



*DEVIL'S GULCH IS FREE TO  
VISIT ON YOUR OWN.*

**Please note:** Only people in good health and able to walk on and climb rock steps should go on the tour. Those unable to take the tour may meet their party at the Log Cabin. Please use caution when walking on the rock.

**Jesse James Bridge:** The foot bridge marks the spot where in 1876, outlaw Jesse James coaxed his horse to jump the ravine in order to evade the posse that was close behind. Don't let the water below the bridge deceive you. There are areas in the canyon reported to be so deep, they are bottomless. Just under the bridge is known as Bottomless Pit. Many years ago a 600 foot plumb line was lowered and no bottom was found. The current is also extremely powerful in areas of the stream even though it appears dark and oily.

**Trail Head: (Cross Bridge)** The trail head starts you on a journey of colorful reddish Sioux Quartzite (or Jasper) rock. The rock has been dated to an age of 1,200 million years and in some places, is believed to be 3,000 to 4,000 feet thick. You will notice spots on the rock that look like spilled paint. This is called lichen and it is the first sign of life on rock. Lichen grows at the rate of one inch or less in a century. Depending on the wind of the day, strange moaning sounds may be heard in various places in Devil's Gulch. One will then easily understand how the canyon got its name. Spirit Canyon is another name for Devil's Gulch.

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From this point on, follow the numbers on posts. Along the trail you will find wild flowers such as South Dakota's State Flower, the pasque, which blooms in early spring. Columbine, violet, and rose which all bloom at various times of the summer.

Please stay on the designated trails to help preserve the beauty of the Gulch for future generations. There is cactus growing in the rock on various places. Watch for it, as it is painful when stuck into your skin.

**No. 1: CEDAR OBSERVATION POINT—** Look across the canyon at the cliff wall and you will see cedar trees growing out of the rock. What appears to be dead branches are actually the tree roots. Cedar trees are the only evergreen tree native to South Dakota. Their needles are short and scaly. The cones are blue and berry like. Native Indians boiled the cones in water for cough medicine. Cedar wood is fragrant and is used to line closets and chests. You will see several cedar trees at Devil's Gulch. You are at the top of an unusual narrow crevice in the quartzite.

**No. 2: BOTTOM OBSERVATION POINT—** From this point you get a good view looking up at the Jesse James Bridge. Notice how the Sioux Quartzite rock in this area appears to be stacked blocks. The reason why is one of the mysteries of Devil's Gulch. You will also notice gold colored lichen on the rock wall and blue-gray mineral deposits.

**No. 3: TOWERING ROCK OBSERVATION POINT:** Continue west on the trail up to the edge of the stream. At the end of the trail, you will be stopped by towering rock.

This is an excellent photo area of the Jesse James Jump Bridge. Return to the "uphill" marker and proceed to top of hill.

**No. 4: UPPER TRAIL OBSERVATION AREA—** Follow the path to your left for a scenic overlook and photo area of Devil's Gulch. The quartzite appears different shades due to weather elements and lighting. Return to uphill trail to continue.

**No. 5: ROCK PATH:** - In this area the quartzite lies flat like a cobblestone sidewalk. The patch of wild sumac is now dead due to a plant fungus.

**No. 6: WATERFALL OBSERVATION POINT—** This is the point where Devil's Gulch forks off into two directions. Look straight ahead, and you will see the Devil's Falls. During drought conditions, the water falls may not be running, but the view is still beautiful. When the falls are running, the water seems to appear out of nowhere, but there is an underground spring. The water tumbles to the bottom of the Gulch and continues on its way to the Dam in Split Rock Park.

**No. 7: DEVIL'S STAIRWAY AND KITCHEN—** Only the experienced climber should attempt to descend down the rock stairway. Near the bottom is Devil's Kitchen. The kitchen is about 8 feet by 10 feet. There is a 20 foot drop from the kitchen to the bottom of the ravine. Notice sharp edges of wall on your right and smooth edges of rocks on your left. It's another mystery of the Gulch.

**No. 8: PLATEAU OBSERVATION POINT—** This point is another beautiful view of the Sioux Quartzite Rock. Across the Gulch the rock lies relatively level and appears to be a plateau.

**No. 9: DEVIL'S FALLS CROSS BRIDGE—** Below is the waterfall and colorful canyon which is spring fed and water from a natural drainage which flows from the east. The water only flows after the winter snow melt or for a period after rain.

**No. 10: EXIT—** Use the steps and follow the trail to the log cabin and parking lot.

\*\*\* We encourage you to visit the Log Cabin Information Center and view exhibits of the area. Hosts are on duty and will try to answer any questions.

**Geology:** First records show Moses Armstrong surveyed this area in 1864. The area was called the HILLS OF THE PRAIRIE. The Gulch is of glacial origin, the aftermath of ice sheets during the PLEISTOCENE EPOCH. Some believe this area once was covered by a great sea that extended as far west as Mitchell, South Dakota (80 miles to the west). The earliest glaciers deposited a thin layer of debris on top of the quartzite, bed of red pipestone (catlinite) may be found. This red claylike stone was easily worked into pipe bowls and ornaments by early Indians. Pipestone is considered sacred by Indians.

*PLEASE HELP  
KEEP OUR  
PARKS CLEAN.*

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*THANK YOU  
FOR VISITING.*

## *INTRIGUING DEVIL'S GULCH*

A road off 5th street in Garretson leads you to a tree hidden canyon known as Devil's Gulch. It is a natural chasm which features scenic rock formations of red quartzite and is the home of the famous jump of outlaw Jesse James.

While standing at the foot bridge in Devil's Gulch, imagine the outlaw Jesse James riding as fast as his horse can gallop because a posse from Northfield, Minnesota is hot on his trail. Jesse approaches the chasm, quickly summarizes the situation, and successfully coaxes his horse to jump the canyon and therefore escapes the posse. This legend happened in the Fall of 1876 where the footbridge is now located.

Jesse James and his gang had robbed a bank in Northfield. Two outlaws in the gang were killed in the attempt and two were wounded, Frank was one of them. The James gang later split up to evade the posse that was close behind. Frank and Jesse headed towards Dakota territory. Just north of Garretson, they went separate ways to try and outrun the posse. Frank went on the west

side of Split Rock River and Jesse rode on the east side not knowing Devil's Gulch laid ahead. The brothers later met south of Garretson at the area now known as Palisade State Park. There they rested in a small cave for a few days before riding on into Nebraska.

The early Indians believed the Canyon came to being as a result of the Spirit, Iktomi hurling his tomahawk in anger at a warrior named Ha-Shootch-Ga. Ha-Shootch-Ga was causing trouble by attending meetings and turned each group against each other by telling them the other group was cheating on them. Iktomi, the Spirit, was considered a wise and brave warrior by all groups. One day while walking along the Split Rock River, Ha-Shootch-Ga began insulting the Intelligence, skill, and bravery of Iktomi. He challenged the Spirit to a test with tomahawks to prove who was the bravest warrior. When Ha-Shootch-Ga saw the fire in Iktomi's eyes, he turned and fled. The spirit threw his tomahawk at the warrior and when it hit the ground, it burst into lightning and a great wound appeared

in the solid rock, thus forming Devil's Gulch.

Another legend of the Gulch concerns the story of Nellie Harding. Nellie, her father, mother and brother were headed to Dakota Territory in a covered wagon. While camped on the banks of the Sioux River, the family was murdered by some Indians led by a white renegade. They captured Nellie and brought her to Devil's Gulch. The young girl's lover, Dick Willowby, had a vivid dream of the event at his home in Wisconsin. He immediately set out to rescue his Nellie and found her with the captors at Devil's Gulch. Dick started shooting at the small party. The only one left alive was the renegade and he appeared with Nellie. A shot from Dick's pistol meant for the renegade, killed Nellie. Dick pursued the renegade for five miles, each shooting at one another. at one another. Each was mortally wounded, but the renegade's horse stumbled causing his rider an instant death. Dick dragged himself back to his Nellie and died with her in the Canyon.

A hiking trail is provided where you will see the water falls that seem to flow out

of nowhere, the Devil's Stairway with the Devil's Kitchen at the bottom, along with other unique scenery. The trail leads you to the bottom where you can view nature at it's best. A tributary leading to Split Rock River flows from the east to the bottom of the chasm. The water appears slow moving, but it is reported areas are so deep, they are thought to be bottomless. There are also powerful undercurrents. The hiking trail is recommended to see all of Devil's Gulch but the trail may be too difficult for those who have trouble walking. Because of the hardness of the quartzite rock, we are unable to provide trails accessible for wheelchairs. Photo's of Devil's Gulch are provided for viewing at the Information Center.

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