

Mount Rushmore

The most visited attraction in the Black Hills is Mt. Rushmore. The sculpture of the four famous American presidents draws an estimated 2.5 million visitors to this National Monument each year. Two tourism promoters, Doane Robinson and Peter Norbeck, first envisioned a sculpture in the Black Hills. They and others lobbied to have sculptures of Old West heroes carved in the granite spires of the Needles area. In 1925 they sought the help of the famous sculptor Gutzon Borglum who had been working on a confederate memorial on Stone Mountain in Georgia. Convinced, Borglum moved to the Black Hills. Realizing the possibilities of the idea, he immediately began to formulate plans for the daunting project.

Borglum and local guides located a southerly-facing body of granite suitable for carving near Keystone known as Rushmore Mountain. Rather than Western heroes, Borglum felt that four presidents who influenced the American West would be more appropriate for the carving. A formal dedication for the project was held at the mountain on October 1, 1925.

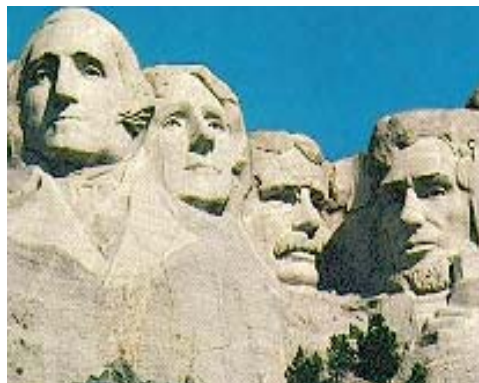
On August 10, 1927, President Calvin Coolidge again dedicated the project, and for the next fourteen years efforts continued on Mt. Rushmore. Of those fourteen years, only six and one half years of actual work occurred due to weather and monetary shortfalls.

Borglum faced a multitude of problems with the sculpture: discovering cracks and poor quality rock on the mountain, developing specialized methods for blasting and granite and hoisting the workers to the top of the mountain, and funding for the project which was in constant jeopardy. Gradually, the likenesses of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt emerged on the mountain.

Borglum died of a heart attack in March of 1941, and the project was turned over to his son Lincoln for completion. With a lack of suitable granite on the mountain for further extensive work on the bodies of the figures, Lincoln finished the project six months after as it is viewed today.

The Memorial has a 5,000-seat amphitheater, interpretive center and theaters, scenic hiking trail, restaurant, gift shop, and bookstore. Borglum's studio containing some of his scale models and tools is open to the public during the summer. A lighting program is held every night (in season) at 9 p.m. in the amphitheater. The 30-minute program features the national anthem, a film about the four presidents, a short interpretive talk, and concludes with the illumination of the Memorial. Borglum insisted that visitors should not be charged to see the carving. A fee-based parking facility providing the most convenient parking was completed in 1998, but there is still free parking in other lots. No admission is charged to see the Memorial.

A special Fourth of July celebration featuring one of the largest fireworks displays in the region is a popular time to experience America's Shrine of Democracy. More information on the carving of the mountain and its enduring legacy can be seen at the Visitor's Center and other areas at the Memorial.



Crazy Horse



With work now finished on the face of Crazy Horse, the work crews have turned their attention to the area of the horse's face.

Visitors are in for a treat, because blocking-out literally will be a high-profile undertaking. During this summer season, workers and their equipment will be perched on the precipitous, high-up areas of the head, in clear view of visitors with binoculars. These cliff-hanging explosive experts have assembled a small fleet of drilling equipment, and there will be unusually big blasts, some removing 20 to 30 feet of rock at a time. There is a tremendous amount of rock overburden to remove, and it will take years of drilling and blasting. There's a lot of excitement about witnessing Crazy Horse's steed take shape.

While the warrior appears stoic and resolute, the model shows a horse full of energy, motion and dynamics. Flying mane and forelock, laid-back ears, flaring nostrils and straining muscles impart a sense of speed and forward motion to the stallion, which seems to carry the rider forward into the wind, too.

Korczak was a superb sculptor of horses. In addition to the model for the Crazy Horse project, you can view two other horse sculptures by Ziolkowski on the premises.

These two works hint at the awesome magnificence of the future figure on the mountain, where the face of a straining warhorse will be 219 feet high!