

Description

The 1,278-acre Mount Rushmore National Memorial is located in the central Black Hills in southwestern South Dakota, 2 miles southwest of Keystone, along State Highway 244, also known as the Gutzon Borglum Memorial Highway. The majority of the landscape is composed of massive granite outcrops intermingled with ponderosa pine forest. Mount Rushmore is a symbol for freedom and democracy and a special place for all people and cultures. The majority of visitation is for purposes of seeing the carved mountain and associated visitor facilities.

When artist Gutzon Borglum began carving Mount Rushmore National Memorial in 1927, he was aware of the lasting legacy of his vision. He once reflected on his dream, “If I can memorialize for the ages a tiny bit of America’s greatness by carving four of her leaders who contributed so much to this greatness, then I will have contributed something of value to the affairs of man. I want to create a monument so inspiring that people from all over America will be drawn to come and look and go home better citizens.” Gutzon Borglum chose the long-lasting Harney Peak granite of South Dakota so that his creation would remain for thousands of years.

The idea for a commemorative sculpture in the Black Hills came from Doane Robinson, the state historian of South Dakota. With his vision to attract tourists to the state, Doane worked with state and national politicians to carve out a portion of the Black Hills for this project. The land was set aside in 1925, and the US Congress began appropriating funds for the project in 1927. Artist Gutzon Borglum worked with more than 400 local workers to carve the monumental faces. Gutzon Borglum passed away in 1941, after 14 years of dedication to the project. His son, Lincoln Borglum, became the first superintendent of the memorial when Congress declared the sculpture complete in October 1941.

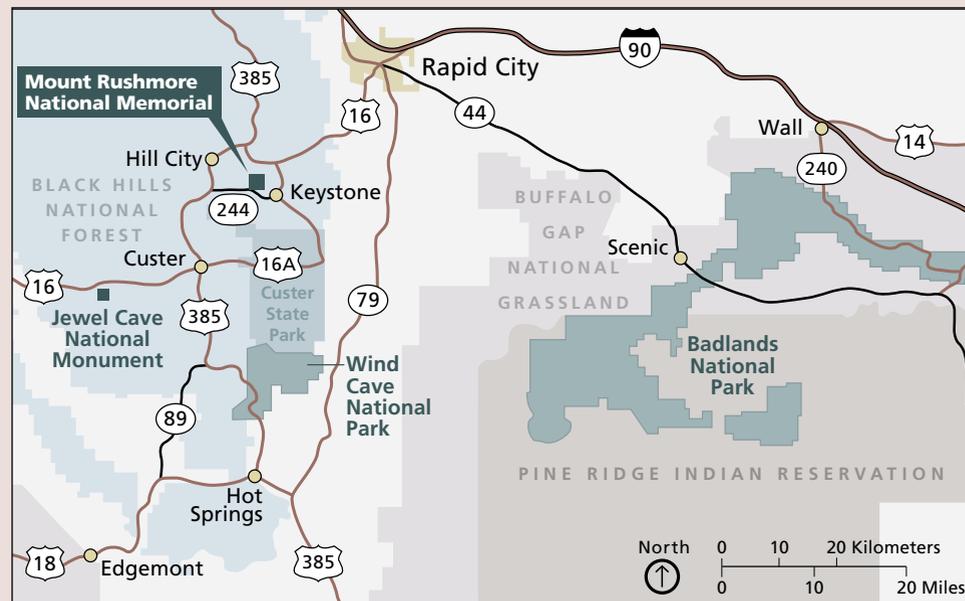
The busts of US Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt represent the first 150 years of the nation’s history. Encompassing the triumphs, struggles, and evolution of the country, the presidents remind visitors of the political, social, and cultural histories of the past and the relevancy of America’s spirit and ideals today. Borglum’s vision included a giant inscription on the mountain, as well as a giant Hall of Records behind the sculpture. Neither of these projects was fully realized. A finished doorway leading to a rough-cut hallway into the mountain was the beginning and end to the Hall of Records.

Mount Rushmore came under the stewardship of the National Park Service in 1933. Since that time, the National Park Service has managed the natural and cultural resources within the 1,278-acre memorial, including large stands of old growth ponderosa pine forest, granite peaks, historic buildings and archeological sites, streams and wetlands, and flora and fauna, representing five different biomes. The memorial has witnessed an increase in visitation, reaching over three million visitors in recent years. The national and international visitors reflect the success of the vision of Doane Robinson and the power of the messages found within the memorial.

The land encompassing Mount Rushmore National Memorial reflects human habitation and development for thousands of years, from the earliest stone tools of tribal populations to the first homesteads in the Black Hills. There are also several historic sites related to the mining boom of the area and sites related to the early development and tourism of the park. Mount Rushmore National Memorial and the Black Hills are also sacred spaces for living cultures whose legacies still thrive today.

A comprehensive redevelopment of the core area of the memorial completed in 1998 alleviated some of the issues and adverse

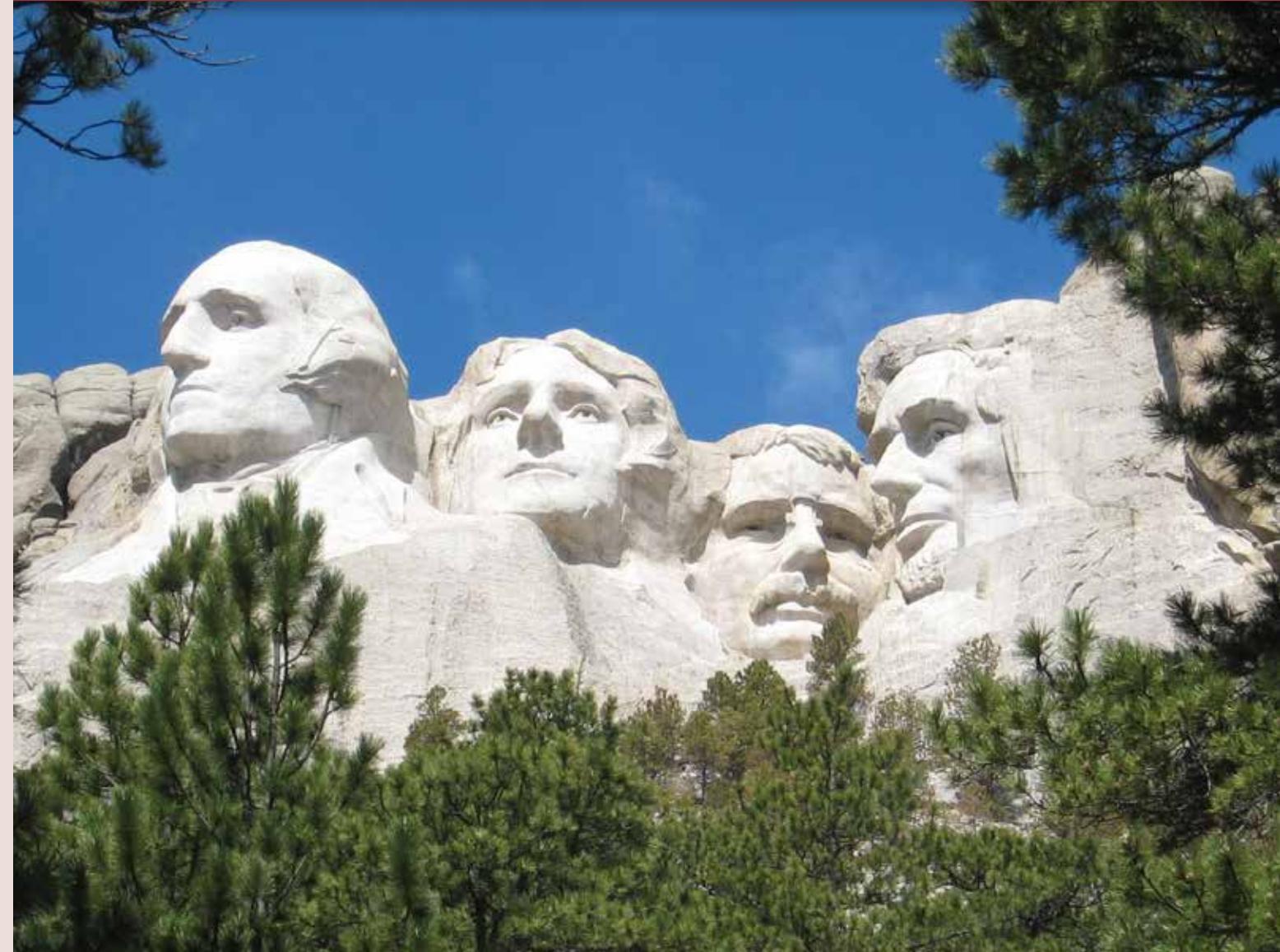
effects associated with crowding, but the concern still exists that the overall visitor experience and memorial resources may deteriorate further. While the 1998 redevelopment of the site improved some of the visitor congestion, it also completely changed visitation patterns and dynamics to the extent that the average length of stay extended from previously less than one hour to now over two hours. The monumental architecture has a profound influence, both positive and negative, on visitors. The amphitheater provides a distinct view of the sculpture, is a setting for learning about the sculpture, and is an integral part of the visitor experience.



Foundation Document Overview

Mount Rushmore National Memorial

South Dakota



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of MOUNT RUSHMORE NATIONAL MEMORIAL is to commemorate the founding, expansion, preservation, and unification of the United States by preserving, protecting, and interpreting the mountain sculpture in its historic, cultural, and natural setting while providing for the education, enjoyment, and inspiration of the public.



Significance

Significance statements express why Mount Rushmore National Memorial resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Mount Rushmore is an internationally recognized symbol, representing the ideals of freedom and democracy.
- Mount Rushmore National Memorial preserves a cultural and natural landscape within a dramatic setting of ponderosa pine forest and granite walls and spires in the Black Hills region of South Dakota.
- The sculpting of Mount Rushmore provided economic stimulation for the Black Hills region and greatly contributed to the tourism industry in South Dakota.
- The Mount Rushmore sculpture is a unique engineering and artistic achievement, considering the tools and processes available during the Depression era.
- The Mount Rushmore sculpture forever changed the landscape of a natural system.



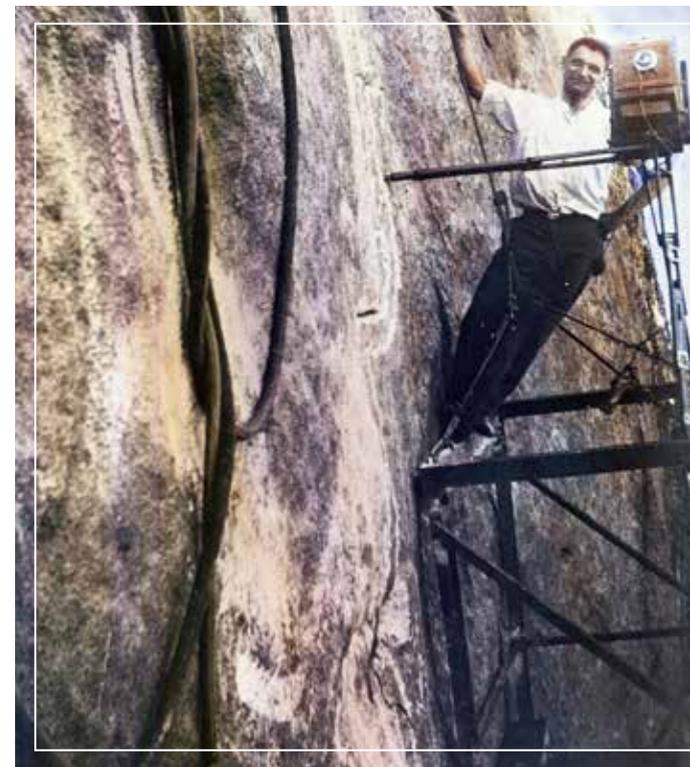
Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **The Sculpture**
- **The Natural Setting**
- **Geology**
- **Museum Collection**
- **Views of the Sculpture**
- **The Sculptor's Studio.**

Mount Rushmore National Memorial may contain other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **The Hall of Records**
- **Historic Structures and Features**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Mount Rushmore National Memorial is a place that reveals the contrast of cultural ideals and the reality of the American experience.
- Mount Rushmore National Memorial stands as a tribute to the successes, setbacks, and perseverance of the visionary leaders and common people who shaped the country's past and laid plans for the future.
- Mount Rushmore, carved to represent the birth, growth, preservation, and development of the nation, is valued as a public work of art intended to evoke freedom, patriotism, and democracy in viewers.
- Mount Rushmore National Memorial is a place where visitors can celebrate and contemplate the individual and collective essence of patriotism.
- The Black Hills are considered sacred and of great importance to many tribes.
- The combination of ecosystem and geologic conditions at Mount Rushmore National Memorial provides a powerful setting for contemplation of the interaction between humans and the natural world.
- Mount Rushmore National Memorial is a result of creative and innovative partnerships that sustain and nurture the memorial and its meanings today and into the future.
- The sculptor Gutzon Borglum and the workers, through vision, struggle, and perseverance, created an inspirational icon on Mount Rushmore that is recognized throughout the world.
- The changes to the natural landscape at Mount Rushmore National Memorial have evoked emotions regarding the impacts of human endeavors.