

Ambling Along U.S. Highway 212

U.S. HIGHWAY 212 STRETCHES more than 900 miles from near Minnesota's Twin Cities to Montana's Yellowstone National Park. More than half that route – 475 miles from Danube, Minn., to Belle Fourche, S.D. – winds through areas served by 11 different electric cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota.

While it is still an important route through the state, many opt for the higher speeds offered by Interstate 90. But, faster isn't always better and Highway 212 offers travelers many insights into life in the region.

As the road ventures steadily westward, travelers encounter many aspects that thread the communities together. Agricultural enterprises are celebrated along the route – from sugar beet processing at Renville, Minn., to Clark, S.D.'s Potato Festival to the sheep ranching country surrounding Newell, S.D. Cultural aspects are also celebrated in numerous museums such as the Terry Redlin Art Museum in Watertown, S.D., to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe's museums and headquarters in Eagle Butte, S.D.

With advance reservations, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe offers wildlife, eco and culture tours through their tourism office. Tours must be arranged at least two weeks in advance.

The route also offers travelers to get a glimpse of days gone by as many communities operate museums dedicated to pioneers and early residents of the area. A few former South Dakota governors' homes

Celebrating the biggest local crop, Clark's Potato Day includes popular mashed potato wrestling, as well as arts in the park, a classic car show, antique tractor show, entertainment and more. Potato Day is one of many community events occurring this summer in towns along U.S. Highway 212.



Photo by South Dakota Tourism.

can even be found en route.

Recreational opportunities also abound as this route traverses two major regional rivers: the Minnesota River and the Missouri River. The Montevideo, Minn., area touts its hunting, canoeing and kayaking opportunities, and pheasant hunting season sees an influx of visitors to Redfield each fall. Walleye fishing along the Missouri brings anglers to Whitlock Bay for numerous fishing tournaments.

Traveling along this route also provides motorists with a glimpse of the somewhat unusual. The Ken Bell Conversation Pieces on the outskirts of Clark cause motorists to do a double take as they wonder if the assembly of cars, wheels and other metal objects are carefully orchestrated or simply haphazardly placed. Bell's work includes "The Parade," a series of red 1976 Ford LTDs which stand staggered in two columns.

Also east of Clark stands the Little Fellow Memorial. The memorial is the site of the community's annual Memorial Day observance remembering a pioneer boy who once lived in a tarpaper shack along the railroad tracks. As the story goes, the

boy loved the trains and when he died was buried near the tracks. A train conductor who had often waved to the little boy made arrangements for the care of the grave after the boy's family had left the area. When the conductor died, his family took over the care of the grave site and it is now cared for by the Clark Rotary Club. The annual observance has taken place at the grave site since 1890.

Faulkton's 1925 Carousel was No. 8 manufactured by the C.W. Parker Co. of Leavenworth, Kansas. Many of its horses and chariot seats are original to the carousel. The Carousel operates Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday evenings.

For Newell, S.D., mayor and Butte Electric Cooperative Manager Ken Wetz, the favorite stretch of Highway 212 is the one closest to home.

"I really like the prairie, so I like the drive – the wildlife, deer, wild turkeys – all that you encounter along the road," said Wetz.

And Wetz offers up Bob's Steakhouse at Whitlock Bay as a must-do for the hungry traveler.

A Selection of Summer Events Along the Road

Here's a partial selection of activities happening in Highway 212 communities this summer. Events are listed from east to west. Please confirm the dates with the host community before planning your trip.

Watertown
June 16 Uptown Watertown's Artwalk Showcase

July 4 Fourth of July Parade
Aug. 4-5 Redlin Art Center's 10th Anniversary Celebration

Aug. 11-12 Dakota Territory Shootout
Grass Drags

Aug. 25 Shrine Ranch Rodeo

Clark
June 10 Heritage Day
Aug. 4 Clark Potato Day
Aug. 4-5 Clark County Threshing Bee

Henry
July 6-7 125th Anniversary Celebration

Redfield
Aug. 18 Redfield Bull-A-Rama

Faulkton
June 30- July 4 Faulkton Rodeo and Wild West Days

June 9-10

June 30

July 7-8

Aug. 9-12

June 8-10

TBA
Aug. 31-Sept. 3

June 9-10

July 13-15

July 13-15
July 22
Aug. 25

Sept. 15

Aug. 25

Gettysburg

Gettysburg's Walk in the Park:
Finding Your Way
Dakota Kruger Annual Summer
Run Car Show
27th Annual Whitlock Bay
Walleye Fishing Tournament
Walk in the Park: Exploring the
Outdoors

La Plant

LaPlant Community Powwow

Eagle Butte

Victory Day Wacipi
CRST Labor Day Fair and Rodeo

Dupree

Dupree Regional High
School Rodeo
Dupree Pioneer Days
Celebration
Dupree Community Powwow
Ziebach County 4-H Rodeo
Dupree Demolition Derby and
ATV Games
Dupree Annual Threshing Bee

Faith

Faith Stock Show and Rodeo

Sept. 2-3

Sept. 2

Sept. 2

Sept. 3

Sept. 20-21

Sept. 1

June 9-10

June 10

June 14

June 15-16

June 20-24

June 23

June 30

July 2-4

July 4

Aug. 21-25

Newell

Newell Labor Day Celebration
Julie Sexton Memorial
Ranch Rodeo
Newell Antique Tractor and
Car Show
Antique Tractor Pull Contest
Newell Ram Show and Sale

Nisland

Butte-Lawrence County Fair

Belle Fourche

All-Car Rally
S.D. Annual International Chili
Society Chili Cook-off
Johnny Spaulding Cabin
Open House
Tri-State Rodeo
S.D. High School Rodeo
State Finals
Branding and Chuckwagon
Supper
Northern Hills Shrine Circus
Annual Black Hills Roundup
Rodeo
4th of July Parade
RiverFest