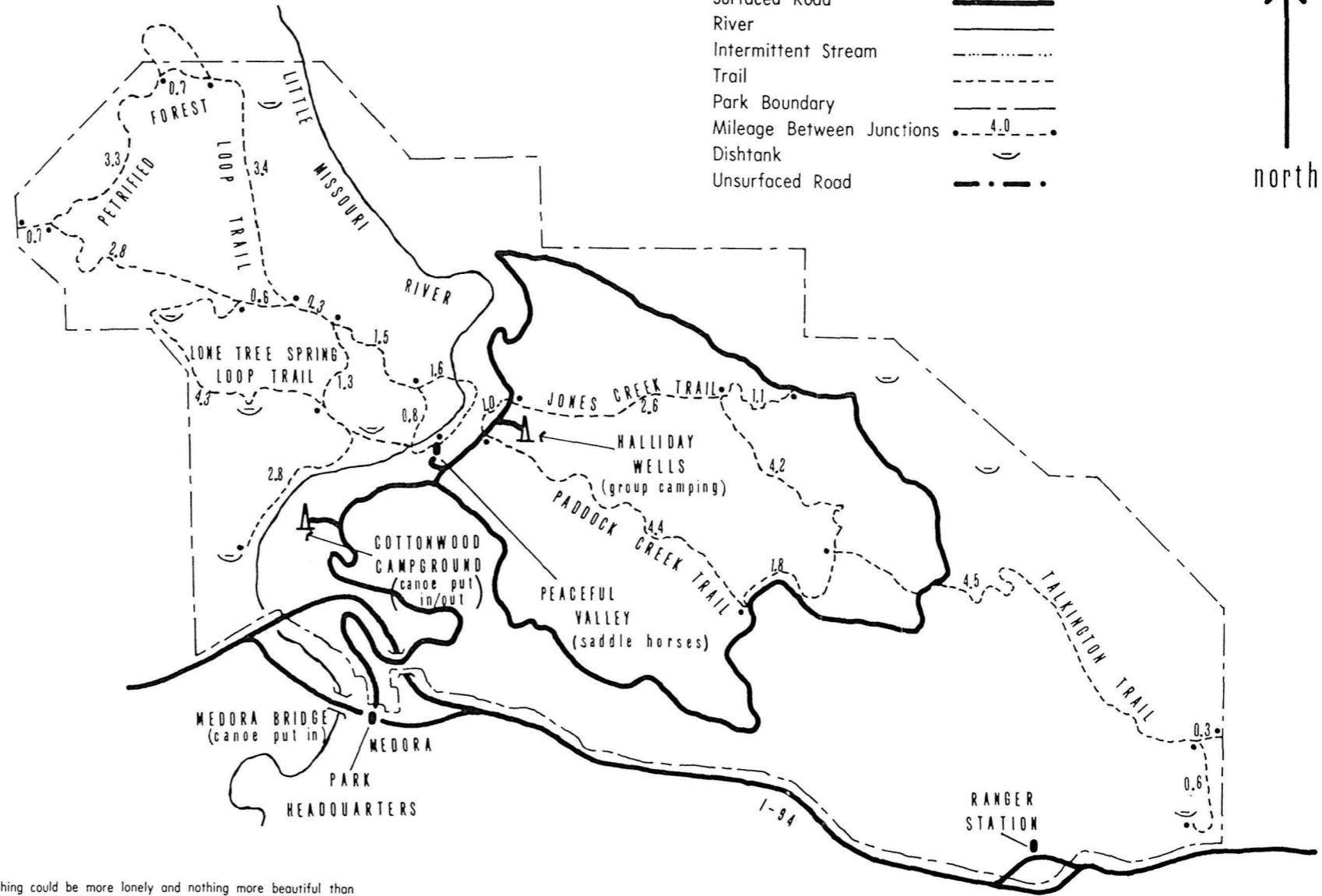
CROSSCOUNTRY TRAVEL

In addition to the established trail system hikers and riders will find the opportunity to travel crosscountry in the park. Topographic maps of the North and South Units are available for purchase and will aid crosscountry travelers. Game trails are also frequently followed by hikers and riders; they are especially helpful in rugged terrain and in crossing creeks with steep banks. The openness of the terrain along with easily identifiable features is also a boon.

Remember: whether traveling crosscountry or on an established trail, it is best not to travel alone in the backcountry. In the event of an accident or sudden illness one or two members of a group can go for help while the others remain awaiting assistance.

"... the loneliness and vastness of the country seemed as unbroken as if the old vanished days had returned - the days of the wild wilderness wanderers..."

It is this very quality of experience described by Theodore Roosevelt which should be preserved in the park's backcountry and wilderness areas. As a backcountry user, you can help. Observe the backcountry use regulations, which were designed to minimize user impact. Hike single file on the trails, so as to not create parallel trails; do not shortcut trails. When traveling crosscountry in a group, do not walk single file; avoid creating new trails. Stop often to appreciate the scene around you and at your feet. The badlands, though rugged in appearance, are fragile. Whether you are crossing a grassy plateau, a juniper-forested slope, or a barren clay butte, be aware of the impact you are having and try to lessen it. — Think before you act: "Is this the way in which I am most likely to LEAVE NO TRACE of my presence here?"



Theodore Roosevelt National Park - South Unit

Surfaced Road	
River	
Intermittent Stream	
Trail	
Park Boundary	
Mileage Between Junctions	
Dishtank	
Unsurfaced Road	



"Nothing could be more lonely and nothing more beautiful than the view at nightfall across the prairies to these huge hill masses, when the lengthening shadows had at last merged into one and the faint afterglow of the red sunset filled the west. The endless waves of rolling prairie, sweeping, vast and dim, to the feet of the great hills, grew purple as the evening darkened, and the buttes loomed into vague, mysterious beauty as their sharp outline softened in the twilight."

Theodore Roosevelt,
Outdoor Pastimes of an
American Hunter