

The Devil, Lunch and a T-Shirt (Travel)

Filed under: [Travel](#) — @ 8:39 am

If you hear a dull roar at the edge of your peripheral hearing this week, don't worry that aliens are calling to you from the Mother Ship.

The noise is coming from Sturgis South Dakota where nearly 600,000 bikers and their bikes, most of them Harleys, have descended on the otherwise peaceful Black Hills. The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally calls itself the single largest multi-day sporting event in the world, and that buzzing roar rocking the heavens this week verifies that indeed, something very big is going on.

Of course, that's not at all what the 25 members of the Jackpine Gypsies, a local motorcycle club, were planning in 1938 when they organized the first event. The little club needed a fundraiser, so they set up a dirt track and held nine races one day. About 200 people showed up.

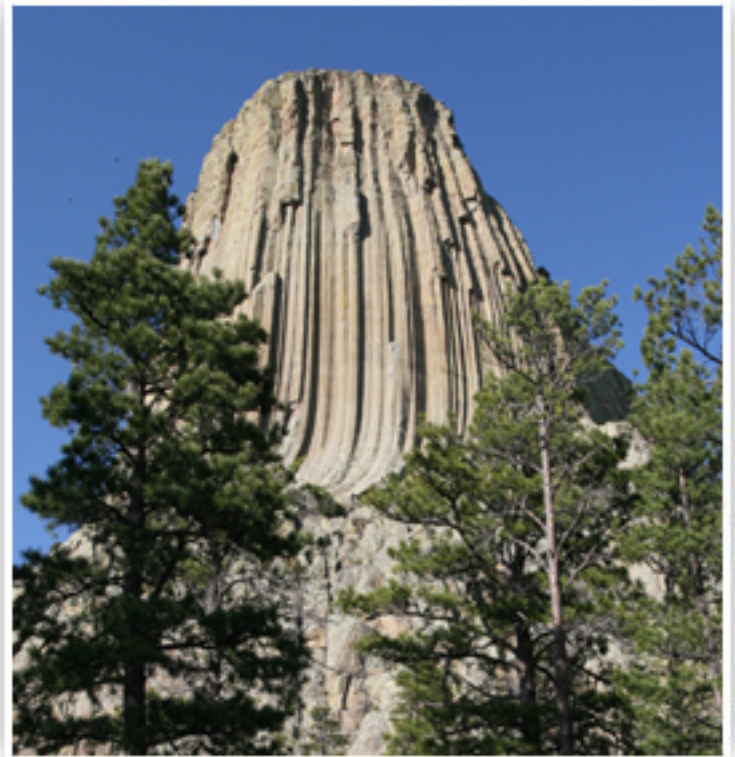
In the 1940s as more people started coming to Sturgis, the Jackpine Gypsies organized a ride to a little spot in the hills near the village of Keystone where a fellow named Gutzom Borglum was making a commotion carving up the side of a mountain.

Today, the mountain is called Rushmore and the ride is called the Mayor's Ride. In addition to the Mayor of Sturgis, you get the governor of South Dakota and a bunch of other elected officials for your \$160 donation. But that includes lunch at the fabulous State Game Lodge in Custer State Park, a cool T-shirt and collector's pin, and lots of other goodies. Last year, the Mayor's Ride raised about \$30,000 for the Sturgis Fire Department.

By the 1950s, the ride to Mount Rushmore wasn't enough to entertain the crowd. So the Jackpine Gypsies started another ride about 100 miles into Wyoming to a place called Devil's Tower. This is also a national monument, but it doesn't get as many visitors as Mount Rushmore.

And that's a shame. Devil's Tower got a lot of exposure in the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," but other than that, it sits quietly in the middle of nowhere, occasionally allowing someone to climb its sides.

Out in the middle of beautiful grasslands, there appears this big rock, protruding 1,267 feet in the air. Scientists describe the tower as an igneous stock or intrusion in the flow of volcanic lava underneath the earth's surface. It might help if you think about it as a magnificent zit on the face of Mother Nature.



The Native Americans of the region consider it a holy place and call it the Bear's Lodge. There are beautiful stories that accompany the tower about how a large bear attacked three sisters, which resulted in the claw marks down the side of the rock.

Doug Navrisky is leading the ride to Devil's Tower this very morning. Now a seasoned member of the Jackpine Gypsies, Navrisky made the mistake of riding a Honda 90 to his first Sturgis rally when he was 16 years old.

"I went to Sturgis as a boy, but came back a man," said Navrisky, who now rides a 98 "peanut butter and jelly" Harley FLTR.

He loves going to the Devil's Tower and for \$40, which gets you a T-shirt, lunch, admission to the monument and the valuable collectors pin, you can ride along with Doug – if not this year, maybe next year.

The date will be August 6, 2009. Doug will be expecting you.

–Diana Lambdin Meyer, RED Travel Writer

–Photo by Bruce N. Meyer