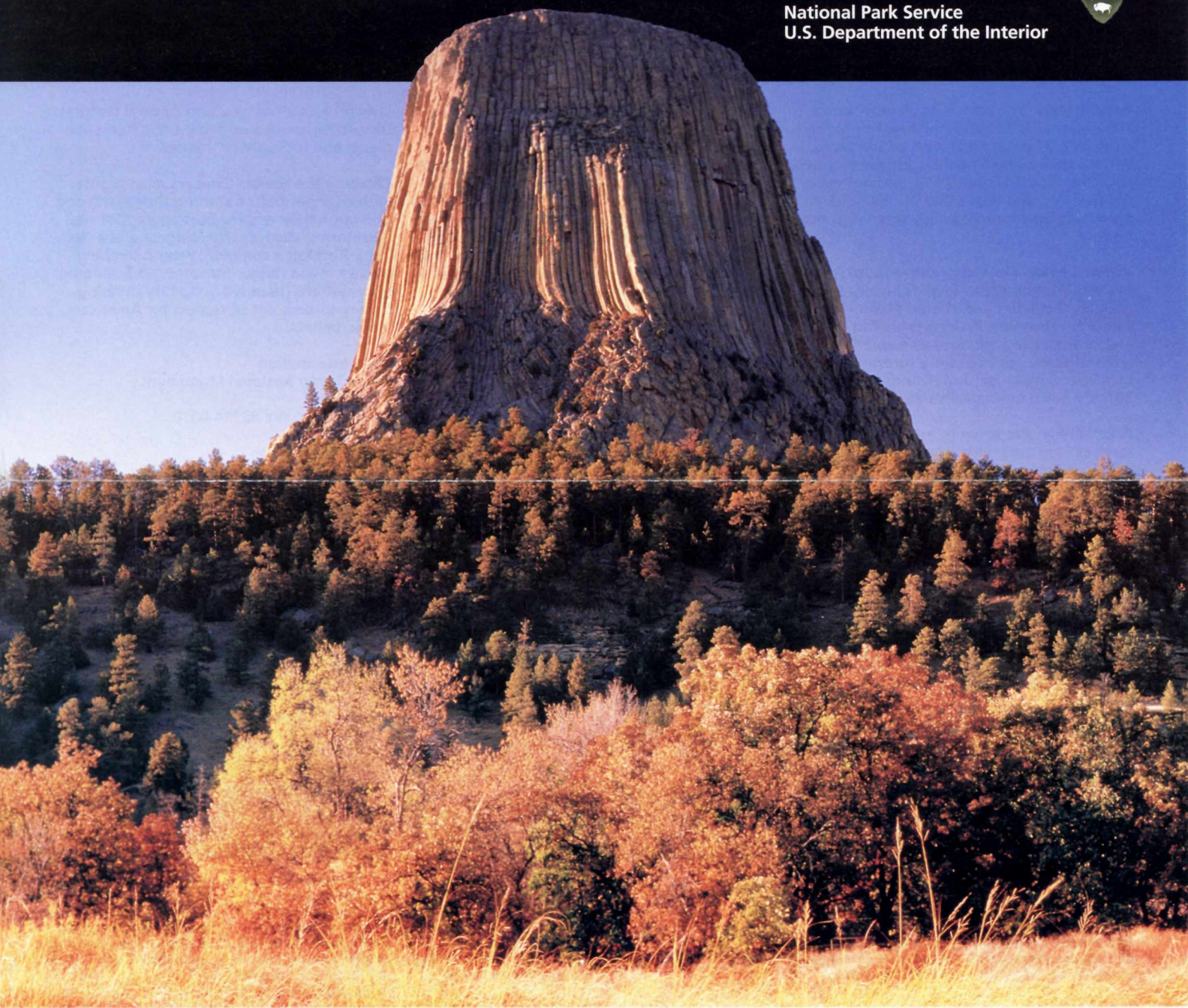


# Devils Tower

National Monument  
Wyoming

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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## Rising Up Against the Sky

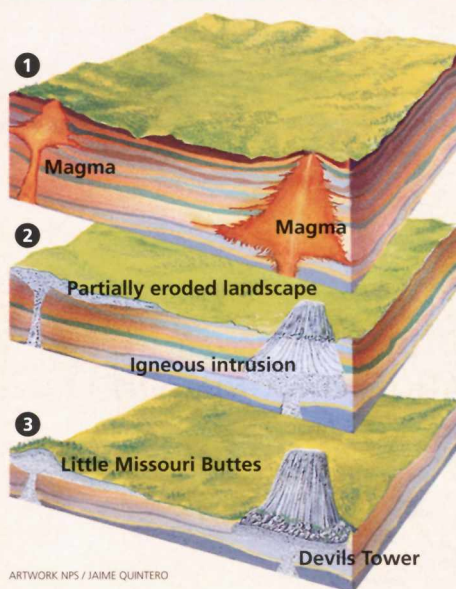
"A dark mist lay over the Black Hills, and the land was like iron," N. Scott Momaday wrote. "At the top of the ridge I caught sight of Devil's Tower upthrust against the gray sky as if in the birth of time the core of the earth had broken through its crust and the motion of the world was begun. There are things in nature that engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devil's Tower is one of them." Several Indian nations share similar legends on the origin of this prominent butte. The Kiowa people say:

"Eight children were there at play, seven sisters and their brother. Suddenly the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run upon his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. Directly there was a bear where the boy had been. The sisters were terrified; they ran, and the bear after them. They came to the stump of a great tree, and the tree spoke to them. It bade them climb upon it, and as they did so it began to rise into the air. The bear came to kill them, but they were just beyond its reach. It reared against the tree and scored the bark all around with its claws. The seven sisters were borne into the sky, and they became the stars of the Pleiades."

Bear Lodge is one of many American Indian names for the Tower. Col. Richard Dodge named it Devils Tower in 1875. He led the military expedition sent to confirm reports of gold in the Black Hills and to survey the area. Scientists then thought Devils Tower was the core of an ancient volcano. Recent data suggests it is an igneous intrusion (see diagram).

On July 4, 1893, with fanfare and over 1,000 spectators, William Rogers and Willard Ripley made the "first" ascent, using a wooden ladder for the first 350 feet. The fact that there was already a

## The Geological Story



ARTWORK NPS / JAIME QUINTERO

**1:** About 50 million years ago molten magma was forced into sedimentary rocks above it and cooled underground. As it cooled it contracted and fractured into columns. An earlier flow formed Little Missouri Buttes. **2 and 3:** Over millions of years, erosion of the sedimentary rock exposed Devils Tower and accentuated Little Missouri Buttes. The Tower rises 867 feet from its base and stands 1,267 feet above the river and 5,112 feet above sea level. The area of its teardrop-shaped top is 1.5 acres. The diameter of its base is 1,000 feet.

flagpole for raising Old Glory atop the Tower suggests the first ascent might have been one day earlier. The climbers' wives ran the refreshment stand and sold pieces of the flag as souvenirs. The Tower became a Fourth of July meeting place for ranching families who might see each other but once a year. At the annual picnic in 1895, Mrs. Rogers used her husband's ladder to become the first woman to reach the summit.

Records of Tower climbs have been kept since 1937. Some 5,000 climbers come every year from all over the world to climb on the massive columns. Over 220 climbing routes have been used.

But there is more to this area than the Tower. Black Hills pine forests merge with rolling plains grasslands. You can see every phase in the process of establishing a forest—from bare rock to pines. And because mountains and plains converge here, over 150 species of birds have been counted—including hawks, bald and golden eagles, prairie falcon, turkey vulture, and American kestrel. It's hard to miss the brightness of the male mountain bluebird, the industriousness of the nuthatch, or the feistiness of the black-billed magpie. White-tailed deer are common, and you can spend hours watching busy, playful prairie dogs in their town on the grasslands below the Tower.

In 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Devils Tower the first national monument under the new Antiquities Act. His action made Wyoming the home of both our first national park—Yellowstone in 1872—and our first national monument. Roosevelt acted to protect the Tower from commercial exploitation. Today a broad range of natural and cultural resources and values is protected here as part of the National Park System.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) established a camp near the present Administration Building. Its workers built camping and picnicking facilities and log buildings that now house the visitor center, ranger office, and entrance station office. They also improved the road to the base of the Tower and built a trail around the Tower.

# Devils Tower

**Getting Here** The park is open year-round. The entrance is 33 miles northeast of Moorcroft, WY; 27 miles northwest of Sundance, WY, via US 14; and 52 miles southwest of Belle Fourche, SD, via SD 34/WY 24. Airlines serve Gillette, WY, and Rapid City, SD. Summer days are warm; evenings and early mornings may be cool.

**Visitor Center** The visitor center/bookstore has exhibits about the Tower's history and geology. Activities are offered Memorial Day through Labor Day. Parking is limited in summer; alternative parking is available for oversized vehicles. For bookstore information contact Devils Tower Natural History Association, 307-467-5283; [www.devilstowernha.org](http://www.devilstowernha.org).

**Accessibility** We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information ask at the visitor center or check our website.

**Hiking Trails** The paved Tower Trail offers close-up Tower views; wayside exhibits tell

the Tower's story. Pets are not allowed on trails. Trails are not recommended for wheelchairs. Trail lengths: Tower Trail 1.3 mi., Red Beds Trail 3 mi., South Side Trail 0.6 mi., Joyner Ridge Trail 1.5 mi., Valley View Trail 0.6 mi.

**Camping and Facilities** Open seasonally, the Belle Fourche River Campground has RV and tent sites, first-come, first-served. It has three group sites. Each campsite has a grill, picnic table, and nearby potable water. Restrooms are accessible. There are no hookups, showers, or laundry facilities. A post office and full services are within one mile of the campground and in nearby towns.

**Safety and Regulations** Obey all posted signs. • Do not feed or disturb prairie dogs. They bite and may carry diseases. Abandoned prairie dog holes may be homes to black widow spiders and rattlesnakes. • Avoid rattlesnakes; snakes seldom bite humans unless they are disturbed or mistreated. • Pets must be leashed at all times. • For firearms and other regulations, visit our website. • Federal

laws protect all natural and cultural features. Disturbing animals and gathering items like plants and rocks are prohibited.

**Climbing the Tower** Climbers must register with a ranger before starting their climb and also upon their return. Be prepared for sudden storms; always carry raingear and a flashlight. Rockfall is common; wear a climbing helmet. Ask a ranger for safety and climbing information. There is a voluntary climbing closure in June out of respect for American Indian beliefs.

**More Information**  
Devils Tower National Monument  
PO Box 10  
Devils Tower, WY 82714-0010  
307-467-5283  
[www.nps.gov/deto](http://www.nps.gov/deto)

Devils Tower National Monument is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

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Lichens and mosses can colonize bare rock. Next may come grasses, then flowering plants and shrubs. Trees sprout among the shrubs, and a new forest begins.



Black-tailed prairie dogs live in their town near the park entrance. These communal animals, especially young pups at play, are delightful to watch.

**Don't feed or approach the prairie dogs. They can bite!**

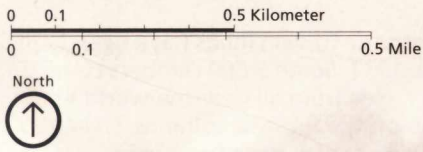


The Belle Fourche River carved most of the landscape that exposed Devils Tower. In the 1700s French fur trappers named it the "pretty fork river."



White-tailed deer live in wooded areas but may visit the campground at dawn or dusk. Other mammals found here are cottontail rabbits, mule deer, chipmunks, and porcu-

pine. Birds abound. Watch for jays, bluebirds, chickadees, woodpeckers, robins, meadowlarks, vultures, and hawks.



- Hiking trail
- Unpaved road
- Parking area or turnout

0.3mi 0.5km Distance indicator

- Ranger station
- Wheelchair-accessible
- Restrooms

