



STURGIS 2026 GROUP RIDE



BADLANDS + WALL DRUG

*A Gray Beard Biker Group Ride
Saturday, August 8th — Sturgis Bike Week 2026
Sponsored by Camp Easy Ride*

Meet up	Staging 7:40 AM at Camp Easy Ride, inside the Buffalo Chip — kickstands up 8:00 AM SHARP
The day	~230 miles, back at the Chip between 4:30 and 5:45 PM — your evening stays free for the show
Bring	A WORKING credit/debit card (the park gate takes no cash), water on the bike, mesh gear if you have it, and a full tank — the Chip has its own fuel station, use it before staging
Fees	\$25 per motorcycle at the Badlands gate — card only, good for 7 days. America the Beautiful passes accepted.
Highway miles	Two I-90 stretches (heading out, and home from Wall) — expect highway speeds and big spacing there
Pace	This is a photo ride, not a race. Lots of stops — some far apart, some a half mile apart. The stops ARE the ride.

AUGUST HEAT — TAKE THIS ONE SERIOUSLY

The Badlands regularly run past 100°F on August afternoons with zero shade at the overlooks. That's why we ride the park in the MORNING and eat lunch in air conditioning at Wall. Carry water on the bike, drink at every stop, and refill at the visitor center. If you start feeling off — dizzy, done sweating, weird — throw a signal and we stop. Wall Drug's free ice water has been saving travelers since 1936; use it.

FLYING A DRONE?

Badlands National Park: prohibited. Federal NPS rule — no launching, landing, or flying anywhere inside the park, with real fines. Drones stay packed from the entrance gate until Wall.

The Highway 44 prairie stretch (Buffalo Gap National Grassland): recreational flying is allowed under 400 ft, clear of people and livestock — the ghost town at Scenic is your legal flying window today.

RIDE NOTES

Fill up at the Chip before staging — the only fuel on today's route before Wall is Cowboy Corner, roughly 90 miles in at the park's doorstep, and it's our last-chance fuel stop before the Badlands. Buy your \$25 Badlands pass online before Saturday and the whole group rolls through the gate quicker. We regroup at every named stop — if you get separated, don't panic-chase: ride your pace to the next stop on this guide and we'll be there. And always: ride your own ride.

THE MORNING — OUT THE QUIET WAY

Roll-out: Buffalo Chip to I-90 East

ETA: 8:00 AM | Time here: —

We open with about 28 highway miles east — staggered formation, big gaps, highway speeds — to the edge of Rapid City, then drop south onto Highway 44: empty prairie two-lane most rally traffic never sees.

Good to know: Start with a FULL tank from the Chip's fuel station — the only pump on today's route before Wall is Cowboy Corner, about 90 miles in.

Scenic, SD — Ghost Town

ETA: 9:35 AM | Time here: 0–10 min

A genuine ghost town on Highway 44 — weathered false-front buildings, the old jail, fading signage. It boomed small, died slow, and photographs like a movie set.

The shot: Bikes staged on the empty main street against the false fronts. Drone pilots: this is your window.

Good to know: Nothing's open here — photo stop only.

Cowboy Corner, Interior — LAST FUEL BEFORE WALL DRUG

ETA: 9:55 AM | Time here: 10–15 min

A genuine mom-and-pop gas stop on the approach road to the park entrance — and the last pump until Wall, on the far side of the Badlands. Old-school pumps: fill FIRST, then go inside and pay.

The shot: Vintage pumps with a row of bikes — a shot on its own.

Good to know: Restrooms here. If your tank's under half, top off — there is NO fuel inside the park.

MID-MORNING — THE BADLANDS LOOP, EAST TO WEST

Through the gate (\$25, card only — have it ready or your pass on your phone), then the loop road west through every marquee overlook with the morning sun behind us — and out the north end before the real heat arrives.

Ben Reifel Visitor Center

ETA: 10:20 AM | Time here: 15–20 min

The park's main visitor center: real restrooms, water-bottle filling, air conditioning, fossil exhibits, and rangers who know where the bighorns were this morning.

Good to know: Top off every water bottle — this is the last easy water until Wall.

Door Trail (+ Window Trail, same lot)

ETA: 10:45 AM | Time here: 30 min

Not a hike — a flat 0.75-mile round trip, and the first quarter mile is a boardwalk that carries you through 'the Door,' a break in the Badlands Wall, and drops you INSIDE the formations. Riding boots are fine. Walk at least to the boardwalk's end — that's the full experience; past it, yellow marker poles let you wander the moonscape another five minutes if you want. Same lot has the Window Trail: a quarter mile to a natural rock window framing an eroded canyon.

The shot: A 360 camera or phone panorama walking through the Door; friends scattered among the formations for scale.

Good to know: Skip the Notch Trail from this lot — that one IS a hike, with a log ladder.

Big Badlands Overlook

ETA: 11:20 AM | Time here: 15 min

The park's famous first-impression view — a short boardwalk to a sweeping panorama of the Badlands Wall. This is the picture most people mean when they say 'the Badlands.'

The shot: The classic wide establishing shot. You can walk out onto the rock — mind the edges; there are no guard rails anywhere in this park.

Good to know: This is our turnaround: leaving the lot, the group exits RIGHT and makes a U-turn at the median break — follow the leader, it'll make sense on the ground.

Bigfoot Pass Overlook

ETA: 11:55 AM | Time here: 15 min

This overlook marks where Chief Big Foot's band descended the Badlands Wall in December 1890, evading the cavalry in the days before Wounded Knee. The view is excellent; the story is better.

Good to know: Restrooms and covered picnic shade here — the best regroup facilities on the whole loop. Use them.

Panorama Point

ETA: 12:15 PM | Time here: 10–15 min

A short boardwalk to a rim view running for miles across the spires — and one of the likelier spots to see bison out on the prairie below.

The shot: The big wide shot of the day. Zoom in if the herd's out there.

Conata Basin Overlook / Dillon Pass

ETA: 12:40 PM | Time here: 10 min

First of the color pair — an elevated overlook across Conata Basin toward the banded yellow-and-red mounds. From here the road drops through Dillon Pass, a descent cut straight through the color bands, and delivers us to Yellow Mounds.

The shot: The high angle across the mounds — then keep cameras rolling on the descent itself.

Good to know: Don't walk out on the mounds — the clay sticks to boots like glue.

Yellow Mounds Overlook

ETA: 12:55 PM | Time here: 10–15 min

The close-up half of the pair — banded yellow-and-red fossil-soil mounds right at the roadside, a color anomaly that looks like nothing else in the park. Many call it the best single stop on the drive.

The shot: Walk up the small hill left of the pull-off for the full 360. Midday sun helps here — the color is the subject.

Pinnacles Overlook

ETA: 1:15 PM | Time here: 20 min

The biggest overlook complex on the loop — multi-level vistas near the north entrance.

The shot: Scan the ridgelines: this is bighorn sheep territory, and a bighorn on a Badlands spire is a keeper.

Good to know: Last stop in the park — from here it's 8 miles north to lunch.

LUNCH — THE WALL BLOCK

Wall Drug Store

ETA: 1:45 PM | Time here: 60–75 min (with the Harley shop)

The most famous roadside stop in America — 76,000 square feet of cafe, shops, western art, the backyard jackalope, and the free ice water that built the place in 1936. The 5-cent coffee is real (dine-in). Veterans: free coffee and a donut.

The shot: The jackalope saddle out back, the donut counter, the sign-forest kitsch. Lunch in the cafe — the donuts and burgers earn their reputation.

Good to know: The air conditioning is part of the plan — this is the midday heat shelter.

Badlands Harley-Davidson — right across the street

ETA: same stop | Time here: 15–20 min

Directly across Main Street from Wall Drug — a licensed H-D apparel and merch store, and a standing tradition on the Sturgis-to-Badlands run. The t-shirt, the pin, and the poker chip live here.

The shot: Bikes lined on Main Street between the two institutions — the classic Wall photo.

Good to know: It's a store, not a dealership — apparel and collectibles, no service department.

THE RIDE HOME — AND THE GROUP VOTE

Optional: Black Hills Harley-Davidson, Exit 55

ETA: 4:00 PM if we stop | Time here: 60–90 min

The rally's monster dealership — during Sturgis week the whole Exit 55 complex becomes a vendor midway with demo fleets, and it sits one minute off the interstate on our way home.

Good to know: We vote at lunch in Wall: stop here (back at the Chip ~5:45) or ride straight through (back ~4:30). Majority rules, decided at the table.

Back at the Buffalo Chip

ETA: 4:30 PM direct / 5:45 PM with the stop | Time here: —

I-90 west into Sturgis, then home to the Chip with the whole evening ahead of you. See you at the show.

Questions on ride day? Find Zachary or the sweep rider at staging. Route map and GPX download:
graybeardbiker.com/rides — if you run your own GPS, remember different route readers calculate differently: stay with the group, and if we're separated, meet at the next stop in this guide. Fees verified July 2026 and subject to change.
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