

Wall Drug Encyclopedia Article

Wall Drug

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A rest stop at Wall Drug in South Dakota is a passport to a truly egalitarian social setting. It is a place that not only relieves highway tedium but enables friendly interaction with other people from all walks of life, none of which could have been foreseen in its humble origins. For summer travelers driving endless hot hours across the Great Plains, an offer of free ice water cannot possibly be ignored. This simple but effective advertising gimmick was the savior of a small shop threatened with extinction by the hard times of the Depression. It was the brainchild of Ted and Dorothy Hustead, who had owned the establishment for five years without seeing much in the way of profit. In 1936, they put up some signs along the highway, and visitors started pouring in. They were still arriving in droves by the end of the twentieth century, and the tiny drug store located off Interstate-90 in downtown Wall, South Dakota, has expanded, evolving into several blocks of representational Wild West architecture, where shaded arcades of shops share space with motel and restaurant facilities. And yes, you can still get that free ice water.

Wall Drug, South Dakota.

Further Reading:

Jennings, Dana. *Free Ice Water: The Story of the Wall Drug*. Aberdeen, South Dakota, North Plains Books & Art, 1975.

"Wall Drug." <http://www.walldrug.com>. April 1999.