

Traverse Through Time

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By Dana Sease

It's been said that "it is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end."

The Journey Museum located in Rapid Springs, S.D., takes visitors of all ages on a journey through four major prehistoric and historic collections. These collections tell the complete story of the Western Great Plains from different perspectives – from the Lakota people who shaped its past to the scientists who now study it.

According to Raymond Summers, director of the museum, millions of people come to the Black Hills each year to see Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse and the Black Hills.

"People don't have a real appreciation for this region until they know the history and the story behind it," Summers said. "The Journey Museum is the best place to learn about the Black Hills and this region of the United States."

The journey through the history of the Black Hills begins in the museum's theater, where visitors watch a 14-minute video that gives an overview of the exhibits in the museum and sets the spiritual tone.

After watching the video, visitors enter the "Star Room," which is a vast "emptiness" covered with stars representing billions of years of unrecorded time. This room is the first stop in the Museum of Geology, where visitors "travel through time and touch the past." There is a geological cross section of the Black Hills that shows how the region was formed over a period of 2.5 billion years. The earth's deepest secrets are revealed here, such as fossils that document the dinosaurs.

The next stop on the journey is the Archaeological Research Center, where visitors "discover what other cultures left behind."

People can examine the lives of early residents, from the ancient hunters who lived in the Black Hills at the end of the ice age to the mining settlers of the 19th century. Guests can visit an archaeological dig and touch artifacts from the last 10,000 years. People can try to solve the mysteries of the past and visit with archaeologists sifting through the clues from the soil.

The third destination on the journey is the Sioux Indian Museum, where visitors "experience the lives of the Lakota people."

The epic story of the Lakota nation unfolds over a 200-year timeline, and visitors come to understand the historical events that changed the Lakota homeland forever. Lakota elders and their descendants tell how a proud people lived, hunted, played and fought. The spirit of a storyteller recounts tales and traditions of the Lakota culture and the legends of the sacred Paha Sapa (Black Hills) come to life.

The Minnilusa Pioneer Museum is the fourth and final stop of the journey, and leads to the not-so-distant past when mountain men, military expeditions and miners first set foot in the Black Hills.

Story walls guide visitors from the European settlers' first encounter of the Black Hills to the Battle of Little Big Horn.

Visitors can see how the discovery of gold captured a young America's imagination, and can encounter Jim Bridger, Gen. George Armstrong Custer, Wild Bill Hickock, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and Red Cloud.

For more information, and to confirm times, dates or prices:
www.journeymuseum.org, (605)-394-6923.