

## Pactola Reservoir

Pactola was a small gold rush town that occupied a mountain valley in the Black Hills. In addition to the settlement, there were church camps, a camp for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and a center for tuberculosis patients. These sites are now at the bottom of Pactola Reservoir, the largest and deepest lake in the mountainous Black Hills.

Construction on the 230-foot high and 1,255-foot wide dam structure began in late 1952 and was completed during the summer of 1956. It created an 800-acre lake that is 150 feet deep and has 14 miles of shoreline. Today, the Bureau of Reclamation manages the dam and reservoir. The water is used for irrigation, recreation, flood control, and municipal use.

Pactola Reservoir is very popular, in part because it's so accessible and visible. Highway 385 cuts directly over the dam, revealing glorious views over the water that beckon your camera from its case. There is an overlook pull-off and Forest Service visitor center on the south end of the dam that is open during the peak summer season.

There are two campgrounds at Pactola and both are on the south side of the reservoir. One is Bear Gulch, a remote group campground. The main one, Pactola, is a sprawling recreation site that accommodates hundreds of campers in a rolling ponderosa pine forest.



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## Pactola Campground

A recreational playground on the shore of a large reservoir

<b>Map</b>	Page 28
<b>Usage</b>	High
<b>Sites</b>	88
<b>Cost</b>	\$16-\$21 (no fee during the off season)
<b>Camp Facilities</b>	Fire rings, grills, picnic tables, water, restrooms, trash containers, boat ramp
<b>Spur Length</b>	Long—up to 50 feet
<b>Managing Agency</b>	USDA Forest Service—Black Hills National Forest; a host is on site
<b>Reservations</b>	Accepted—check <a href="http://www.recreation.gov">www.recreation.gov</a> or call (877) 444-6777
<b>Season</b>	Open all year
<b>Elevation</b>	4,800 feet
<b>GPS Coordinates</b>	N44° 3.92' W103° 30.20'

### The Camp

Pactola Campground has three separate loops that seem to be out of order. The first is Loop C, which contains the first 22 sites in addition to 8 terrific tent sites. This loop receives the most traffic because it offers a direct route to the reservoir and boat ramp. Sites 23-47 are found in Loop A, which is the middle section of the campground. The last, Loop B, contains sites 48-80 and is the furthest from the water.



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Among the loops, there are four handicap-accessible sites. Many of the campsites have a limited view of the water. Long parking spurs accommodate large RVs and trailers.

The reservoir is a well-known fishery in this part of South Dakota. Famed for its record lake trout—a 28 pounder was caught in 2009—the waters also hold perch, rainbow trout, and brown trout. Fishing for sizable brown trout is also popular in Rapid Creek, above and below the lake. East of the campground, you'll find the reservoir's southern marina (there is a northern one as well) in addition to a swim beach and picnic area.

There are several hiking and mountain biking opportunities around camp. At Loop B, you'll find the Osprey Trail (Trail 58). This 2.2-mile path has two loops and a track that leads to the water. It is named after the raptors that are commonly seen here. East of the dam is a trailhead for the Centennial Trail, the 111-mile path that traverses the Black Hills. A shorter option includes Veteran's Point at the north end of the dam. This is a .75-mile paved and handicap-accessible trail that includes picnic tables, interpretive signs, restrooms, and fishing piers.

## Field Notes

This is a busy place during the summer, on the water and off. If you like to join the action, you'll enjoy this hoppin' camp. If you're looking for calmer waters, check out one of the smaller lakes such as Dalton Lake or Roubaix Lake.

## Directions

From Rapid City, take HWY 44 west for 17 miles. Turn left onto HWY 385 and drive south for nearly 3 miles. Turn right onto the paved access road and follow the signs for a couple more miles to reach the recreation area.

If driving from Hill City, follow HWY 16/HWY 385 north for almost 14 miles to the turnoff on the left. Follow the paved road to the campground.

