



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



## George S. Mickelson Trail

*South Dakota*



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## Overview

Named in honor of the former South Dakota governor who crusaded for the trail before his death in a plane crash in 1993, the George S. Mickelson Trail runs through the heart of the Black Hills, connecting Deadwood with Edgemont. The crushed-stone pathway incorporates nearly 100 converted railroad bridges and 4 tunnels, and much of it traverses national forest; however, some segments pass through private lands and users are asked to respect landowner rights.

In many places the trail is notched into the mountains—pressed up against granite walls to one side and dropping off steeply on the other. The granite gives way to slabs of slate stacked haphazardly like tall, thin texts on a bookshelf.

The trail is largely rural, with limited cell service, however; it does pass through several small towns and nearby state parks and campgrounds.

## About the Route

The George S. Mickelson Trail's northern section (starting from Deadwood) cuts a curving course through mountains and ponderosa pine forests, over creeks and through narrow valleys by the towns of Deadwood, Lead, Rochford and Mystic. Every few miles, the trail crosses converted railroad bridges, some with trestles hundreds of feet high. Just south of Mystic, a once-thriving mining town, trail users encounter a 40-foot-long keyhole tunnel, which was formed by blasting through rock and lined with beams cut to fit the curving contours that give the tunnel its keyhole appearance.

The northernmost 16 miles (between Deadwood and Dumont), the trail is the steepest, with Dumont the highest point along the trail. The rest of the trail rarely exceeds a 4% grade.

From Hill City south through Custer, the trail travels through a gradually changing landscape, from mountains and corridors of ponderosa pine to high mountain meadows and the open prairie. Valleys stretch and cattle graze in the fields. Trail users will find many attractions close to this stretch of the trail, including the Crazy Horse Monument, which the trail passes north of Custer, and Mount Rushmore, located 6 miles east of the trail when it passes through Hill City. South of Custer, trail users can take a side trip east from the town of Pringle to reach Wind Caves National Park in 6 miles. Bison, elk and other wildlife roam the park's rolling prairie grasslands, while a complex cave system sprawls beneath.



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**States:** South Dakota

**Counties:** Custer, Fall  
River, Lawrence, Pennington

Length: 112 miles

**Trail end points:** Deadwood Trailhead, Charles  
St. (Deadwood) to 105 E St. (Edgemont)

**Trail surfaces:** Crushed Stone

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Bike, Wheelchair

Accessible, Horseback Riding, Mountain

Biking, Snowmobiling, Walking, Cross Country

## Parking & Trail Access

The George S. Mickelson Trail runs between Deadwood Trailhead, Charles St. (Deadwood) and 105 E St. (Edgemont), with parking at either end.

Additional parking can be found at:

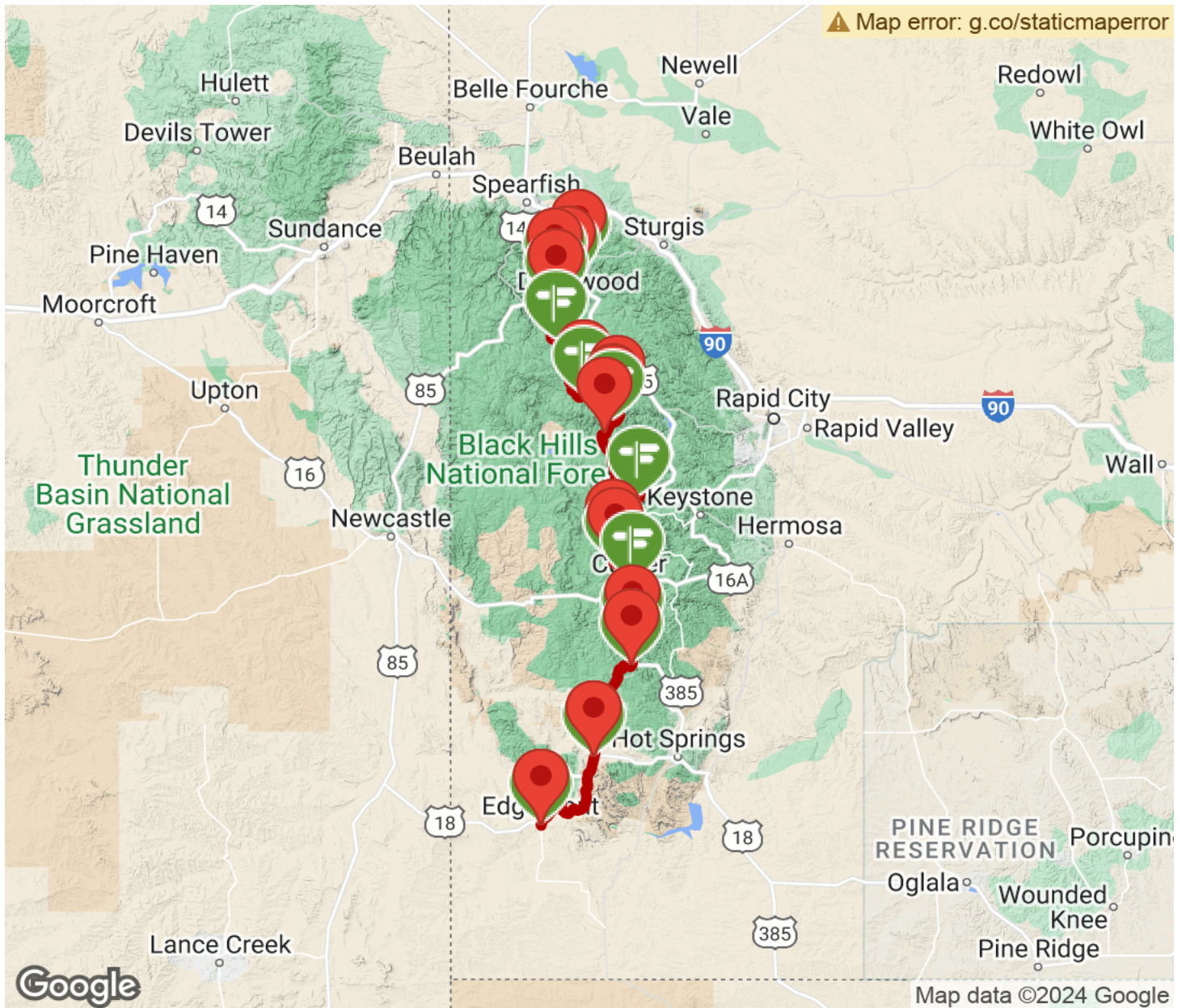
- 11701-11717 Rochford Rd (Hill City)
- 24855 Village Ave (Crazy Horse)

There are numerous parking options along this route, See [TrailLink Map](#) for more parking options and detailed directions.



# George S. Mickelson Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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