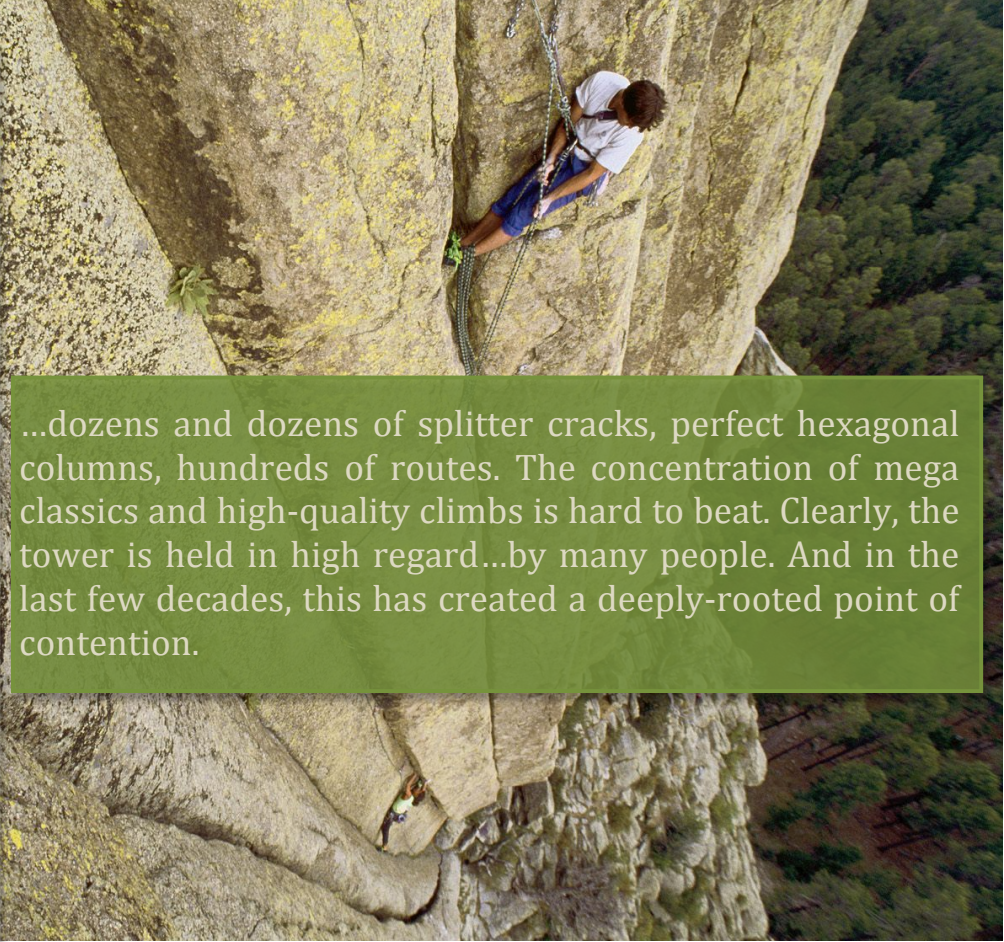


When you think Devils Tower, you think
Climbing Mecca...

Devils Tower:

Contested Sacred Land

A photograph of a person climbing the rock face of Devils Tower. The climber is wearing a white t-shirt and blue shorts, and is secured by ropes and gear. The rock is a light tan color with some yellow lichen. The background shows a dense green forest.

...dozens and dozens of splitter cracks, perfect hexagonal columns, hundreds of routes. The concentration of mega classics and high-quality climbs is hard to beat. Clearly, the tower is held in high regard...by many people. And in the last few decades, this has created a deeply-rooted point of contention.

I'm not here to argue the validity of spiritual practice. I too recognize the unique spiritual nature of rock climbing. I rely on it for sanity. I know the clarity that comes from focusing on a single movement, from balancing tenuous foot placements with precise throws at gritty features that you shouldn't be able to stick to. It comes too from scaling cracks, the very absence of rock.

However I *am* here to argue for respect, and a dedication to climbing ethics.

For those new to the Devils Tower story, here's the 15-second quick-and-dirty history review. Native people have considered the tower a sacred place for centuries--long before any settlers arrived here.

In 1868, the U.S. Government signed the tower and all of the Black Hills over to the Sioux Nation. Shortly thereafter, gold was found in the region.

In 1877, the Government took the land back. Teddy Roosevelt declared it a National Monument in 1906.