

NEBRASKA GROUP TOUR TRAVEL PLANNER

Second Edition: 2006

Prepared by:

The Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division

PO Box 98907

Lincoln NE 68509

1.877.NEBRASKA

www.VisitNebraska.org

Greetings!

This Nebraska Group Tour Travel Planner is your introduction to great travel experiences! Consider yourself invited to share all we have to offer from small town charm to cosmopolitan excitement.

The highways and byways of Nebraska will lead you to much more than just the next town. Chart a historical course to relive the stories of Crazy Horse and Buffalo Bill. The road to culture and fine arts will lead you to art galleries, museums, botanical gardens, artist studios, ethnic festivals and restaurants, symphonies and Broadway productions. Follow your stomachs to some good old fashioned home-cookin' or enjoy a night on the town with friends over exotic cuisine at one of our upscale international restaurants. Explore the country that inspired novelists Willa Cather, Mari Sandoz, Wright Morris, John G. Neihardt, Bess Streeter Aldrich and U. S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize for Poetry winner Ted Kooser.

I invite you to explore the endless group tour possibilities found across Nebraska. Should you need the help of convention and visitors bureaus you'll find a list in the Group Tour Travel Planner. In the back of the Planner there's a list of lodging properties that can accommodate group tours. The enclosed annual Nebraska Festivals Guide will help you select entertaining and exciting events from the National Czech Festival to the Running of the Wieners. Finally, you will find the Nebraska Travel Guide that provides comprehensive information on attractions across the state. For your convenience, you can access the Nebraska Group Tour Travel Planner on the Internet at www.VisitNebraska.org.

I am sure that Nebraska will meet and exceed your expectations! Remember, in Nebraska the only wrong road is the road not taken.

Please contact me with any questions at 1-877-NEBRASKA (877-632-7275), 402-471-3744 (direct line) or email me at pbohaty@VisitNebraska.org

Paula Bohaty
Nebraska Group Travel Manager
Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division

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Nebraska Group Travel Manager

Paula Bohaty

Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division

Author

Micheal Collins

Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division

Editor

Sue Sitzmann

Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Reviewers

Heather Hogue and Mary Ethel Emanuel

Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division

Maps

Zach Schroeder

Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Photographs

Jodi Paus

Snitily Carr

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General Travel Information

There are many exciting and interesting tour opportunities awaiting your discovery in Nebraska. The information in this tour manual is designed to help make planning and operating your tour through Nebraska as easy and profitable as possible.

We will gladly provide you with additional information if there is something you need to know that is not included in the manual.

We look forward to serving you!

Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism

Paula Bohaty, Group Travel Manager

301 Centennial Mall South

P.O. Box 98907

Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-8907

877-NEBRASKA (877-632-7275)

Direct line (402) 471-3744

Fax: (402) 471-3026

E-mail: pbohaty@VisitNebraska.org

Website: <http://www.visitnebraska.org/>

Time Zones

The state of Nebraska spans two time zones. The eastern two-thirds of Nebraska is included in the Central Time Zone, and the western third in the Mountain Time Zone. When traveling on Interstate 80, the time change occurs between the Sutherland and Paxton exits.

Nebraska Topography

Eastern Nebraska is covered with rugged bluffs, rolling hills, picturesque valleys and lush vegetation. The Great Plains stretch westward across 75% of the state, and include rock formations, eroded hills and deep canyons. The Sandhills, North America's largest stabilized sand dune formation, covers the west central part of Nebraska, and are bordered by the Nebraska National Forest near Thedford. The High Plains are northwest, southwest, and west of the Sandhills. Within these 12,000 square miles are the scenic and rugged Wildcat Hills and Pine Ridge. A small area of South Dakota's Badlands also extends into northwestern Nebraska.

Nebraska Facts and Tidbits

Location

North central United States. Bordered by South Dakota on the north, Iowa and Missouri on the east, Kansas on the south, and Colorado and Wyoming on the west.

Elevation

Highest point: 5,424 feet in Kimball County. Lowest point: 840 feet in Richardson County. Nebraska's average elevation is 2,600 feet.

Area

77,358 square miles; 16th largest state

Nebraska measures 459 miles across at its widest point, following a diagonal from southeast to northwest.

Population

1,713,375 (2000); 38th largest state.

Statehood

Nebraska became the 37th state on March 1, 1867.

Origin of Name

From Oto Indian word "Nebrathka" meaning "flat water" (the tribe's name for the Platte River, which crosses the state).

State Capital

Lincoln.

State Government

Nebraska is the only state with a single house Legislature—the Unicameral.

Ten Largest Cities

Omaha 404,267; Lincoln 235,594; Bellevue 46,734; Grand Island 43,771; Kearney 28,211; Fremont 25,198; Norfolk 24,061; Hastings 23,536; North Platte 23,924; Columbus 20,880.

State Parks

Eight state park areas, 74 recreational and historical areas and 5 federal camping areas

State Symbols

Flower Goldenrod

Tree Cottonwood

Bird Western Meadowlark

Insect Honeybee

Mammal White Tailed Deer

Motto Equality Before the Law

Gemstone Blue Chalcedony

Fish Channel Catfish

Song "Beautiful Nebraska" composed by Jim Fras

Presidential Birthplace

38th President Gerald Rudolph Ford, 1974-1977

Born: July 14, 1913, in Omaha, Neb.

Nickname

The Cornhusker State (from the method of harvesting or “husking” corn by hand).

Seasons

Nebraska offers a full four-season climate. Normal average daily temperatures range from minus 20° F in the winter to more than 75° F in the summer. Annual precipitation ranges from over 30” in the southeast to less than 17” in the Nebraska Panhandle.

Rivers and Lakes

Nebraska has approximately 2,500 natural and man-made small lakes.

Climate of Nebraska*

Normal Temperature

Month	Panhandle	North Central	Northeast	Central	East Central	Southwest	South Central	Southeast
January	24.1	21.5	19.6	22.3	22.0	25.1	24.7	23.8
February	28.6	27.3	25.7	28.1	27.9	31.0	30.5	29.8
March	35.0	36.1	36.5	37.5	38.6	39.1	39.8	40.5
April	45.3	46.7	48.7	48.4	50.6	48.8	50.5	51.6
May	55.7	57.6	60.2	59.1	61.5	58.7	60.6	62.0
June	65.7	67.5	70.1	69.2	17.7	69.2	71.1	72.1
July	72.9	73.3	74.6	74.2	76.0	74.9	76.3	76.7
August	70.8	71.4	72.3	72.1	73.6	73.0	74.0	74.5
September	60.6	61.4	63.1	62.7	64.7	36.2	64.7	65.7
October	48.8	49.3	50.9	50.6	52.7	51.1	25.6	53.8
November	34.7	33.7	34.8	35.1	37.1	36.6	37.3	38.8
December	26.7	24.3	23.2	25.2	25.6	27.8	27.6	27.6
Annual	47.4	47.5	48.3	48.7	50.2	49.9	50.8	51.4

Average Humidity, Wind and Weather

Station	Relative Humidity (Percent)	Mean Wind Velocity (MPH)	Prevailing Wind Direction	Sunshine (Percent of Possible)	Sky Cover Sunrise to Sunset (Tenths)	Annual Number of Days with Precipitation Measurable
Grand Island	66	11.8	S	—	—	88.2
Lincoln	69	9.4	S	62	—	90.7
Norfolk	66	11.3	S	—	5.7	91.4
North Platte	65	10.2	S	66	5.7	84.2
Omaha	68	10.5	SSE	60	5.8	99.7
Scottsbluff	59	10.7	NW	—	5.6	87.7
Valentine	59	9.4	NW	66	5.5	83.6

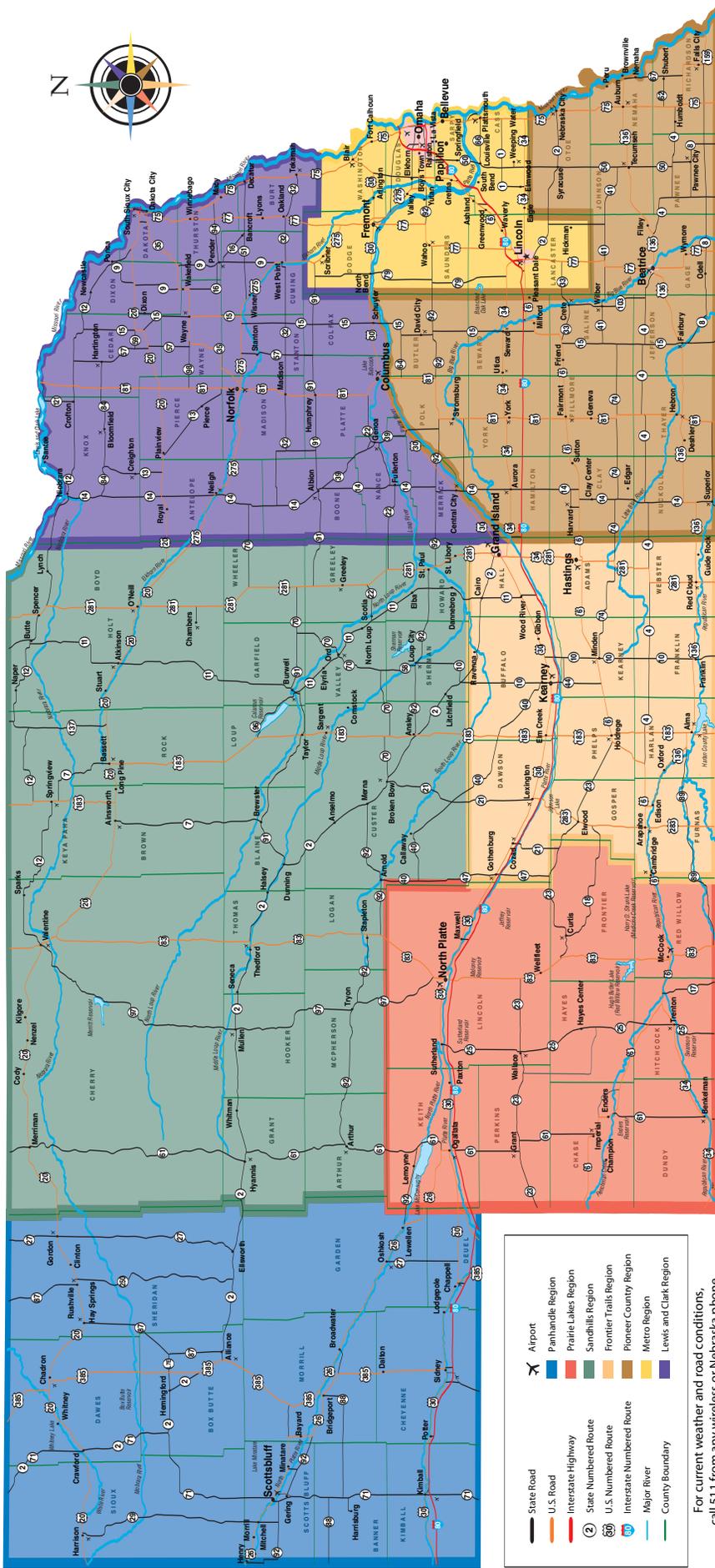
Normal Precipitation

Month	Panhandle	North Central	Northeast	Central	East Central	Southwest	South Central	Southeast
January	0.40	0.45	0.54	0.51	0.67	0.47	0.46	0.73
February	0.44	0.58	0.70	0.61	0.71	0.52	0.56	0.81
March	1.08	1.47	2.01	1.86	2.24	1.34	1.92	2.38
April	1.85	2.32	2.81	2.56	2.94	1.97	2.25	2.90
May	3.10	3.64	4.05	3.89	4.51	3.30	4.07	4.42
June	2.67	3.40	4.01	3.78	4.05	3.18	5.42	3.85
July	2.39	3.32	3.41	3.42	3.60	3.03	3.70	4.30
August	1.70	2.46	3.01	2.80	3.35	2.44	3.07	3.49
September	1.43	2.06	2.42	2.14	2.86	1.40	2.11	3.20
October	1.07	1.52	1.91	1.51	2.12	1.25	1.47	2.22
November	0.64	1.04	1.51	1.27	1.68	0.86	1.27	1.80
December	0.41	0.48	0.68	0.57	0.85	0.43	0.53	0.93
Annual	17.18	22.74	27.06	24.92	29.58	20.19	24.83	31.03

Source: Nebraska State Climate Office, the High Plains Climate Center and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

* Figures based on 1971-2000 period.

State of Nebraska



Tour 1

Day Tours from Omaha, Eastern and Southeastern Nebraska

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, **the largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-feet of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for

its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to the Missouri River frontier. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that different ethnic groups have had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children's garden, herb garden, spring flowering walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-

255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Use Omaha as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

Tour A: The Pathfinder Tour



Rick's Café Boatyard, Omaha



30 minutes (16 miles) north on Highway 75 to Fort Calhoun.

Enjoy the view along the **Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway** as you make your way to Fort Calhoun and [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fun-

filled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. The National Signature Event for the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place at Fort Atkinson in 2004. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses **Too Far North**, 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are custom-made labels for all occasions. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

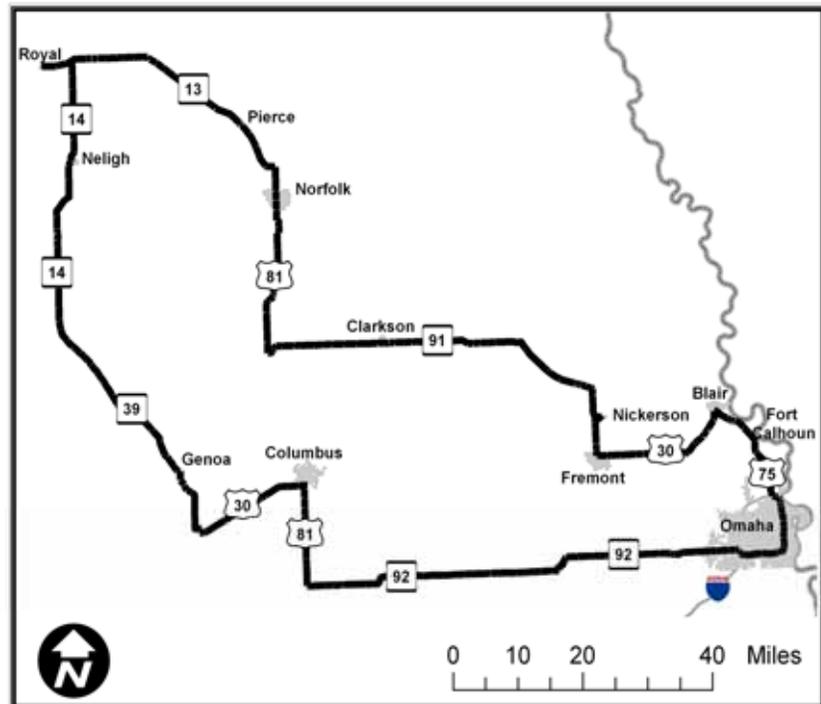
15 minutes (9 miles) north on Highway 75 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 30 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy



branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

15 minutes (9 miles) north on Highway 77 to Nickerson.

The [Apple Barn at Fontenelle Orchard](#), 402-727-5272, features fresh, tree-ripe fruit that you can pick yourself. Tours of the orchard are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour, 15 minutes (47 miles) north on Highway 77, west on Highways 275 and 91 to Clarkson.

Clarkson enjoys two major claims to fame—its rich Czech heritage and the renowned [Bluebird Nursery](#), 519 Cherry St., 402-892-3457. The Clarkson Chamber of Commerce can arrange a Czech breakfast for your group (make sure you eat a kolach, a delicious Czech pastry) and arrange a tour of the outstanding nursery. The Bluebird Nursery is one of the largest in the Midwest, and they ship seeds and plants around the globe. As you tour this quaint community, you'll notice the influence that the nursery has had on it. Clarkson is one of Nebraska's more colorful communities and boasts some of the best-kept gardens and green spaces in the state. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour (43 miles) on west on Highway 91, north on Highway 81 to Norfolk.

Norfolk, northeast Nebraska's largest city, offers a fine selection of overnight and dining facilities that cater to the group tour market. While in town be sure to visit the [Elkhorn Valley Historical Museum](#), 515 Queen City Blvd., 402-371-3886. Here you'll see a great collection of historic artifacts relating to the area, including one of the few remaining antique square turn tractors that can make a full square turn so as not to waste field space to turn around. Memorabilia on Norfolk's two famous sons—*Tonight Show* host Johnny Carson and Thural Ravenscroft, the voice of Kellogg's™ "Tony the Tiger" are on display.

A must see is the **Johnny Carson Exhibit**. Norfolk was the boyhood home of Johnny Carson from age eight through high school. Mr. Carson donated a large collection of personal items to the museum, including videotapes, early boyhood photos and vintage photos of his stage and radio days, as well as many personal items. A display of Carson's special awards—six Emmy Awards, Kennedy Center Honors Medallion, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Television Hall of Fame, and many more are on display. A unique "Best Of" home theater showing favorite *Tonight Show* episodes and monologues chosen by Johnny himself for the museum are part of this impressive collection. A full-sized, life-like Carson mannequin delivers the monologues when visitors step close enough to the exhibit. In the immortal words of Ed McMahon, "Heeeeeeeere's Johnny!"

Also be sure to check out the **Willetta Lueschen Bird Library** at the museum. With prior arrangements, museum staff can take your group to the nearby cave for a "cool" break. Located close to the museum is the new [Norfolk Arts Center](#), 305 N. 5th St., 402-

371-7199. This beautiful, new facility features an ever-changing traveling exhibit gallery, as well as showcases the works of local and regional artists. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 2 hours.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highways 81 and 13 to Pierce.

Wine making in Nebraska? You betcha! Located northeast of Pierce is Nebraska's first vineyard—[Cuthills Vineyards](#), 54663 853 Road, 402-329-4181. Walking tours of the vineyards are available, and depending on what time of year your group stops, you may be able to witness the winemaking progress. Fun things to do include sampling wines, relaxing on the spacious patio overlooking the vineyards, and eating a delicious catered meal in the historic barn. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

40 minutes (18 miles) north on Highway 13 to Plainview.

Relive your childhood days under the circus big top! The [Plainview Clown Doll Museum](#), 402-582-4433, boasts an impressive collection of more than 2,400 clown dolls. Guided tours are available upon request.

25 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 20 to Royal.

Scientists claim that [Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park](#), 402-893-2000, near Royal is one of the richest fossil finds of its kind in the northern hemisphere. Millions of years ago, a giant volcano in Idaho spewed volcanic ash into the area for several months, suffocating thousands of camels, horses and other prehistoric mammals. The ash encased the animals intact, and today visitors can go to the “Rhino Barn” to watch staff diligently uncover whole skeletons. There also is a visitor center/gift shop at the facility. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Go wild at [Zoo Nebraska](#), 4030 Highway 20, 402-893-2002, where you can view chimpanzees, monkeys, tigers, parrots, birds of prey, reptiles, wolves and much more. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (21 miles) east on Highway 20, south on Highway 14 to Neligh.

Home to one of the few remaining water-powered mills in the state, [Neligh Mills State Historical Site](#), 402-887-4303, takes groups back to a time when the mill was the center of commerce for many towns. The mill's colorful history is displayed throughout the facility. The Neligh Chamber of Commerce, 202 W. 4th St., 402-887-4195, can recommend several local spots for lunch. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Pierson Wildlife Museum Learning Center](#), 205 E. Fifth St., 402-887-4212, features one of the largest private wild game collections in the U.S., all in one exhibit that includes 100 full mounts and 50 head mounts from around the world. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

90 minutes (57 miles) south on Highways 14 and 39 to Genoa.

The [Genoa Indian School Museum](#), 209 E. Webster Ave., 402-993-6636, is the site of the former Indian Industrial School where American Indian youth were housed and educated for assimilation into white society. The students who attended the school were from 10 states and more than 20 tribes. Tours of the Manual Training Building are available throughout the year by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Genoa Historical Museum](#), 402 Willard Ave., 402-993-2330, boasts a nice collection of tribal and Mormon Trail exhibits. An original diary from Mormon Trail pioneer Henry Hudson

is on exhibit. Original wagon ruts of the Mormon Trail are visible south of town. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (30 miles) south on Highway 39, east on Highway 30 to Columbus.

Columbus offers a wide variety of tours to fit the tastes of any group, from history buffs to modern technology enthusiasts. A 1904 steam locomotive, Quicentenary Belltower, and the [Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial](#), 2001 A.J. Higgins Road, 402-564-2769, are a few reasons to tour Freedom Park. The center point of the park is a life-size replica of the Higgins landing craft that he designed and built to help win WWII. The replica is made of steel and set in sand as if it were beached. Its ramp is down to let visitors walk inside, while sand samples collected from invasion beaches across the globe are mixed with the sand that surrounds the craft. Equally impressive is the bronze eagle with a seven-foot wingspan that sits atop a steel structure made from material from the 2001 World Trade Center disaster in New York City. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. The [Platte County Historical Society Museum](#), 2916 16th St., 402-564-4553, features an 1857 log cabin complete with period furnishings. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Columbus boasts truly one of the best restaurants in Nebraska, **Dusters and the Gottburg Brew Pub**, 2804 13th St., 402-564-8338. Dining here will make you think you're in a much larger city. Even though the menu is full of delicious dishes, and you can't go wrong with anything you chose, try the Chicken Kiev. You won't regret it! Columbus is known as the most industrialized city per capita in Nebraska, and the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 764 33rd Ave., 402-564-2769, can arrange industrial tours for your group. The attractive **St. Michael's Catholic Church**, 309 3rd St., 402-428-2675, in nearby Tarnov is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1 hour, 20 minutes (56 miles) south on Highway 81, east on Highway 92 to Wahoo.

Wahoo is the former home office of *Late Night with David Letterman*. Although the "office" is a downtown phone booth, folks in Wahoo have a lot of fun with it. Wahoo also is the hometown of Oscar-winning filmmaker Darryl F. Zanuck, co-founder of the 20th Century-Fox Studios. An exhibit on his life is displayed at the [Saunders County Historical Museum](#), 240 N. Walnut St., 402-443-3090. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. The museum not only has an outstanding collection, but hosts many wonderful events throughout the year, including a Prairie Christmas in December. In addition to Zanuck, Wahoo is the home of four other famous sons: Baseball Hall-of-Famer Samuel "Wahoo Sam" Crawford, Pulitzer Prize winner Dr. Howard Hanson, artist and author Clarence W. "Herk" Anderson, and Nobel Prize winner Dr. George Beadle. The **Howard Hanson House**, 402-443-4217, has been fully restored and features memorabilia about him and Wahoo's other famous residents. For a nostalgic step back in time, stop by the [Wigwam Café](#), 146 E. 5th St., 402-443-5575, in downtown Wahoo. It's a classic original diner that is sure to be a big hit with your group.

1 hour (40 miles) east on Highway 92 to Omaha.

Tour B: A Capital Tour



Fort Atkinson State Historical Park, Fort Calhoun



30 minutes (16 miles) north on Highway 75 to Fort Calhoun.

Enjoy the view along the **Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway** as you make your way to Fort Calhoun and [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fun-filled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. The National Signature Event for the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place at Fort Atkinson in 2004. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses **Too Far North**, 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are custom-made labels for all occasions. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (9 miles) north on Highway 75 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 30 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

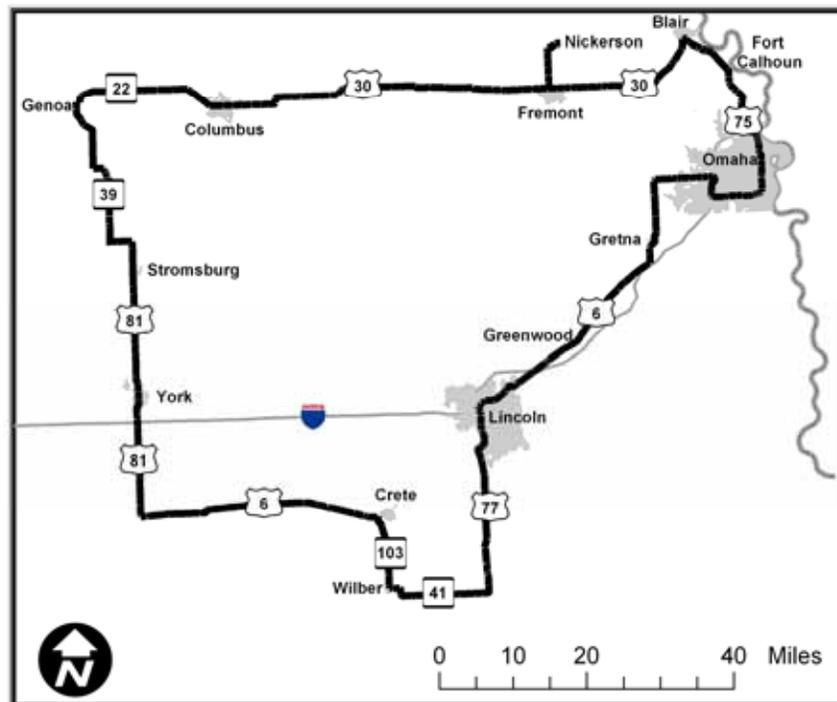
15 minutes (9 miles) north on Highway 77 to Nickerson.

The [Apple Barn at Fontenelle Orchard](#), 402-727-5272, features fresh, tree-ripe fruit that you can pick yourself. Tours of the orchard are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (49 miles) west on Highway 30 to Columbus.

Columbus offers a wide variety of tours to fit the tastes of any group, from history buffs to modern technology enthusiasts. A 1904 steam locomotive, Quicentenary Belltower, and the [Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial](#), 2001 A.J. Higgins Road, 402-564-2769, are a few reasons to tour Freedom Park.

The center point of the park is a life-size replica of the Higgins landing craft that he designed and built to help win WWII. The replica is made of steel and set in sand as if it were beached. Its ramp is down to let visitors walk inside, while sand samples collected from invasion beaches across the globe are mixed with the sand that surrounds the



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you're in a much larger city. Even though the menu is full of delicious dishes, and you can't go wrong with anything you chose, try the Chicken Kiev. You won't regret it! Columbus is known as the most industrialized city per capita in Nebraska, and the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 764 33rd Ave., 402-564-2769, can arrange industrial tours for your group. The attractive **St. Michael's Catholic Church**, 309 3rd St., 402-428-2675, in nearby Tarnov is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

40 minutes (30 miles) north on Highway 81, west on Highway 22, south on Highway 39 to Genoa.

The [Genoa Indian School Museum](#), 209 E. Webster Ave., 402-993-6636, is the site of the former Indian Industrial School where American Indian youth were housed and educated for assimilation into white society. The students who attended the school were from 10 states and more than 20 tribes. Tours of the Manual Training Building are available throughout the year by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Genoa Historical Museum](#), 402 Willard Ave., 402-993-2330, boasts a nice collection of tribal and Mormon Trail exhibits. An original diary from Mormon Trail pioneer Henry Hudson is on exhibit. Original wagon ruts of the Mormon Trail are visible south of town. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (28 miles) south on Highway 39, east on Highway 92, south on Highway 81 to Stromsburg.

Välkommen till Stromsburg! Nebraska's Swedish Capitol, 402-764-2561, hosts a great Swedish Festival in mid-June, complete with a giant smorgasbord! You can get a real sense of the Swedish heritage in Stromsburg by having your group stroll through the quaint shops in the downtown district. With prior notice, the Stromsburg Community Club, 402-764-2101, can prepare a host of Swedish delicacies and serve them in the town square or nearby Buckley Park. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (17 miles) south on Highway 81 to York.

The big balloon tells you that you are nearing York. This community of just over 8,000 offers an outstanding array of restaurants and fast-food facilities. But it is best known for **Chances 'R Restaurant and Lounge**, 124 W. 5th St., 402-362-7755, in downtown York. The "R," as it is known locally, hosts more group tours than any other private restaurant in Nebraska—and for good reasons—huge portions at reasonable rates and good food made from scratch. If you happen to be in York on a Sunday morning, the "R" offers an outstanding Sunday brunch—a treat worth fasting for.

While in York, your group will be amazed by **Lee's Legendary Marbles and Collectables**, 3120 S. Lincoln Ave., 402-362-0103. More than a half-million marbles are on display, including some very rare examples. Two other very nice York attractions are the **Anna Beemis Historical Museum**, 211 E 7th St., 402-363-2630, which features historic artifacts and the [Yorkshire Playhouse](#), 402-362-7060, which offers a taste of Broadway in small town Nebraska. Four productions are scheduled throughout the year, as well as special seasonal events and children's theater productions. The theater is handicap accessible and group rates are available for performances.

1 hour (51 miles) south on Highway 81, east on Highways 6 and 33 to Crete.

Since 2001, [Blue Valley Vineyard](#), SW 142nd St. and Stagecoach Road, 402-826-5700, in Crete has offered quality, handcrafted wines, a wine tasting room and gift shop that sell a variety of wine accessories. In the spring, summer and autumn your tour may stroll the grounds and enjoy wine on the patios and decks, while the warmth and hospitality of the tasting room awaits you in the winter. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

25 minutes (12 miles) south on Highway 103 to Wilber.

Everyone in Wilber is Czech—at least during the first weekend of August when the town hosts thousands for the Annual Wilber Czech Festival. The U.S. Congress proclaimed Wilber the National Czech Capitol and folks in Wilber take that seriously. However, you can get a sense of Czech heritage anytime you come to town. The **Wilber Czech Museum**, 102 W 3rd St., 402-821-2183, contains detailed information on the heritage of those who founded Wilber and on their homeland of Czechoslovakia. There is usually a quilting bee going on at the museum, and the ladies are always delighted to chat with you and show you around. Located next door to the museum is the **Wilber Bakery**, 104 W 3rd St., 402-821-2995, where your group must sample a kolach, also known as “Czech Danish.” Around the corner is the beautifully restored **Hotel Wilber**, 203 S. Wilson St., 402-821-2020, a wonderful bed and breakfast. Your group can tour the facility and grab a bite to eat. *Vitame Vas!* With advance notice, costumed guides are available to escort your group along walking tours of Wilber. These tours include a meal. Suggested tour time in town: 1½ hour.

1 hour (40 miles) east on Highway 41, north on Highway 77 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska’s state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska’s pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation’s only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor’s Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln’s exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln’s warehouse and farmer’s market district. Today it is home to the state’s largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket’s many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you’re looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You’re sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world’s best

licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, “**Torn Notebook**,” a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the “American Indian Gallery,” “The First Nebraskans,” “Nebraska Joins the Union,” and “Building the State.” Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled

opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get "lost" in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight at try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) east on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (7 miles) east on Highway 6 to Exit 426.

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30

wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

15 minutes (11 miles) east on Highway 6 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

30 minutes (22 miles) east on Highway 6 to Omaha.

Tour C: Branch Out in Southeast Nebraska



Homestead National Monument of America, Beatrice

30 minutes (18 miles) south on Highway 75, west on Highway 370, south on Highway 50 to Springfield.

In addition to a beautiful view of the surrounding countryside, the [Soaring Wings Winery](#), 17111 S. 138th St., 402-253-2479, offers wine tastings, tours and a gift shop. Experience an eclectic two-acre sculpture garden at the [Carl Weiss Sculpture Studio](#), 402-680-0642. The formal and informal gardens are dotted with sculptures from local and regional artists, including Carl Weiss' landscape concepts, bronze sculptures and artwork. Meander quietly along the walking paths at [Springcreek Gardens & Nursery](#), 12275 Main St., 402-253-8000, where a new plant or surprise is around every corner. The full service nursery and landscape design center offers more than 450 varieties of perennials, shrubs and landscape trees. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour.

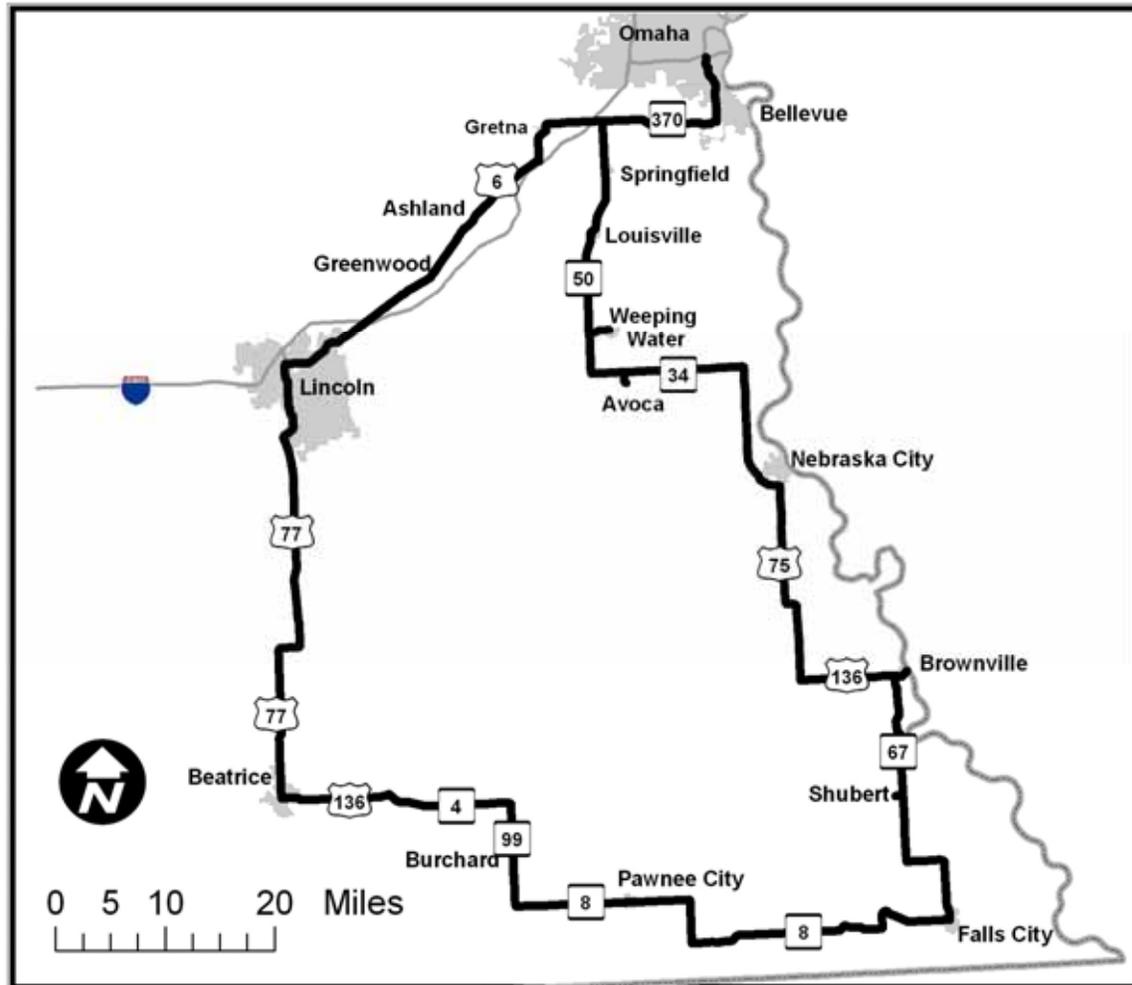
Also in Springfield is the **Springfield Old Fashioned Soda Fountain**, 205 Main St., 402-253-2000, where you can enjoy an ice cream shake and remember old times. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Meander quietly along the walking paths at [Springcreek Gardens & Nursery](#), 12275 Main St., 402-253-8000, where a new plant or surprise is around every corner. The full service nursery and landscape design center offer more than 450 varieties of perennials, shrubs and landscape trees. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

10 minutes (7 miles) south on Highway 50 to Louisville.

The [Louisville Art Gallery](#), 230 Main St., 402-234-2867, features more than 3,500-square-feet of exhibition space for sculptures, paintings, ceramics, pottery and fine art photography. **The Gallery Shop**, 127 Main St., 402-234-2669, is home to **Art Chicks**—where singing, dancing and frivolity are encouraged. You might find yourself wearing a feather boa and brandishing a magic wand as you explore the two shops and garden that make up the gallery. You can select a whimsical art piece and then indulge in a gourmet lunch. Call ahead for tours. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (12 miles) south on Highway 50 to Weeping Water.

A short drive from Omaha will bring you to the [Loft Community Theatre](#), 402-267-5400, near Weeping Water. Located in a converted 1924 hog barn, the “Born in a Barn” players have produced more than 300 plays since 1977. Four major productions run from May to October each year.



20 minutes (6 miles) south on Highway 50, east on Highway 34 to Avoca.

Pumpkins, fall produce and decorations, a wooded walking trail, picnic grounds, antiques, and gifts await your group tour at an 1881 family farmstead. **Bloom Where You’re Planted Pumpkin Patch & Barn Store**, 911 108th St., 402-267-4104, is a great escape back to the farm! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

45 minutes (25 miles) east on Highway 34, south on Highway 75 to Nebraska City.

Nebraska City boasts a variety of exciting attractions and activities, plenty of history, shopping opportunities and beautiful scenery—all in one charming community. Nebraska City’s pride and joy is [Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum](#), 2600 2nd Ave., 402-873-7222. Home of J. Sterling and Carolyn Morton, the 52-room Victorian-style mansion is a memorable stop for any group visit. J. Sterling Morton was the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland and helped establish Arbor

Day as a holiday. There are quiet walking trails, gardens and nearby orchards with an “Apple House” where travelers can enjoy a variety of apple treats and buy souvenirs. Make sure you tour the National Arbor Day Foundation’s “Tree Adventure,” which includes touch-screen exhibits, a 20-minute film that shows the significance of trees and other exciting information about the environment. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

A fine example of Victorian architecture is the **Wildwood Center Historic House and The Barn Art Gallery**, 420 Steinhart Park Road, 402-873-6340. Built in 1869, Wildwood was home to Jasper Ware, an early banker in Nebraska City. All home furnishings are of the Victorian Era, and behind the house is a gallery that displays artwork of many Nebraska artisans. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Another major Nebraska City attraction is [Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village](#), 2012 4th Corso, 402- 873-3115. Part of the Underground Railroad for slaves, this restored site has many historical artifacts on display, as well as a restored village. You also can walk through the underground cave on the grounds. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Downtown Nebraska City is a treasure trove of antique and specialty retail stores where you can find clothing for everyone, crafts and works of art, Christmas decorations, books and specialty foods. On weekends a trolley is available to take your group around town. With its abundance of changing leaves and apple harvests, fall is one of the most beautiful seasons to visit Nebraska City. For overnight or meal service, look no further than the [Lied Conference Center and Arbor Day Farms](#), 2700 Sylvan Road, 402-873-8733. This environment-friendly facility offers state-of-the-art meeting rooms, spacious overnight rooms and excellent meals. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Make sure to spend some time sipping wine at one of Nebraska’s newest wineries—[Arbor Trails Winery](#), 6450 J Road, 402-873-8888. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Experience firsthand the journey of Lewis and Clark at the [Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#), 100 Valmont Dr., 402-874-9900, which sits atop an 80-acre site overlooking the Missouri River. The center focuses on the recorded scientific discoveries of plants and animals made during the tour. Enjoy hands-on exploration activities, interactive exhibits, a life-size replica of the keelboat used by Lewis and Clark, and a 45-foot American Indian Earth Lodge. Suggested tour time: 2-3 hours. The **River Country Nature Center**, 114 S. 6th St., 402-873-3000, is open by appointment only and houses more than 400 preserved specimens of native Nebraska birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles in replicas of their natural habitats. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Free your mind and explore the artistic side of Nebraska City at the [Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts](#), 801 3rd Corso, 402-874-9600. The center is an art retreat for visual artists, writers, art scholars, choreographers and artists from across the nation. A main gallery and exhibition rooms display works of art for public viewing and are changed approximately every two months. Art classes held at the center are offered throughout the year and open to the public. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Apples, peaches, cherries, plums, grapes, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, squash, peppers, and more...oh my! Load up on delicious fresh fruits and vegetables at [Kimmel Orchard](#), 6045 G Road, 402-873-5293. A new shuttle path was developed to teach your group tour about the history and operation of the orchard. Benches, scenic resting spots, and picnic areas dot the hiking trail to let your tour enjoy spring's blossoms or the beautiful autumn colors. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (34 miles) south on Highway 75, east on Highway 136 (Heritage Highway Scenic Byway) to Brownville.

At one time the bustling community of Brownville was to serve as Nebraska's "Gateway City," but when the railroad decided to locate in Omaha, Brownville's future looked grim. Fortunately the spunky locals refused to let their community die, and today's Brownville has become a genuine tourism destination. Your group can cruise down the Missouri River on the [Spirit of Brownville](#), 402-825-4211, take in a play or concert at the **Brownville Village Theatre**, 402-825-4121, or **Brownville Concert Hall**, 402-825-3331, shop in the quaint downtown, or sip wine at sunset on the deck of [Whiskey Run Creek Winery](#), 702 Main St., 402-825-4601. The **Captain Bailey House**, **Carson House** and **Furnas House**, 402-825-6001, are some of the many restored historic homes that are open to the public.

The **Meriwether Lewis Museum of Missouri River History**, 402-825-3341, a decommissioned U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredge boat, now houses a museum dedicated to the Missouri River. The **Governor Furnas Connector Trail** connects the **Governor Furnas Arboretum**, 402-825-6637, to the Missouri River. The trail boasts more than 200 types of trees, shrubs and flowers for you to enjoy. One of the town's newest tourist endeavors is the [Brownville Lyceum](#), 225 Main St., 402-825-4321, which opened April 2005. This haven for booklovers has many used books to purchase, a reading room in which to relax and read, and a small café that serves tasty dishes. Suggested tour time in town: 2-3 hours.

10 minutes (5 miles) south on Highway 67 to Indian Cave State Park.

[Indian Cave State Park](#), 402-883-2575, includes more than 3,000 acres along the Missouri River. This pristine area is home to a variety of activities, such as camping, hiking, backpacking, picnicking, and nature and wilderness activities. There are 20 miles of hiking trails in the park. The fall months are particularly spectacular, and history buffs will enjoy the restored schoolhouse and general store from the old river town of St. Deroin. During the summer months, old-time crafts are demonstrated to visitors. You can reserve a group picnic shelter if needed. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (23 miles) south on Highways 67 and 73 to Falls City.

Two of Falls City's best attractions are the **Bell-Jenne House**, 402-245-3481, and the **Richardson County Historical Museum**, 402-245-3481. The Bell-Jenne House is an impressive two-story brick Italianate-style house built in 1881 and features eight period piece rooms to give your group tour a glimpse into life in the late 19th century. The Richardson County Historical Museum highlights the history and people of Falls City and

the region. With advance planning, tours of both facilities can be scheduled. Suggested tour time of each attraction: 1 hour.

1 hour (41 miles) west on Highway 8 to Pawnee City.

Home of film stars Irish McCalla and Harold Lloyd, Pawnee City also is home to a very impressive historical museum complex. The [Pawnee County Historical Museum](#), 402-852-3131, is comprised of 16 historic buildings that display antique furnishings, tools, vintage vehicles, rare photos, books, unique handcraft items and a variety of other artifacts. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. One of the city's newest and most unique attractions is the **Toy Pedal Clinic**, 402-852-2655, a museum dedicated to this fun toy of yesteryear. The museum displays more than 450 toy pedal cars, tractors, airplanes and a host of other small toys. Other collections at the museum include a John Deere room, kiddie car collection, kerosene lamps, quilts, bicycles, salt and pepper shakers and doll collection. Your tour also can observe museum staff while they restore old pedal cars. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Before leaving Pawnee City, stop by **Hallie's Restaurant and Lounge**, 604 9th St., 402-852-2445, for a yummy slice of homemade pie.

Enjoy the only winery and microbrewery in Nebraska! The [Schilling Bridge Winery and Microbrewery](#), 62193 710th Rd., 402-852-2400, offers Nebraska produced wines and handcrafted microbrews surrounded by more than eight acres of grapevines. The centerpiece of the landscape is an 1890 Limestone Rock Island Railroad bridge. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Also check out the **restored Harold Lloyd home**, 402-852-3131, in Burchard, 12 miles west of Pawnee City. The front room of the house contains memorabilia from Lloyd's life and acting career. Upon request, you can set up time for your group to watch a Harold Lloyd movie in his former home. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

1 hour (42 miles) west on Highway 8, north on Highway 99, west on Highways 4 and 136 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska's most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—[Homestead National Monument of America](#), 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country's first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city's excellent selection of restaurants and fine community

theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

20 minutes (14 miles) north on Highway 77 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the “American Indian Gallery,” “The First Nebraskans,” “Nebraska Joins the Union,” and “Building the State.” Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska’s tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get “lost” in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight at try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) east on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (7 miles) east on Highway 6 to Exit 426.

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

15 minutes (11 miles) east on Highway 6 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a

terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

30 minutes (22 miles) east on Highway 6 to Omaha.

Tour 2

Day Tours from Lincoln and Southeastern Nebraska

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Use Lincoln as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

Tour A: Bright Lights and Big Cities



Haymarket District, Lincoln



45 minutes (30 miles) north on Highway 77 to Wahoo.

Wahoo is the former home office of *Late Night with David Letterman*. Although the “office” is a downtown phone booth, folks in Wahoo have a lot of fun with it. Wahoo also is the hometown of Oscar-winning filmmaker Darryl F. Zanuck, co-founder of the 20th Century-Fox Studios. An exhibit on his life is displayed at the [Saunders County Historical Museum](#), 240 N. Walnut St., 402-443-3090. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. The museum not only has an outstanding collection, but hosts many wonderful events throughout the year, including a Prairie Christmas in December. In addition to Zanuck, Wahoo is the home of four other famous sons: Baseball Hall-of-Famer Samuel “Wahoo Sam” Crawford, Pulitzer Prize winner Dr. Howard Hanson, artist and author Clarence W. “Herk” Anderson, and Nobel Prize winner Dr. George Beadle. The **Howard Hanson House**, 402-443-4217, has been fully restored and features memorabilia about him and Wahoo’s other famous residents. For a nostalgic step back in time, stop by the [Wigwam Café](#), 146 E. 5th St., 402-443-5575, in downtown Wahoo. It’s a classic original diner that is sure to be a big hit with your group.

30 minutes (21 miles) north on Highway 77 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner

theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

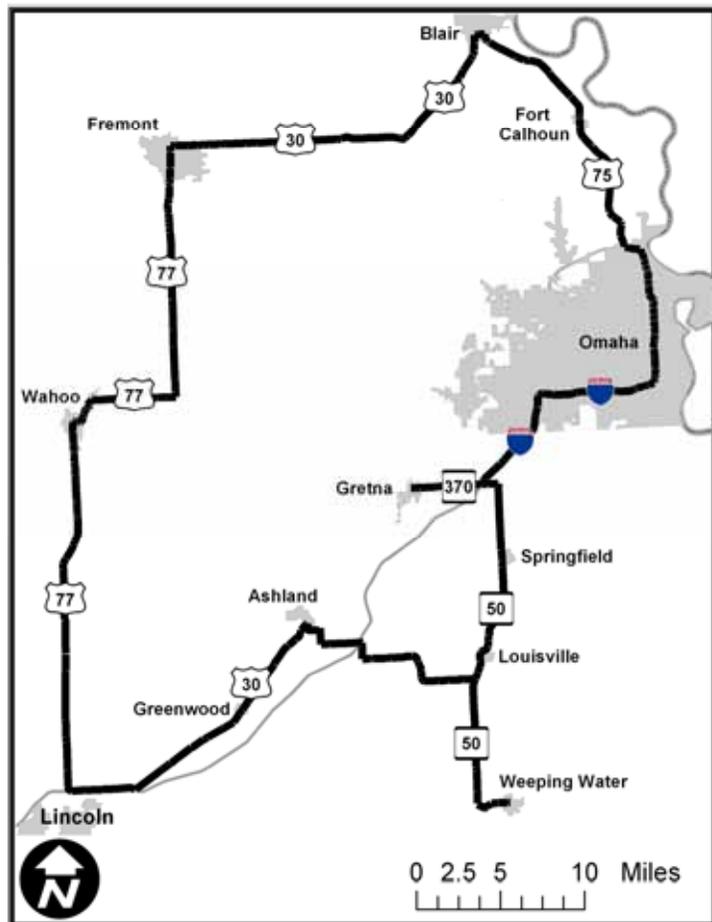
Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

40 minutes (24 miles) east on Highway 30 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

15 minutes (9 miles) south on Highway 75 to Fort Calhoun.

Enjoy the view along the **Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway** as you make your way to Fort Calhoun and [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fun-filled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. The National Signature Event for the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place at Fort Atkinson in 2004. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses **Too Far North**, 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are



custom-made labels for all occasions. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (16 miles) south on Highway 75 to Omaha.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, **the largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-feet of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to

the Missouri River frontier. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that different ethnic groups have had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children's garden, herb garden, spring flowering walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (22 miles) west on Interstate 80 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

15 minutes (10 miles) east on Highway 370, south on Highway 50 to Springfield.

In addition to a beautiful view of the surrounding countryside, the [Soaring Wings Winery](#), 17111 S. 138th St., 402-253-2479, offers wine tastings, tours and a gift shop. Experience an eclectic two-acre sculpture garden at the [Carl Weiss Sculpture Studio](#), 402-680-0642. The formal and informal gardens are dotted with sculptures from local and regional artists, including Carl Weiss' landscape concepts, bronze sculptures and artwork. Meander quietly along the walking paths at [Springcreek Gardens & Nursery](#), 12275 Main St., 402-253-8000, where a new plant or surprise is around every corner. The full service nursery and landscape design center offers more than 450 varieties of perennials, shrubs and landscape trees. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour.

Also in Springfield is the **Springfield Old Fashioned Soda Fountain**, 205 Main St., 402-253-2000, where you can enjoy an ice cream shake and remember old times. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

10 minutes (7 miles) south on Highway 50 to Louisville.

The [Louisville Art Gallery](#), 230 Main St., 402-234-2867, features more than 3,500-square-feet of exhibition space for sculptures, paintings, ceramics, pottery and fine art photography. **The Gallery Shop**, 127 Main St., 402-234-2669, is home to **Art Chicks**—where singing, dancing and frivolity are encouraged. You might find yourself wearing a feather boa and brandishing a magic wand as you explore the two shops and garden that make up the gallery. You can select a whimsical art piece and then indulge in a gourmet lunch. Call ahead for tours. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (12 miles) south on Highway 50 to Weeping Water.

A short drive from Omaha will bring you to the [Loft Community Theatre](#), 402-267-5400, near Weeping Water. Located in a converted 1924 hog barn, the “Born in a Barn” players have produced more than 300 plays since 1977. Four major productions run from May to October each year.

45 minutes (30 miles) north on Highway 50, west on Highway 66 to Exit 426.

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

30 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 6 to Lincoln.

Tour B: Land O' The Trails



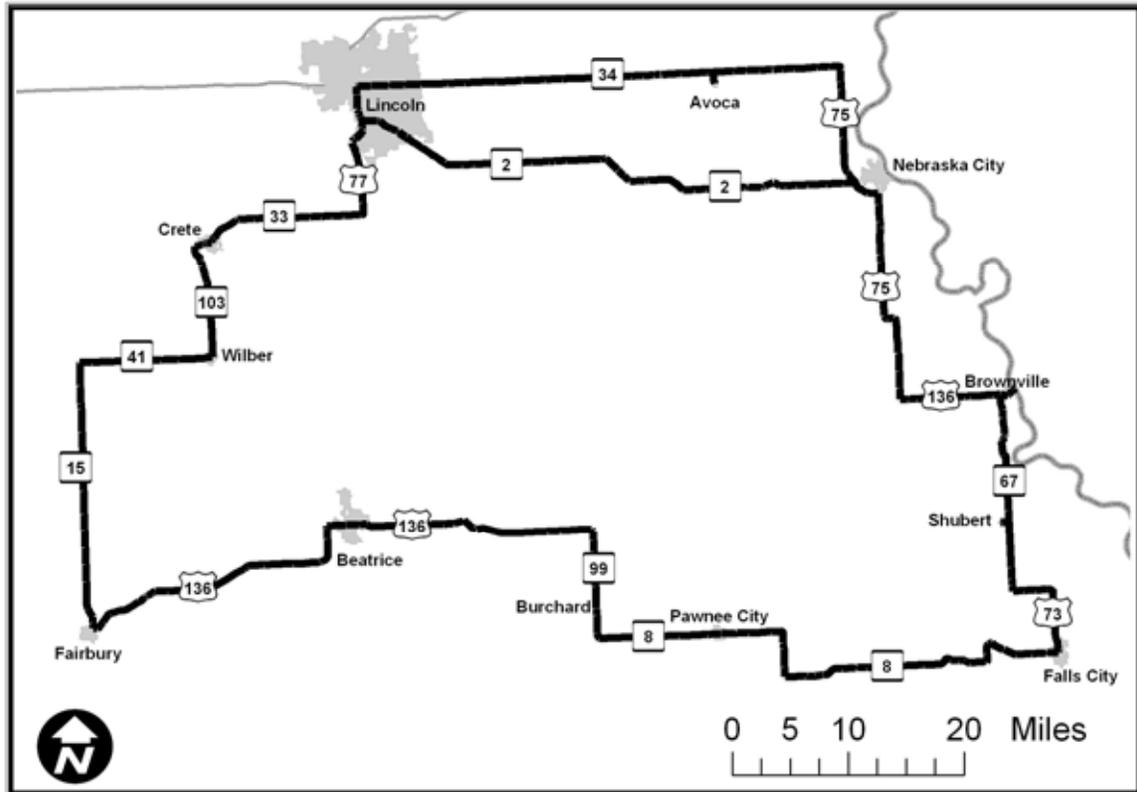
Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City



45 minutes (30 miles) east on Highway 2 to Avoca.

Pumpkins, fall produce and decorations, a wooded walking trail, picnic grounds, antiques, and gifts await your group tour at an 1881 family farmstead. **Bloom Where**

You're Planted Pumpkin Patch & Barn Store, 911 108th St., 402-267-4104, is a great escape back to the farm! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.



45 minutes (25 miles) east on Highway 34, south on Highway 75 to Nebraska City. Nebraska City boasts a variety of exciting attractions and activities, plenty of history, shopping opportunities and beautiful scenery—all in one charming community. Nebraska City's pride and joy is [Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum](#), 2600 2nd Ave., 402-873-7222. Home of J. Sterling and Carolyn Morton, the 52-room Victorian-style mansion is a memorable stop for any group visit. J. Sterling Morton was the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland and helped establish Arbor Day as a holiday. There are quiet walking trails, gardens and nearby orchards with an "Apple House" where travelers can enjoy a variety of apple treats and buy souvenirs. Make sure you tour the National Arbor Day Foundation's "Tree Adventure," which includes touch-screen exhibits, a 20-minute film that shows the significance of trees and other exciting information about the environment. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

A fine example of Victorian architecture is the **Wildwood Center Historic House and The Barn Art Gallery**, 420 Steinhart Park Road, 402-873-6340. Built in 1869, Wildwood was home to Jasper Ware, an early banker in Nebraska City. All home furnishings are of the Victorian Era, and behind the house is a gallery that displays artwork of many Nebraska artisans. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Another major Nebraska City attraction is [Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village](#), 2012 4th Corso, 402- 873-3115. Part of the Underground Railroad for slaves, this restored site

has many historical artifacts on display, as well as a restored village. You also can walk through the underground cave on the grounds. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Downtown Nebraska City is a treasure trove of antique and specialty retail stores where you can find clothing for everyone, crafts and works of art, Christmas decorations, books and specialty foods. On weekends a trolley is available to take your group around town. With its abundance of changing leaves and apple harvests, fall is one of the most beautiful seasons to visit Nebraska City. For overnight or meal service, look no further than the [Lied Conference Center and Arbor Day Farms](#), 2700 Sylvan Road, 402-873-8733. This environment-friendly facility offers state-of-the-art meeting rooms, spacious overnight rooms and excellent meals. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Make sure to spend some time sipping wine at one of Nebraska’s newest wineries—[Arbor Trails Winery](#), 6450 J Road, 402-873-8888. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Experience firsthand the journey of Lewis and Clark at the [Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#), 100 Valmont Dr., 402-874-9900, which sits atop an 80-acre site overlooking the Missouri River. The center focuses on the recorded scientific discoveries of plants and animals made during the tour. Enjoy hands-on exploration activities, interactive exhibits, a life-size replica of the keelboat used by Lewis and Clark, and a 45-foot American Indian Earth Lodge. Suggested tour time: 2-3 hours. The **River Country Nature Center**, 114 S. 6th St., 402-873-3000, is open by appointment only and houses more than 400 preserved specimens of native Nebraska birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles in replicas of their natural habitats. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Free your mind and explore the artistic side of Nebraska City at the [Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts](#), 801 3rd Corso, 402-874-9600. The center is an art retreat for visual artists, writers, art scholars, choreographers and artists from across the nation. A main gallery and exhibition rooms display works of art for public viewing and are changed approximately every two months. Art classes held at the center are offered throughout the year and open to the public. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Apples, peaches, cherries, plums, grapes, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, squash, peppers, and more...oh my! Load up on delicious fresh fruits and vegetables at [Kimmel Orchard](#), 6045 G Road, 402-873-5293. A new shuttle path was developed to teach your group tour about the history and operation of the orchard. Benches, scenic resting spots, and picnic areas dot the hiking trail to let your tour enjoy spring’s blossoms or the beautiful autumn colors. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (34 miles) south on Highway 75, east on Highway 136 (Heritage Highway Scenic Byway) to Brownville.

At one time the bustling community of Brownville was to serve as Nebraska’s “Gateway City,” but when the railroad decided to locate in Omaha, Brownville’s future looked grim. Fortunately the spunky locals refused to let their community die, and today’s Brownville has become a genuine tourism destination. Your group can cruise down the Missouri River on the [Spirit of Brownville](#), 402-825-4211, take in a play or concert at the **Brownville Village Theatre**, 402-825-4121, or **Brownville Concert Hall**, 402-825-

3331, shop in the quaint downtown, or sip wine at sunset on the deck of [Whiskey Run Creek Winery](#), 702 Main St., 402-825-4601. The **Captain Bailey House**, **Carson House** and **Furnas House**, 402-825-6001, are some of the many restored historic homes that are open to the public.

The **Meriwether Lewis Museum of Missouri River History**, 402-825-3341, a decommissioned U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredge boat, now houses a museum dedicated to the Missouri River. The **Governor Furnas Connector Trail** connects the **Governor Furnas Arboretum**, 402-825-6637, to the Missouri River. The trail boasts more than 200 types of trees, shrubs and flowers for you to enjoy. One of the town's newest tourist endeavors is the [Brownville Lyceum](#), 225 Main St., 402-825-4321, which opened April 2005. This haven for booklovers has many used books to purchase, a reading room in which to relax and read, and a small café that serves tasty dishes. Suggested tour time in town: 2-3 hours.

10 minutes (5 miles) south on Highway 67 to Indian Cave State Park.

[Indian Cave State Park](#), 402-883-2575, includes more than 3,000 acres along the Missouri River. This pristine area is home to a variety of activities, such as camping, hiking, backpacking, picnicking, and nature and wilderness activities. There are 20 miles of hiking trails in the park. The fall months are particularly spectacular, and history buffs will enjoy the restored schoolhouse and general store from the old river town of St. Deroin. During the summer months, old-time crafts are demonstrated to visitors. You can reserve a group picnic shelter if needed. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (23 miles) south on Highways 67 and 73 to Falls City.

Two of Falls City's best attractions are the **Bell-Jenne House**, 402-245-3481, and the **Richardson County Historical Museum**, 402-245-3481. The Bell-Jenne House is an impressive two-story brick Italianate-style house built in 1881 and features eight period piece rooms to give your group tour a glimpse into life in the late 19th century. The Richardson County Historical Museum highlights the history and people of Falls City and the region. With advance planning, tours of both facilities can be scheduled. Suggested tour time of each attraction: 1 hour.

1 hour (41 miles) west on Highway 8 to Pawnee City.

Home of film stars Irish McCalla and Harold Lloyd, Pawnee City also is home to a very impressive historical museum complex. The [Pawnee County Historical Museum](#), 402-852-3131, is comprised of 16 historic buildings that display antique furnishings, tools, vintage vehicles, rare photos, books, unique handcraft items and a variety of other artifacts. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. One of the city's newest and most unique attractions is the **Toy Pedal Clinic**, 402-852-2655, a museum dedicated to this fun toy of yesteryear. The museum displays more than 450 toy pedal cars, tractors, airplanes and a host of other small toys. Other collections at the museum include a John Deere room, kiddie car collection, kerosene lamps, quilts, bicycles, salt and pepper shakers and doll collection. Your tour also can observe museum staff while they restore old pedal cars. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Before leaving Pawnee City, stop by **Hallie's Restaurant and Lounge**, 604 9th St., 402-852-2445, for a yummy slice of homemade pie.

Enjoy the only winery and microbrewery in Nebraska! The [Schilling Bridge Winery and Microbrewery](#), 62193 710th Rd., 402-852-2400, offers Nebraska produced wines and handcrafted microbrews surrounded by more than eight acres of grapevines. The centerpiece of the landscape is an 1890 Limestone Rock Island Railroad bridge. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Also check out the **restored Harold Lloyd home**, 402-852-3131, in Burchard, 12 miles west of Pawnee City. The front room of the house contains memorabilia from Lloyd's life and acting career. Upon request, you can set up time for your group to watch a Harold Lloyd movie in his former home. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

1 hour (42 miles) west on Highway 8, north on Highway 99, west on Highways 4 and 136 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska's most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—[Homestead National Monument of America](#), 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country's first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city's excellent selection of restaurants and fine community theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

45 minutes (28 miles) west on Highway 136 to Fairbury.

Fairbury boasts more original brick-lined streets than any other community in Nebraska, and its downtown district offers many excellent shopping and dining opportunities, such as historic Fairbury Square. [Stagecoach Mall](#), 510 E. St., 402-729-4034, boasts a number of unique crafts and antiques. Be sure to stop and see the block-long Campbell Brothers Circus Mural that was painted on the side of Globe Rexall Drugstore. A short drive east of town is **Rock Creek Station State Historical Park**, 402-729-5777, which offers one of the best sites to see original wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail. The area served as a resting place for pioneers, and entrepreneurs set up trading posts there to provide goods for thousands of pioneers trekking west. In its heyday, Rock Creek also was a busy Pony Express station. In addition to its historical significance along the Oregon Trail and Pony

Express, Rock Creek Station may be best known as the place where “Wild” Bill Hickok gained notoriety for killing his first victims. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (Fairbury), 1 hour (Rock Creek).

Make sure to spend some time at the [New Earth Clay Pottery and Art Gallery](#), 515 4th St., 402-729-3034, in downtown Fairbury. This pottery business has been around for more than 25 years, and features more than 25 Nebraska artists’ artwork, including pottery, ceramics, glass, sculpture, paintings, photographs and jewelry. Pottery demonstrations and tours are available upon request.

Steele City Historical District, 402-729-5131, east of Rock Creek Station on Highway 112, features four old restored buildings—a 1900 stone blacksmith’s shop, 1902 stone livery stable, 1880s stone Baptist church, and 1890 brick bank museum. The third Sunday in September, the tiny village hosts thousands of bargain hunters and history buffs who come for the annual flea market and antique farm machinery show.

1 hour, 15 minutes (37 miles) north on Highway 15, east on Highway 41 to Wilber.

Everyone in Wilber is Czech—at least during the first weekend of August when the town hosts thousands for the Annual Wilber Czech Festival. The U.S. Congress proclaimed Wilber the National Czech Capitol and folks in Wilber take that seriously. However, you can get a sense of Czech heritage anytime you come to town. The **Wilber Czech Museum**, 102 W 3rd St., 402-821-2183, contains detailed information on the heritage of those who founded Wilber and on their homeland of Czechoslovakia. There is usually a quilting bee going on at the museum, and the ladies are always delighted to chat with you and show you around. Located next door to the museum is the **Wilber Bakery**, 104 W 3rd St., 402-821-2995, where your group must sample a kolach, also known as “Czech Danish.” Around the corner is the beautifully restored **Hotel Wilber**, 203 S. Wilson St., 402-821-2020, a wonderful bed and breakfast. Your group can tour the facility and grab a bite to eat. *Vitame Vas!* With advance notice, costumed guides are available to escort your group along walking tours of Wilber. These tours include a meal. Suggested tour time in town: 1½ hour.

25 minutes (11 miles) north on Highway 103 to Crete.

Since 2001, [Blue Valley Vineyard](#), SW 142nd St. and Stagecoach Road, 402-826-5700, in Crete has offered quality, handcrafted wines, a wine tasting room and gift shop that sell a variety of wine accessories. In the spring, summer and autumn your tour may stroll the grounds and enjoy wine on the patios and decks, while the warmth and hospitality of the tasting room awaits you in the winter. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

20 minutes (14 miles) west on Highway 33, north on Highway 77 to Lincoln.

Tour 3

Day Tours from Norfolk and Northeastern Nebraska

Norfolk, northeast Nebraska's largest city, offers a fine selection of overnight and dining facilities that cater to the group tour market. While in town be sure to visit the [Elkhorn Valley Historical Museum](#), 515 Queen City Blvd., 402-371-3886. Here you'll see a great collection of historic artifacts relating to the area, including one of the few remaining antique square turn tractors that can make a full square turn so as not to waste field space to turn around. Memorabilia on Norfolk's two famous sons—*Tonight Show* host Johnny Carson and Thural Ravenscroft, the voice of Kellogg's™ "Tony the Tiger" are on display.

A must see is the **Johnny Carson Exhibit**. Norfolk was the boyhood home of Johnny Carson from age eight through high school. Mr. Carson donated a large collection of personal items to the museum, including videotapes, early boyhood photos and vintage photos of his stage and radio days, as well as many personal items. A display of Carson's special awards—six Emmy Awards, Kennedy Center Honors Medallion, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Television Hall of Fame, and many more are on display. A unique "Best Of" home theater showing favorite *Tonight Show* episodes and monologues chosen by Johnny himself for the museum are part of this impressive collection. A full-sized, life-like Carson mannequin delivers the monologues when visitors step close enough to the exhibit. In the immortal words of Ed McMahon, "Heeeeeeeere's Johnny!"

Also be sure to check out the **Willetta Lueschen Bird Library** at the museum. With prior arrangements, museum staff can take your group to the nearby cave for a "cool" break. Located close to the museum is the new [Norfolk Arts Center](#), 305 N. 5th St., 402-371-7199. This beautiful, new facility features an ever-changing traveling exhibit gallery, as well as showcases the works of local and regional artists. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 2 hours.

Use Norfolk as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

Tour A: Between Two Rivers



Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial, Columbus



30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highways 81 and 13 to Pierce.

Wine making in Nebraska? You betcha! Located northeast of Pierce is Nebraska's first vineyard—[Cuthills Vineyards](#), 54663 853 Road, 402-329-4181. Walking tours of the vineyards are available, and depending on what time of year your group stops, you may be able to witness the winemaking progress. Fun things to do include sampling wines, relaxing on the spacious patio overlooking the vineyards, and eating a delicious catered meal in the historic barn. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

1 hour, 15 minutes (46 miles) north on Highways 13 and 121, west on Highway 84 to Bloomfield.

This quaint community offers a variety of shopping opportunities, including a wonderful antique/tea shop downtown, and with prior notice, a delicious afternoon lunch or tea can be arranged. The **Bloomfield Bakery**, 104 N. Broadway St., 402-373-2343, is one of Nebraska's best bakeries, so make sure you save plenty of room on the motorcoach (and in your stomach) for all the goodies your group will want to take back. Homemade noodles, huge loaves of bread, one of the tastiest pancake mixes in the state, and everything in between await your tour at the bakery. Search for that perfect bargain or antique that you've been trying to find for years at **Sally's Antiques and Sweets**, 112 E. Main St., 402-373-2423. This store offers many beautiful antiques, furniture and other quality historic pieces in surroundings that will make you feel you're in a big city. However, the prices are all small town! Call ahead to make reservations for a scrumptious lunch in the intimate tearoom located in the back of the store. Tea, coffee and homemade deserts are available daily. You won't regret it! Suggested tour time in Bloomfield: 1½ hour.

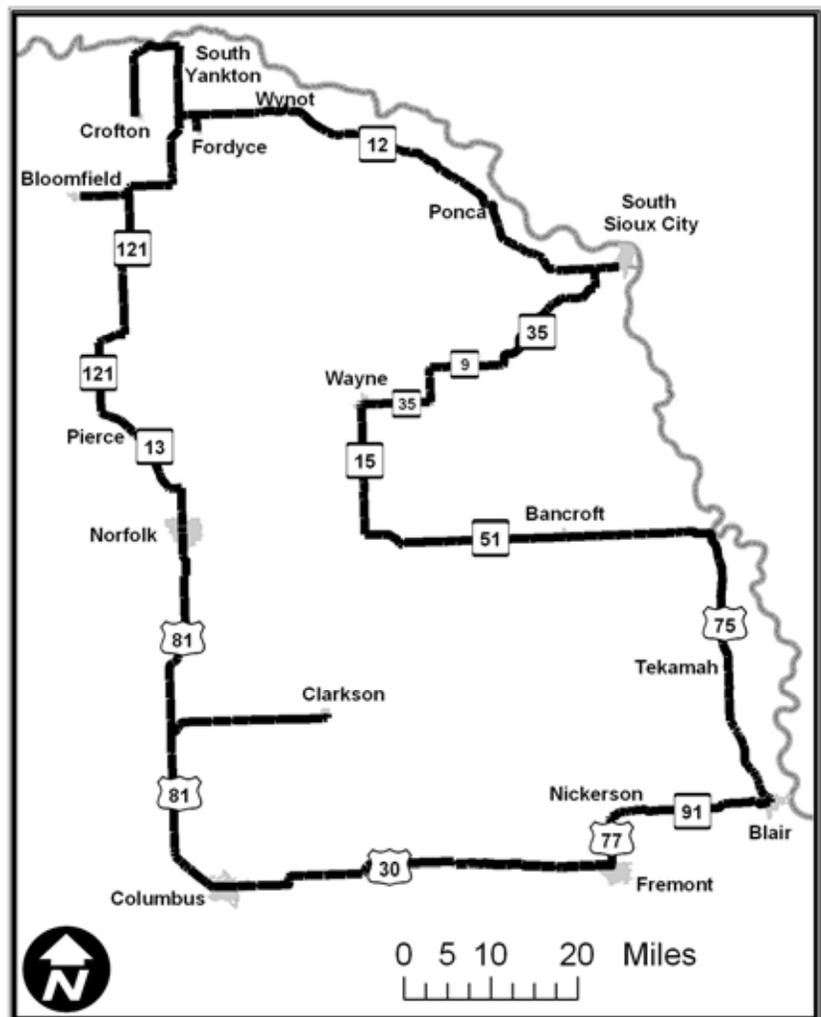
Get an up-close view of one of the few grass-based dairies in the upper Midwest at [Bruns Dairy](#), 88088 538 Ave., 402-373-4906, near Bloomfield. Impressive grassland vistas and an abundance of green grass, colorful prairie flowers, and some of the most docile dairy cattle you've ever seen will make you think you've taken a trip to Ireland instead of northeast Nebraska. The dairy is home to the first New Zealand style milking parlor in Nebraska and soon, an on-farm cheese plant will offer visitors fresh cheese made from the milk of the Bruns' dairy herds. Tours of the dairy farm are available from May 15 to October 1. Directions: 6 miles west on Highway 84 to 538 Ave. from Bloomfield, farm is 100 yards south on gravel road. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

30 minutes (18 miles) east on Highway 84, north on Highway 121, west on Highway 12 to Crofton.

The historic [Argo Hotel](#), 211 W. Kansas St., 402-388-2400, in Crofton is a great place for your group to spend an afternoon relaxing on the spacious front porch. This beautiful hotel has been restored into a bed and breakfast, while the restaurant is able to accommodate group tours for full meals or afternoon teas. Spend time downstairs singing along with the player piano in the restored speakeasy tavern. And don't forget to ask your host about the Argo Hotel ghost! Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Make plans to spend time at the [Jolene Steffen Studio](#), 55472 888th Road, 402-357-3740, near the hamlet of Constance, east of Crofton. Her art reflects the things that mean the most to her—wide-open sky and rolling hills, beautiful wildflowers and garden flowers, children, animals, creeks and pastoral northeast Nebraska scenes. The vividness and quality of Jolene's works truly will amaze you! Plus, they are affordable to practically everyone, with most prices ranging from \$30 to more than \$500 for the larger pieces.

One of Nebraska's largest lakes, **Lewis and Clark Lake**, is located in the **Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area**, 402-388-4169, 7 miles north of Crofton on Highway 121. This is a prime area for bird watching, especially for bald eagles. Winter is a great time to visit when frigid temperatures freeze the lake and provide great opportunities for ice fishing, skating, and snowmobiling. The Corps of Engineers operates a power generation plant at **Gavins Point Dam**, 402-667-7873, and the [Lewis and Clark Visitor Center](#), 10 miles north on Highway 12, 402-667-2546. Tours of the power plant are given Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Listed on the Nebraska Survey of Historic Places, [Bow View Farm](#), 88664 550 Ave., 402-388-4798, offers your tour a glimpse into the rural way of life. A historical walking tour of the farm's buildings and a low impact birding hike along Bluebird Trail are two activities



awaiting your group tour. An on-farm store is located in a historic 1916 barn where you can purchase home-raised black oil sunflower birdseed, wild birdseed, birdfeeders, postcards, and other items. 1 mile west of Crofton on Highway 12 and 3¼ miles south on 550 Ave.

20 minutes (13 miles) north on Highway 121 to South Yankton.

The [Corps of Discovery Welcome Center](#), 402-667-6557, is located at the intersection of two historic transportation routes—the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Pan-American Highway (Highway 81). The visitor center boasts a gorgeous view of the Missouri River and the surrounding countryside from the scenic overlook. Other features of the center include interpretive panels that retell the story of Lewis and Clark, an art gallery and a gift shop full of Nebraska-made products. With advance scheduling, tours from the visitor center to area attractions can be arranged. Suggested tour time: 45-60 minutes.

20 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 81, east on Highway 12 (Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway) to Fordyce.

[Prairie Blossom Trails](#), 55582 887 Road, 402-357-3702, near Fordyce is one of the few places in the country that graze Scottish Highland cattle. On your tour of the farm, you can get a firsthand view of these unique looking creatures, walk trails made by pioneer wagons of the past, or simply take in the breathtaking pasture landscape or sunset. Make sure you pick up some of the Scottish Highland beef. It's some of the best beef you'll ever eat! Group tours are offered between May 1 and October 31. Directions: (A) 3 miles south of Highways 81 and 12 junction, turn east on 887 Road, ¾ of a mile and south 1/3 of a mile; (B) 5 miles north to 887 Road from Pleasant Valley Store at Highways 81 and 84 junction.

Spend some time with certified organic farmers at [Marv and Ed's Farm](#), 55996 Highway 12, 402-357-2150 near Fordyce. You won't find any additives or preservatives here! These lifelong farmers raise a variety of organic vegetables and grains, such as corn, oats with sweet clover, alfalfa, turnips, soybeans and hay. You also can spend some time watching the many critters they raise—dairy cows and calves, herds of cattle, hens, turkeys, geese, hogs, Angora goats, and Guinea fowl. Tours are provided from May 1 to October 1. Directions: (A) 4 miles east and south of intersection of Highways 81 and 12; (B) north of Hartington, 3 miles west and south from intersection of Highways 12 and 57.

20 minutes (9 miles) east on Highway 12 to Bow Valley.

Grape growing and wine production facilities are sprouting up all over Nebraska. [Nissen Brothers Vineyards](#), 88560 566 Ave., 402-254-3426, near Bow Valley is home to one of the state's newest vineyards. Spend time with the owners learning about the process of growing grapes for wine. Directions: 3 miles north of Hartington on Highway 57 and 886 Road, then 2½ miles east to 566 Ave., then south ½ mile.

15 minutes (6 miles) east on Highway 12 to Wynot.

Located 2 miles east of Wynot off Highway 12, [St. James Marketplace](#), 89039 570 Ave., 402-357-3330, is located in a historical schoolhouse. Today it's home to a wonderful farmer's market, craft fair and tearoom that is ideal for an afternoon snack. A

variety of historical exhibits also are on display. This unique attraction is a must-see for your group tour. If your tour comes through in late September, plan to stay for the Heritage Fest. Inquire from the ladies at the marketplace about taking a side trip on **Rattlesnake Road**—one of the most breathtaking backcountry roads in the region. The **Wiseman Monument** along the road recounts a chilling pioneer murder story. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (marketplace), 1 hour (Rattlesnake Road). Note: The monument and scenic drive are via dirt roads, and no services are available.

45 minutes (29 miles) east on Highway 12 to Ponca.

Located a short drive north of Ponca on Highway 12, **Ponca State Park**, 402-755-2284, features one of Nebraska's most comprehensive outdoor/environmental education programs, including history, biology, ecology, astronomy, geology and archaeology of the area. With more than 20 miles of recreational trails, the park provides plenty of opportunities for your group to commune with nature. During the fall months, hayrack rides are available for groups of 15 or more. As part of the park's annual Hallowfest, the second weekend in October, haunted hayrack rides are given. Buffalo burgers, Lewis and Clark stew and fish fries are held in the summer and fall months. During spring, the park comes alive with the sounds of migratory and native songbirds. The **Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center**, 402-755-2284, boasts a large interpretive display and exhibit area, a field laboratory and plenty of meeting rooms. Make sure you drive to the tri-state overlook along the Missouri River for a phenomenal view of the river and surrounding countryside. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Towers of Time**, 402-755-2284, exhibit features relief carvings of the flora and fauna of three time periods in northeast Nebraska. A waterfall, pond, fountain and walking path complement the towers. Check it out after dark when the entire exhibit is beautifully lit.

30 minutes (22 miles) east on Highways 12 and 20 to South Sioux City.

The city offers a number of quality dining opportunities for your group tour.

55 minutes (26 miles) west on Highway 35, south on Highway 9 to Emerson.

Emerson, the only town in Nebraska located in three counties, is home to the **Iron Horse Bar and Casino**, 1010 S. Main St., 402-695-0180. Owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, this 2,000-square-foot facility offers Las Vegas fun and excitement, Nebraska style. The friendly staff at the Iron Horse will serve you up some great food and drinks while you're going for that big pay off! Great for small group tours.

45 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 9, west on Highway 35 to Wayne.

Home of the popular Wayne Chicken Show each July, Wayne also boasts a historic downtown district. The **Wayne State College Arboretum**, 1111 Main St., 402-375-7384, has an herb garden, nature center, trails and hundreds of varieties of plant life. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Garden Perennials**, 402-375-3615, is three acres of gardens and thousands of perennial flowers. Group tours of both facilities are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour, 15 minutes (40 miles) south on Highway 15, east on Highways 275 and 51 to Bancroft.

Bancroft was home to Nebraska Poet Laureate John G. Neihardt. The [John G. Neihardt State Historical Site](#), 306 W. Elm St., 402-648-3388, gives your tour a fascinating look at an individual who dedicated his entire life to understanding and helping the American Indians. His most famous book, *Black Elk Speaks*, chronicles many years of interviews with this famous Indian chief. Neihardt's study, where he wrote many of his books and poems, is located on the grounds of the center. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (32 miles) east on Highway 51, south on Highway 75 to Tekamah.

Enjoy a glass of full-bodied Nebraska wine and a tour of the operation at [Silvercreek Hill Vineyards](#), 3130 County Road M, 402-374-1602. The farm operation also raises corn, soybeans and cattle. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour

30 minutes (19 miles) south on Highway 75 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (19 miles) west on Highway 91 to Nickerson.

The [Apple Barn at Fontenelle Orchard](#), 402-727-5272, features fresh, tree-ripe fruit that you can pick yourself. Tours of the orchard are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (9 miles) south on Highway 77 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery**

92 West, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

1 hour, 15 minutes (47 miles) west on Highway 30 to Columbus.

Columbus offers a wide variety of tours to fit the tastes of any group, from history buffs to modern technology enthusiasts. A 1904 steam locomotive, Quicentenary Belltower, and the [Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial](#), 2001 A.J. Higgins Road, 402-564-2769, are a few reasons to tour Freedom Park. The center point of the park is a life-size replica of the Higgins landing craft that he designed and built to help win WWII. The replica is made of steel and set in sand as if it were beached. Its ramp is down to let visitors walk inside, while sand samples collected from invasion beaches across the globe are mixed with the sand that surrounds the craft. Equally impressive is the bronze eagle with a seven-foot wingspan that sits atop a steel structure made from material from the 2001 World Trade Center disaster in New York City. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. The [Platte County Historical Society Museum](#), 2916 16th St., 402-564-4553, features an 1857 log cabin complete with period furnishings. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Columbus boasts truly one of the best restaurants in Nebraska, **Dusters and the Gottburg Brew Pub**, 2804 13th St., 402-564-8338. Dining here will make you think you're in a much larger city. Even though the menu is full of delicious dishes, and you can't go wrong with anything you chose, try the Chicken Kiev. You won't regret it! Columbus is known as the most industrialized city per capita in Nebraska, and the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 764 33rd Ave., 402-564-2769, can arrange industrial tours for your group. The attractive **St. Michael's Catholic Church**, 309 3rd St., 402-428-2675, in nearby Tarnov is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1 hour (41 miles) north on Highway 81, east on Highway 91 to Clarkson.

Clarkson enjoys two major claims to fame—its rich Czech heritage and the renowned [Bluebird Nursery](#), 519 Cherry St., 402-892-3457. The Clarkson Chamber of Commerce can arrange a Czech breakfast for your group (make sure you eat a kolach, a delicious Czech pastry) and arrange a tour of the outstanding nursery. The Bluebird Nursery is one of the largest in the Midwest, and they ship seeds and plants around the globe. As you tour this quaint community, you'll notice the influence that the nursery has had on it. Clarkson is one of Nebraska's more colorful communities and boasts some of the best-kept gardens and green spaces in the state. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour (43 miles) west on Highway 91, north on Highway 81 to Norfolk.

Tour B: Exploring with Lewis and Clark



Private George Shannon Statue



30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highways 81 and 13 to Pierce.

Wine making in Nebraska? You betcha! Located northeast of Pierce is Nebraska's first vineyard—[Cuthills Vineyards](#), 54663 853 Road, 402-329-4181. Walking tours of the vineyards are available, and depending on what time of year your group stops, you may be able to witness the winemaking progress. Fun things to do include sampling wines, relaxing on the spacious patio overlooking the vineyards, and eating a delicious catered meal in the historic barn. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

1 hour, 15 minutes (48 miles) south on Highway 13, west on Highway 275 to Neligh.

Home to one of the few remaining water-powered mills in the state, [Neligh Mills State Historical Site](#), 402-887-4303, takes groups back to a time when the mill was the center of commerce for many towns. The mill's colorful history is displayed throughout the facility. The Neligh Chamber of Commerce, 202 W. 4th St., 402-887-4195, can recommend several local spots for lunch. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Pierson Wildlife Museum Learning Center](#), 205 E. Fifth St., 402-887-4212, features one of the largest private wild game collections in the U.S., all in one exhibit that includes 100 full mounts and 50 head mounts from around the world. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (21 miles) north on Highway 14, west on Highway 20 to Royal.

Scientists claim that [Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park](#), 402-893-2000, near Royal is one of the richest fossil finds of its kind in the northern hemisphere. Millions of years ago, a giant volcano in Idaho spewed volcanic ash into the area for several months, suffocating thousands of camels, horses and other prehistoric mammals. The ash encased the animals intact, and today visitors can go to the "Rhino Barn" to watch staff diligently uncover whole skeletons. There also is a visitor center/gift shop at the facility. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Go wild at [Zoo Nebraska](#), 4030 Highway 20, 402-893-2002, where you can view chimpanzees, monkeys, tigers, parrots, birds of prey, reptiles, wolves and much more. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (26 miles) east on Highway 20, north on Highway 14, east on Highway 59 to Winnetoon.

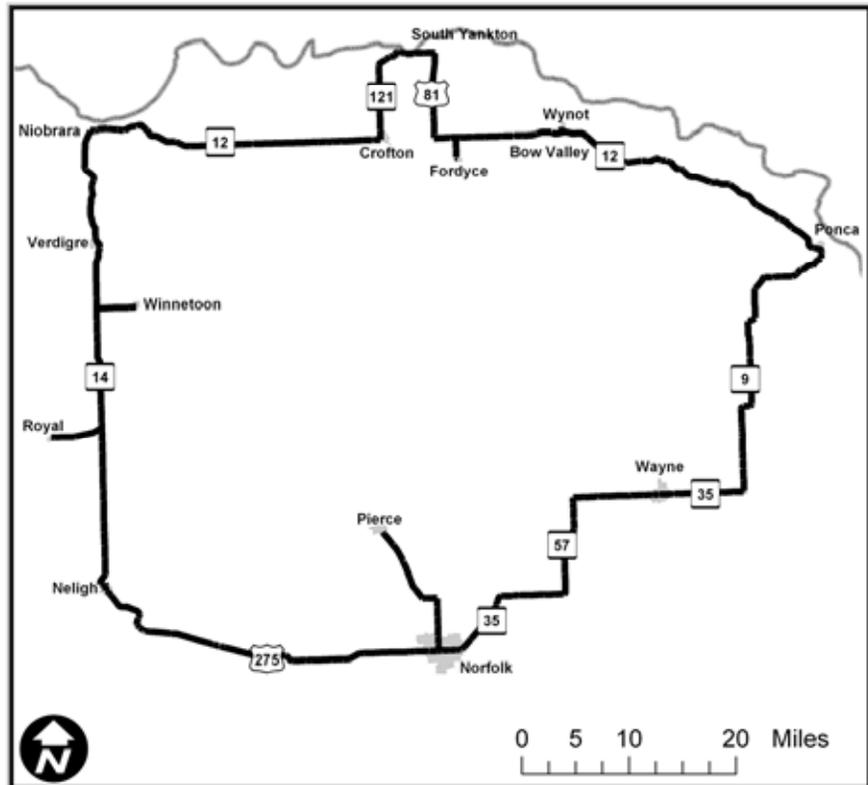
With only 59 residents, Winnetoon, 402-847-3368, is a sleepy Nebraska town, but a great stop for any group tour! Your first stop should be the post office/general store/antique store, then stroll along the boardwalk to explore the many other buildings of this unique cowboy town. If you time it right, you might catch the “**Cowboy Chainsaw Carver**” at work as he uses his chain saw to turn an ordinary block of wood into a work of art. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

20 minutes (10 miles) west on Highway 59, north on Highway 14 to Verdigre.

Spend a few minutes in the Kolach Capital of the World. The **Verdigre Bakery**, 405 N. Main St., 402-668-2233, makes this Czech and Slovak baked pastry fresh every morning in a variety of flavors, such as prune, poppy seed, apricot, cherry and cream cheese. If you’ve never enjoyed this eastern European delicacy, they’re definitely worth a try.

20 minutes (12 miles) north on Highway 14 to Niobrara.

Located at the confluence of the



Niobrara and Missouri rivers, Niobrara had to be moved twice to higher ground due to flooding. Luckily your group tour doesn’t have to worry about high water as they explore what Niobrara has to offer. The [Krevcik Riverview Elk Ranch](#), 88971 517 Ave., 402-857-3850, southwest of Niobrara State Park, is a fun place to go to encounter wildlife close up. Load your group into a covered wagon for an enjoyable ride around the picturesque ranch to see majestic elk and bison herds. You’ll never forget the experience of hand feeding buffalo as they clamor to the wagon for corn! It’s truly an experience! The gift shop sells a variety of buffalo-related products, clothing and food, such as tasty buffalo jerky (if you like it a little spicy, try the jalapeño flavor). Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

[Niobrara State Park](#), 89261 522 Ave., 402-857-3373, offers your group tour a wide variety of outdoor experiences, such as picnicking, swimming, boating, hiking on 14

miles of trails, fishing, horseback trail riding and wildlife watching. The **J. Alan Cramer Interpretive Center**, 402-857-3373, offers an exceptional view of the park and highlights the history and people of the area. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. If you visit between Memorial and Labor days, make sure to attend the buffalo cookout. With prior arrangements, your tour can experience the history and natural wonders of the Missouri River on the **Upper Missouri River Float Trip**, which follows the same path as Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.

The **Ponca Earthlodge** and **Ponca Tribal Museum**, 2543 Park Ave., 402-857-3519, display the rich culture and heritage of the Ponca Tribe and their influence on this region of Nebraska. The museum displays artifacts from Ponca history, American Indian artwork, tribal archive photographs and a gift shop that specializes in American Indian artwork. Located in the Powwow area, the **Ponca Native Garden** contains many varieties of plants that were used by the ancestral Ponca, such as maize, squash, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers, strawberries, sage and watermelon. An outer area of the garden includes plants that were beneficial to the Ponca Tribe and wildlife, such as buffalo berries, sweet potatoes, ground cherries and wild plums. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

10 minutes (5 miles) east on Highway 12 to Ohiya Casino.

See if Lady Luck is smiling on you at the **Ohiya Casino**, 52946 Highway 12, 402-857-3860, on the Santee Reservation. Located a few miles east of Niobrara, this 12,000-square-foot casino is owned and operated by the Santee Tribe. You also can purchase authentic American Indian jewelry, blankets and other crafts. Adjacent to the casino is the **Ohiya Casino Café**, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A weekend buffet and Sunday brunch are offered during the spring, summer and fall months. Get out your bucks and start having fun! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. As you travel across the reservation, you will go through the **Nebraska Everglades** where the highway is lined on both sides by marshes and water.

20 minutes (15 miles) east on Highway 12 to Crofton.

The historic [Argo Hotel](#), 211 W. Kansas St., 402-388-2400, in Crofton is a great place for your group to spend an afternoon relaxing on the spacious front porch. This beautiful hotel has been restored into a bed and breakfast, while the restaurant is able to accommodate group tours for full meals or afternoon teas. Spend time downstairs singing along with the player piano in the restored speakeasy tavern. And don't forget to ask your host about the Argo Hotel ghost! Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Make plans to spend time at the [Jolene Steffen Studio](#), 55472 888th Road, 402-357-3740, near the hamlet of Constance, east of Crofton. Her art reflects the things that mean the most to her—wide-open sky and rolling hills, beautiful wildflowers and garden flowers, children, animals, creeks and pastoral northeast Nebraska scenes. The vividness and quality of Jolene's works truly will amaze you! Plus, they are affordable to practically everyone, with most prices ranging from \$30 to more than \$500 for the larger pieces.

One of Nebraska's largest lakes, **Lewis and Clark Lake**, is located in the **Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area**, 402-388-4169, 7 miles north of Crofton on Highway 121. This is a prime area for bird watching, especially for bald eagles. Winter is a great time to

visit when frigid temperatures freeze the lake and provide great opportunities for ice fishing, skating, and snowmobiling. The Corps of Engineers operates a power generation plant at **Gavins Point Dam**, 402-667-7873, and the [Lewis and Clark Visitor Center](#), 10 miles north on Highway 12, 402-667-2546. Tours of the power plant are given Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Listed on the Nebraska Survey of Historic Places, [Bow View Farm](#), 88664 550 Ave., 402-388-4798, offers your tour a glimpse into the rural way of life. A historical walking tour of the farm's buildings and a low impact birding hike along Bluebird Trail are two activities awaiting your group tour. An on-farm store is located in a historic 1916 barn where you can purchase home-raised black oil sunflower birdseed, wild birdseed, birdfeeders, postcards, and other items. 1 mile west of Crofton on Highway 12 and 3¼ miles south on 550 Ave.

20 minutes (13 miles) north on Highway 121 to South Yankton.

The [Corps of Discovery Welcome Center](#), 402-667-6557, is located at the intersection of two historic transportation routes—the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Pan-American Highway (Highway 81). The visitor center boasts a gorgeous view of the Missouri River and the surrounding countryside from the scenic overlook. Other features of the center include interpretive panels that retell the story of Lewis and Clark, an art gallery and a gift shop full of Nebraska-made products. With advance scheduling, tours from the visitor center to area attractions can be arranged. Suggested tour time: 45-60 minutes.

20 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 81, east on Highway 12 to Fordyce.

[Prairie Blossom Trails](#), 55582 887 Road, 402-357-3702, near Fordyce is one of the few places in the country that graze Scottish Highland cattle. On your tour of the farm, you can get a firsthand view of these unique looking creatures, walk trails made by pioneer wagons of the past, or simply take in the breathtaking pasture landscape or sunset. Make sure you pick up some of the Scottish Highland beef. It's some of the best beef you'll ever eat! Group tours are offered between May 1 and October 31. Directions: (A) 3 miles south of Highways 81 and 12 junction, turn east on 887 Road, ¾ of a mile and south 1/3 of a mile; (B) 5 miles north to 887 Road from Pleasant Valley Store at Highways 81 and 84 junction.

Spend some time with certified organic farmers at [Marv and Ed's Farm](#), 55996 Highway 12, 402-357-2150 near Fordyce. You won't find any additives or preservatives here! These lifelong farmers raise a variety of organic vegetables and grains, such as corn, oats with sweet clover, alfalfa, turnips, soybeans and hay. You also can spend some time watching the many critters they raise—dairy cows and calves, herds of cattle, hens, turkeys, geese, hogs, Angora goats, and Guinea fowl. Tours are provided from May 1 to October 1. Directions: (A) 4 miles east and south of intersection of Highways 81 and 12; (B) north of Hartington, 3 miles west and south from intersection of Highways 12 and 57.

20 minutes (9 miles) east on Highway 12 to Bow Valley.

Grape growing and wine production facilities are sprouting up all over Nebraska. [Nissen Brothers Vineyards](#), 88560 566 Ave., 402-254-3426, near Bow Valley is home to one of

the state's newest vineyards. Spend time with the owners learning about the process of growing grapes for wine. Directions: 3 miles north of Hartington on Highway 57 and 886 Road, then 2½ miles east to 566 Ave., then south ½ mile.

15 minutes (6 miles) east on Highway 12 to Wynot.

Located 2 miles east of Wynot off Highway 12, [St. James Marketplace](#), 89039 570 Ave., 402-357-3330, is located in a historical schoolhouse. Today it's home to a wonderful farmer's market, craft fair and tearoom that is ideal for an afternoon snack. A variety of historical exhibits also are on display. This unique attraction is a must-see for your group tour. If your tour comes through in late September, plan to stay for the Heritage Fest. Inquire from the ladies at the marketplace about taking a side trip on **Rattlesnake Road**—one of the most breathtaking backcountry roads in the region. The **Wiseman Monument** along the road recounts a chilling pioneer murder story. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (marketplace), 1 hour (Rattlesnake Road). Note: The monument and scenic drive are via dirt roads, and no services are available.

45 minutes (29 miles) east on Highway 12 to Ponca.

Located a short drive north of Ponca on Highway 12, [Ponca State Park](#), 402-755-2284, features one of Nebraska's most comprehensive outdoor/environmental education programs, including history, biology, ecology, astronomy, geology and archaeology of the area. With more than 20 miles of recreational trails, the park provides plenty of opportunities for your group to commune with nature. During the fall months, hayrack rides are available for groups of 15 or more. As part of the park's annual Halloweenfest, the second weekend in October, haunted hayrack rides are given. Buffalo burgers, Lewis and Clark stew and fish fries are held in the summer and fall months. During spring, the park comes alive with the sounds of migratory and native songbirds. The **Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center**, 402-755-2284, boasts a large interpretive display and exhibit area, a field laboratory and plenty of meeting rooms. Make sure you drive to the tri-state overlook along the Missouri River for a phenomenal view of the river and surrounding countryside. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Towers of Time**, 402-755-2284, exhibit features relief carvings of the flora and fauna of three time periods in northeast Nebraska. A waterfall, pond, fountain and walking path complement the towers. Check it out after dark when the entire exhibit is beautifully lit.

1 hour, 15 minutes (40 miles) south on Highway 9, west on Highway 35 to Wayne.

Home of the popular Wayne Chicken Show each July, Wayne also boasts a historic downtown district. The **Wayne State College Arboretum**, 1111 Main St., 402-375-7384, has an herb garden, nature center, trails and hundreds of varieties of plant life. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Garden Perennials**, 402-375-3615, is three acres of gardens and thousands of perennial flowers. Group tours of both facilities are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (36 miles) south on Highway 35 to Norfolk.

Tour 4

Day Tours from Tri-Cities (Kearney, Hastings, Grand Island)

The Central Nebraska Tri-Cities Region (Kearney, Hastings, and Grand Island) offers group tour planners a vast selection of tour options. Each of the three cities has excellent overnight accommodations and meal options that are ideal for your group. The spring months are an excellent time to visit central Nebraska and spend your time with a half million Sandhill cranes that use the area as a stopover on their migration between early March and mid April. Just a few minutes south of Kearney and Grand Island near Hastings, you can witness the awesome spectacle of more than 10 million ducks and geese as they migrate through the Rainwater Basin. Each of the three cities offers excellent wildlife viewing options that can be catered to suit your group's needs. The Sandhill cranes migration is truly a remarkable site and one that your group will cherish for years to come.

The [Nebraska Bird Observatory at the Crane Meadows Visitors Center](#), 888-382-1820, in Alda (6 miles west of Grand Island) offers a variety of Sandhill crane-related activities on 250 acres of pristine or restored prairie along the Platte River. Witness the awesome sights and sounds of “Wings Over the Platte”—an award-winning celebration of the world's largest crane migration (a half million Sandhill cranes). Year-round programs and special events are available in the interpretive center. Suggested tour time: ½ hour (programs), 2-3 hours (guided tours), and 2 hours (Crane Lore Round the Campfire). As you visit the sights around Grand Island, keep your eyes peeled for 30 majestic Sandhill cranes all decked out for **Crane Mania**.

Make sure you visit [Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center](#), 308-468-5282, near Gibbon, 30 minutes southeast of Kearney off Interstate 80. This 1,250-acre wildlife sanctuary is located on the banks of the Platte River. In early spring, more than one-half million Sandhill cranes pass through the area on their northward migration. Trips to crane viewing blinds are available every morning and evening in March and the first week in April. The Nicolson Audubon Center offers stunning views of the Platte River, interpretive displays, gift shop, and trails. An interesting tidbit about the facility is that it was constructed entirely of hay bales. Reservations are required for crane season viewing blinds in March. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. [George Spencer Vineyard and Tasting Room](#), 7155 Pawnee Rd., 308-468-5612, is a central Nebraska treasure that features internationally acclaimed Nebraska wines. Wine tasting, vineyard tours, a delicious dinner, and gift shop are yours to enjoy. Reservations for dinner are required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The Tri-cities Region of Kearney, Hastings and Grand Island each offer excellent lodging accommodations and meal options that will suit your group tour needs.

Kearney

Just east of Kearney, you will literally drive under one of Nebraska's newest group tour attractions—[The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument](#), 877-511-2724. Locally known as the Arch, no tour of Nebraska is complete without a stop at the only tourist attraction in America that is located over a federal interstate highway. Built to commemorate the westward expansion of America, the Arch highlights the west's original American Indian habitants, the Mormon, Oregon and California Trails and the pioneers who traveled these early routes. Other exhibits highlight the expansion of the railroad that founded many Nebraska towns, the Overland Stagecoach and Pony Express, the Lincoln Highway, as well as and modern marvels, such as the telegraph and fiber optics. Your group will learn about the history of transportation and communication along the famous Platte River Road through magnificent interactive exhibits and stunning audio/visual effects. The Arch also includes a food court and gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1-1½ hours.

See Nebraska in a whole new way at the [Museum of Nebraska Art \(MONA\)](#), 2401 Central Ave., 308-865-8559, which features works of art that highlight Nebraska and the Great Plains in 11 exciting galleries. This impressive museum is housed in a 1911 Renaissance revival historic post office that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to works by great artists, such as George Catlin, Robert Henri, J. Laurie Wallace, Grant Reynard, and John Falter, MONA boasts an original collection of works by John J. Audubon that focuses on indigenous Nebraska wildlife. The museum's permanent collection includes more than 5,000 works by artists of regional, national and international importance, prints and a number of impressive rotating collections. Visitors can relax and stroll outdoors through the Cliff Hillegass Sculpture Garden and browse through the museum shop for that perfect gift. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

For the nature lover, be sure to stop at [Cabela's](#), 3600 Highway 30, 308-237-7999, in Kearney—the “World's Foremost Outdoor Outfitter.” This is Cabela's second Nebraska store; the original is in Sidney. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

Wander through the stately mansion of one of Kearney's most influential people. George Washington Frank, who developed projects that helped Kearney grow in the late 1800s, built the three-story [George E. Frank House](#), 2010 W. 24th St., 308-865-8284, in 1889. An annual Christmas walk at the Frank House starts after Thanksgiving and lasts for two weeks. Tours of the house can be arranged for groups throughout the year. The mansion's Tiffany window was one of few such windows located in private residences in the Great Plains region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. A Union Pacific depot, train caboose and six turn-of-the-century buildings at the [Trails and Rails Museum](#), 710 W. 11th St., 308-234-3041, highlight the importance that the railroad had on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. As you explore Kearney, be on the lookout for **Cranes on Parade**—6-foot fiberglass cranes, each one a unique and original work of art.

Hastings

[Hastings Museum/Lied Super Screen Theater/J.M. McDonald Planetarium](#), 1330 N. Burlington Ave., 402-461-4629. Hastings is a lively community that regularly caters to

the group tour market. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History has one of the best natural history collections in the region, including the “People of the Plains” exhibit from prehistoric times to historic trails and pioneer towns.

Hey Kool-Aid! *Kool-Aid: Discover the Dream* is an interactive exhibit that tells the story of the birth of one of America’s favorite soft drinks. Lifelike murals and replicas, a fiber-optic river of Kool-Aid, interactive kiosks, and the original Kool-Aid Man costume help to tell the story.

The *Groundwater Discovery Adventure* teaches visitors about the Ogallala Aquifer (a large underground water reserve located underneath the Great Plains region) and the importance of groundwater to the settlement and development of the central plains. Some displays in this exhibit include a floor-to-ceiling mural of a prairie landscape, paleontology dig areas, a simulated spring that bubbles from the Ogallala Aquifer and through a raised stream into the room, a walking bridge, teepees and an 1857 log cabin. An interactive water display allows visitors to dam water in a stream, lift gates to irrigate crop areas, and divert the stream to flood a miniature town.

The J.M. McDonald Planetarium will schedule special show times for groups. Also located there, the former IMAX Theatre has been upgraded to the Lied Super Screen Theater. Documentary and full-length feature films are shown on the five-story high screen to provide an incredible viewing experience. Suggested tour time at the museum: 2 hours.

Don’t leave Hastings without spending time browsing around for that perfect gift or souvenir at [Nebraska Food & Gift](#), 208 S. Burlington Ave., 402-462-8883. This exceptional gift store represents more than 170 Nebraska communities and features an eclectic variety of locally made products.

Colorful banners hang throughout the city during the summer proclaiming Hastings as the official birthplace of Kool-Aid. The local visitors bureau staff, 402-461-8400, can arrange unique dining experiences, tours of businesses and historic landmarks, evening entertainment and overnight accommodations for your group.

Grand Island

Experience pioneer life on 200 acres at the [Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer](#), 308-385-5316, which is one of the top 10 living history museums in the country. You can walk through an 1890s railroad town, push a handcart on the Mormon Trail, have a better understanding of American Indians at the Pawnee Earth Lodge, or explore the birth cottage of Oscar-winning actor Henry Fonda. A variety of special events are offered at the museum throughout the year. Add some mystery to your tour! Was there an island in Nebraska? Why is Grand Island a “train hot spot?” Who are the internationally known Abbots? Add a historic tour of the famous and infamous characters of Grand Island’s early days. See farming past to present with a look at local farms, “the business” behind agriculture, and tour some of the nation’s top agricultural manufacturing plants. The **Stuhr Museum Gift Shop** offers fantastic souvenirs and gifts. Tour time: 1-3 hours.

Grand Island abounds with art galleries, specialty stores and other shops where you can buy that hard-to-find gift or souvenir to remember your trip. Some shops you must make time for are **Prairie Winds Art Center**, 112 W. 3rd St., 308-381-4001, **The Warehouse Gallery**, 381 N. Walnut St., 308-382-8589, **The Gallery**, 3535 W. 13th St., 308-382-8701, **Maudie’s Stained Glass**, 301 W. 3rd St., 308-382-1993, **Heart of the Country**, 311 W. 3rd St., 308-382-2861, and **Bartenbach’s Galleries**, 209 N. Locust St., 308-382-7575.

Use Kearney, Hastings or Grand Island as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

Tour A: Pioneer Trails



Archway Monument, Kearney



To Aurora:

From Kearney: 1 hour, 15 minutes (66 miles) east on Interstate 80.

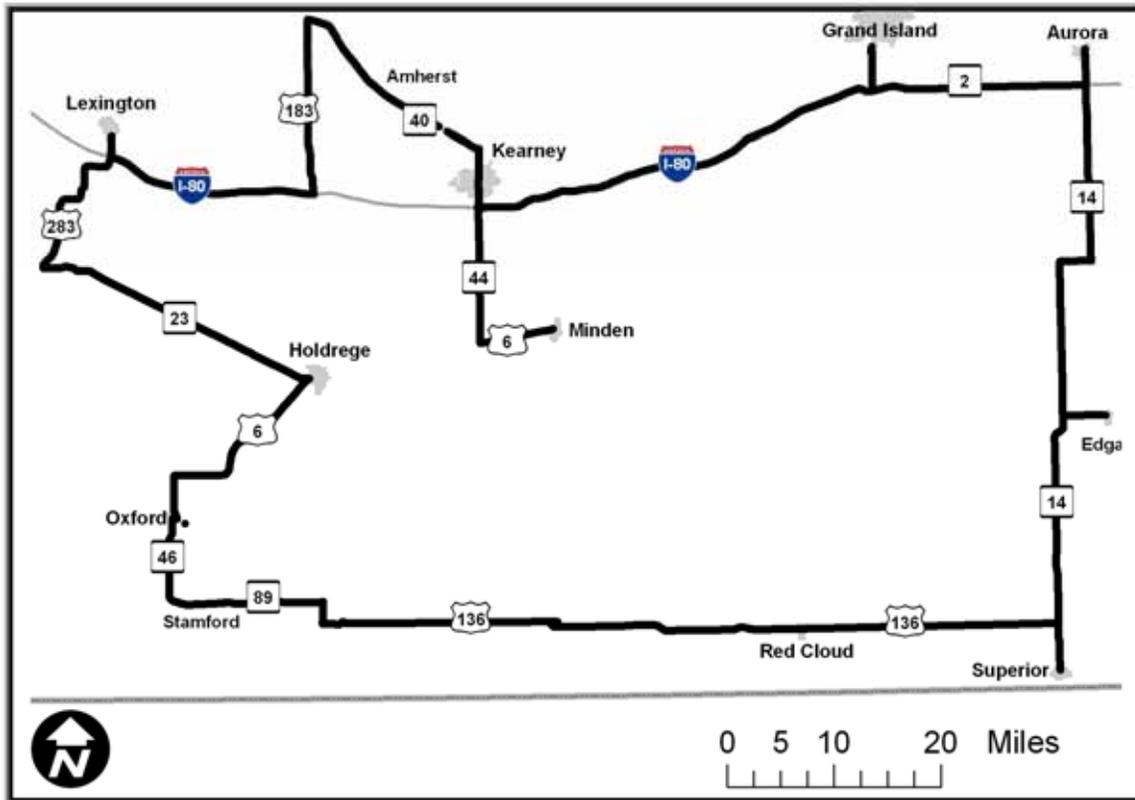
From Hastings: 1 hour (40 miles) north on Highway 281, east on Interstate 80.

From Grand Island: 45 minutes (33 miles) south on Highway 281, east on Interstate 80.

Aurora is a charming community with two outstanding attractions: The [Plainsman Museum](#), 210 16th St., 402-694-6531, and the [Edgerton Explorit Center](#), 208 16th St., 402-694-4032. The Plainsman Museum offers Nebraska history under one roof. A sod house, Pony Express station, car collection and an outstanding doll collection are featured in the facility. Ag-related exhibits and equipment also are on display. Next door, the Edgerton Explorit Center is dedicated to Aurora native Harold “Doc” Edgerton—the inventor of the strobe light. The Explorit Center features examples of Edgerton’s work, as well as many hands-on science exhibits. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 1½ hour.

1 hour (42 miles) south on Highway 14, east on Highway S18B to Edgar.

Good scents and good times at the [Sugar Shack Country Candle Company](#), 223 N. C St., 402-224-3211. Spend time browsing for that perfect scent to warm your heart, home or office. However, candles are not all that Sugar Shack specializes in; they also carry a wide assortment of candle accessories, enamelware, crockery, homemade fudge, soaps and coffees. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.



45 minutes (30 miles) south on Highway 14 to Superior.

The name says it all...Superior! This small, rural community is known as Nebraska's "Victorian Capitol," thanks to Lady Vestey. She started life as Evelene Brodstone in Superior. During the Great Depression, she moved to Chicago and worked at the Vestey Meat Packing Company as a stenographer. She worked her way up in the company and was, at one time, the highest paid female executive in the world. Although she was a world traveler, she never forgot her roots in Nebraska. Learn more about Lady Vestey and her life at the **Nuckolls County Museum**, 612 E. 6th St., 402-879-4144. The museum also boasts a wonderful collection of American Indian artifacts, some which belonged to Chief Red Cloud.

To commemorate Lady Vestey's life, Superior has concentrated on promoting its Victorian charm, and offers tours of Victorian homes. Your tour also can enjoy a Victorian tea and a trip through a local doll factory. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Enjoy a tasty glass of wine at the newly opened [Meyer Vineyards](#), 200 W. 15th St., 402.879.3001. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (29 miles) west on Highway 136 to Red Cloud.

Follow the **Heritage Highway Scenic Byway** (Highway 136) to Red Cloud—the childhood home of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather. Cather wrote eloquently about life on the Great Plains and many of the buildings and rural characteristics that visitors see today are featured in her books. Her childhood home, as well as several historic buildings throughout town, is open for tours. The [Red Cloud Opera House](#), 411 N. Webster St., 402-746-2641, has been renovated and includes a bookstore, art gallery,

theatre and a variety of Cather memorabilia. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. The **Webster County Historical Museum**, 721 W. 4th St., 402-746-2444, housed in a stately mansion and two other adjacent buildings, is one of Nebraska's nicest county museums. An impressive mounted animal display in the attic is a must see. Guided tours of the museum grounds can be arranged. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

90 minutes (60 miles) west on Highways 136 and 89 to Stamford.

Enjoy the scenic views as your group tour travels along the **Heritage Highway Seneic Byway** to relive the days of the American Plains Indians at **Living History Tepee**, 308-868-9400. Agricultural tours, a working family farm, and pumpkin patch will delight everyone on your group tour. Spend a relaxing autumn afternoon searching for just the right pumpkin or enjoying a hayrack ride at **Pumpkin Corners**, 308-868-4121. Suggested tour time at both attractions: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (34 miles) north on Highway 46, west on Highway 6 to Holdrege.

During World War II, this region of Nebraska housed several German prisoner of war (POW) camps. Many POWs settled in the area and became productive and valued residents. The [Nebraska Prairie Museum](#), 308-995-5015, in Holdrege has an impressive collection from Camp Atlanta, originally located five miles from Holdrege. Works of art by POWs, as well as a variety of other exhibits, are displayed. The museum also has several historical buildings on its grounds. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour (41 miles) west on Highway 23, north on Highway 283 to Lexington.

The [Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles](#), 308-324-6329, is an impressive collection of military equipment and machinery. Suggested tour: 1 hour. Lexington also boasts two wineries—[Mac's Creek Vineyards and Winery](#), 308-324-0440, and [Millenium Wines Vineyard](#), 308-324-6094. So make sure you take time to sample their excellent Nebraska-produced wines and tour the vineyards and production facilities. Explore the history of Dawson County at the [Dawson County Historical Museum](#), 805 N. Taft St., 308-324-5340. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (30 miles) east on Highway 30, north on Highway 183, east on Highway 40 to Amherst.

Come on down and enjoy life on the farm at [Harvest Moon Farms](#), 308-826-2068. A delicious catered picnic lunch, 7-acre corn maze, and scenic hayrack ride through the pumpkin patch are in store for your tour. Visit Grandma's Kitchen and the Country Store for great food and gift ideas. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

35 minutes (30 miles) east on Highway 40, south on Highway 44 to Fort Kearny State Historical Park.

Located south of the city of Kearney, [Fort Kearny State Historical Park](#), 308-865-5305, is an impressive state historic park. In its 23 years as a military post, Fort Kearny came to symbolize westward expansion and development. It was the first fort built to protect travelers on the Oregon Trail. It also was the headquarters for the military and civil governments, an important stage station, a home station of the Pony Express, an outfitting depot for numerous American Indian campaigns, and home of the famed

Pawnee Scouts under the leadership of Frank and Luther North. Visitors can explore a recreated stockade area and view historical artifacts of the Oregon Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

[Fort Kearny State Recreational Area](#), 1020 V Road, 308-865-5305, is located only a short drive from the state historical park. If you visit Nebraska during March or early April, you can witness the spectacular annual Sandhill crane migration. Fort Kearny State Recreational Area is an ideal bird viewing area. An abandoned railroad line across the Platte River has been converted into a hiking and biking trail and provides excellent bird viewing opportunities for your group. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

35 minutes (23 miles) south on Highway 44, east on Highway 6 to Minden.

Minden is home to the world-famous [Harold Warp Pioneer Village](#), 800-445-4447. Twenty-six buildings, including a sod house, one-room school, Pony Express station, depot, general store and an 1884 church make up the village. It is home to the oldest existing Buick and 350 other antique autos, 20 historic aircraft, 100 vintage tractors, guns, motorcycles, snowmobiles, boats, buggies, trains and trolleys. The historic crafts of spinning, weaving and broom-making are demonstrated for visitors year-round. If you come during the summer, plan to enjoy a nostalgic ride on an 1800-era steam carousel. A restaurant and gift shop is also on-site. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Be sure to also visit the [Minden Opera House](#), 322 E. 5th St., 308-832-0588, located in downtown Minden, only a few blocks from Pioneer Village. Built in 1891, the building has been restored into a beautiful multi-purpose facility that attracts live performances from around the country. The Opera House can cater breakfast for your group as well. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Minden knows how to celebrate Christmas. In fact, it's officially known as the "Christmas City." During the holiday season, the downtown district is ablaze with more than 12,000 lights for the annual "Light of the World" Christmas Pageant. This truly impressive sight has been a holiday staple in Minden since 1946.

Your tour is finished 35 minutes (23 miles) from Kearney, 50 minutes (32 miles) from Hastings, and 1 hour and 15 minutes (55 miles) from Grand Island.

Tour B: The Crossroads



Nebraska's Big Rodeo, Burwell



To Dannebrog:

From Kearney: 90 minutes (73 miles) east on Interstate 80, north on Highway 281, west on Highway 58.

From Hastings: 1 hour, 15 minutes (47 miles) north on Highway 281, west on Highway 58.

From Grand Island: 40 minutes (23 miles) north on Highway 281, west on Highway 58.

Explore a little piece of Denmark in central Nebraska. Dannebrog is a charming Danish community that has been introduced to millions of TV viewers by local historian and TV commentator Roger Welsch. Roger's monthly *Postcard From Nebraska* segment on *CBS Sunday Morning* often featured small town life in Dannebrog. Many flock to the town to get a chance to visit the town that he talked about so fondly. Roger's own contribution to Dannebrog's tourism inventory—The **National Liar's Hall of Fame**, 106 S. Mill St., 308-226-2222, is a unique tour stop located inside the "**Lille**" **Mermaid Gift Shop**. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Make sure you arrange with the friendly folks in Dannebrog for a traditional Danish snack or meal while in town. Your group also will want to save some time to walk through the downtown area and visit some of the unique shops. If you are lucky enough to be in town during the early part of June you can enjoy Grundluvs Fest—Dannebrog's Danish celebration. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

25 minutes (13 miles) north on Highway 11, east on Highway 92 to St. Paul.

The **Loup Rivers Scenic Byway** (Highways 91/11) will take you to St. Paul—hometown of famous baseball player Grover Cleveland Alexander. The **Museum of Nebraska Major League Baseball**, 619 Howard Ave., 308-754-5558, features a collection on Alexander and four other Nebraskans who went on to baseball fame—Sam Crawford, Dazzy Vance, Bob Gibson and Richie Ashburn. There also is a charming historic village adjacent to the downtown area that consists of a restored train depot, one-room school, general store and church. The village can be opened for groups with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (29 miles) west on Highway 92, north on Highway 11 to Scotia.

Scotia is home to **Happy Jack Peak and Chalk Mine**, 308-245-3276. With more than 6,000 feet of honeycombed caverns, it features the only publicly accessible chalk room and pillar mine in North America. The mine is located in a very scenic part of the Nebraska Sandhills (the largest grass stabilized sand dune area in North America). Groups are welcome to explore the caves with a guide. For adventurous types, a hike to the top of Happy Jack Hill provides a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. Don't miss the Haunted Mine Tour in late October. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (17 miles) north on Highway 11 to Ord.

Ord is the hometown of Evelyn Sharp, who, at age 18, was the youngest female commercial pilot in the nation. She lost her life while flying missions during World War II. A display on Sharp is available at the Ord Airport. Your tour also can enjoy a Victorian tea at the [Valley County Museum](#), 117 S. 16th St., 308-728-5178. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

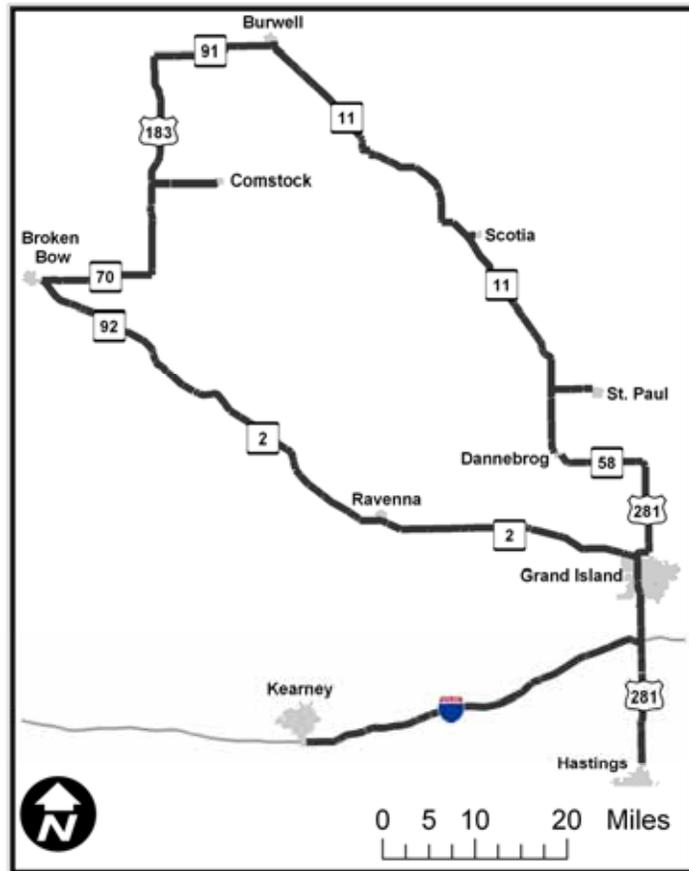
20 minutes (10 miles) north on Highway 11 to Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park.

[Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park](#), 308-346-4715, between Burwell and Ord near Elyria, has the greatest number of original buildings still standing of any historical fort in Nebraska.

Originally built to protect pioneers from the hostile Teton Sioux Tribe, the fort became a fortress for the friendly Pawnee Tribe, as well as pioneers. Today visitors can explore the barracks and other original structures and learn about the fort's colorful history. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (10 miles) north on Highway 11 to Burwell.

Just north of Burwell is the immense [Calamus Reservoir](#) and the historic Garfield County Fairgrounds, home each July to [Nebraska's Big Rodeo](#). The [Dream Weavers Cabin](#), 308-346-4383, has herb/tea/wildflower gardens, weavings and homeopathic remedies. The **Calamus Dam and Fish Hatchery**, 308-346-4226, at Calamus Reservoir is a multi-million dollar fish hatchery where your tour can observe how fish are raised in captivity. Have an old fashioned, foot stompin' good time at [Calamus Outfitters](#), Highway 96, 308-346-4697. This cow/calf operation offers cattle drives, brandings and



calving season experiences for your tour, as well as trail rides through the majestic Sandhills. The cream-can socials and pitchfork steak suppers are not to be missed! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

50 minutes (34 miles) west on Highway 91, south on Highway 183 to Comstock.

You'll know you're getting close to Comstock when you see an impressive group of windmills looming on the horizon. With more than 100 windmills, the [2nd Wind Ranch](#), 800-658-4443, has the largest freestanding windmill collection in the world. Suggested touring time: 1 hour.

56 minutes (31 miles) south on Highway 183, west on Highway 70 to Broken Bow.

Experience the relaxing pace of western Nebraska as you head deep into the heart of the Sandhills to Broken Bow. Truly a delightful town, the downtown district features a host of unique specialty stores, and a gazebo where your group can enjoy a quiet picnic lunch. Contact the Broken Bow Chamber of Commerce to make pre-trip arrangements for lunch. The [Custer County Historical Museum](#), 445 S. 9th Ave., 308-872-2203, owns many original photographs by famed Sandhills photographer Solomon Butcher. He photographed pioneers and brings you face to face with the people who settled this land in the 19th century. The city also is located along the **Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway** (Highway 2). Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (32 miles) east on Highway 2 to Litchfield.

Enjoy the true farming experience at **Fulton Farms**, 308-446-2520, where pasture tours, history tours, and birding and wildlife viewing opportunities are some of the many fun activities that will delight your group tour. Suggested tour time: 2-3 hours.

Take a side tour along Highway 10 north east of Litchfield to Loup City where your group tour can enjoy homemade desserts, lemonade, ice tea and delicious lunches in a country farm setting at **Cottonwood Lane and Anna's Tea Room**, 308-745-0211. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

From Litchfield: 25 minutes (18 miles) east on Highway 2 to Ravenna.

The **Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway** leads you straight into Ravenna's charming downtown area where several nice shops await your group. A newly renovated movie theater features the history and growth of Ravenna. For a refreshment break, make plans to stop at **Aunt Betty's Bed and Breakfast**, 804 Grand Ave., 308-452-3739, located a few blocks from downtown. You'll enjoy this lovely antique-filled 1907 Victorian home.

Your tour is 45 minutes (32 miles) from Kearney and Grand Island, and 90 minutes (55 miles) from Hastings.

Tour 5

Day Tours from Valentine and Central Nebraska

Valentine is Nebraska's "Outdoor Capital," 308-376-2969, and offers your group a wide variety of exciting outdoor activities, including canoeing, hiking, biking, wildlife watching and even stargazing. Each July, Valentine hosts the [Annual Nebraska Star Party](#), 402-489-8197, when amateur and professional astronomers from around the world come here to view the night sky in one of the darkest places in the country—the Sandhills. Valentine also is home to Nebraska's highest waterfall located in [Smith Falls State Park](#), 402-376-1306. Once finished, the nation's longest hiking/biking trail will pass through Valentine—the Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail will extend 321 miles from Norfolk to Chadron. A portion of this trail already is completed around the city. On February 14, all eyes are on the "Heart City" as hundreds of postcards and letters are mailed from Valentine with the official Valentine postmark.

Downtown Valentine is one attraction you don't want to miss. It boasts everything from arts and craft shops, (**The Gallery**, 226 N. Main St., 402-376-3834) and bookstores (**Plains Trading Company**, 269 N. Main St., 402-376-1424) to a cyber café and one of the area's largest western wear stores—[Young's Western Wearhouse](#), 143 N. Main St., 800-658-4398. Dining at [Peppermill Steakhouse](#), 112 N. Main St., 402-376-1440, or [Jordan's](#), 402-376-7255, and dancing or stomping your heels at an outdoor concert are just a few of the many ways to "kick up your heels" in the city.

Valentine sits in the Nebraska Sandhills, which cover an area of more than 19,000-square miles, and is the largest grass-stabilized sand dune region in North America. However, these Sandhills are not a desert, but instead sit above one of the largest underground water reservoirs in the world—the Ogallala Aquifer. The groundwater rises to the surface in many places, creating marshes, small lakes and bubbling springs.

Use Valentine as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

40 minutes (30 miles) west on Highway 20 (Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway) to Nenzel. The [Sandhills Spirit of the West](#), 402-823-4131, is the perfect way to end your day before the next day's tour. Experience Nebraska's Sandhills among genuine cowboy surroundings where your tour can sit back and relax for a spell on a rustic wagon ride, and learn about the area's history, settlement and ranching ways from local cowboys and ranchers. Make sure you're plenty hungry for a hearty chuck wagon dinner, featuring Dutch oven cobbler, biscuits, coffee, cowboy beans and a mouthwatering rib eye steak. Group reservations required. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Tour A: Sandhills Kicks



Meadville



20 minutes (15 miles) east on Highway 12 to Smith Falls State Park.

[Smith Falls State Park](#), 402-376-1306, boasts the state's tallest waterfall. Water cascades 70 feet from the cliff top and empties into the scenic Niobrara River. Smith Falls is accessible via a national historic bridge that crosses the river and a wooden walking path that ends beneath the falls. Public restrooms are available at the park office/information center. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Return to Valentine. 5 minutes (4 miles) east on Highway 12 to Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge.

As you enter the [Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-376-3789, you'll cross the Niobrara River on Cornell Bridge. Nearby is one of several access points for canoeing and tubing along the scenic river. Fort Niobrara was established in 1912 with six bison, 17 elk and a few deer on land donated to the federal government. Today, the refuge spans more than 19,000 square miles and is home to the Great Plains bison, the black-tailed prairie dog, elk and other resident wildlife. In addition, more than 200 species of migratory birds have been identified in the refuge. Groups can view wildlife up-close in a drive-through exhibition pasture. Don't forget your camera! Advance reservations are appreciated. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

1 hour (46 miles) east on Highway 20 to Ainsworth.

Ainsworth was proclaimed the "Country Music Capital of Nebraska" in November 1992. Today, thousands of people enjoy the annual country music festival held during the second weekend in August. Ainsworth also hosts the National Horseshoe Pitching Contest in June, which draws participants from all 50 states and Canada. One winner of the contest was on the *Tonight Show* several years ago. When asked where the tournament was held, the winner replied "Out in the middle of nowhere." When the good folks of Ainsworth heard this, they decided to change the name of the tournament to "Middle of Nowhere Days." The history of the area is preserved at the **Sellers Barton Museum**, 402-387-2740, located in a log cabin in Court House Park. Two bed and breakfasts, the [Ainsworth Inn](#), 400 N. Main St., 402-387-0408, and **Upper Room**, 409 N. Wilson St., 402-387-0107, can provide meals or tea for your group. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

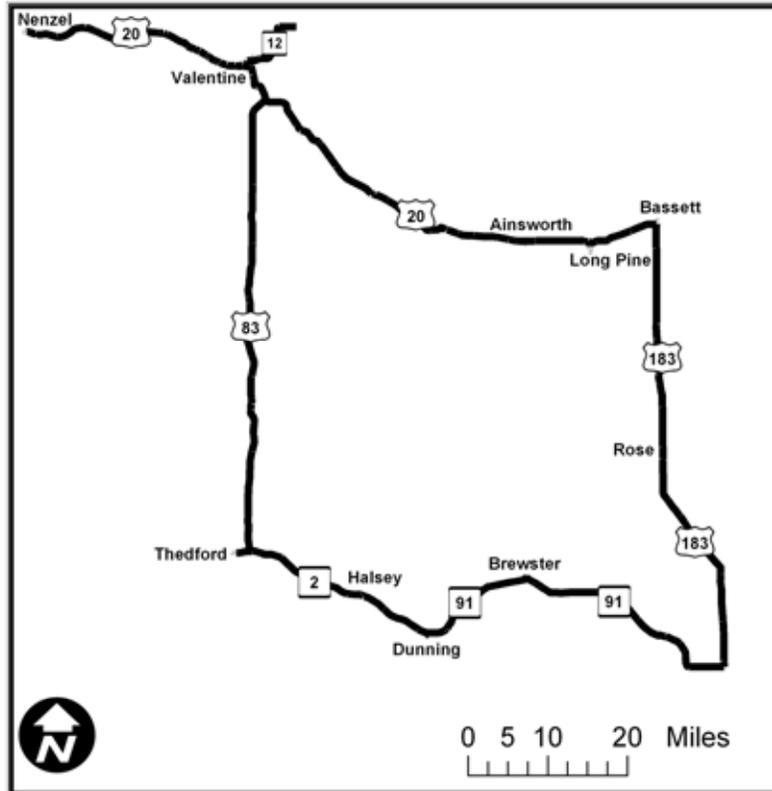
15 minutes (10 miles) east on Highway 20 to Long Pine.

One of Nebraska's most treasured secrets, Long Pine is located in a deep-forested canyon near the crystal clear [Long Pine Creek](#), 402-273-4395. The small hamlet of Long Pine has earned the title "Beauty Spot of Nebraska," and is one of the oldest towns in the Sandhills. Long Pine Creek is one of Nebraska's finest trout streams.

15 minutes (10 miles) east on Highway 20 to Bassett.

Relax, have something to drink, and put your feet up for a spell in Nebraska's "City of Nostalgia!" Explore Bassett's downtown, starting with the completely restored **Phillips 66 Gas Station**, 402-684-

2263. Built in 1927, the gas station was painstakingly restored to its glory days and today houses memorabilia from the service station. Have your photograph taken on the adjacent boardwalk before walking across the street to the **R.F. Goeke Sundries**, 402-684-2263, and stepping back into the 1940s. Recall the days of the candy counter and aisle after aisle of buttons and notions. Make your way toward the back of the store and reminisce about bygone days while you devour your favorite sundae or malt at the perfectly restored, old-fashioned soda fountain.



40 minutes (29 miles) south on Highway 183 to Rose.

While away the time riding in a Conestoga wagon to view a herd of nearly 1,000 bison at the [Hutchinson Buffalo Ranch](#), 402-273-4574. Other stops along the guided Perfect 10 Buffalo Tour include enjoying a drink from a natural artesian well, the chance to pet a tame bison named Miracle, and an incredible view of the Sandhills from Pike's Peak—the highest hill on the ranch.

90 minutes (61 miles) south on Highway 183, west on Highway 91 to Brewster.

Renowned as the smallest county seat in the nation, Brewster offers scenic views of the North Loup River, and is rich in history of horse thieves and saloonkeepers. Two businesses cater to the group tour market—[Uncle Buck's](#), 308-547-2210, and the **Sandhills Guest Ranch**, 308-547-2460. Uncle Buck's is a great place to enjoy a mouth-

watering meal while surrounded by rustic, Old West charm. The Sandhills Guest Ranch offers horseback rides, cookouts and storytelling with advance notice. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. The **Double L Gift Shop**, 308-547-0420, offers a touch of Nebraska where you can take back unique locally made and handcrafted gifts. Ask about feeding the goats once your tour is finished shopping. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

35 minutes (26 miles) west on Highways 91 (Loup Rivers Scenic Byway) and 2 (Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway) to Halsey.

Halsey is the gateway to the [Nebraska National Forest](#)—the largest hand-planted forest in the nation, 308-533-2257. This oasis in the Sandhills offers groups a variety of fun-filled activities, including nature trails and a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape from atop an observation tower. Picnic and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

25 minutes (17 miles) west on Highway 2 to Thedford.

Thedford is home to the **Thedford Art Gallery**, 509 Court St., 308-645-2586. The gallery is owned and supported by Thedford Art Guild volunteers and offers some of the best works of art available for purchase in the area. You're sure to find nice gifts for friends and family back home. Call ahead to ensure the gallery will be open for your tour. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

45 minutes (41 miles) north on Highway 83 to the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge.

Established in 1935, the [Valentine National Wildlife Refuge](#), 308-376-1889, covers more than 70,000 acres and is a paradise for outdoorsmen and wildlife watchers. More than 240 bird species have been identified on the various lakes and marshes. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

25 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 83 to the Bryan Bridge scenic overlook.

Take Highway 83 five minutes south of Valentine to the historic **Bryan Bridge**, 402-376-2969, which was constructed in 1932 over the Niobrara River. The scenic overlook offers a spectacular view of the river and the old train trestle bridge that is part of the nationally designated Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail. Upon completion, this trail will extend 320 miles from Norfolk to Chadron, and will be the longest rails-to-trails (converting former railroad tracks into trails) in the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

5 minutes (5 miles) north on Highway 83 to Valentine.

Tour B: Sandhills Journeys



Uncle Buck's Lodge, Brewster



50 minutes (26 miles) southwest on Highway 97.

[Merritt Reservoir State Recreation Area](#), 402-376-3320, is a massive reservoir set in the middle of the Sandhills. Merritt Reservoir covers nearly 3,000 acres, has an impressive 44 miles of shoreline, and offers some of Nebraska's premier fishing. Plan a meal or snack stop at the **Waters Edge Restaurant**, 402-376-3320, where you also can soak in a panoramic view of the reservoir. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. Located adjacent to the reservoir is [Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest](#), 402-823-4154. This 115,703-acre forest is a unique mixture of forest and prairie deep in the Sandhills. Suggested drive time through forest: 1 hour.

90 minutes (65 miles) north on Highway S16F, west on Highway 20 to Bowring Ranch State Historical Park.

Explore the scenery along the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** (Highway 20) to Merriman and the [Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch State Historical Park](#), 308-684-3428. The park has a long history that stretches back to 1854. The visitor center, outbuildings and ranch house document the history of ranching in the Sandhills, and chronicle the lives of Arthur and Eve Bowring. Both believed strongly in community service and dedicated a great deal of time in the public forum. Eve was the first woman from Nebraska to serve in the United States Congress as a senator. Eve's collection of political memorabilia is a Who's Who in American politics. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (30 miles) west on Highway 20 to Gordon.

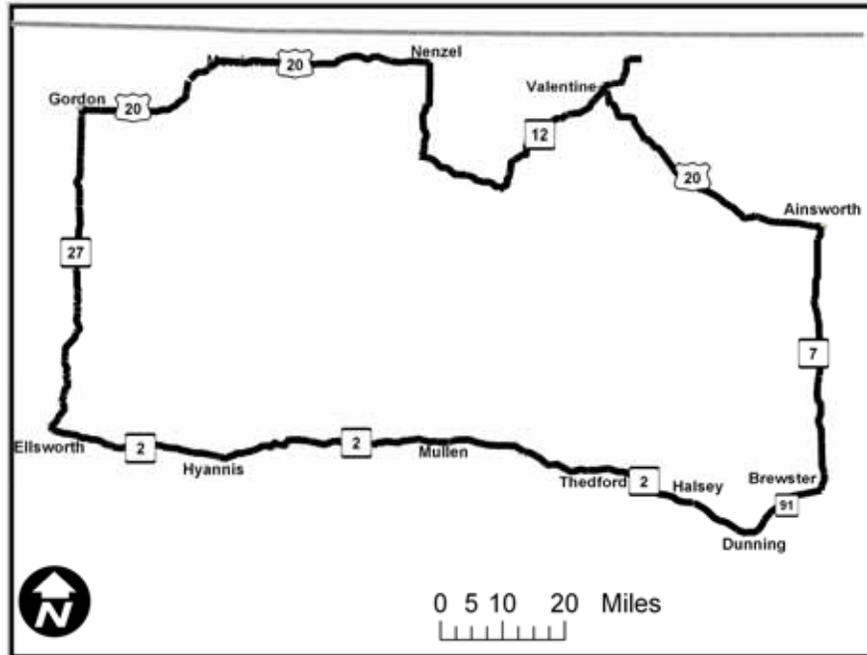
World-renowned western historical author Mari Sandoz wrote about her life in Nebraska's impressive Sandhills region. A local publishing firm has an extensive collection of her works in its **Mari Sandoz Room**, 117 Main St., 308-282-9972. Your group tour can learn about this fascinating woman and her impact on Nebraska's literary scene. The Mari Sandoz Homestead is 30 miles south of Gordon on Highway 27, and tours are available from the Gordon Tourist Information Center, 308-282-0730. View cowboy memorabilia from the late 1800s to present day at the **Tri-State Old Time Cowboy Museum**, 308-360-1447. The **Scamahorn Museum**, 308-638-7643, is in a restored 1880s era church and chronicles the area's colorful history. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

1 hour, 50 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 27 to Ellsworth.

Take a relaxing drive through the Sandhills along Highway 27 to Ellsworth. This is the country that Mari Sandoz wrote so much about. Her gravesite and a historical marker are located east of the highway. At the intersection of highways 27 and 2 is the tiny town of

Ellsworth that was founded as the company town for the vast Spade Ranch in the late 19th century. The ranch remains a working cattle ranch. An old general store in town, **Morgan's Cowpoke Haven**, 308-762-2666, manufactures quality bags that are shipped across the country. These bags are sold at Cabela's and have been featured on

QVC and Home Shopping Network. The store also specializes in western clothing, so plan to spend some time and money on official western wear to make your friends back home green with envy. Cowboy up!



34 minutes (28 miles) east on Highway 2 (Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway) to Hyannis.

The tiny hamlet of Hyannis is home to the **Verde Valley Guest Ranch**, 308-458-2220, a working cattle ranch that was established 115 years ago. Groups can enjoy a variety of activities, including hiking, wildlife watching or witnessing the hard work involved with raising cattle. Advance group tour notice is required, and meals can be arranged with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

50 minutes (39 miles) east on Highway 2 to Mullen.

Located in the heart of Sandhills Country, Mullen offers canoeing adventures on the **Dismal and Middle Loup Rivers**, 308-546-2206 (Glidden Sandhills Motel). The Dismal River appeals to a high adventure trip, while the Middle Loup is more sedate and makes for a great group outing. A new adventure trend is floating down the river in a stock tank. These 7-9 foot tanks are virtually unsinkable and will keep you dry.

30 minutes (26 miles) east on Highway 2 to Thedford.

Thedford is home to the **Thedford Art Gallery**, 509 Court St., 308-645-2586. The gallery is owned and supported by the volunteers of the Thedford Art Guild and offers some of the best works of art available for purchase in the area. You're sure to find a nice

gift for friends and family back home. Call ahead to ensure the gallery will be open for your tour. Suggested tour time: 30 minutes.

20 minutes (17 miles) east on Highway 2 to Halsey.

Halsey is the gateway to the [Nebraska National Forest](#)—the largest hand-planted forest in the nation, 308-533-2257. This oasis in the Sandhills offers groups a variety of fun-filled activities, including nature trails and a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape from atop an observation tower. Picnic and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

35 minutes (26 miles) east on Highways 91 (Loup Rivers Scenic Byway) and 2 (Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway) to Brewster.

Renowned as the smallest county seat in the nation, Brewster offers scenic views of the North Loup River, and is rich in history of horse thieves and saloonkeepers. Two businesses cater to the group tour market—[Uncle Buck's](#), 308-547-2210, and the **Sandhills Guest Ranch**, 308-547-2460. Uncle Buck's is a great place to enjoy a mouth-watering meal while surrounded by rustic, Old West charm. The Sandhills Guest Ranch offers horseback rides, cookouts and storytelling with advance notice. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. The **Double L Gift Shop**, 308-547-0420, offers a touch of Nebraska where you can take back unique locally made and handcrafted gifts. Ask about feeding the goats once your tour is finished shopping. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

90 minutes (43 miles) north on Highway 7 to Ainsworth.

Ainsworth was proclaimed the “Country Music Capital of Nebraska” in November 1992. Today, thousands of people enjoy the annual country music festival held during the second weekend in August. Ainsworth also hosts the National Horseshoe Pitching Contest in June, which draws participants from all 50 states and Canada. One winner of the contest was on the *Tonight Show* several years ago. When asked where the tournament was held, the winner replied “Out in the middle of nowhere.” When the good folks of Ainsworth heard this, they decided to change the name of the tournament to “Middle of Nowhere Days.” The history of the area is preserved at the **Sellers Barton Museum**, 402-387-2740, located in a log cabin in Court House Park. Two bed and breakfasts, the [Ainsworth Inn](#), 400 N. Main St., 402-387-0408, and **Upper Room**, 409 N. Wilson St., 402-387-0107, can provide meals or tea for your group. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (46 miles) west on Highway 20 to Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge.

As you enter the [Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-376-3789, you'll cross the Niobrara River on Cornell Bridge. Nearby is one of several access points for canoeing and tubing along the scenic river. Fort Niobrara was established in 1912 with six bison, 17 elk and a few deer on land donated to the federal government. Today, the refuge spans more than 19,000 square miles and is home to the Great Plains bison, the black-tailed prairie dog, elk and other resident wildlife. In addition, more than 200 species of migratory birds have been identified in the refuge. Groups can view wildlife up-close in a drive-through exhibition pasture. Don't forget your camera! Advance reservations are appreciated. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

From Valentine: 20 minutes east on Highway 12 (Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway) to Smith Falls State Park.

[Smith Falls State Park](#), 402-376-1306, boasts the state's tallest waterfall. Water cascades 70 feet from the cliff top and empties into the scenic Niobrara River. Smith Falls is accessible via a national historic bridge that crosses the river and a wooden walking path that ends beneath the falls. Public restrooms are available at the park office/information center. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

20 minutes (15 miles) west on Highway 12 to Valentine.

Tour 6

Day Tours from North Platte, Western and Southwestern Nebraska

Birthplace of the rodeo, North Platte is a great group tour stop. Colonel William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody spent many years in North Platte where he originated the rodeo. His ranch, [Buffalo Bill State Historical Park](#), 308-535-8035, is the focal point of the city. You can tour his house, as well as his beautifully maintained historic barn. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. During the third week of June, the entire community dons their western duds for NEBRASKAland Days, 308-532-7939. It’s 10 days of western fun, ethnic celebrations and live entertainment! If a hands-on experience with trains is what you want, don’t miss the **Railroad Museum**, 308-532-4729, in Cody Park where you will find Union Pacific’s Challenger 3977—one of the largest steam locomotives ever built. Elk, peacock, geese, deer and a variety of other critters call the park home. Hint: they’ll like you better if you feed them. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Made famous by the book *Once Upon a Town* by Bob Greene, the North Platte World War II Canteen display is housed at the **Lincoln County Historical Museum**, 2403 N. Buffalo Bill Ave., 308-534-6579. The interpretative display details the story of the Canteen and its volunteers who, for 51 months, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week throughout World War II, met every U.S. military train to provide food, treats and hospitality to passengers. A community of less than 15,000 served more than six million service men and women free of charge. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Don’t miss the [20th Century Veterans’ Memorial](#), 2811 S. Jeffers St., 308-532-6579, which is dedicated to the men and women who have served their country. The memorial features larger than life bronze statues and wall murals that honor the five branches of the armed forces. A “Walk of Honor” that is lined by thousands of commemorative bricks shows the names of veterans. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

You can witness railroad history in the making at **Union Pacific Railroad’s Bailey Yard**, 308-532-4729. The largest rail car classification complex in the world, it stretches eight miles and covers nearly 3,000 acres. Get a panoramic view of this spectacular sight from the visitor observation deck and listen to an 8-minute audio presentation about this immense railroad facility. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Conveniently located at the intersection of Interstate 80 and Highway 83, [Fort Cody Trading Post](#), 308-532-8081, is one of the state’s largest and engagingly eclectic gift shops. Antiques, leather goods, jewelry, western gifts, novelties, books, clothing, gag gifts and a variety of other fun gifts and souvenirs can be picked up at Fort Cody. If it’s fun, it’s at Fort Cody! Make sure you walk through the Old West Museum in the back of the store to view the miniature version of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show—a 20,000-piece hand-carved animated display. Fort Cody is a definite must-see! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

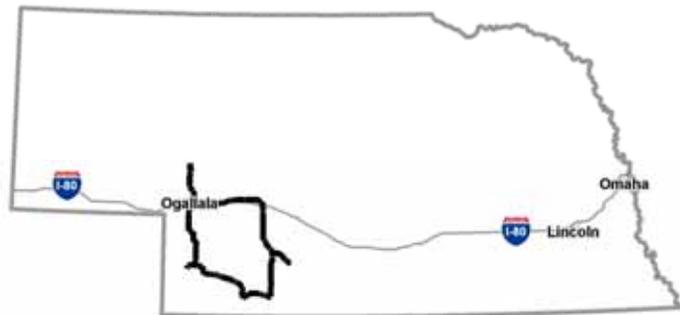
The **Artist's Co-op Art and Gift Gallery**, 308-532-4729, is a must-see showcase of original work of west central Nebraska artists. Five large gallery rooms and an outdoor sculpture garden provide great opportunities to view the works of art at your own leisure. Workshops are hosted by artist members and nationally acclaimed professional artists. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Use North Platte as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

Tour A: Traverse the Great Southwest



Mansion on the Hill, Ogallala



30 minutes (27 miles) south on Highway 83 to Wellfleet, east on Opal Springs Road.

Wellfleet is home to a unique Nebraska attraction, [Dancing Leaf Earth Lodge and Cultural Learning Center](#), 6100 E. Opal Springs Road, 308-963-4233. Your group will experience primitive American Indian life. Groups may enjoy nature hikes, canoeing and delicious buffalo stew dinners. Enjoy the earth lodge and learn about the importance of the medicine wheel. Guided tours of the area can be scheduled with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (26 miles) south on Highway 83, east on Highways 23 and 18 to Stockville.

[Perk's Prairie Paradise](#), 308-367-8782, is truly one of Nebraska's hidden historic gems. This privately-owned tribute to Nebraska's pioneer spirit and history boasts 19 structures that visitors can walk through, including a one-room schoolhouse, sod house, church, saloon, two-story house and a replicated "pioneer street" featuring a boardwalk along false building facades. The buildings depict a surveyor's office, millinery shop, dentist office and carpenter's shop, among others. You gotta see it to believe it! A refreshment break can be provided. Suggested tour time: 2½-3 hours.

1 hour, 20 minutes (51 miles) west on Highways 18 and 23, south on Highway 83 to McCook.

McCook is southwest Nebraska's commerce center and offers excellent restaurants, shops and boutiques to explore, as well as one of the most charming historical downtown districts in the state. One of the nation's most influential senators, George Norris, was born in McCook. An independent thinker, Norris helped create the Rural Electrification Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority Act (which brought electricity to many rural parts of the country), and the one-house legislative body in Nebraska—the Unicameral. The

[George Norris Home](#), 706 Norris Ave., 308-345-8484, is a branch of the Nebraska State Historical Society. Groups can view artifacts from Norris' life as well as memorabilia from his 45 years in Congress. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Museum of the High Plains**, 421 Norris Ave., 308-345-3661, boasts a number of fine exhibits, including pioneer artifacts from the late 1800s, historic photographs, clothing and rooms devoted to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Senator George Norris, and three former Nebraska governors (Frank Morrison, Ralph Brooks, and Ben Nelson). The museum also has an impressive model railroad exhibit to demonstrate the railroad's impact on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.



Hands down! **Sehnert's Bakery and Bieroc Café**, 312 Norris Ave., 308-345-6500, has some of the best cheesecake in Nebraska, possibly the entire U.S! In addition to cheesecake, your group can enjoy a variety of other mouthwatering dishes and desserts.

30 minutes (22 miles) west on Highway 34 to Trenton.

Spend some time at **Massacre Canyon**, the site of the last great battle between the Sioux and Pawnee Tribes. The Pawnee suffered a tragic loss of life at this battle. The **Massacre Canyon Monument and Visitor Center**, 308-334-5171, tells the story of this eventful time. Restrooms and a gift shop are available. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

90 minutes (55 miles) north on Highway 25, west on Highways 6 and S15A to Champion.

Site of the state's last water-powered flourmill, [Champion Mill State Historical Park](#), 308-882-5860, in Champion chronicles the history and story of the mill. From its beginning in 1886 through 1968, the mill produced outstanding flour products sold throughout the region. Today visitors can take a guided tour through the facility, relax on a bench underneath one of the many shade trees that surround the nearby pond, or buy a souvenir sack of ground flour to take back home. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Nearby Imperial offers a variety of conveniences and boasts one of the most successful county fairs in the state. The town has an active downtown district that includes an espresso shop, health food store and a lovely bed and breakfast with a wrap-around porch (each room has an enclosed balcony). The [Balcony House Bed and Breakfast](#), 308-882-5597, can provide your group tour with delicious refreshments with prior notice. Take a few moments to sit on the front porch and enjoy the quiet of small town Nebraska. Suggested tour time of Imperial: 1 hour.

From Imperial: 40 minutes (30 miles) north on Highway 61 to Grant.

Browse the works of some of the best artists in southwest Nebraska at [Meadowlark Gallery](#), 246 Central Ave., 308-352-2450. A gift shop is available to purchase that special piece of art or souvenir. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 61 to Ogallala.

Once a bustling cowboy town with a very colorful reputation, Ogallala is now a family-friendly town that embraces its colorful western past. Be sure to make time to visit [Front Street](#), 519 E. 1st St., 308-284-6000, to watch **The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**—Nebraska’s longest-running summer theatre. Belly up to the bar for a sarsaparilla or other beverage to wet your whistle while you watch showgirls and desperados perform. Plan a visit to the [Petrified Wood Gallery](#), 525 E. 1st St., 308-284-9996, after the show—one of Nebraska’s most unique museums. This gallery of natural history specializes in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts. The Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office, 204 East A St, 308-284-4066, can arrange for you to visit legendary **Boot Hill** or the stately **Mansion on the Hill**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

Ogallala also is home to “Big Mac” or [Lake McConaughy](#)—the largest inland lake in the region, 308-284-8800. The lake is a water lover’s paradise and offers white sand beaches, excellent fishing and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the water. The **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, 308-284-8800, is Nebraska’s first water museum and interprets the significance of water to the state’s past, present and future. With advance notice, the Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office can help arrange a beach party, boat rides and a tour of **Kingsley Dam**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. From late December to early March, the [Bald Eagle Viewing Center](#), 308-284-2332, is open below the dam and is one of the best locations in the region to view these magnificent birds.

View one of the largest, privately held lilac collections in the country—**The Lilacs of Meadowlark Hill**, 308-284-2524. The best time to visit is May during “Lilac Time,” when the air is heavy with the perfume wafting off these beautiful flowers. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 61 to Haythorn Ranch.

Take a step back in time at a working cattle ranch located in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills, north of Ogallala. The historical [Haythorn Ranch Tours and Figure Traditions Event Center](#), 308-355-4000, maintains a herd of more than 500 ranch-bred horses that are used in day-to-day ranching activities. It is the largest breeder of quarter

horses in the U.S. and the second largest in the world. Call for reservations for large and small group tour packages. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

1 hour (41 miles) south on Highway 61, east on Highway 30 to Paxton.

It's off to one of Nebraska's most famous watering holes—[Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge](#), 308-239-4500, in Paxton. Ole's is known for its impressive collection of mounted animals, as well as quality food and exceptional hospitality that attracts many group tours to this unique restaurant. There is plenty of room for groups, and the delicious food will bring you back again and again. Suggested time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (33 miles) east on Highway 30 to North Platte.

Tour B: Peaceful Prairies



Fort Cody, North Platte



40 minutes (37 miles) east on Highway 30 to Gothenburg.

One of the few Pony Express stations, 308-537-3505, still standing in Nebraska is located in Gothenburg's charming city park. Original historic items are on display and your clients can send postcards to friends and family back home postmarked with the original Pony Express stamp. The **Sod House Museum**, 308-537-2680, at the Gothenburg Interstate 80 exit shows visitors how the pioneers lived and survived on the treeless Great Plains. Both attractions have gift shops. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 45 minutes.

15 minutes (11 miles) east on Highway 30 to Cozad.

Cozad is home of painter Robert Henri, who founded the Ash Can style of painting and became a major influence in the art world. In fact, his works hang in galleries in New York City and Paris, France. His childhood home is the **Robert Henri Museum and Historical Walkway**, 218 E. 8th St., 308-784-4154, where several of his original works of art are on display, along with other Henri-inspired art. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

25 minutes (14 miles) east on Highway 30 to Lexington.

The [Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles](#), 308-324-6329, is an impressive collection of military equipment and machinery. Suggested tour: 1 hour. Lexington also boasts two wineries—[Mac's Creek Vineyards and Winery](#), 308-324-0440, and [Millenium Wines Vineyard](#), 308-324-6094. So make sure you take time to sample their excellent Nebraska-produced wines and tour the vineyards and production facilities.

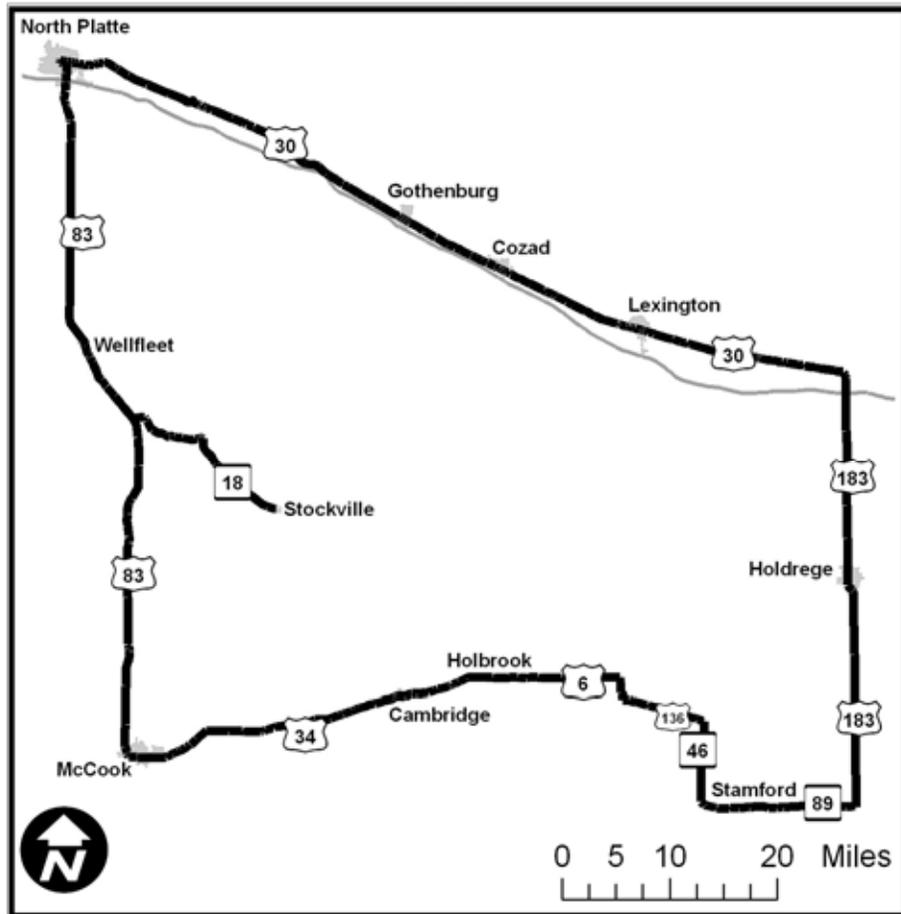
Explore the history of Dawson County at the [Dawson County Historical Museum](#), 805 N. Taft St., 308-324-5340. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

50 minutes (41 miles) east on Highway 30, south on Highway 183 to Holdrege.

During World War II, this region of Nebraska housed several German prisoner of war (POW) camps. Many POWs settled in the area and became

productive and valued residents. The [Nebraska Prairie Museum](#), 308-995-5015, in Holdrege has an impressive collection from Camp Atlanta, originally located

five miles from Holdrege. Works of art by POWs, as well as a variety of other exhibits, are displayed. The museum also has several historical buildings on its grounds. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.



50 minutes (34 miles) south on Highway 183, west on Highways 136 and 89 to Stamford. Relive the days of the American Plains Indians at **Living History Tepee**, 308-868-9400. Agricultural tours, a working family farm, and pumpkin patch will delight everyone on your group tour. Spend a relaxing autumn afternoon searching for just the right pumpkin or enjoying a hayrack ride at **Pumpkin Corners**, 308-868-4121. Suggested tour time at both attractions: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (34 miles) west on Highway 89, north on Highway 46, west on Highways 136 and 6 to Holbrook.

Visit the [GROW Nebraska](#) store, 416 Central Ave., 888-476-9632, in Holbrook where your tour can purchase locally made and Nebraska-made crafts, products and souvenirs. Call ahead to make sure the store is open for your tour's arrival.

15 minutes (9 miles) west on Highway 6 to Cambridge.

Two outstanding tourist attractions in Cambridge are the [Cambridge Bed and Breakfast](#), 606 Parker St., 308-697-3220, and the [Sondra L. Jonson Studios](#), 716 Nelson St., 800-720-8574. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Cambridge Bed and Breakfast is a neoclassical style, three-story home, completed in 1910. The house's owners host a living history tour experience where your tour can learn about the Faling family (the house's original owners), life in rural Nebraska, neoclassical architecture, and marvel at the house's beautifully designed interior. Special events, such as high tea, dessert or an ice cream social can be provided to groups of 10 or more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Between 1998 and 2002, Sondra L. Jonson created more than 14 life-sized sculptures to display in six states. Her small bronze statues appear in collections throughout the United States and Europe, including the White House and the Vatican. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. For more information on tours in Cambridge, contact the Cambridge Economic Development office at 308-697-3711.

Between 1998 and 2002, Sondra L. Jonson created more than 14 life-sized sculptures to display in six states. Her small bronze statues appear in collections throughout the United States and Europe, including the White House and the Vatican. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

35 minutes (21 miles) west on Highway 6 to McCook.

McCook is southwest Nebraska's commerce center and offers excellent restaurants, shops and boutiques to explore, as well as one of the most charming historical downtown districts in the state. One of the nation's most influential senators, George Norris, was born in McCook. An independent thinker, Norris helped create the Rural Electrification Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority Act (which brought electricity to many rural parts of the country), and the one-house legislative body in Nebraska—the Unicameral. The [George Norris Home](#), 706 Norris Ave., 308-345-8484, is a branch of the Nebraska State Historical Society. Groups can view artifacts from Norris' life as well as memorabilia from his 45 years in Congress. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

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1 hour, 20 minutes (51 miles) north on Highway 83, east on Highways 23 and 18 to Stockville.

[Perk's Prairie Paradise](#), 308-367-8782, is truly one of Nebraska's hidden historic gems. This privately-owned tribute to Nebraska's pioneer spirit and history boasts 19 structures

that visitors can walk through, including a one-room schoolhouse, sod house, church, saloon, two-story house and a replicated “pioneer street” featuring a boardwalk along false building facades. The buildings depict a surveyor’s office, millinery shop, dentist office and carpenter’s shop, among others. You gotta see it to believe it! A refreshment break can be provided. Suggested tour time: 2½-3 hours.

50 minutes (26 miles) west on Highways 18 and 23, north on Highway 83 to Wellfleet, east on Opal Springs Road.

Wellfleet is home to a unique Nebraska attraction, [**Dancing Leaf Earth Lodge and Cultural Learning Center**](#), 6100 E. Opal Springs Road, 308-963-4233. Your group will experience primitive American Indian life. Groups may enjoy nature hikes, canoeing and delicious buffalo stew dinners. Enjoy the earth lodge and learn about the importance of the medicine wheel. Guided tours of the area can be scheduled with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

35 minutes (27 miles) north on Highway 83 to North Platte.

Tour 7

Day Tours from Scottsbluff/Gering and Western Nebraska

Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area’s colorful history are featured. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines in the [Farm and Ranch Museum](#), 2930 M St., 308-436-1989, at the base of Scotts Bluff National Monument. If your group tour comes during the third weekend in September, make plans to watch live demonstrations of various farming equipment during the annual Harvest Festival. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Enjoy pine-covered canyons and rugged rock buttes at the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center**, 308-436-3777, a short drive south of Gering. Nestled within the [Wildcat Hills](#), the nature center is located in one of the most beautiful regions of Nebraska. A wide variety and abundance of native wildlife can be enjoyed from the information center’s deck or along the more than 3 miles of hiking trails throughout the park. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Two museums in Gering that are worth visiting are the [Wyo-braska Museum of Natural History](#), 850 U St., 308-436-7104, which houses more than 300 mounted zoological specimens from around the world; and the [North Platte Valley Museum](#), 308-436-5411, which chronicles the history of the area through a variety of impressive displays, including a sod house, one-room schoolhouse and agricultural equipment from bygone days. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour.

The main lines of the western migratory trails converged at **Robidoux Pass**. Today, you can visit the reconstructed [Robidoux Trading Post](#) in beautiful **Carter Canyon**, south of Gering. Don’t miss the blacksmith shop monument and pioneer graves near the trading post. Suggested tour time (with scenic drive): 1½ hour. Contact the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau for tour information: 308-436-6886. The trading post is located on a dirt road, and no services are available along the road or at the site.

Directly to the north of Gering, Scottsbluff boasts a very impressive arts center—the **West Nebraska Arts Center**, 106 E. 18th St., 308-632-2226. It features a variety of artistic activities, including a gallery and gift shop that sells locally made gifts. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

The [Riverside Zoo](#), 1600 S. Beltline Highway West, 308-630-6236, is an impressive facility that features more than 300 animals representing 97 animal species from around the world. Excellent picnic facilities and walking paths are available. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Enjoy a panoramic view of Scotts Bluff National Monument as you sip a refreshing glass of wine at the [Prairie Vine Vineyard and Winery](#), 308-623-2955. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Fillingham Exotic Animal Farm**, 308-623-1164, in Morrill, west of Scottsbluff on Highway 26, offers guided tours of exotic animals throughout the 275-acre farm. Some of the rare animals include a Z-donk, a zebus and an onyx. Reservations for guided tours are required. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Use Scottsbluff or Gering as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

Tour A: Westward Trails



Chimney Rock, Bayard



1 hour (45 miles) south on Highway 71 to Kimball.

As you approach Kimball you'll notice Nebraska's newest "[Wind Farm](#)," 308-474-4759, on the horizon where seven large wind turbines convert the ever-present Nebraska wind into energy. Each turbine stands nearly 350 feet tall, with the blades and turbine weighing more than 40 tons. You must make prior arrangements for on-site access. However, Kimball is best known as "Missile Center USA" because more than 200 Minutemen missiles were housed in the immediate area during the Cold War. Today a 100-foot disarmed missile stands in **Gotte Park**, 308-235-3782, as a monument to the Cold War. The park offers picnic and restroom facilities. Downtown Kimball has several fine specialty stores for shoppers. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

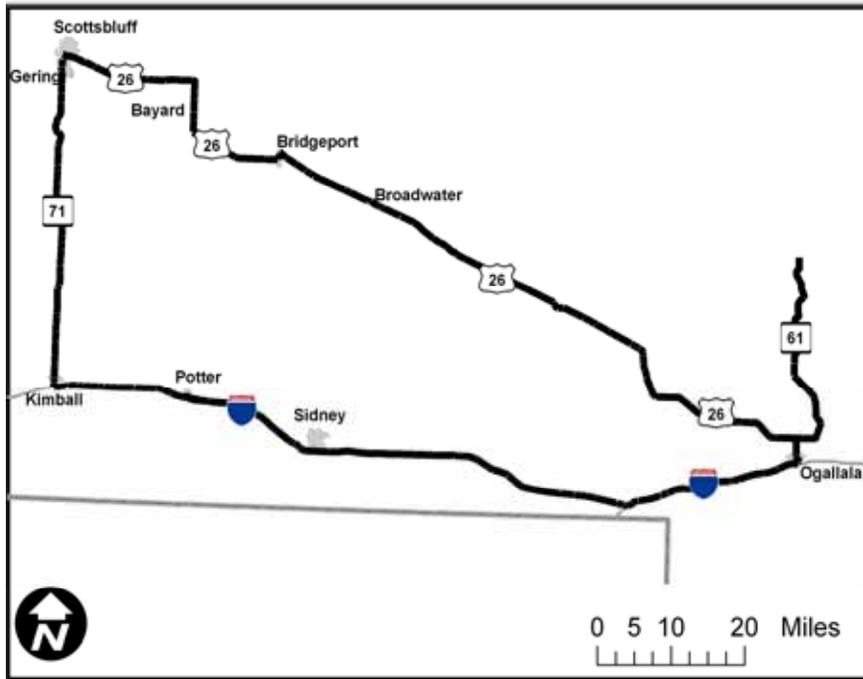
Come fill your bags to the brims with nuts, candy, spices, gourmet chocolates, homemade jellies, preserves and hundreds of other tantalizingly delicious goodies at **Carol's Nut List**, 600 E. Third Ave., 308-235-4826. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

What covers more than 20,000 square feet, has a 47-ton garage door, a 120-foot access hallway, and once accommodated a 67-foot-long, 278,000-pound missile? Why Kimball's only underground house of course! Built in a renovated former **Atlas E Missile site**, 308-235-2708, this home and its tenants will truly amaze you with the story

of why they live underground and how they make this massive space livable. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

25 minutes (21 miles) east on Highway 30 to Potter.

The small town of Potter boasts an old-fashioned soda fountain that serves homemade food and ice cream desserts in a restored downtown drugstore. The **Potter Sundry**, 308-879-4548, is famous for its Tin Roof Sundaes. Potter's active historical foundation has helped to renovate and restore a number of downtown buildings. A former hardware store has been renovated into an enjoyable flea market called **A Collective Gathering**, 326



Chestnut St., 308-879-4311, where you're bound to find those special gifts or bargains. **Chestnut Street Memory Station**, 947 Sherman St., 308-879-4466, is a renovated gas station that specializes in antiques, collectibles and jukeboxes. You might even find a vintage jukebox to play those old Elvis records at your next party. A reading garden

offers solace and a nice place to enjoy the day. Restroom facilities are available at the senior center. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

25 minutes (22 miles) east on Highway 30 to Sidney.

Sidney is home to **Cabela's**—the world's largest outdoor outfitter, 115 Cabela Dr., 308-254-7889. This Nebraska-based international mail-order business started as a home-based business selling fishing lures through the mail. Today Cabela's has a mailing list of more than 3 million people from around the globe, and visitors to Sidney can shop in the giant retail store located right on Interstate 80. Bargain hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will have a great time at Cabela's. The store's centerpiece is a giant man-made mountain featuring dozens of mounted animals climbing to its peak. Dining and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Discover Sidney's colorful military past at **Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home**, 1153 6th Ave., 308-254-2150. Fort Sidney was originally constructed to protect Union Pacific Railroad workers from Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who were opposed to the railroad running

through their territory. An 1872 powder magazine also remains of Fort Sidney. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour, 15 minutes (72 miles) east on Highway 30 to Ogallala.

Once a bustling cowboy town with a very colorful reputation, Ogallala is now a family-friendly town that embraces its colorful western past. Be sure to make time to visit [Front Street](#), 519 E. 1st St., 308-284-6000, to watch **The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**—Nebraska’s longest-running summer theatre. Belly up to the bar for a sarsaparilla or other beverage to wet your whistle while you watch showgirls and desperados perform. Plan a visit to the [Petrified Wood Gallery](#), 525 E. 1st St., 308-284-9996, after the show—one of Nebraska’s most unique museums. This gallery of natural history specializes in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts. The Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office, 204 East A St, 308-284-4066, can arrange for you to visit legendary **Boot Hill** or the stately **Mansion on the Hill**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

Ogallala also is home to “Big Mac” or [Lake McConaughy](#)—the largest inland lake in the region, 308-284-8800. The lake is a water lover’s paradise and offers white sand beaches, excellent fishing and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the water. The **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, 308-284-8800, is Nebraska’s first water museum and interprets the significance of water to the state’s past, present and future. With advance notice, the Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office can help arrange a beach party, boat rides and a tour of **Kingsley Dam**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. From late December to early March, the [Bald Eagle Viewing Center](#), 308-284-2332, is open below the dam and is one of the best locations in the region to view these magnificent birds.

View one of the largest, privately held lilac collections in the country—**The Lilacs of Meadowlark Hill**, 308-284-2524. The best time to visit is May during “Lilac Time,” when the air is heavy with the perfume wafting off these beautiful flowers. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 61 to Haythorn Ranch.

Take a step back in time at a working cattle ranch located in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills, north of Ogallala. The historical [Haythorn Ranch Tours and Figure Traditions Event Center](#), 308-355-4000, maintains a herd of more than 500 ranch-bred horses that are used in day-to-day ranching activities. It is the largest breeder of quarter horses in the U.S. and the second largest in the world. Call for reservations for large and small group tour packages. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

90 minutes south (51 miles) on Highway 61, west on Highway 26 to Ash Hollow State Historical Park.

[Ash Hollow State Historical Park](#), 308-778-5651, is located on the west side of **Lake McConaughy** near Lewellen. The park boasts an unusual collection of prehistoric and pioneer history. Fossils from prehistoric animals were discovered in the area and many are displayed at the interpretive center. Ancient Indian tribes and early pioneers used the area as a staging or camping area. Nearby Windlass Hill is the site where pioneers had to

lower wagon trains using a windlass—a device for hoisting or hauling. Today a hike up to Windlass Hill offers a spectacular view of deep wagon ruts still visible after 150 years. A visitors/interpretive center has displays of prehistoric rhinoceros, mammoths, mastodons and early pioneer history. A hiking trail from the visitor center leads to a spring at the bottom of the canyon. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

60 minutes (42 miles) west on Highway 26 to Broadwater.

Pick up a knick-knack or groovy souvenir at a unique store along Highway 26 between Ogallala and Scottsbluff. **Tumbleweed Treasures**, Highway 26 and Gutherie St., 308-489-5420, in the hamlet of Broadwater is well worth the stop. The store is regularly open weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day. However, you can make prior arrangements with the owners to visit the store during other times. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

25 minutes (15 miles) west on Highway 26 to Bridgeport.

Highways 92 and 26 follow the Oregon, Mormon and Pony Express Trails, and were the first stretches of highway designated as an official Nebraska Scenic Byway—the **Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway**. Along the way your group will begin to notice unusual rock formations along the horizon. When pioneers crossed Nebraska, there was little more than flat prairie stretching before them for weeks on end. You can imagine their excitement when they started to see a noticeable change in the landscape. The first two formations you'll come across are [Courthouse and Jail Rocks](#), 308-586-2581 (Chimney Rock Visitors Center), located on Highway 88 to the south of Highways 92 and 26. They were so named because of their similarity to courthouses and jail buildings back east. Note: No staff or tourist facilities are available at the site. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

No trip to Bridgeport is complete without sampling some of the best pastries and desserts in western Nebraska. The **Sweet Things Bakery**, 308-262-1024, in downtown Bridgeport is bound to satisfy even the most discriminating palates with its mouthwatering sweets.

25 minutes (16 miles) west on Highway 26 to Bayard.

“Towering to the heavens” is how one pioneer described Chimney Rock near Bayard—the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. At the base of the spire, the [Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitors Center](#), 308-586-2581, offers visitors fascinating stories from pioneer diaries about their trek westward. There is an audio-visual presentation and an impressive book and gift shop on site. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

To experience what it was like as a pioneer, nothing compares to the [Oregon Trail Wagon Train](#), 308-586-1850, one mile from Chimney Rock. Put on your best western duds and step back in time to the 1850s as your group boards a Conestoga wagon train for a bumpy ride alongside actual wagon ruts. Your group will enjoy campfire songs, stories and the most mouth-watering meal prepared over an open fire. It's the perfect way to end your day as an illuminated Chimney Rock lights up the night. Reservations required. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

35 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff or Highway 92 to Gering.

Tour B: Prehistoric Venture



Pine Ridge, Northwest Nebraska



45 minutes (43 miles) west on Highway 26, north on Highway 29 to Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

[Agate Fossil Beds National Monument](#), 301 River Road, 308-668-2211, south of Harrison, is a fossil lover's paradise. Fossilized mammals from 19 million years ago are embedded and easily visible in the walls and canyons of the 3,000-acre national monument. There are miles of easy-to-navigate hiking trails throughout the property and the visitor center interprets the history and significance of the area. Agate Fossil Beds also tell the story of "Captain" James Cook—a former professional hunter, guide, Army scout and owner of the nearby Agate Springs Ranch. For 50 years, the ranch was a haven for American Indians, such as Chief Red Cloud. Cook welcomed and fed his guests, and in return, they repaid his generosity by presenting him with gifts throughout the years. In time, these gifts became a sizable and important collection of American Indian artifacts, which are now permanently displayed in the visitor center. This is truly a unique collection and a must-see exhibit! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (22 miles) north on Highway 29 to Harrison.

Grab a quick snack or something to drink in Harrison, also known as "Nebraska's Top Town." With an elevation of 4,878 feet above sea level, it enjoys the highest elevation of any Nebraska community. Make sure you have your camera ready; Harrison is surrounded by some of the most scenic countryside in the state.

35 minutes (27 miles) east on Highway 20 to Crawford.

Take the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** to Crawford, home of Nebraska's largest state park—[Fort Robinson State Park](#), 308-665-2900. It was at Fort Robinson where the great Lakota warrior Crazy Horse surrendered in 1877. A stone marker shows the spot where he was mortally wounded. Fort Robinson also was the site of the famous Cheyenne Outbreak and home to the "Buffalo Soldiers," an African-American garrison in a segregated army. Many activities are available at "Fort Rob," including buffalo stew cookouts, theatrical presentations at the Post Playhouse (group rates available), historic tours and museums, and Jeep rides through the majestic, pine-covered buttes. The [Trailside Museum of Natural History](#), 308-66-2929, houses a mammoth skeleton that

stands 10 feet tall and an art gallery of American Indian and western art. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

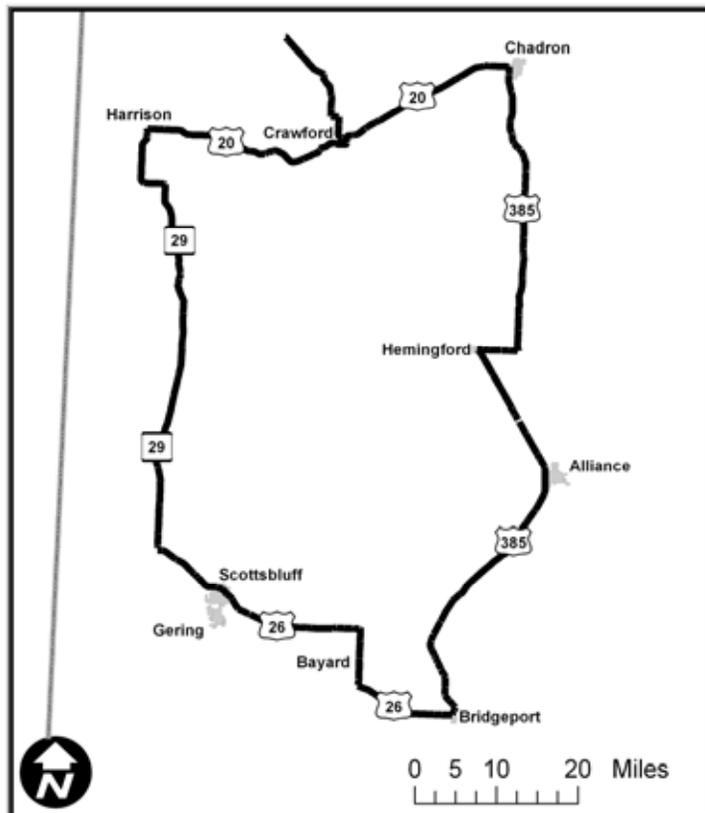
[Last Chance Winery](#), 432 2nd St., 308-66-2712, is located in downtown Crawford. Enjoy sipping delicious wines at a winetasting, followed by a tour of the wine production facility. Advance notice is required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Enjoy a mouth-watering meal at the **Ranch House**, 445 Second St., 308-665-1231. Afterwards, spend time browsing the extensive upstairs art and antique gallery. So come on in, and they'll rustle you up something tasty and delicious at this National Register of Historic Places landmark.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highway 2, west on Toadstool Road to Toadstool Geologic Park.

[Toadstool Geologic Park](#), 308-432-0300, northwest of Crawford, resembles the famous South Dakota Badlands and is one of the most dramatic landscapes in Nebraska. Over the centuries, the clay and sandstone in the area have been eroded by wind and rain to form toadstool-shaped formations. The park also contains valuable fossil deposits and the longest known mammal trackway of the Oligocene epoch—more than one mile. A one-mile loop trail from the campground highlights many fine examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations. A reconstructed sod house gives a glimpse into the past when prairie homesteaders used the only abundant building material available—sod. A hand water pump and full-accessible vault toilets are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

[Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site](#), 308-432-0300, is located a short drive northwest of Crawford. More than 10,000 years ago, a great catastrophe killed hundreds of bison, the largest mammals on the Great Plains. More than 600 bison skeletons have been unearthed here and the mystery of how and why they died in one place at one time is still under investigation. Feel free to make your own suggestions! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Along the way to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, make sure you stop at [High Plains Homestead](#), 308-665-2592, to enjoy some of the best pie in the world at the **Drifter Cookshack**. While there, spend some time visiting the recreated Old West village on the property, which features a working blacksmith shop, antique store and the Dirty Creek Saloon, where you can enjoy a cool, refreshing non-alcoholic



drink. Make sure to stop by the old-fashioned general store to pick up that special gift or rustic souvenir. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Note: All but three miles to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, Toadstool Geologic Park and High Plains Homestead are on a well-maintained gravel road (Highway 2/71). No travel on the gravel roads should be attempted during or after rain.

30 minutes (24 miles) east of Crawford on Highway 20 to Chadron.

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, **Chadron State Park**, 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups. Suggested tour time: 1-3 hours.

The **Museum of the Fur Trade**, 6321 Highway 20, 308-432-3843, is located just outside Chadron. This one-of-a-kind facility displays artifacts from the lucrative fur-trading industry that was once a thriving business in northwest Nebraska in the early 1800s. The Bordeaux Trading Post, built in 1837, stands on the museum grounds and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Nebkota Dinner Train**, 111 N. Main St., 308-432-2487, offers dining car excursions through the scenic Pine Ridge area and three-hour dinner excursions on Friday and Saturday evenings. Other attractions in Chadron include the **Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center**, 1000 Main St., 308-432-6401, located on the campus of Chadron State College. The center is dedicated to the study of Nebraska and High Plains culture, literature and history. The Heritage Room hosts a collection of Sandoz's books and poems. The **Dawes County Historical Museum**, 341 Country Club Road, 308-432-4999, shares the story of the area throughout several buildings of the museum complex, such as an original log house and barn, schoolhouse and railroad caboose.

1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 385 (Gold Rush Scenic Byway) to Alliance.

The next best thing to Stonehenge, **Carhenge**, 308-762-1520, is one of Nebraska's crackerjack attractions and has stirred much controversy since its creation in 1987. An exact replica of the world-famous Stonehenge in England, Carhenge uses old cars in place of stones. The project was the brainchild of architect Jim Reinders. He and his family gathered for a family reunion in Alliance and wanted to come up with a project to dedicate to Reinder's father. Jim spent many years in Europe and studied Stonehenge at great length. In 1987, he returned to his family farm and constructed Carhenge. At first it met with mixed reactions from local residents; however, Carhenge has now become a national sensation and one of Nebraska's unique attractions. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

Alliance also has one of the state's best historical museums—the **Knight Museum of High Plains Heritage**, 908 Yellowstone Ave., 308-762-2384. A variety of displays interpret the history of the city and the importance that the railroad played in its growth. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Carnegie Arts Center](#), 204 W. 4th St., 308-762-4571, features local and regional artists, gifts and a sculpture garden. **Sallows Conservatory and Arboretum**, 308-762-2384, features tropical and sub-tropical plants, and walking paths wind through the flower displays of the Sunken Gardens. Downtown Alliance also offers a variety of unique shopping and dining opportunities. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Step back in time to a slower, more relaxed pace at [Dobby's Frontier Town](#), 320 E. 25th St., 308-762-4321. This recreation of a turn-of-the-century western town boasts a homesteader's cabin, mercantile, bootlegger's cabin, post office, jail, baled straw house, and much, much more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Sweet Sage Spice and Gourmet Shoppe, 806 Box Butte Ave., 308-487-5599, in Hemingford, 20 miles northwest of Alliance on Highway 2, is an old-fashioned variety store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

1 hour (40 miles) south on Highway 385, west on Highway L62A, east on Highway 26 to Bayard.

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35 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff or Highway 92 to Gering.

Tour 8

Day Tours from Chadron and Western Nebraska

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, [Chadron State Park](#), 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups. Suggested tour time: 1-3 hours.

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Use Chadron as a home base for excellent day trips around the area.

Tour A: Trekking Through the High Country



Bordeaux Trading Post, Chadron



30 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 20 to Crawford.

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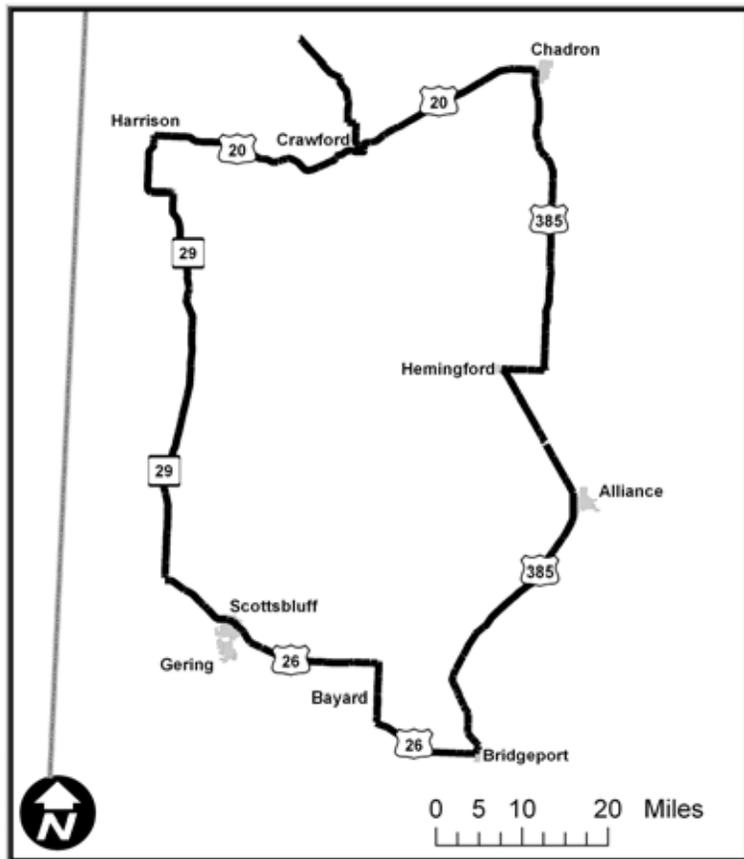
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Springs Ranch. For 50 years, the ranch was a haven for American Indians, such as Chief Red Cloud. Cook welcomed and fed his guests, and in return, they repaid his generosity by presenting him with gifts throughout the years. In time, these gifts became a sizable and important collection of American Indian artifacts, which are now permanently displayed in the visitor center. This is truly a unique collection and a must-see exhibit! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

45 minutes (43 miles) south on Highway 29, east on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff/Gering. Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area’s colorful history are featured. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines in the [Farm and Ranch Museum](#), 2930 M St., 308-436-1989, at the base of Scotts Bluff National Monument. If your group tour comes during the third weekend in September, make plans to watch live demonstrations of various farming equipment during the annual Harvest Festival. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Enjoy pine-covered canyons and rugged rock buttes at the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center**, 308-436-3777, a short drive south of Gering. Nestled within the [Wildcat Hills](#), the nature center is located in one of the most beautiful regions of Nebraska. A wide variety and abundance of native wildlife can be enjoyed from the information center’s deck or along the more than 3 miles of hiking trails throughout the park. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Two museums in Gering that are worth visiting are the [Wyo-braska Museum of Natural History](#), 850 U St., 308-436-7104, which houses more than 300 mounted zoological specimens from around the world; and the [North Platte Valley Museum](#), 308-436-5411, which chronicles the history of the area through a variety of impressive displays, including a sod house, one-room schoolhouse and agricultural equipment from bygone days. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour.

The main lines of the western migratory trails converged at **Robidoux Pass**. Today, you can visit the reconstructed [Robidoux Trading Post](#) in beautiful **Carter Canyon**, south of Gering. Don’t miss the blacksmith shop monument and pioneer graves near the trading post. Suggested tour time (with scenic drive): 1½ hour. Contact the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau for tour information: 308-436-6886. The trading post is located on a dirt road, and no services are available along the road or at the site.

Directly to the north of Gering, Scottsbluff boasts a very impressive arts center—the **West Nebraska Arts Center**, 106 E. 18th St., 308-632-2226. It features a variety of

artistic activities, including a gallery and gift shop that sells locally made gifts. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

The [Riverside Zoo](#), 1600 S. Beltline Highway West, 308-630-6236, is an impressive facility that features more than 300 animals representing 97 animal species from around the world. Excellent picnic facilities and walking paths are available. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Enjoy a panoramic view of Scotts Bluff National Monument as you sip a refreshing glass of wine at the [Prairie Vine Vineyard and Winery](#), 308-623-2955. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Fillingham Exotic Animal Farm**, 308-623-1164, in Morrill, west of Scottsbluff on Highway 26, offers guided tours of exotic animals throughout the 275-acre farm. Some of the rare animals include a Z-donk, a zebus and an onyx. Reservations for guided tours are required. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (25 miles) east on Highway 26 to Bayard.

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25 minutes (16 miles) east on Highway 26 to Bridgeport.

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No trip to Bridgeport is complete without sampling some of the best pastries and desserts in western Nebraska. The **Sweet Things Bakery**, 308-262-1024, in downtown

Bridgeport is bound to satisfy even the most discriminating palates with its mouthwatering sweets.

50 minutes (38 miles) north on Highway 385 (Gold Rush Scenic Byway) to Alliance.

The next best thing to Stonehenge, [Carhenge](#), 308-762-1520, is one of Nebraska's crackerjack attractions and has stirred much controversy since its creation in 1987. An exact replica of the world-famous Stonehenge in England, Carhenge uses old cars in place of stones. The project was the brainchild of architect Jim Reinders. He and his family gathered for a family reunion in Alliance and wanted to come up with a project to dedicate to Reinder's father. Jim spent many years in Europe and studied Stonehenge at great length. In 1987, he returned to his family farm and constructed Carhenge. At first it met with mixed reactions from local residents; however, Carhenge has now become a national sensation and one of Nebraska's unique attractions. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

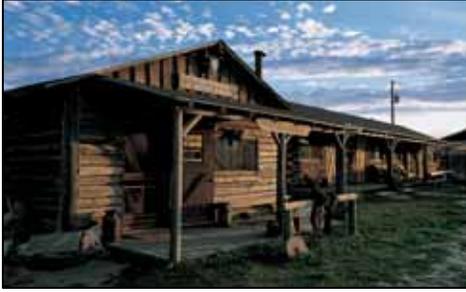
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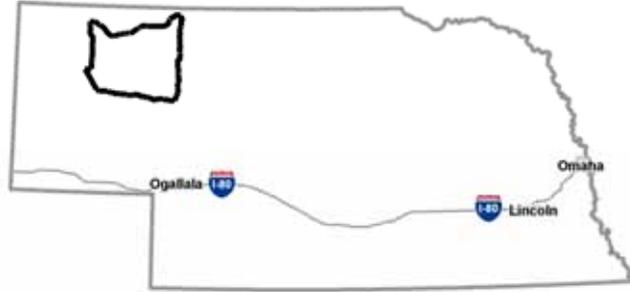
Sweet Sage Spice and Gourmet Shoppe, 806 Box Butte Ave., 308-487-5599, in Hemingford, 20 miles northwest of Alliance on Highway 2, is an old-fashioned variety store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

1 hour, 20 minutes (55 miles) north on Highway 385 to Chadron.

Tour B: Sandhills Excursion



High Plains Homestead, Crawford



1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 385 (Gold Rush Scenic Byway) to Alliance.

The next best thing to Stonehenge, [Carhenge](#), 308-762-1520, is one of Nebraska's crackerjack attractions and has stirred much controversy since its creation in 1987. An exact replica of the world-famous Stonehenge in England, Carhenge uses old cars in place of stones. The project was the brainchild of architect Jim Reinders. He and his family gathered for a family reunion in Alliance and wanted to come up with a project to dedicate to Reinder's father. Jim spent many years in Europe and studied Stonehenge at great length. In 1987, he returned to his family farm and constructed Carhenge. At first it met with mixed reactions from local residents; however, Carhenge has now become a national sensation and one of Nebraska's unique attractions. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

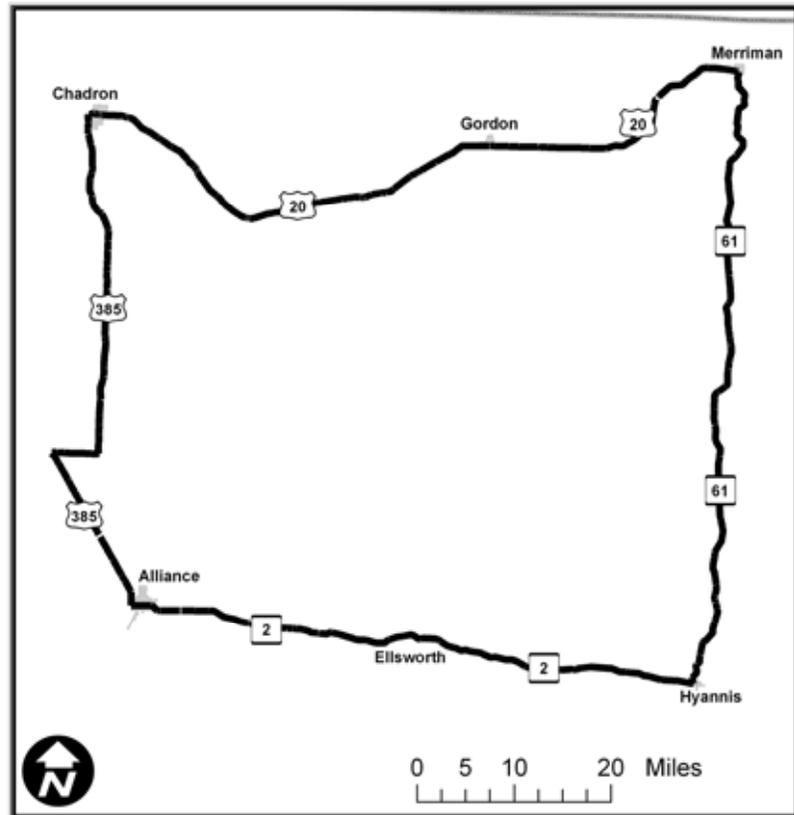
Alliance also has one of the state's best historical museums—the **Knight Museum of High Plains Heritage**, 908 Yellowstone Ave., 308-762-2384. A variety of displays interpret the history of the city and the importance that the railroad played in its growth. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Carnegie Arts Center](#), 204 W. 4th St., 308-762-4571, features local and regional artists, gifts and a sculpture garden. **Sallows Conservatory and Arboretum**, 308-762-2384, features tropical and sub-tropical plants, and walking paths wind through the flower displays of the Sunken Gardens. Downtown Alliance also offers a variety of unique shopping and dining opportunities. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Step back in time to a slower, more relaxed pace at [Dobby's Frontier Town](#), 320 E. 25th St., 308-762-4321. This recreation of a turn-of-the-century western town boasts a homesteader's cabin, mercantile, bootlegger's cabin, post office, jail, baled straw house, and much, much more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Sweet Sage Spice and Gourmet Shoppe, 806 Box Butte Ave., 308-487-5599, in Hemingford, 20 miles northwest of Alliance on Highway 2, is an old-fashioned variety store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

45 minutes (32 miles) east on Highway 2 (Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway) to Ellsworth.

Take a relaxing drive through the Sandhills along Highway 27 to Ellsworth. This is the country that Mari Sandoz wrote so much about. Her gravesite and a historical marker are located east of the highway. At the intersection of highways 27 and 2 is the tiny town of Ellsworth that was founded as the company town for the vast Spade Ranch in the late 19th century. The ranch remains a working cattle ranch. An old general store in town, **Morgan's Cowpoke Haven**, 308-762-2666, manufactures quality



bags that are shipped across the country. These bags are sold at Cabela's and have been featured on QVC and Home Shopping Network. The store also specializes in western clothing, so plan to spend some time and money on official western wear to make your friends back home green with envy. Cowboy up!

25 minutes (19 miles) east on Highway 2 to Ashby.

While traveling along the **Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway**, plan a stop in Ashby and spend some time learning the fine arts of painting and pottery work at **CaLinda's Pot Shop & Art Gallery**, 113 Main Street, 308-577-6766. Or take home some fabulous works of art—pottery, watercolors, oil paintings, pastels and inks. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (9 miles) east on Highway 2 to Hyannis.

The tiny hamlet of Hyannis is home to the **Verde Valley Guest Ranch**, 308-458-2220, a working cattle ranch that was established 115 years ago. Groups can enjoy a variety of activities, including hiking, wildlife watching or witnessing the hard work involved with raising cattle. Advance group tour notice is required, and meals can be arranged with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

90 minutes (67 miles) north on Highway 61 to Merriman.

Explore the scenery along the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** (Highway 20) to Merriman and the [Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch State Historical Park](#), 308-684-3428. The park has a long history that stretches back to 1854. The visitor center, outbuildings and ranch house document the history of ranching in the Sandhills, and chronicle the lives of Arthur and Eve Bowring. Both believed strongly in community service and dedicated a great deal of time in the public forum. Eve was the first woman from Nebraska to serve in the United States Congress as a senator. Eve's collection of political memorabilia is a Who's Who in American politics. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (30 miles) west on Highway 20 to Gordon.

World-renowned western historical author Mari Sandoz wrote about her life in Nebraska's impressive Sandhills region. A local publishing firm has an extensive collection of her works in its **Mari Sandoz Room**, 117 Main St., 308-282-9972. Your group tour can learn about this fascinating woman and her impact on Nebraska's literary scene. The Mari Sandoz Homestead is 30 miles south of Gordon on Highway 27, and tours are available from the Gordon Tourist Information Center, 308-282-0730. View cowboy memorabilia from the late 1800s to present day at the **Tri-State Old Time Cowboy Museum**, 308-360-1447. The **Scamahorn Museum**, 308-638-7643, is in a restored 1880s era church and chronicles the area's colorful history. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

1 hour (47 miles) west on Highway 20 to Chadron.

Tour 9

Cruisin' Down the Byway

A Scenic Tour of Northern Nebraska



Pine Ridge, Northwest Nebraska



Day 1

This tour will take you on a journey of northern Nebraska's charm and beauty along three state scenic byways: Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway (Highway 20), Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway (Highway 12) and Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway (Highway 75).

Enter Nebraska on Highway 385 (Gold Rush Byway).

20 minutes (19 miles) from the Nebraska/South Dakota state line to Chadron.

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, [Chadron State Park](#), 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups. Suggested tour time: 1-3 hours.

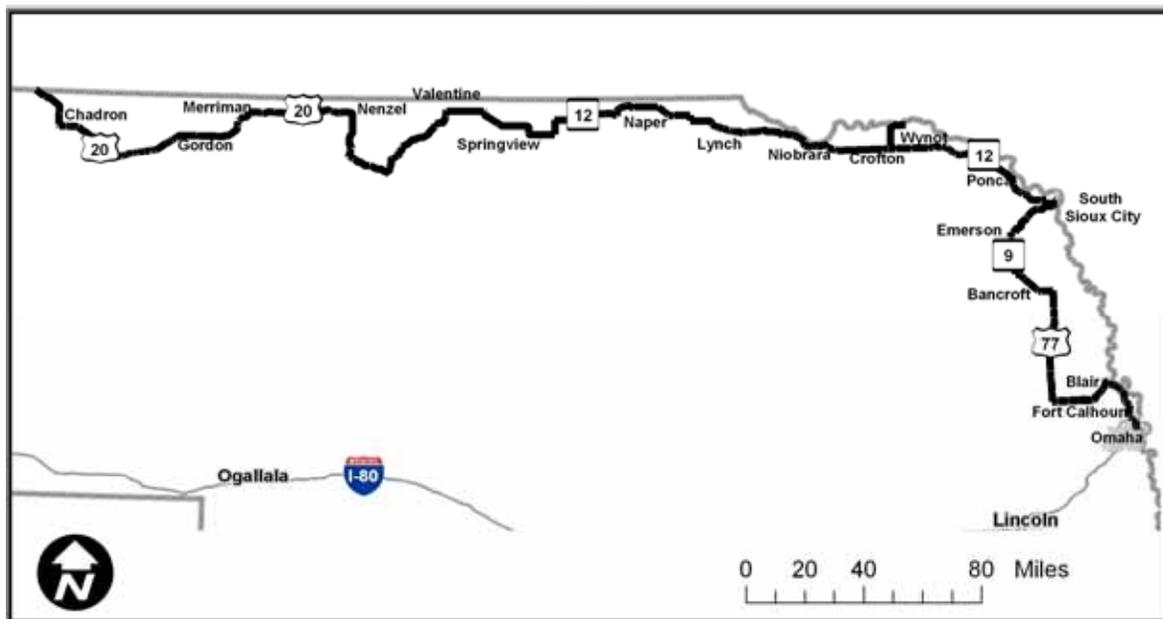
The [Museum of the Fur Trade](#), 6321 Highway 20, 308-432-3843, is located just outside Chadron. This one-of-a-kind facility displays artifacts from the lucrative fur-trading industry that was once a thriving business in northwest Nebraska in the early 1800s. The Bordeaux Trading Post, built in 1837, stands on the museum grounds and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Nebkota Dinner Train**, 111 N. Main St., 308-432-2487, offers dining car excursions through the scenic Pine Ridge area and three-hour dinner excursions on Friday and Saturday evenings. Other attractions in Chadron include the [Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center](#), 1000 Main St., 308-432-6401, located on the campus of

Chadron State College. The center is dedicated to the study of Nebraska and High Plains culture, literature and history. The Heritage Room hosts a collection of Sandoz's books and poems. The **Dawes County Historical Museum**, 341 Country Club Road, 308-432-4999, shares the story of the area throughout several buildings of the museum complex, such as an original log house and barn, schoolhouse and railroad caboose.

1 hour (47 miles) east on Highway 20 (Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway) to Gordon.

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40 minutes (31 miles) east on Highway 20 to Nenzel.

The [Sandhills Spirit of the West](#), 402-823-4131, is the perfect way to end your day before the next day's tour. Experience Nebraska's Sandhills among genuine cowboy surroundings where your tour can sit back and relax for a spell on a rustic wagon ride, and learn about the area's history, settlement and ranching ways from local cowboys and ranchers. Make sure you're plenty hungry for a hearty chuck wagon dinner, featuring Dutch oven cobbler, biscuits, coffee, cowboy beans and a mouthwatering rib eye steak. Group reservations required. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

30 minutes (19 miles) south on Highway S16F to Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest and Merritt Reservoir.

[Merritt Reservoir State Recreation Area](#), 402-376-3320, is a massive reservoir set in the middle of the Sandhills. Merritt Reservoir covers nearly 3,000 acres, has an impressive 44 miles of shoreline, and offers some of Nebraska's premier fishing. Plan a meal or snack stop at the **Waters Edge Restaurant**, 402-376-3320, where you also can soak in a panoramic view of the reservoir. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. Located adjacent to the reservoir is [Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest](#), 402-823-4154. This 115,703-acre forest is a unique mixture of forest and prairie deep in the Sandhills. Suggested drive time through forest: 1 hour.

50 minutes (26 miles) northwest on Highway 97 to Valentine.

Valentine is Nebraska's "Outdoor Capital," 308-376-2969, and offers your group a wide variety of exciting outdoor activities, including canoeing, hiking, biking, wildlife watching and even stargazing. Each July, Valentine hosts the [Annual Nebraska Star Party](#), 402-489-8197, when amateur and professional astronomers from around the world come here to view the night sky in one of the darkest places in the country—the Sandhills. Valentine also is home to Nebraska's highest waterfall located in [Smith Falls State Park](#), 402-376-1306. Once finished, the nation's longest hiking/biking trail will pass through Valentine—the Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail will extend 321 miles from Norfolk to Chadron. A portion of this trail already is completed around the city. On February 14, all eyes are on the "Heart City" as hundreds of postcards and letters are mailed from Valentine with the official Valentine postmark.

Downtown Valentine is one attraction you don't want to miss. It boasts everything from arts and craft shops, (**The Gallery**, 226 N. Main St., 402-376-3834) and bookstores (**Plains Trading Company**, 269 N. Main St., 402-376-1424) to a cyber café and one of the area's largest western wear stores—[Young's Western Wearhouse](#), 143 N. Main St., 800-658-4398. Dining at [Peppermill Steakhouse](#), 112 N. Main St., 402-376-1440, or [Jordan's](#), 402-376-7255, and dancing or stomping your heels at an outdoor concert are just a few of the many ways to "kick up your heels" in the city.

Valentine sits in the Nebraska Sandhills, which cover an area of more than 19,000-square miles, and is the largest grass-stabilized sand dune region in North America. However, these Sandhills are not a desert, but instead sit above one of the largest underground water reservoirs in the world—the Ogallala Aquifer. The groundwater rises to the surface in many places, creating marshes, small lakes and bubbling springs.

Established in 1935, the [Valentine National Wildlife Refuge](#), 308-376-1889, covers more than 70,000 acres and is a paradise for outdoorsmen and wildlife watchers. More than 240 bird species have been identified on the various lakes and marshes. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Valentine offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Meadville

20 minutes (15 miles) east on Highway 12 to Smith Falls State Park.

[Smith Falls State Park](#), 402-376-1306, boasts the state's tallest waterfall. Water cascades 70 feet from the cliff top and empties into the scenic Niobrara River. Smith Falls is accessible via a national historic bridge that crosses the river and a wooden walking path that ends beneath the falls. Public restrooms are available at the park office/information center. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) east on Highway 12 to Springview.

Enjoy a refreshing break at the **Turtle Butte Lodge and Café**, 402-497-4100, located in one of the most historic buildings in Springview. This historic hotel and café offer a variety of dishes prepared with local ingredients, such as buffalo and locally raised beef. Also, at a height of 296 feet from ground to blade, the **wind turbines** west of town are the largest ones in the country.

90 minutes (42 miles) east on Highway 12 to Naper.

Start your Lewis and Clark Trail Tour in Naper at the [White Horse Ranch](#), 402-832-5560, where the American White Horse is bred. A museum and guided tour will thrill your group and give them an up-close view of ranch life in Nebraska.

1 hour, 10 minutes (37 miles) east on Highway 12 to Lynch.

Located along the **Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway** (Highway 12), Lynch is home to **Old Baldy**, 402-569-3202, which served as a historical landmark for riverboats. In 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition stopped here and saw its first prairie dog village. Make sure you stop in town to buy one of the famous Lynch Dawgs—a stuffed toy prairie dog for your collection—developed in celebration of the 2004 Lewis and Clark Commemoration. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

40 minutes (26 miles) east on Highway 12 to Niobrara.

Located at the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri rivers, Niobrara had to be moved twice to higher ground due to flooding. Luckily your group tour doesn't have to worry about high water as they explore what Niobrara has to offer. The [Kreycik Riverview Elk Ranch](#), 88971 517 Ave., 402-857-3850, southwest of Niobrara State Park, is a fun place to go to encounter wildlife close up. Load your group into a covered wagon for an enjoyable ride around the picturesque ranch to see majestic elk and bison herds. You'll never forget the experience of hand feeding buffalo as they clamor to the wagon for corn! It's truly an experience! The gift shop sells a variety of buffalo-related products, clothing and food, such as tasty buffalo jerky (if you like it a little spicy, try the jalapeño flavor). Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

[Niobrara State Park](#), 89261 522 Ave., 402-857-3373, offers your group tour a wide variety of outdoor experiences, such as picnicking, swimming, boating, hiking on 14 miles of trails, fishing, horseback trail riding and wildlife watching. The **J. Alan Cramer Interpretive Center**, 402-857-3373, offers an exceptional view of the park and highlights the history and people of the area. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. If you visit between Memorial and Labor days, make sure to attend the buffalo cookout. With prior arrangements, your tour can experience the history and natural wonders of the Missouri River on the **Upper Missouri River Float Trip**, which follows the same path as Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.

The **Ponca Earthlodge** and **Ponca Tribal Museum**, 2543 Park Ave., 402-857-3519, display the rich culture and heritage of the Ponca Tribe and their influence on this region of Nebraska. The museum displays artifacts from Ponca history, American Indian artwork, tribal archive photographs and a gift shop that specializes in American Indian artwork. Located in the Powwow area, the **Ponca Native Garden** contains many varieties of plants that were used by the ancestral Ponca, such as maize, squash, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers, strawberries, sage and watermelon. An outer area of the garden includes plants that were beneficial to the Ponca Tribe and wildlife, such as buffalo berries, sweet potatoes, ground cherries and wild plums. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

10 minutes (5 miles) east on Highway 12 to Ohiya Casino.

See if Lady Luck is smiling on you at the **Ohiya Casino**, 52946 Highway 12, 402-857-3860, on the Santee Reservation. Located a few miles east of Niobrara, this 12,000-square-foot casino is owned and operated by the Santee Tribe. You also can purchase authentic American Indian jewelry, blankets and other crafts. Adjacent to the casino is the **Ohiya Casino Café**, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A weekend buffet and Sunday brunch are offered during the spring, summer and fall months. Get out your bucks and start having fun! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. As you travel across the reservation, you will go through the **Nebraska Everglades** where the highway is lined on both sides by marshes and water.

20 minutes (15 miles) east on Highway 12 to Crofton.

The historic [Argo Hotel](#), 211 W. Kansas St., 402-388-2400, in Crofton is a great place for your group to spend an afternoon relaxing on the spacious front porch. This beautiful

hotel has been restored into a bed and breakfast, while the restaurant is able to accommodate group tours for full meals or afternoon teas. Spend time downstairs singing along with the player piano in the restored speakeasy tavern. And don't forget to ask your host about the Argo Hotel ghost! Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Make plans to spend time at the [Jolene Steffen Studio](#), 55472 888th Road, 402-357-3740, near the hamlet of Constance, east of Crofton. Her art reflects the things that mean the most to her—wide-open sky and rolling hills, beautiful wildflowers and garden flowers, children, animals, creeks and pastoral northeast Nebraska scenes. The vividness and quality of Jolene's works truly will amaze you! Plus, they are affordable to practically everyone, with most prices ranging from \$30 to more than \$500 for the larger pieces.

One of Nebraska's largest lakes, **Lewis and Clark Lake**, is located in the **Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area**, 402-388-4169, 7 miles north of Crofton on Highway 121. This is a prime area for bird watching, especially for bald eagles. Winter is a great time to visit when frigid temperatures freeze the lake and provide great opportunities for ice fishing, skating, and snowmobiling. The Corps of Engineers operates a power generation plant at **Gavins Point Dam**, 402-667-7873, and the [Lewis and Clark Visitor Center](#), 10 miles north on Highway 12, 402-667-2546. Tours of the power plant are given Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Listed on the Nebraska Survey of Historic Places, [Bow View Farm](#), 88664 550 Ave., 402-388-4798, offers your tour a glimpse into the rural way of life. A historical walking tour of the farm's buildings and a low impact birding hike along Bluebird Trail are two activities awaiting your group tour. An on-farm store is located in a historic 1916 barn where you can purchase home-raised black oil sunflower birdseed, wild birdseed, birdfeeders, postcards, and other items. 1 mile west of Crofton on Highway 12 and 3¼ miles south on 550 Ave.

20 minutes (13 miles) north on Highway 121 to South Yankton.

The [Corps of Discovery Welcome Center](#), 402-667-6557, is located at the intersection of two historic transportation routes—the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Pan-American Highway (Highway 81). The visitor center boasts a gorgeous view of the Missouri River and the surrounding countryside from the scenic overlook. Other features of the center include interpretive panels that retell the story of Lewis and Clark, an art gallery and a gift shop full of Nebraska-made products. With advance scheduling, tours from the visitor center to area attractions can be arranged. Suggested tour time: 45-60 minutes.

25 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 81, east on Highway 12 to Fordyce.

[Prairie Blossom Trails](#), 55582 887 Road, 402-357-3702, near Fordyce is one of the few places in the country that graze Scottish Highland cattle. On your tour of the farm, you can get a firsthand view of these unique looking creatures, walk trails made by pioneer wagons of the past, or simply take in the breathtaking pasture landscape or sunset. Make sure you pick up some of the Scottish Highland beef. It's some of the best beef you'll ever eat! Group tours are offered between May 1 and October 31. Directions: (A) 3 miles south of Highways 81 and 12 junction, turn east on 887 Road, ¾ of a mile and south 1/3

of a mile; (B) 5 miles north to 887 Road from Pleasant Valley Store at Highways 81 and 84 junction.

Spend some time with certified organic farmers at [Marv and Ed's Farm](#), 55996 Highway 12, 402-357-2150 near Fordyce. You won't find any additives or preservatives here! These lifelong farmers raise a variety of organic vegetables and grains, such as corn, oats with sweet clover, alfalfa, turnips, soybeans and hay. You also can spend some time watching the many critters they raise—dairy cows and calves, herds of cattle, hens, turkeys, geese, hogs, Angora goats, and Guinea fowl. Tours are provided from May 1 to October 1. Directions: (A) 4 miles east and south of intersection of Highways 81 and 12; (B) north of Hartington, 3 miles west and south from intersection of Highways 12 and 57.

20 minutes (9 miles) east on Highway 12 to Bow Valley.

Grape growing and wine production facilities are sprouting up all over Nebraska. [Nissen Brothers Vineyards](#), 88560 566 Ave., 402-254-3426, near Bow Valley is home to one of the state's newest vineyards. Spend time with the owners learning about the process of growing grapes for wine. Directions: 3 miles north of Hartington on Highway 57 and 886 Road, then 2½ miles east to 566 Ave., then south ½ mile.

15 minutes (6 miles) east on Highway 12 to Wynot.

Located 2 miles east of Wynot off Highway 12, [St. James Marketplace](#), 89039 570 Ave., 402-357-3330, is located in a historical schoolhouse. Today it's home to a wonderful farmer's market, craft fair and tearoom that is ideal for an afternoon snack. A variety of historical exhibits also are on display. This unique attraction is a must-see for your group tour. If your tour comes through in late September, plan to stay for the Heritage Fest. Inquire from the ladies at the marketplace about taking a side trip on **Rattlesnake Road**—one of the most breathtaking backcountry roads in the region. The **Wiseman Monument** along the road recounts a chilling pioneer murder story. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (marketplace), 1 hour (Rattlesnake Road). Note: The monument and scenic drive are via dirt roads, and no services are available.

45 minutes (29 miles) east on Highway 12 to Ponca.

Located a short drive north of Ponca on Highway 12, [Ponca State Park](#), 402-755-2284, features one of Nebraska's most comprehensive outdoor/environmental education programs, including history, biology, ecology, astronomy, geology and archaeology of the area. With more than 20 miles of recreational trails, the park provides plenty of opportunities for your group to commune with nature. During the fall months, hayrack rides are available for groups of 15 or more. As part of the park's annual Hallowfest, the second weekend in October, haunted hayrack rides are given. Buffalo burgers, Lewis and Clark stew and fish fries are held in the summer and fall months. During spring, the park comes alive with the sounds of migratory and native songbirds. The **Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center**, 402-755-2284, boasts a large interpretive display and exhibit area, a field laboratory and plenty of meeting rooms. Make sure you drive to the tri-state overlook along the Missouri River for a phenomenal view of the river and surrounding countryside. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Towers of Time**, 402-755-2284, exhibit features relief carvings of the flora and fauna of three time periods in northeast Nebraska. A waterfall, pond, fountain and walking path complement the towers. Check it out after dark when the entire exhibit is beautifully lit.

30 minutes (22 miles) east on Highway 12 to South Sioux City.

South Sioux City offers many exceptional lodging properties for your group tour.

Day 3



Fort Atkinson State Historical Park

55 minutes (26 miles) west on Highway 35, south on Highway 9 to Emerson.

Emerson, the only town in Nebraska located in three counties, is home to the **Iron Horse Bar and Casino**, 1010 S. Main St., 402-695-0180. Owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, this 2,000-square-foot facility offers Las Vegas fun and excitement, Nebraska style. The friendly staff at the Iron Horse will serve you up some great food and drinks while you're going for that big pay off! Great for small group tours.

50 minutes (23 miles) south on Highways 9 and 16 to Bancroft.

Bancroft was home to Nebraska Poet Laureate John G. Neihardt. The [John G. Neihardt State Historical Site](#), 306 W. Elm St., 402-648-3388, gives your tour a fascinating look at an individual who dedicated his entire life to understanding and helping the American Indians. His most famous book, *Black Elk Speaks*, chronicles many years of interviews with this famous Indian chief. Neihardt's study, where he wrote many of his books and poems, is located on the grounds of the center. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (32 miles) east on Highway 51, south on Highway 75 to Tekamah.

Enjoy a glass of full-bodied Nebraska wine and a tour of the operation at [Silvercreek Hill Vineyards](#), 3130 County Road M, 402-374-1602. The farm operation also raises corn, soybeans and cattle. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour

30 minutes (19 miles) south on Highway 75 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865.

More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

35 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 30 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

1 hour (41 miles) east on Highway 275 to Omaha.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, **the largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of

Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-feet of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

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The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children's garden, herb garden, spring flowering walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west.

Florence Mill, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service

declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

North of Omaha are Fort Calhoun and **Fort Atkinson State Historical Park**, 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fun-filled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. The National Signature Event for the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place at Fort Atkinson in 2004. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses **Too Far North**, 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are custom-made labels for all occasions. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Tour 10

Land of the Pioneers: A Tour of Southeastern Nebraska



Strategic Air and Space Museum, Ashland



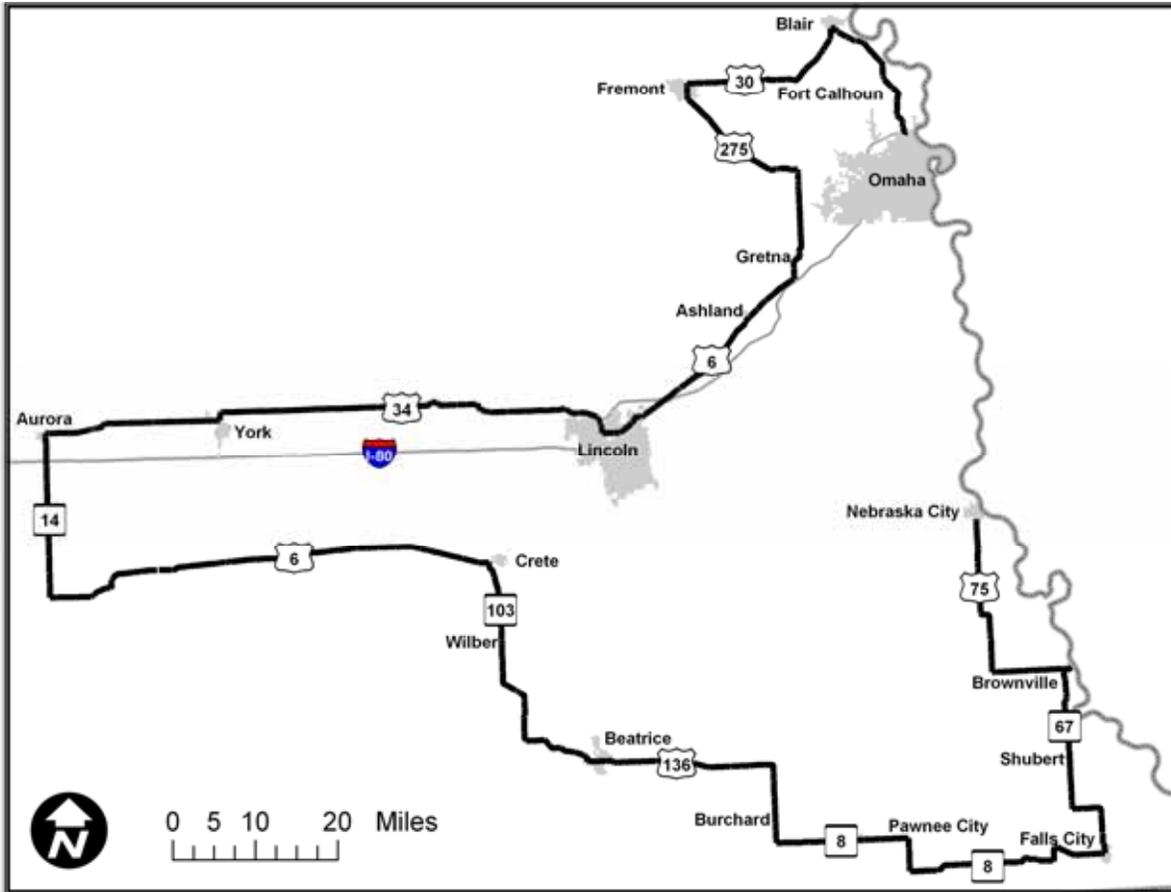
Day 1

Enter Nebraska on Interstate 80 in Omaha.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, **the largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

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30 minutes (16 miles) north on Highway 75 to Fort Calhoun.

Enjoy the view along the **Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway** as you make your way to Fort Calhoun and [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fun-filled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. The National Signature Event for the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place at Fort Atkinson in 2004. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses **Too Far North**, 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are custom-made labels for all occasions. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (9 miles) north on Highway 75 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 30 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H

St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip-roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

40 minutes (29 miles) east on Highway 275, south on Highway 6 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

15 minutes (11 miles) west on Highway 6 to Exit 426.

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour

time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

30 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 6 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants,

antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the "American Indian Gallery," "The First Nebraskans," "Nebraska Joins the Union," and "Building the State." Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of

Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get "lost" in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight to try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Lincoln offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Nebraska City

55 minutes (54 miles) west on Highway 34 to York.

The big balloon tells you that you are nearing York. This community of just over 8,000 offers an outstanding array of restaurants and fast-food facilities. But it is best known for **Chances ‘R Restaurant and Lounge**, 124 W. 5th St., 402-362-7755, in downtown York. The “R,” as it is known locally, hosts more group tours than any other private restaurant in Nebraska—and for good reasons—huge portions at reasonable rates and good food made from scratch. If you happen to be in York on a Sunday morning, the “R” offers an outstanding Sunday brunch—a treat worth fasting for.

While in York, your group will be amazed by **Lee’s Legendary Marbles and Collectables**, 3120 S. Lincoln Ave., 402-362-0103. More than a half-million marbles are on display, including some very rare examples. Two other very nice York attractions are the **Anna Beemis Historical Museum**, 211 E 7th St., 402-363-2630, which features historic artifacts and the [Yorkshire Playhouse](#), 402-362-7060, which offers a taste of Broadway in small town Nebraska. Four productions are scheduled throughout the year, as well as special seasonal events and children’s theater productions. The theater is handicap accessible and group rates are available for performances.

20 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 34, south on Highway S93A to Henderson.

Marvel at beautiful life-size bronze sculptures and vibrant, colorful paintings that capture the true spirit of the west at [Friesen Gallery](#), 932 North Main St., 402-723-4977. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (17 miles) north on Highway S93A, west on Highway 34 to Aurora.

Aurora is a charming community with two outstanding attractions: The [Plainsman Museum](#), 210 16th St., 402-694-6531, and the [Edgerton Explorit Center](#), 208 16th St., 402-694-4032. The Plainsman Museum offers Nebraska history under one roof. A sod house, Pony Express station, car collection and an outstanding doll collection are featured in the facility. Ag-related exhibits and equipment also are on display. Next door, the Edgerton Explorit Center is dedicated to Aurora native Harold “Doc” Edgerton—the inventor of the strobe light. The Explorit Center features examples of Edgerton’s work, as well as many hands-on science exhibits. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 1½ hour.

90 minutes (72 miles) south on Highway 14 and east on Highway 6 to Crete.

Since 2001, [Blue Valley Vineyard](#), SW 142nd St. and Stagecoach Road, 402-826-5700, in Crete has offered quality, handcrafted wines, a wine tasting room and gift shop that sell a variety of wine accessories. In the spring, summer and autumn your tour may stroll the grounds and enjoy wine on the patios and decks, while the warmth and hospitality of the tasting room awaits you in the winter. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (11 miles) south on Highway 103 to Wilber.

Everyone in Wilber is Czech—at least during the first weekend of August when the town hosts thousands for the Annual Wilber Czech Festival. The U.S. Congress proclaimed Wilber the National Czech Capitol and folks in Wilber take that seriously. However, you can get a sense of Czech heritage anytime you come to town. The **Wilber Czech Museum**, 102 W 3rd St., 402-821-2183, contains detailed information on the heritage of those who founded Wilber and on their homeland of Czechoslovakia. There is usually a quilting bee going on at the museum, and the ladies are always delighted to chat with you and show you around. Located next door to the museum is the **Wilber Bakery**, 104 W 3rd St., 402-821-2995, where your group must sample a kolach, also known as “Czech Danish.” Around the corner is the beautifully restored **Hotel Wilber**, 203 S. Wilson St., 402-821-2020, a wonderful bed and breakfast. Your group can tour the facility and grab a bite to eat. *Vitame Vas!* With advance notice, costumed guides are available to escort your group along walking tours of Wilber. These tours include a meal. Suggested tour time in town: 1½ hour.

45 minutes (26 miles) south on Highway 103, east on Highway 4 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska’s most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—[Homestead National Monument of America](#), 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country’s first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city’s excellent selection of restaurants and fine community theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

1 hour (42 miles) east on Highways 136 and 4, south on Highway 99, east on Highway 8 to Pawnee City.

Home of film stars Irish McCalla and Harold Lloyd, Pawnee City also is home to a very impressive historical museum complex. The [Pawnee County Historical Museum](#), 402-852-3131, is comprised of 16 historic buildings that display antique furnishings, tools, vintage vehicles, rare photos, books, unique handcraft items and a variety of other artifacts. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. One of the city's newest and most unique attractions is the **Toy Pedal Clinic**, 402-852-2655, a museum dedicated to this fun toy of yesteryear. The museum displays more than 450 toy pedal cars, tractors, airplanes and a host of other small toys. Other collections at the museum include a John Deere room, kiddie car collection, kerosene lamps, quilts, bicycles, salt and pepper shakers and doll collection. Your tour also can observe museum staff while they restore old pedal cars. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Before leaving Pawnee City, stop by **Hallie's Restaurant and Lounge**, 604 9th St., 402-852-2445, for a yummy slice of homemade pie.

Enjoy the only winery and microbrewery in Nebraska! The [Schilling Bridge Winery and Microbrewery](#), 62193 710th Rd., 402-852-2400, offers Nebraska produced wines and handcrafted microbrews surrounded by more than eight acres of grapevines. The centerpiece of the landscape is an 1890 Limestone Rock Island Railroad bridge. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Also check out the **restored Harold Lloyd home**, 402-852-3131, in Burchard, 12 miles west of Pawnee City. The front room of the house contains memorabilia from Lloyd's life and acting career. Upon request, you can set up time for your group to watch a Harold Lloyd movie in his former home. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

1 hour (41 miles) east on Highway 8 to Falls City.

Two of Falls City's best attractions are the **Bell-Jenne House**, 402-245-3481, and the **Richardson County Historical Museum**, 402-245-3481. The Bell-Jenne House is an impressive two-story brick Italianate-style house built in 1881 and features eight period piece rooms to give your group tour a glimpse into life in the late 19th century. The Richardson County Historical Museum highlights the history and people of Falls City and the region. With advance planning, tours of both facilities can be scheduled. Suggested tour time of each attraction: 1 hour.

30 minutes (16 miles) north on Highways 67 and 73 to Indian Cave State Park.

[Indian Cave State Park](#), 402-883-2575, includes more than 3,000 acres along the Missouri River. This pristine area is home to a variety of activities, such as camping, hiking, backpacking, picnicking, and nature and wilderness activities. There are 20 miles of hiking trails in the park. The fall months are particularly spectacular, and history buffs will enjoy the restored schoolhouse and general store from the old river town of St. Deroin. During the summer months, old-time crafts are demonstrated to visitors. You can reserve a group picnic shelter if needed. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (13 miles) north on Highways 73 and 67 to Brownville.

At one time the bustling community of Brownville was to serve as Nebraska's "Gateway City," but when the railroad decided to locate in Omaha, Brownville's future looked grim. Fortunately the spunky locals refused to let their community die, and today's Brownville has become a genuine tourism destination. Your group can cruise down the Missouri River on the [Spirit of Brownville](#), 402-825-4211, take in a play or concert at the **Brownville Village Theatre**, 402-825-4121, or **Brownville Concert Hall**, 402-825-3331, shop in the quaint downtown, or sip wine at sunset on the deck of [Whiskey Run Creek Winery](#), 702 Main St., 402-825-4601. The **Captain Bailey House**, **Carson House** and **Furnas House**, 402-825-6001, are some of the many restored historic homes that are open to the public.

The **Meriwether Lewis Museum of Missouri River History**, 402-825-3341, a decommissioned U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredge boat, now houses a museum dedicated to the Missouri River. The **Governor Furnas Connector Trail** connects the **Governor Furnas Arboretum**, 402-825-6637, to the Missouri River. The trail boasts more than 200 types of trees, shrubs and flowers for you to enjoy. One of the town's newest tourist endeavors is the [Brownville Lyceum](#), 225 Main St., 402-825-4321, which opened April 2005. This haven for booklovers has many used books to purchase, a reading room in which to relax and read, and a small café that serves tasty dishes. Suggested tour time in town: 2-3 hours.

40 minutes (34 miles) west on Highway 136 (Heritage Highway Scenic Byway) and north on Highway 75 to Nebraska City.

Nebraska City boasts a variety of exciting attractions and activities, plenty of history, shopping opportunities and beautiful scenery—all in one charming community. Nebraska City's pride and joy is [Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum](#), 2600 2nd Ave., 402-873-7222. Home of J. Sterling and Carolyn Morton, the 52-room Victorian-style mansion is a memorable stop for any group visit. J. Sterling Morton was the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland and helped establish Arbor Day as a holiday. There are quiet walking trails, gardens and nearby orchards with an "Apple House" where travelers can enjoy a variety of apple treats and buy souvenirs. Make sure you tour the National Arbor Day Foundation's "Tree Adventure," which includes touch-screen exhibits, a 20-minute film that shows the significance of trees and other exciting information about the environment. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

A fine example of Victorian architecture is the **Wildwood Center Historic House and The Barn Art Gallery**, 420 Steinhart Park Road, 402-873-6340. Built in 1869, Wildwood was home to Jasper Ware, an early banker in Nebraska City. All home furnishings are of the Victorian Era, and behind the house is a gallery that displays artwork of many Nebraska artisans. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Another major Nebraska City attraction is [Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village](#), 2012 4th Corso, 402- 873-3115. Part of the Underground Railroad for slaves, this restored site has many historical artifacts on display, as well as a restored village. You also can walk through the underground cave on the grounds. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Downtown Nebraska City is a treasure trove of antique and specialty retail stores where you can find clothing for everyone, crafts and works of art, Christmas decorations, books and specialty foods. On weekends a trolley is available to take your group around town. With its abundance of changing leaves and apple harvests, fall is one of the most beautiful seasons to visit Nebraska City. For overnight or meal service, look no further than the [Lied Conference Center and Arbor Day Farms](#), 2700 Sylvan Road, 402-873-8733. This environment-friendly facility offers state-of-the-art meeting rooms, spacious overnight rooms and excellent meals. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Make sure to spend some time sipping wine at one of Nebraska's newest wineries—[Arbor Trails Winery](#), 6450 J Road, 402-873-8888. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Experience firsthand the journey of Lewis and Clark at the [Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#), 100 Valmont Dr., 402-874-9900, which sits atop an 80-acre site overlooking the Missouri River. The center focuses on the recorded scientific discoveries of plants and animals made during the tour. Enjoy hands-on exploration activities, interactive exhibits, a life-size replica of the keelboat used by Lewis and Clark, and a 45-foot American Indian Earth Lodge. Suggested tour time: 2-3 hours. The **River Country Nature Center**, 114 S. 6th St., 402-873-3000, is open by appointment only and houses more than 400 preserved specimens of native Nebraska birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles in replicas of their natural habitats. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Free your mind and explore the artistic side of Nebraska City at the [Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts](#), 801 3rd Corso, 402-874-9600. The center is an art retreat for visual artists, writers, art scholars, choreographers and artists from across the nation. A main gallery and exhibition rooms display works of art for public viewing and are changed approximately every two months. Art classes held at the center are offered throughout the year and open to the public. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Apples, peaches, cherries, plums, grapes, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, squash, peppers, and more...oh my! Load up on delicious fresh fruits and vegetables at [Kimmel Orchard](#), 6045 G Road, 402-873-5293. A new shuttle path was developed to teach your group tour about the history and operation of the orchard. Benches, scenic resting spots, and picnic areas dot the hiking trail to let your tour enjoy spring's blossoms or the beautiful autumn colors. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Nebraska City offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Tour 11

Plains and Cranes: A Tour of Eastern and Central Nebraska



Rosenblatt Stadium, Omaha

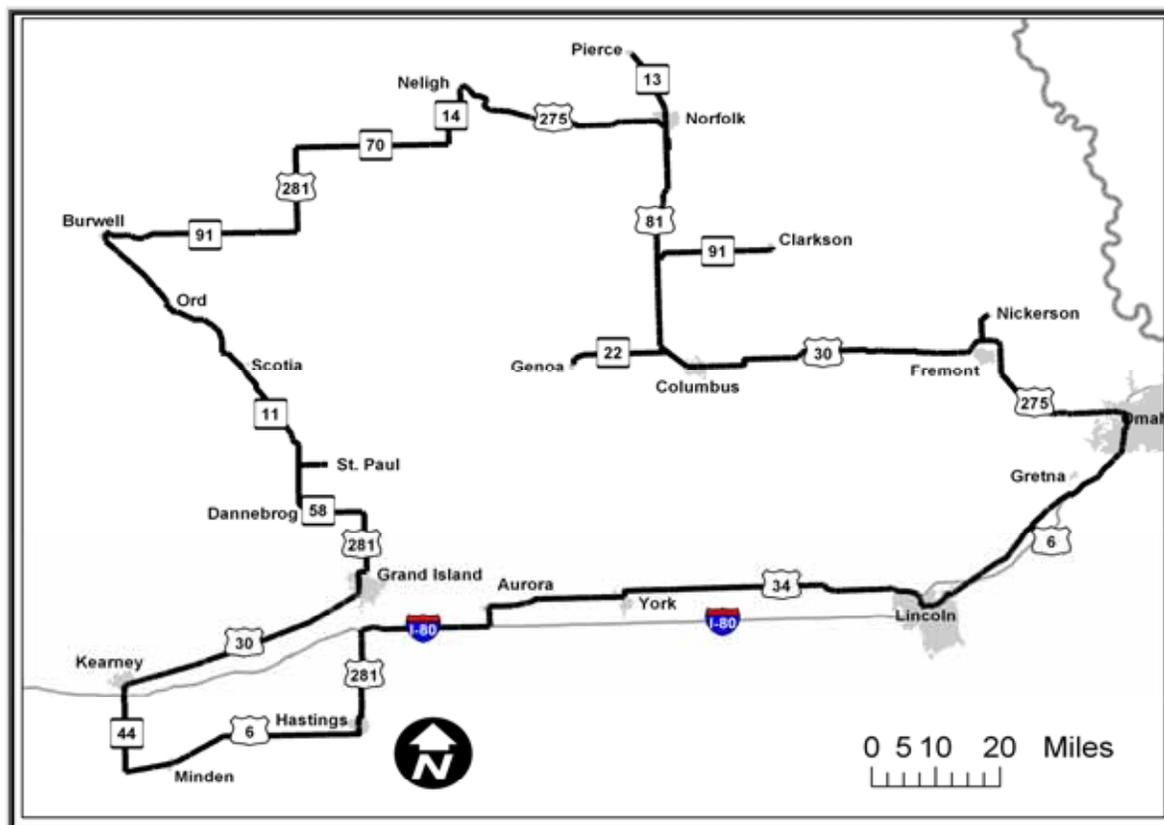


Day 1

Enter Nebraska on Interstate 80 in Omaha.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, the **largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.



The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-foot of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to the Missouri River frontier. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that different ethnic groups have had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children’s garden, herb garden, spring flowering

walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden

inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

55 minutes (35 miles) west on Highway 275 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

15 minutes (9 miles) north on Highway 77 to Nickerson.

The [Apple Barn at Fontenelle Orchard](#), 402-727-5272, features fresh, tree-ripe fruit that you can pick yourself. Tours of the orchard are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (49 miles) west from Fremont on Highway 30 to Columbus.

Columbus offers a wide variety of tours to fit the tastes of any group, from history buffs to modern technology enthusiasts. A 1904 steam locomotive, Quicentenary Belltower, and the [Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial](#), 2001 A.J. Higgins Road, 402-564-2769, are a few reasons to tour Freedom Park. The center point of the park is a life-size replica of the Higgins landing craft that he designed and built to help win WWII. The replica is made of steel and set in sand as if it were beached. Its ramp is down to let visitors walk inside, while sand samples collected from invasion beaches across the globe are mixed with the sand that surrounds the craft. Equally impressive is the bronze eagle with a seven-foot wingspan that sits atop a steel structure made from material from the 2001 World Trade Center disaster in New York City. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. The [Platte County Historical Society Museum](#), 2916 16th St., 402-564-4553, features an 1857 log cabin complete with period furnishings. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Columbus boasts truly one of the best restaurants in Nebraska, **Dusters and the Gottburg Brew Pub**, 2804 13th St., 402-564-8338. Dining here will make you think you're in a much larger city. Even though the menu is full of delicious dishes, and you can't go wrong with anything you chose, try the Chicken Kiev. You won't regret it! Columbus is known as the most industrialized city per capita in Nebraska, and the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 764 33rd Ave., 402-564-2769, can arrange industrial tours for your group. The attractive **St. Michael's Catholic Church**, 309 3rd St., 402-428-2675, in nearby Tarnov is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

40 minutes (30 miles) north on Highway 81, west on Highway 22 to Genoa.

The [Genoa Indian School Museum](#), 209 E. Webster Ave., 402-993-6636, is the site of the former Indian Industrial School where American Indian youth were housed and educated for assimilation into white society. The students who attended the school were from 10 states and more than 20 tribes. Tours of the Manual Training Building are available throughout the year by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Genoa Historical Museum](#), 402 Willard Ave., 402-993-2330, boasts a nice collection of tribal and Mormon Trail exhibits. An original diary from Mormon Trail pioneer Henry Hudson is on exhibit. Original wagon ruts of the Mormon Trail are visible south of town. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour, 20 minutes (50 miles) east on Highway 22, north on Highway 81, east on Highway 91 to Clarkson.

Clarkson enjoys two major claims to fame—its rich Czech heritage and the renowned [Bluebird Nursery](#), 519 Cherry St., 402-892-3457. The Clarkson Chamber of Commerce can arrange a Czech breakfast for your group (make sure you eat a kolach, a delicious Czech pastry) and arrange a tour of the outstanding nursery. The Bluebird Nursery is one of the largest in the Midwest, and they ship seeds and plants around the globe. As you tour this quaint community, you'll notice the influence that the nursery has had on it. Clarkson is one of Nebraska's more colorful communities and boasts some of the best-kept gardens and green spaces in the state. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour (43 miles) west on Highway 91, north on Highway 81 to Norfolk.

Norfolk, northeast Nebraska's largest city, offers a fine selection of overnight and dining facilities that cater to the group tour market. While in town be sure to visit the [Elkhorn Valley Historical Museum](#), 515 Queen City Blvd., 402-371-3886. Here you'll see a great collection of historic artifacts relating to the area, including one of the few remaining antique square turn tractors that can make a full square turn so as not to waste field space to turn around. Memorabilia on Norfolk's two famous sons—*Tonight Show* host Johnny Carson and Thural Ravenscroft, the voice of Kellogg's™ "Tony the Tiger" are on display.

A must see is the **Johnny Carson Exhibit**. Norfolk was the boyhood home of Johnny Carson from age eight through high school. Mr. Carson donated a large collection of personal items to the museum, including videotapes, early boyhood photos and vintage photos of his stage and radio days, as well as many personal items. A display of Carson's special awards—six Emmy Awards, Kennedy Center Honors Medallion, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Television Hall of Fame, and many more are on display. A unique "Best Of" home theater showing favorite *Tonight Show* episodes and monologues chosen by Johnny himself for the museum are part of this impressive collection. A full-sized, life-like Carson mannequin delivers the monologues when visitors step close enough to the exhibit. In the immortal words of Ed McMahon, "Heeeeeeeere's Johnny!"

Also be sure to check out the **Willetta Lueschen Bird Library** at the museum. With prior arrangements, museum staff can take your group to the nearby cave for a "cool" break. Located close to the museum is the new [Norfolk Arts Center](#), 305 N. 5th St., 402-371-7199. This beautiful, new facility features an ever-changing traveling exhibit gallery, as well as showcases the works of local and regional artists. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 2 hours.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highway 13 to Pierce.

Wine making in Nebraska? You betcha! Located northeast of Pierce is Nebraska's first vineyard—[Cuthills Vineyards](#), 54663 853 Road, 402-329-4181. Walking tours of the vineyards are available, and depending on what time of year your group stops, you may be able to witness the winemaking progress. Fun things to do include sampling wines, relaxing on the spacious patio overlooking the vineyards, and eating a delicious catered meal in the historic barn. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

Norfolk offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Museum of Nebraska Art, Kearney

1 hour, 15 minutes (48 miles) west on Highway 275 to Neligh.

Home to one of the few remaining water-powered mills in the state, [Neligh Mills State Historical Site](#), 402-887-4303, takes groups back to a time when the mill was the center of commerce for many towns. The mill's colorful history is displayed throughout the facility. The Neligh Chamber of Commerce, 202 W. 4th St., 402-887-4195, can recommend several local spots for lunch. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Pierson Wildlife Museum Learning Center](#), 205 E. Fifth St., 402-887-4212, features one of the largest private wild game collections in the U.S., all in one exhibit that includes 100 full mounts and 50 head mounts from around the world. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

2 hours, 15 minutes (80 miles) south on Highway 14, west on Highways 70 and 91 to Burwell.

Just north of Burwell is the immense [Calamus Reservoir](#) and the historic Garfield County Fairgrounds, home each July to [Nebraska's Big Rodeo](#). The [Dream Weavers Cabin](#), 308-346-4383, has herb/tea/wildflower gardens, weavings and homeopathic remedies. The **Calamus Dam and Fish Hatchery**, 308-346-4226, at Calamus Reservoir is a multi-million dollar fish hatchery where your tour can observe how fish are raised in captivity. Have an old fashioned, foot stompin' good time at [Calamus Outfitters](#), Highway 96, 308-346-4697. This cow/calf operation offers cattle drives, brandings and calving season experiences for your tour, as well as trail rides through the majestic Sandhills. The cream-can socials and pitchfork steak suppers are not to be missed! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

[Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park](#), 308-346-4715, between Burwell and Ord near Elyria, has the greatest number of original buildings still standing of any historical fort in Nebraska. Originally built to protect pioneers from the hostile Teton Sioux Tribe, the fort became a fortress for the friendly Pawnee Tribe, as well as pioneers. Today visitors can explore the barracks and other original structures and learn about the fort's colorful history. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (17 miles) south on Highway 11 to Ord.

Ord is the hometown of Evelyn Sharp, who, at age 18, was the youngest female commercial pilot in the nation. She lost her life while flying missions during World War II. A display on Sharp is available at the Ord Airport. Your tour also can enjoy a

Victorian tea at the [Valley County Museum](#), 117 S. 16th St., 308-728-5178. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (17 miles) south on Highway 11 to Scotia.

Scotia is home to **Happy Jack Peak and Chalk Mine**, 308-245-3276. With more than 6,000 feet of honeycombed caverns, it features the only publicly accessible chalk room and pillar mine in North America. The mine is located in a very scenic part of the Nebraska Sandhills (the largest grass stabilized sand dune area in North America). Groups are welcome to explore the caves with a guide. For adventurous types, a hike to the top of Happy Jack Hill provides a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. Don't miss the Haunted Mine Tour in late October. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (29 miles) south on Highway 11, east on Highway 92 to St. Paul.

The **Loup Rivers Scenic Byway** (Highways 91/11) will take you to St. Paul—hometown of famous baseball player Grover Cleveland Alexander. The **Museum of Nebraska Major League Baseball**, 619 Howard Ave., 308-754-5558, features a collection on Alexander and four other Nebraskans who went on to baseball fame—Sam Crawford, Dazzy Vance, Bob Gibson and Richie Ashburn. There also is a charming historic village adjacent to the downtown area that consists of a restored train depot, one-room school, general store and church. The village can be opened for groups with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

25 minutes (13 miles) west on Highway 92, south on Highway 11 to Dannebrog.

Explore a little piece of Denmark in central Nebraska. Dannebrog is a charming Danish community that has been introduced to millions of TV viewers by local historian and TV commentator Roger Welsch. Roger's monthly *Postcard From Nebraska* segment on *CBS Sunday Morning* often featured small town life in Dannebrog. Many flock to the town to get a chance to visit the town that he talked about so fondly. Roger's own contribution to Dannebrog's tourism inventory—The **National Liar's Hall of Fame**, 106 S. Mill St., 308-226-2222, is a unique tour stop located inside the "**Lille**" **Mermaid Gift Shop**. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Make sure you arrange with the friendly folks in Dannebrog for a traditional Danish snack or meal while in town. Your group also will want to save some time to walk through the downtown area and visit some of the unique shops. If you are lucky enough to be in town during the early part of June you can enjoy Grundluvs Fest—Dannebrog's Danish celebration. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The Tri-cities Region of Kearney, Hastings and Grand Island offer many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day Three



SouthPoint, Lincoln

The Central Nebraska Tri-Cities Region (Kearney, Hastings, and Grand Island) offers group tour planners a vast selection of tour options. Each of the three cities has excellent overnight accommodations and meal options that are ideal for your group. The spring months are an excellent time to visit central Nebraska and spend your time with a half million Sandhill cranes that use the area as a stopover on their migration between early March and mid April. Just a few minutes south of Kearney and Grand Island near Hastings, you can witness the awesome spectacle of more than 10 million ducks and geese as they migrate through the Rainwater Basin. Each of the three cities offers excellent wildlife viewing options that can be catered to suit your group's needs. The Sandhill cranes migration is truly a remarkable site and one that your group will cherish for years to come.

The [Nebraska Bird Observatory at the Crane Meadows Visitors Center](#), 888-382-1820, in Alda (6 miles west of Grand Island) offers a variety of Sandhill crane-related activities on 250 acres of pristine or restored prairie along the Platte River. Witness the awesome sights and sounds of “Wings Over the Platte”—an award-winning celebration of the world's largest crane migration (a half million Sandhill cranes). Year-round programs and special events are available in the interpretive center. Suggested tour time: ½ hour (programs), 2-3 hours (guided tours), and 2 hours (Crane Lore Round the Campfire). As you visit the sights around Grand Island, keep your eyes peeled for 30 majestic Sandhill cranes all decked out for **Crane Mania**.

Make sure you visit [Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center](#), 308-468-5282, near Gibbon, 30 minutes southeast of Kearney off Interstate 80. This 1,250-acre wildlife sanctuary is located on the banks of the Platte River. In early spring, more than one-half million Sandhill cranes pass through the area on their northward migration. Trips to crane viewing blinds are available every morning and evening in March and the first week in April. The Nicolson Audubon Center offers stunning views of the Platte River, interpretive displays, gift shop, and trails. An interesting tidbit about the facility is

that it was constructed entirely of hay bales. Reservations are required for crane season viewing blinds in March. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. [George Spencer Vineyard and Tasting Room](#), 7155 Pawnee Rd., 308-468-5612, is a central Nebraska treasure that features internationally acclaimed Nebraska wines. Wine tasting, vineyard tours, a delicious dinner, and gift shop are yours to enjoy. Reservations for dinner are required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Kearney

Just east of Kearney, you will literally drive under one of Nebraska's newest group tour attractions—[The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument](#), 877-511-2724. Locally known as the Arch, no tour of Nebraska is complete without a stop at the only tourist attraction in America that is located over a federal interstate highway. Built to commemorate the westward expansion of America, the Arch highlights the west's original American Indian habitants, the Mormon, Oregon and California Trails and the pioneers who traveled these early routes. Other exhibits highlight the expansion of the railroad that founded many Nebraska towns, the Overland Stagecoach and Pony Express, the Lincoln Highway, as well as and modern marvels, such as the telegraph and fiber optics. Your group will learn about the history of transportation and communication along the famous Platte River Road through magnificent interactive exhibits and stunning audio/visual effects. The Arch also includes a food court and gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1-1½ hours.

See Nebraska in a whole new way at the [Museum of Nebraska Art \(MONA\)](#), 2401 Central Ave., 308-865-8559, which features works of art that highlight Nebraska and the Great Plains in 11 exciting galleries. This impressive museum is housed in a 1911 Renaissance revival historic post office that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to works by great artists, such as George Catlin, Robert Henri, J. Laurie Wallace, Grant Reynard, and John Falter, MONA boasts an original collection of works by John J. Audubon that focuses on indigenous Nebraska wildlife. The museum's permanent collection includes more than 5,000 works by artists of regional, national and international importance, prints and a number of impressive rotating collections. Visitors can relax and stroll outdoors through the Cliff Hillegass Sculpture Garden and browse through the museum shop for that perfect gift. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

For the nature lover, be sure to stop at [Cabela's](#), 3600 Highway 30, 308-237-7999, in Kearney—the “World's Foremost Outdoor Outfitter.” This is Cabela's second Nebraska store; the original is in Sidney. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

Wander through the stately mansion of one of Kearney's most influential people. George Washington Frank, who developed projects that helped Kearney grow in the late 1800s, built the three-story [George E. Frank House](#), 2010 W. 24th St., 308-865-8284, in 1889. An annual Christmas walk at the Frank House starts after Thanksgiving and lasts for two weeks. Tours of the house can be arranged for groups throughout the year. The mansion's Tiffany window was one of few such windows located in private residences in the Great Plains region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. A Union Pacific depot, train caboose and six turn-of-the-century buildings at the [Trails and Rails Museum](#), 710 W. 11th St., 308-234-

3041, highlight the importance that the railroad had on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. As you explore Kearney, be on the lookout for **Cranes on Parade**—6-foot fiberglass cranes, each one a unique and original work of art.

Hastings

[Hastings Museum/Lied Super Screen Theater/J.M. McDonald Planetarium](#), 1330 N. Burlington Ave., 402-461-4629. Hastings is a lively community that regularly caters to the group tour market. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History has one of the best natural history collections in the region, including the “People of the Plains” exhibit from prehistoric times to historic trails and pioneer towns.

Hey Kool-Aid! *Kool-Aid: Discover the Dream* is an interactive exhibit that tells the story of the birth of one of America’s favorite soft drinks. Lifelike murals and replicas, a fiber-optic river of Kool-Aid, interactive kiosks, and the original Kool-Aid Man costume help to tell the story.

The *Groundwater Discovery Adventure* teaches visitors about the Ogallala Aquifer (a large underground water reserve located underneath the Great Plains region) and the importance of groundwater to the settlement and development of the central plains. Some displays in this exhibit include a floor-to-ceiling mural of a prairie landscape, paleontology dig areas, a simulated spring that bubbles from the Ogallala Aquifer and through a raised stream into the room, a walking bridge, teepees and an 1857 log cabin. An interactive water display allows visitors to dam water in a stream, lift gates to irrigate crop areas, and divert the stream to flood a miniature town.

The J.M. McDonald Planetarium will schedule special show times for groups. Also located there, the former IMAX Theatre has been upgraded to the Lied Super Screen Theater. Documentary and full-length feature films are shown on the five-story high screen to provide an incredible viewing experience. Suggested tour time at the museum: 2 hours.

Don’t leave Hastings without spending time browsing around for that perfect gift or souvenir at [Nebraska Food & Gift](#), 208 S. Burlington Ave., 402-462-8883. This exceptional gift store represents more than 170 Nebraska communities and features an eclectic variety of locally made products.

Colorful banners hang throughout the city during the summer proclaiming Hastings as the official birthplace of Kool-Aid. The local visitors bureau staff, 402-461-8400, can arrange unique dining experiences, tours of businesses and historic landmarks, evening entertainment and overnight accommodations for your group.

Grand Island

Experience pioneer life on 200 acres at the [Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer](#), 308-385-5316, which is one of the top 10 living history museums in the country. You can walk through an 1890s railroad town, push a handcart on the Mormon Trail, have a better understanding of American Indians at the Pawnee Earth Lodge, or explore the birth

cottage of Oscar-winning actor Henry Fonda. A variety of special events are offered at the museum throughout the year. Add some mystery to your tour! Was there an island in Nebraska? Why is Grand Island a “train hot spot?” Who are the internationally known Abbots? Add a historic tour of the famous and infamous characters of Grand Island’s early days. See farming past to present with a look at local farms, “the business” behind agriculture, and tour some of the nation’s top agricultural manufacturing plants. The **Stuhr Museum Gift Shop** offers fantastic souvenirs and gifts. Tour time: 1-3 hours.

Grand Island abounds with art galleries, specialty stores and other shops where you can buy that hard-to-find gift or souvenir to remember your trip. Some shops you must make time for are **Prairie Winds Art Center**, 112 W. 3rd St., 308-381-4001, **The Warehouse Gallery**, 381 N. Walnut St., 308-382-8589, **The Gallery**, 3535 W. 13th St., 308-382-8701, **Maudie’s Stained Glass**, 301 W. 3rd St., 308-382-1993, **Heart of the Country**, 311 W. 3rd St., 308-382-2861, and **Bartenbach’s Galleries**, 209 N. Locust St., 308-382-7575.

To Minden:

From Kearney: 35 minutes (23 miles) south on Highway 44, east on Highway 6 to Minden.

From Hastings: 50 minutes (32 miles) east on Highway 6 to Minden.

From Grand Island: 1½ hours (54 miles) south on Highway 281, east of Interstate 80, and south on Highway 10 to Minden.

Minden is home to the world-famous [Harold Warp Pioneer Village](#), 800-445-4447. Twenty-six buildings, including a sod house, one-room school, Pony Express station, depot, general store and an 1884 church make up the village. It is home to the oldest existing Buick and 350 other antique autos, 20 historic aircraft, 100 vintage tractors, guns, motorcycles, snowmobiles, boats, buggies, trains and trolleys. The historic crafts of spinning, weaving and broom-making are demonstrated for visitors year-round. If you come during the summer, plan to enjoy a nostalgic ride on an 1800-era steam carousel. A restaurant and gift shop is also on-site. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Be sure to also visit the [Minden Opera House](#), 322 E. 5th St., 308-832-0588, located in downtown Minden, only a few blocks from Pioneer Village. Built in 1891, the building has been restored into a beautiful multi-purpose facility that attracts live performances from around the country. The Opera House can cater breakfast for your group as well. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Minden knows how to celebrate Christmas. In fact, it’s officially known as the “Christmas City.” During the holiday season, the downtown district is ablaze with more than 12,000 lights for the annual “Light of the World” Christmas Pageant. This truly impressive sight has been a holiday staple in Minden since 1946.

From Minden: 1 hour, 25 minutes (69 miles) east on Highway 6, north on Highway 14 to [Aurora](#).

Aurora is a charming community with two outstanding attractions: The [Plainsman Museum](#), 210 16th St., 402-694-6531, and the [Edgerton Explorit Center](#), 208 16th St.,

402-694-4032. The Plainsman Museum offers Nebraska history under one roof. A sod house, Pony Express station, car collection and an outstanding doll collection are featured in the facility. Ag-related exhibits and equipment also are on display. Next door, the Edgerton Explorit Center is dedicated to Aurora native Harold “Doc” Edgerton—the inventor of the strobe light. The Explorit Center features examples of Edgerton’s work, as well as many hands-on science exhibits. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 1½ hour.

20 minutes (17 miles) east on Highway 34, south on Highway S93A to Henderson.

Marvel at beautiful life-size bronze sculptures and vibrant, colorful paintings that capture the true spirit of the west at [Friesen Gallery](#), 932 North Main St., 402-723-4977. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (18 miles) north on Highway S93A, east on Highway 34 to York.

The big balloon tells you that you are nearing York. This community of just over 8,000 offers an outstanding array of restaurants and fast-food facilities. But it is best known for **Chances ‘R Restaurant and Lounge**, 124 W. 5th St., 402-362-7755, in downtown York. The “R,” as it is known locally, hosts more group tours than any other private restaurant in Nebraska—and for good reasons—huge portions at reasonable rates and good food made from scratch. If you happen to be in York on a Sunday morning, the “R” offers an outstanding Sunday brunch—a treat worth fasting for.

While in York, your group will be amazed by **Lee’s Legendary Marbles and Collectables**, 3120 S. Lincoln Ave., 402-362-0103. More than a half-million marbles are on display, including some very rare examples. Two other very nice York attractions are the **Anna Beemis Historical Museum**, 211 E 7th St., 402-363-2630, which features historic artifacts and the [Yorkshire Playhouse](#), 402-362-7060, which offers a taste of Broadway in small town Nebraska. Four productions are scheduled throughout the year, as well as special seasonal events and children’s theater productions. The theater is handicap accessible and group rates are available for performances.

1 hour (54 miles) east on Highway 34 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska’s state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska’s pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation’s only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor’s Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln’s exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln’s warehouse and farmer’s market district. Today it is home to the

state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the "American Indian Gallery," "The First Nebraskans," "Nebraska Joins the Union," and "Building the State." Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who

first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get "lost" in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight at try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) east on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (7 miles) east on Highway 6 Exit 426.

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to

sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

15 minutes (11 miles) east on Highway 6 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

Tour 12

Lakes and Prairies of Southwestern Nebraska



Dancing Leaf Earth Lodge, Wellfleet

Day 1

Enter from Colorado on Interstate 76, north on Colorado Highway 113 (becomes Nebraska Highway 19) to Sidney.

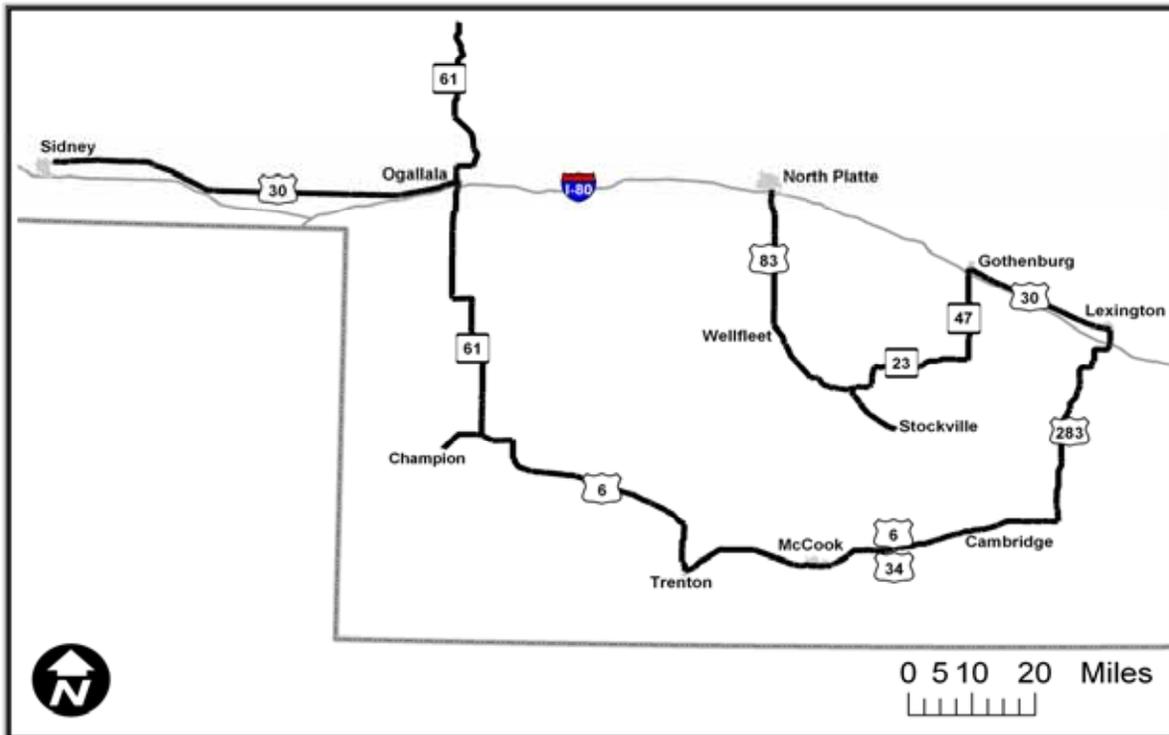
Enter from Wyoming on Interstate 80; continue eastbound to Sidney.

Sidney is home to [Cabela's](#)—the world's largest outdoor outfitter, 115 Cabela Dr., 308-254-7889. This Nebraska-based international mail-order business started as a home-based business selling fishing lures through the mail. Today Cabela's has a mailing list of more than 3 million people from around the globe, and visitors to Sidney can shop in the giant retail store located right on Interstate 80. Bargain hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will have a great time at Cabela's. The store's centerpiece is a giant man-made mountain featuring dozens of mounted animals climbing to its peak. Dining and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Discover Sidney's colorful military past at **Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home**, 1153 6th Ave., 308-254-2150. Fort Sidney was originally constructed to protect Union Pacific Railroad workers from Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who were opposed to the railroad running through their territory. An 1872 powder magazine also remains of Fort Sidney. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour, 10 minutes (72 miles) east on Highway 30 to Ogallala.

Once a bustling cowboy town with a very colorful reputation, Ogallala is now a family-friendly town that embraces its colorful western past. Be sure to make time to visit [Front Street](#), 519 E. 1st St., 308-284-6000, to watch **The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**—Nebraska's longest-running summer theatre. Belly up to the bar for a sarsaparilla

or other beverage to wet your whistle while you watch showgirls and desperados perform. Plan a visit to the [Petrified Wood Gallery](#), 525 E. 1st St., 308-284-9996, after the show—one of Nebraska’s most unique museums. This gallery of natural history specializes in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts. The Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office, 204 East A St, 308-284-4066, can arrange for you to visit legendary **Boot Hill** or the stately **Mansion on the Hill**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.



Ogallala also is home to “Big Mac” or [Lake McConaughy](#)—the largest inland lake in the region, 308-284-8800. The lake is a water lover’s paradise and offers white sand beaches, excellent fishing and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the water. The **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, 308-284-8800, is Nebraska’s first water museum and interprets the significance of water to the state’s past, present and future. With advance notice, the Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office can help arrange a beach party, boat rides and a tour of **Kingsley Dam**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. From late December to early March, the [Bald Eagle Viewing Center](#), 308-284-2332, is open below the dam and is one of the best locations in the region to view these magnificent birds.

View one of the largest, privately held lilac collections in the country—**The Lilacs of Meadowlark Hill**, 308-284-2524. The best time to visit is May during “Lilac Time,” when the air is heavy with the perfume wafting off these beautiful flowers. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 61 to Haythorn Ranch.

Take a step back in time at a working cattle ranch located in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills, north of Ogallala. The historical [Haythorn Ranch Tours and Figure Traditions Event Center](#), 308-355-4000, maintains a herd of more than 500 ranch-bred horses that are used in day-to-day ranching activities. It is the largest breeder of quarter horses in the U.S. and the second largest in the world. Call for reservations for large and small group tour packages. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

30 minutes (20 miles) south on Highway 61 to Grant.

Browse the works of some of the best artists in southwest Nebraska at [Meadowlark Gallery](#), 246 Central Ave., 308-352-2450. A gift shop is available to purchase that special piece of art or souvenir. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (35 miles) south on Highway 61, west on Highway S15A to Champion.

Site of the state's last water-powered flourmill, [Champion Mill State Historical Park](#), 308-882-5860, in Champion chronicles the history and story of the mill. From its beginning in 1886 through 1968, the mill produced outstanding flour products sold throughout the region. Today visitors can take a guided tour through the facility, relax on a bench underneath one of the many shade trees that surround the nearby pond, or buy a souvenir sack of ground flour to take back home. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Nearby Imperial offers a variety of conveniences and boasts one of the most successful county fairs in the state. The town has an active downtown district that includes an espresso shop, health food store and a lovely bed and breakfast with a wrap-around porch (each room has an enclosed balcony). The [Balcony House Bed and Breakfast](#), 308-882-5597, can provide your group tour with delicious refreshments with prior notice. Take a few moments to sit on the front porch and enjoy the quiet of small town Nebraska. Suggested tour time of Imperial: 1 hour.

90 minutes (55 miles) east on Highway 6, south on Highway 25 to Trenton.

Spend some time at **Massacre Canyon**, the site of the last great battle between the Sioux and Pawnee Tribes. The Pawnee suffered a tragic loss of life at this battle. The **Massacre Canyon Monument and Visitor Center**, 308-334-5171, tells the story of this eventful time. Restrooms and a gift shop are available. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

30 minutes (23 miles) east on Highway 34 to McCook.

McCook is southwest Nebraska's commerce center and offers excellent restaurants, shops and boutiques to explore, as well as one of the most charming historical downtown districts in the state. One of the nation's most influential senators, George Norris, was born in McCook. An independent thinker, Norris helped create the Rural Electrification Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority Act (which brought electricity to many rural parts of the country), and the one-house legislative body in Nebraska—the Unicameral. The [George Norris Home](#), 706 Norris Ave., 308-345-8484, is a branch of the Nebraska State Historical Society. Groups can view artifacts from Norris' life as well as memorabilia from his 45 years in Congress. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Museum of the High Plains**, 421 Norris Ave., 308-345-3661, boasts a number of fine exhibits, including pioneer artifacts from the late 1800s, historic photographs, clothing and rooms devoted to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Senator George Norris, and three former Nebraska governors (Frank Morrison, Ralph Brooks, and Ben Nelson). The museum also has an impressive model railroad exhibit to demonstrate the railroad's impact on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Hands down! **Sehnert's Bakery and Bieroc Café**, 312 Norris Ave., 308-345-6500, has some of the best cheesecake in Nebraska, possibly the entire U.S! In addition to cheesecake, your group can enjoy a variety of other mouthwatering dishes and desserts.

McCook offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Scout's Rest Ranch, North Platte

35 minutes (26 miles) east on Highway 6 to Cambridge.

Two outstanding tourist attractions in Cambridge are the [Cambridge Bed and Breakfast](#), 606 Parker St., 308-697-3220, and the [Sondra L. Jonson Studios](#), 716 Nelson St., 800-720-8574. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Cambridge Bed and Breakfast is a neoclassical style, three-story home, completed in 1910. The house's owners host a living history tour experience where your tour can learn about the Faling family (the house's original owners), life in rural Nebraska, neoclassical architecture, and marvel at the house's beautifully designed interior. Special events, such as high tea, dessert or an ice cream social can be provided to groups of 10 or more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Between 1998 and 2002, Sondra L. Jonson created more than 14 life-sized sculptures to display in six states. Her small bronze statues appear in collections throughout the United States and Europe, including the White House and the Vatican. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. For more information on tours in Cambridge, contact the Cambridge Economic Development office at 308-697-3711.

15 minutes (9 miles) east on Highway 6 to Holbrook.

Visit the [GROW Nebraska](#) store, 416 Central Ave., 888-476-9632, in Holbrook where your tour can purchase locally made and Nebraska-made crafts, products and souvenirs. Call ahead to make sure the store is open for your tour's arrival.

50 minutes (34 miles) east on Highway 6, south on Highway 283, east on Highway 89 to Stamford.

Relive the days of the American Plains Indians at **Living History Tepee**, 308-868-9400. Agricultural tours, a working family farm, and pumpkin patch will delight everyone on your group tour. Spend a relaxing autumn afternoon searching for just the right pumpkin or enjoying a hayrack ride at **Pumpkin Corners**, 308-868-4121. Suggested tour time at both attractions: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (34 miles) north on Highway 46, east on Highway 6 to Holdrege.

During World War II, this region of Nebraska housed several German prisoner of war (POW) camps. Many POWs settled in the area and became productive and valued residents. The [Nebraska Prairie Museum](#), 308-995-5015, in Holdrege has an impressive collection from Camp Atlanta, originally located five miles from Holdrege. Works of art by POWs, as well as a variety of other exhibits, are displayed. The museum also has several historical buildings on its grounds. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (41 miles) west on Highway 23, north on Highway 283 to Lexington.

The [Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles](#), 308-324-6329, is an impressive collection of military equipment and machinery. Suggested tour: 1 hour. Lexington also boasts two wineries—[Mac's Creek Vineyards and Winery](#), 308-324-0440, and [Millenium Wines Vineyard](#), 308-324-6094. So make sure you take time to sample their excellent Nebraska-produced wines and tour the vineyards and production facilities. Explore the history of Dawson County at the [Dawson County Historical Museum](#), 805 N. Taft St., 308-324-5340. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (29 miles) west on Highway 30 to Gothenburg.

One of the few Pony Express stations, 308-537-3505, still standing in Nebraska is located in Gothenburg's charming city park. Original historic items are on display and your clients can send postcards to friends and family back home postmarked with the original Pony Express stamp. The **Sod House Museum**, 308-537-2680, at the Gothenburg Interstate 80 exit shows visitors how the pioneers lived and survived on the treeless Great Plains. Both attractions have gift shops. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 45 minutes.

90 minutes (40miles) south on Highway 47, west on Highway 23, east on Highway 18 to Stockville.

[Perk's Prairie Paradise](#), 308-367-8782, is truly one of Nebraska's hidden historic gems. This privately-owned tribute to Nebraska's pioneer spirit and history boasts 19 structures that visitors can walk through, including a one-room schoolhouse, sod house, church, saloon, two-story house and a replicated "pioneer street" featuring a boardwalk along false building facades. The buildings depict a surveyor's office, millinery shop, dentist office and carpenter's shop, among others. You gotta see it to believe it! A refreshment break can be provided. Suggested tour time: 2½-3 hours.

50 minutes (26 miles) west on Highway Highways 18 and 23, north on Highway 83 to Wellfleet, east on Opal Springs Road.

Wellfleet is home to a unique Nebraska attraction, [Dancing Leaf Earth Lodge and Cultural Learning Center](#), 6100 E. Opal Springs Road, 308-963-4233. Your group will experience primitive American Indian life. Groups may enjoy nature hikes, canoeing and delicious buffalo stew dinners. Enjoy the earth lodge and learn about the importance of the medicine wheel. Guided tours of the area can be scheduled with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (27 miles) north on Highway 83 to North Platte.

Birthplace of the rodeo, North Platte is a great group tour stop. Colonel William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody spent many years in North Platte where he originated the rodeo. His ranch, [Buffalo Bill State Historical Park](#), 308-535-8035, is the focal point of the city. You can tour his house, as well as his beautifully maintained historic barn. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. During the third week of June, the entire community dons their western duds for NEBRASKAland Days, 308-532-7939. It’s 10 days of western fun, ethnic celebrations and live entertainment! If a hands-on experience with trains is what you want, don’t miss the **Railroad Museum**, 308-532-4729, in Cody Park where you will find Union Pacific’s Challenger 3977—one of the largest steam locomotives ever built. Elk, peacock, geese, deer and a variety of other critters call the park home. Hint: they’ll like you better if you feed them. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Made famous by the book *Once Upon a Town* by Bob Greene, the North Platte World War II Canteen display is housed at the **Lincoln County Historical Museum**, 2403 N. Buffalo Bill Ave., 308-534-6579. The interpretative display details the story of the Canteen and its volunteers who, for 51 months, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week throughout World War II, met every U.S. military train to provide food, treats and hospitality to passengers. A community of less than 15,000 served more than six million service men and women free of charge. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Don’t miss the [20th Century Veterans’ Memorial](#), 2811 S. Jeffers St., 308-532-6579, which is dedicated to the men and women who have served their country. The memorial features larger than life bronze statues and wall murals that honor the five branches of the armed forces. A “Walk of Honor” that is lined by thousands of commemorative bricks shows the names of veterans. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

You can witness railroad history in the making at **Union Pacific Railroad’s Bailey Yard**, 308-532-4729. The largest rail car classification complex in the world, it stretches eight miles and covers nearly 3,000 acres. Get a panoramic view of this spectacular sight from the visitor observation deck and listen to an 8-minute audio presentation about this immense railroad facility. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Conveniently located at the intersection of Interstate 80 and Highway 83, [Fort Cody Trading Post](#), 308-532-8081, is one of the state’s largest and engagingly eclectic gift shops. Antiques, leather goods, jewelry, western gifts, novelties, books, clothing, gag gifts and a variety of other fun gifts and souvenirs can be picked up at Fort Cody. If it’s fun, it’s at Fort Cody! Make sure you walk through the Old West Museum in the back of

the store to view the miniature version of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show—a 20,000-piece hand-carved animated display. Fort Cody is a definite must-see! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Artist's Co-op Art and Gift Gallery**, 308-532-4729, is a must-see showcase of original work of west central Nebraska artists. Five large gallery rooms and an outdoor sculpture garden provide great opportunities to view the works of art at your own leisure. Workshops are hosted by artist members and nationally acclaimed professional artists. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

20 minutes (16 miles) east on Highway 30 to Maxwell.

Established in 1863, **Fort McPherson National Cemetery**, 308-582-4433, near Maxwell is Nebraska's only national cemetery. The fort provided protection for the building of the railroad and settlers on their westward trek. Today, it is one of the most beautiful cemeteries you will see and the final resting place for more than 6,700 war veterans from the Civil War to modern conflicts. Group tours of the cemetery are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

North Platte offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Tour 13

Journeys Across Western Nebraska



Oregon Trail Wagon Train, Bayard



Day 1

Enter from Colorado on Interstate 76, north on Colorado Highway 113 (becomes Nebraska Highway 19) to Sidney.

Enter from Wyoming on Interstate 80; continue eastbound to Sidney.

Sidney is home to [Cabela's](#)—the world's largest outdoor outfitter, 115 Cabela Dr., 308-254-7889. This Nebraska-based international mail-order business started as a home-based business selling fishing lures through the mail. Today Cabela's has a mailing list of more than 3 million people from around the globe, and visitors to Sidney can shop in the giant retail store located right on Interstate 80. Bargain hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will have a great time at Cabela's. The store's centerpiece is a giant man-made mountain featuring dozens of mounted animals climbing to its peak. Dining and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Discover Sidney's colorful military past at **Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home**, 1153 6th Ave., 308-254-2150. Fort Sidney was originally constructed to protect Union Pacific Railroad workers from Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who were opposed to the railroad running through their territory. An 1872 powder magazine also remains of Fort Sidney. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (42 miles) north on Highway 385 to Bridgeport.

Highways 92 and 26 follow the Oregon, Mormon and Pony Express Trails, and were the first stretches of highway designated as an official Nebraska Scenic Byway—the **Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway**. Along the way your group will begin to notice unusual rock formations along the horizon. When pioneers crossed Nebraska, there was little more than flat prairie stretching before them for weeks on end. You can imagine their excitement when they started to see a noticeable change in the landscape. The first two formations you'll come across are [Courthouse and Jail Rocks](#), 308-586-2581 (Chimney Rock Visitors Center), located on Highway 88 to the south of Highways 92 and 26. They were so named because of their similarity to courthouses and jail

buildings back east. Note: No staff or tourist facilities are available at the site. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

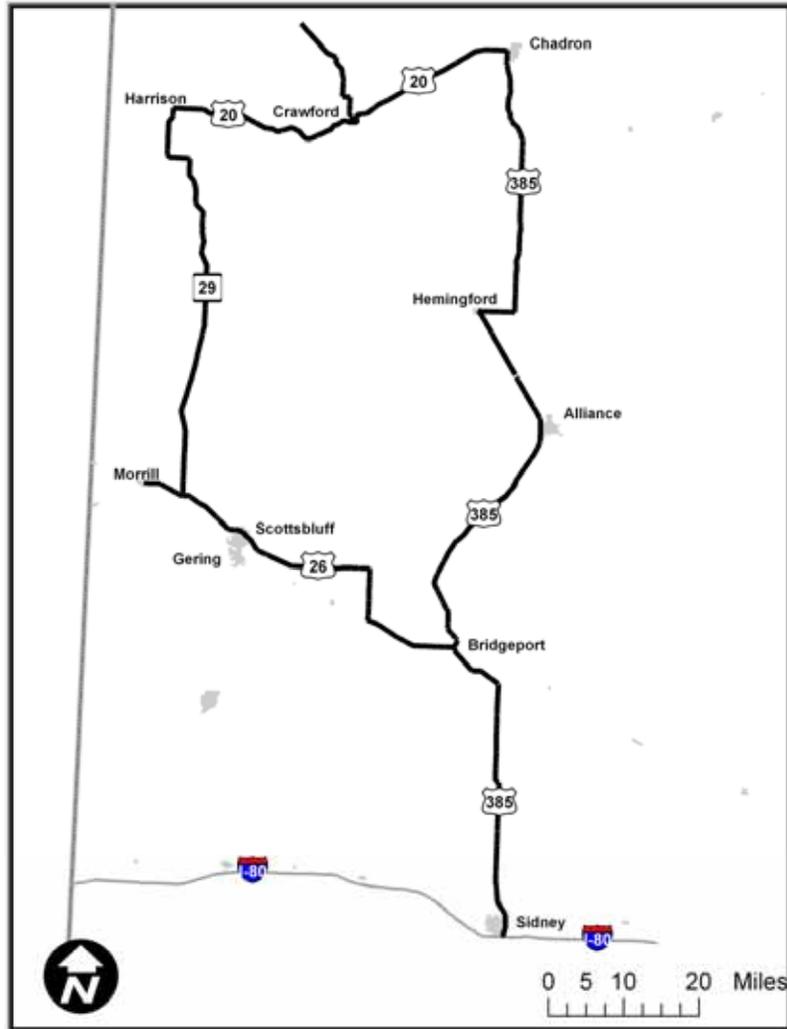
No trip to Bridgeport is complete without sampling some of the best pastries and desserts in western Nebraska. The **Sweet Things Bakery**, 308-262-1024, in downtown Bridgeport is bound to satisfy even the most discriminating palates with its mouthwatering sweets.

25 minutes (16 miles) west on Highway 26 to Bayard. “Towering to the heavens” is how one pioneer described Chimney Rock near Bayard—the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. At the base of the spire, the [Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitors](#)

[Center](#), 308-586-2581, offers visitors fascinating stories from pioneer diaries about their trek westward. There is an audio-visual presentation and an impressive book and gift shop on site. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

To experience what it was like as a pioneer, nothing compares to the [Oregon Trail Wagon Train](#), 308-586-1850, one mile from Chimney Rock. Put on your best western duds and step back in time to the 1850s as your group boards a Conestoga wagon train for a bumpy ride alongside actual wagon ruts. Your group will enjoy campfire songs, stories and the most mouth-watering meal prepared over an open fire. It’s the perfect way to end your day as an illuminated Chimney Rock lights up the night. Reservations required. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

35 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff or Highway 92 to Gering. Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous



view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area's colorful history are featured. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines in the [Farm and Ranch Museum](#), 2930 M St., 308-436-1989, at the base of Scotts Bluff National Monument. If your group tour comes during the third weekend in September, make plans to watch live demonstrations of various farming equipment during the annual Harvest Festival. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Enjoy pine-covered canyons and rugged rock buttes at the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center**, 308-436-3777, a short drive south of Gering. Nestled within the [Wildcat Hills](#), the nature center is located in one of the most beautiful regions of Nebraska. A wide variety and abundance of native wildlife can be enjoyed from the information center's deck or along the more than 3 miles of hiking trails throughout the park. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Two museums in Gering that are worth visiting are the [Wyo-braska Museum of Natural History](#), 850 U St., 308-436-7104, which houses more than 300 mounted zoological specimens from around the world; and the [North Platte Valley Museum](#), 308-436-5411, which chronicles the history of the area through a variety of impressive displays, including a sod house, one-room schoolhouse and agricultural equipment from bygone days. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour.

The main lines of the western migratory trails converged at **Robidoux Pass**. Today, you can visit the reconstructed [Robidoux Trading Post](#) in beautiful **Carter Canyon**, south of Gering. Don't miss the blacksmith shop monument and pioneer graves near the trading post. Suggested tour time (with scenic drive): 1½ hour. Contact the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau for tour information: 308-436-6886. The trading post is located on a dirt road, and no services are available along the road or at the site.

Directly to the north of Gering, Scottsbluff boasts a very impressive arts center—the **West Nebraska Arts Center**, 106 E. 18th St., 308-632-2226. It features a variety of artistic activities, including a gallery and gift shop that sells locally made gifts. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

The [Riverside Zoo](#), 1600 S. Beltline Highway West, 308-630-6236, is an impressive facility that features more than 300 animals representing 97 animal species from around the world. Excellent picnic facilities and walking paths are available. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Enjoy a panoramic view of Scotts Bluff National Monument as you sip a refreshing glass of wine at the [Prairie Vine Vineyard and Winery](#), 308-623-2955. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Fillingham Exotic Animal Farm**, 308-623-1164, in Morrill, west of Scottsbluff on Highway 26, offers guided tours of exotic animals throughout the 275-acre farm. Some of

the rare animals include a Z-donk, a zebus and an onyx. Reservations for guided tours are required. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Scottsbluff and Gering offer many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Roubidoux Trading Post, Gering

45 minutes (43 miles) west on Highway 26, north on Highway 29 to Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

[Agate Fossil Beds National Monument](#), 301 River Road, 308-668-2211, south of Harrison, is a fossil lover's paradise. Fossilized mammals from 19 million years ago are embedded and easily visible in the walls and canyons of the 3,000-acre national monument. There are miles of easy-to-navigate hiking trails throughout the property and the visitor center interprets the history and significance of the area. Agate Fossil Beds also tell the story of "Captain" James Cook—a former professional hunter, guide, Army scout and owner of the nearby Agate Springs Ranch. For 50 years, the ranch was a haven for American Indians, such as Chief Red Cloud. Cook welcomed and fed his guests, and in return, they repaid his generosity by presenting him with gifts throughout the years. In time, these gifts became a sizable and important collection of American Indian artifacts, which are now permanently displayed in the visitor center. This is truly a unique collection and a must-see exhibit! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (22 miles) north on Highway 29 to Harrison.

Grab a quick snack or something to drink in Harrison, also known as "Nebraska's Top Town." With an elevation of 4,878 feet above sea level, it enjoys the highest elevation of any Nebraska community. Make sure you have your camera ready; Harrison is surrounded by some of the most scenic countryside in the state.

35 minutes (27 miles) east on Highway 20 to Crawford.

Take the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** to Crawford, home of Nebraska's largest state park—[Fort Robinson State Park](#), 308-665-2900. It was at Fort Robinson where the great Lakota warrior Crazy Horse surrendered in 1877. A stone marker shows the spot where he was mortally wounded. Fort Robinson also was the site of the famous Cheyenne Outbreak and home to the "Buffalo Soldiers," an African-American garrison in a segregated army. Many activities are available at "Fort Rob," including buffalo stew cookouts, theatrical presentations at the Post Playhouse (group rates available), historic

tours and museums, and Jeep rides through the majestic, pine-covered buttes. The [Trailside Museum of Natural History](#), 308-66-2929, houses a mammoth skeleton that stands 10 feet tall and an art gallery of American Indian and western art. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

[Last Chance Winery](#), 432 2nd St., 308-66-2712, is located in downtown Crawford. Enjoy sipping delicious wines at a winetasting, followed by a tour of the wine production facility. Advance notice is required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Enjoy a mouth-watering meal at the **Ranch House**, 445 Second St., 308-665-1231. Afterwards, spend time browsing the extensive upstairs art and antique gallery. So come on in, and they'll rustle you up something tasty and delicious at this National Register of Historic Places landmark.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highway 2, west on Toadstool Road to Toadstool Geologic Park.

[Toadstool Geologic Park](#), 308-432-0300, northwest of Crawford, resembles the famous South Dakota Badlands and is one of the most dramatic landscapes in Nebraska. Over the centuries, the clay and sandstone in the area have been eroded by wind and rain to form toadstool-shaped formations. The park also contains valuable fossil deposits and the longest known mammal trackway of the Oligocene epoch—more than one mile. A one-mile loop trail from the campground highlights many fine examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations. A reconstructed sod house gives a glimpse into the past when prairie homesteaders used the only abundant building material available—sod. A hand water pump and full-accessible vault toilets are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

[Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site](#), 308-432-0300, is located a short drive northwest of Crawford. More than 10,000 years ago, a great catastrophe killed hundreds of bison, the largest mammals on the Great Plains. More than 600 bison skeletons have been unearthed here and the mystery of how and why they died in one place at one time is still under investigation. Feel free to make your own suggestions! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Along the way to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, make sure you stop at [High Plains Homestead](#), 308-665-2592, to enjoy some of the best pie in the world at the **Drifter Cookshack**. While there, spend some time visiting the recreated Old West village on the property, which features a working blacksmith shop, antique store and the Dirty Creek Saloon, where you can enjoy a cool, refreshing non-alcoholic drink. Make sure to stop by the old-fashioned general store to pick up that special gift or rustic souvenir. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Note: All but three miles to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, Toadstool Geologic Park and High Plains Homestead are on a well-maintained gravel road (Highway 2/71). No travel on the gravel roads should be attempted during or after rain.

30 minutes (24 miles) east of Crawford on Highway 20 to Chadron.

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep

your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, [Chadron State Park](#), 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups. Suggested tour time: 1-3 hours.

The [Museum of the Fur Trade](#), 6321 Highway 20, 308-432-3843, is located just outside Chadron. This one-of-a-kind facility displays artifacts from the lucrative fur-trading industry that was once a thriving business in northwest Nebraska in the early 1800s. The Bordeaux Trading Post, built in 1837, stands on the museum grounds and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Nebkota Dinner Train**, 111 N. Main St., 308-432-2487, offers dining car excursions through the scenic Pine Ridge area and three-hour dinner excursions on Friday and Saturday evenings. Other attractions in Chadron include the [Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center](#), 1000 Main St., 308-432-6401, located on the campus of Chadron State College. The center is dedicated to the study of Nebraska and High Plains culture, literature and history. The Heritage Room hosts a collection of Sandoz's books and poems. The **Dawes County Historical Museum**, 341 Country Club Road, 308-432-4999, shares the story of the area throughout several buildings of the museum complex, such as an original log house and barn, schoolhouse and railroad caboos.

Day 3



Carhenge, Alliance

1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 385 to Alliance.

The next best thing to Stonehenge, [Carhenge](#), 308-762-1520, is one of Nebraska's crackerjack attractions and has stirred much controversy since its creation in 1987. An exact replica of the world-famous Stonehenge in England, Carhenge uses old cars in place of stones. The project was the brainchild of architect Jim Reinders. He and his family gathered for a family reunion in Alliance and wanted to come up with a project to dedicate to Reinder's father. Jim spent many years in Europe and studied Stonehenge at great length. In 1987, he returned to his family farm and constructed Carhenge. At first it met with mixed reactions from local residents; however, Carhenge has now become a national sensation and one of Nebraska's unique attractions. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

Alliance also has one of the state's best historical museums—the **Knight Museum of High Plains Heritage**, 908 Yellowstone Ave., 308-762-2384. A variety of displays interpret the history of the city and the importance that the railroad played in its growth. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Carnegie Arts Center](#), 204 W. 4th St., 308-762-4571, features local and regional artists, gifts and a sculpture garden. **Sallows Conservatory and Arboretum**, 308-762-2384, features tropical and sub-tropical plants, and walking paths wind through the flower displays of the Sunken Gardens. Downtown Alliance also offers a variety of unique shopping and dining opportunities. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Step back in time to a slower, more relaxed pace at [Dobby's Frontier Town](#), 320 E. 25th St., 308-762-4321. This recreation of a turn-of-the-century western town boasts a homesteader's cabin, mercantile, bootlegger's cabin, post office, jail, baled straw house, and much, much more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Sweet Sage Spice and Gourmet Shoppe, 806 Box Butte Ave., 308-487-5599, in Hemingford, 20 miles northwest of Alliance on Highway 2, is an old-fashioned variety store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

1 hour, 45 minutes (79 miles) south on Highway 385 to Sidney and Interstate 80.

Sidney is home to [Cabela's](#)—the world's largest outdoor outfitter, 115 Cabela Dr., 308-254-7889. This Nebraska-based international mail-order business started as a home-based business selling fishing lures through the mail. Today Cabela's has a mailing list of more than 3 million people from around the globe, and visitors to Sidney can shop in the giant retail store located right on Interstate 80. Bargain hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will have a great time at Cabela's. The store's centerpiece is a giant man-made mountain featuring dozens of mounted animals climbing to its peak. Dining and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Discover Sidney's colorful military past at **Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home**, 1153 6th Ave., 308-254-2150. Fort Sidney was originally constructed to protect Union Pacific Railroad workers from Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who were opposed to the railroad running through their territory. An 1872 powder magazine also remains of Fort Sidney. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Tour 14

Valleys, Buttes and Bluffs: A Tour of Western Nebraska



Riverside Zoo, Scottsbluff



Day 1

Enter Nebraska on Highway 385 (Gold Rush Scenic Byway) to Chadron.

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, [Chadron State Park](#), 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups. Suggested tour time: 1-3 hours.

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1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 385 to Alliance.

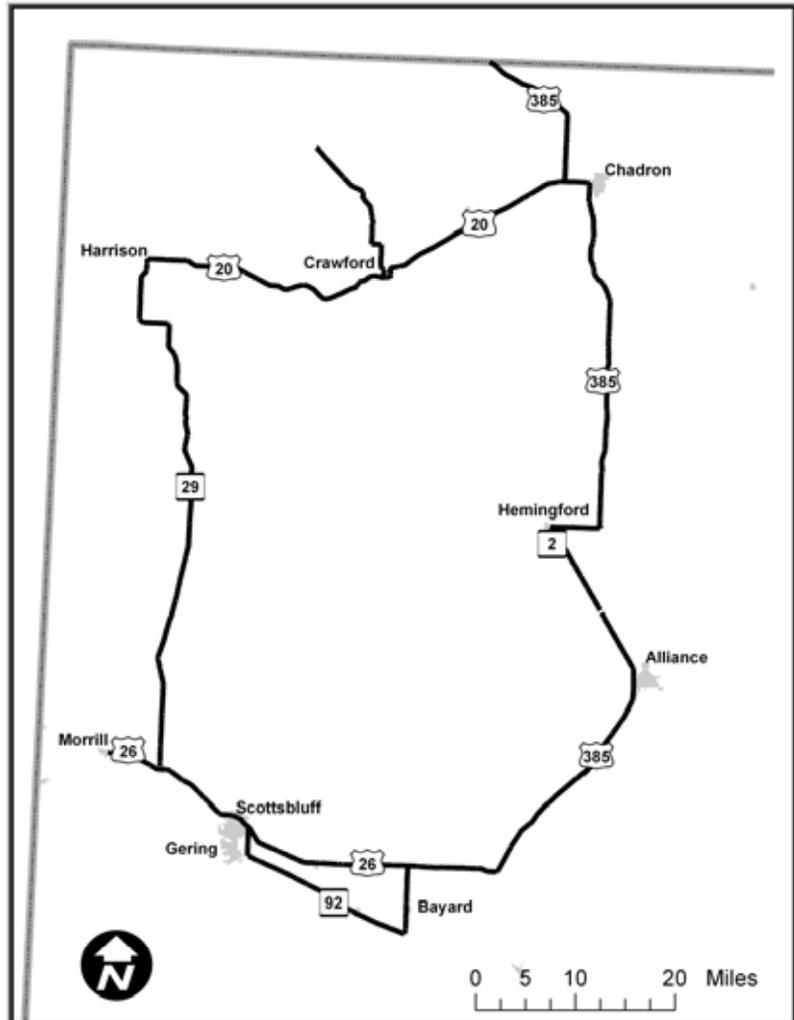
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store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

1 hour (40 miles) south on Highway 385, west on Highway L62A, south on Highway 26 to Bayard.

“Towering to the heavens” is how one pioneer described Chimney Rock near Bayard—the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. At the base of the spire, the [Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitors Center](#), 308-586-2581, offers visitors fascinating stories from pioneer diaries about their trek westward. There is an audio-visual presentation and an impressive book and gift shop on site. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

To experience what it was like as a pioneer, nothing compares to the [Oregon Trail Wagon Train](#), 308-586-1850, one mile from Chimney Rock. Put on your best western duds and step back in time to the 1850s as your group boards a Conestoga wagon train for a bumpy ride alongside actual wagon ruts. Your group will enjoy campfire songs, stories and the most mouth-watering meal prepared over an open fire. It’s the perfect way to end your day as an illuminated Chimney Rock lights up the night. Reservations required. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

35 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff or Highway 92 to Gering.

Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area’s colorful history are featured. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines in the [Farm and Ranch Museum](#), 2930 M St., 308-436-1989, at the base of Scotts Bluff National Monument. If your group tour comes during the third weekend in September, make plans to watch live demonstrations of various farming equipment during the annual Harvest Festival. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Enjoy pine-covered canyons and rugged rock buttes at the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center**, 308-436-3777, a short drive south of Gering. Nestled within the [Wildcat Hills](#), the nature center is located in one of the most beautiful regions of Nebraska. A wide variety and abundance of native wildlife can be enjoyed from the information center’s deck or along the more than 3 miles of hiking trails throughout the park. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Two museums in Gering that are worth visiting are the [Wyo-braska Museum of Natural History](#), 850 U St., 308-436-7104, which houses more than 300 mounted zoological specimens from around the world; and the [North Platte Valley Museum](#), 308-436-5411, which chronicles the history of the area through a variety of impressive

displays, including a sod house, one-room schoolhouse and agricultural equipment from bygone days. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour.

The main lines of the western migratory trails converged at **Robidoux Pass**. Today, you can visit the reconstructed [Robidoux Trading Post](#) in beautiful **Carter Canyon**, south of Gering. Don't miss the blacksmith shop monument and pioneer graves near the trading post. Suggested tour time (with scenic drive): 1½ hour. Contact the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau for tour information: 308-436-6886. The trading post is located on a dirt road, and no services are available along the road or at the site.

Directly to the north of Gering, Scottsbluff boasts a very impressive arts center—the **West Nebraska Arts Center**, 106 E. 18th St., 308-632-2226. It features a variety of artistic activities, including a gallery and gift shop that sells locally made gifts. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

The [Riverside Zoo](#), 1600 S. Beltline Highway West, 308-630-6236, is an impressive facility that features more than 300 animals representing 97 animal species from around the world. Excellent picnic facilities and walking paths are available. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Enjoy a panoramic view of Scotts Bluff National Monument as you sip a refreshing glass of wine at the [Prairie Vine Vineyard and Winery](#), 308-623-2955. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Fillingham Exotic Animal Farm**, 308-623-1164, in Morrill, west of Scottsbluff on Highway 26, offers guided tours of exotic animals throughout the 275-acre farm. Some of the rare animals include a Z-donk, a zebus and an onyx. Reservations for guided tours are required. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Day 2



17 Ranch, Northwestern Nebraska

45 minutes (43 miles) west on Highway 26, north on Highway 29 to Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

[Agate Fossil Beds National Monument](#), 301 River Road, 308-668-2211, south of Harrison, is a fossil lover's paradise. Fossilized mammals from 19 million years ago are embedded and easily visible in the walls and canyons of the 3,000-acre national monument. There are miles of easy-to-navigate hiking trails throughout the property and the visitor center interprets the history and significance of the area. Agate Fossil Beds

also tell the story of “Captain” James Cook—a former professional hunter, guide, Army scout and owner of the nearby Agate Springs Ranch. For 50 years, the ranch was a haven for American Indians, such as Chief Red Cloud. Cook welcomed and fed his guests, and in return, they repaid his generosity by presenting him with gifts throughout the years. In time, these gifts became a sizable and important collection of American Indian artifacts, which are now permanently displayed in the visitor center. This is truly a unique collection and a must-see exhibit! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (22 miles) north on Highway 29 to Harrison.

Grab a quick snack or something to drink in Harrison, also known as “Nebraska’s Top Town.” With an elevation of 4,878 feet above sea level, it enjoys the highest elevation of any Nebraska community. Make sure you have your camera ready; Harrison is surrounded by some of the most scenic countryside in the state.

35 minutes (27 miles) east on Highway 20 to Crawford.

Take the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** to Crawford, home of Nebraska’s largest state park—[Fort Robinson State Park](#), 308-665-2900. It was at Fort Robinson where the great Lakota warrior Crazy Horse surrendered in 1877. A stone marker shows the spot where he was mortally wounded. Fort Robinson also was the site of the famous Cheyenne Outbreak and home to the “Buffalo Soldiers,” an African-American garrison in a segregated army. Many activities are available at “Fort Rob,” including buffalo stew cookouts, theatrical presentations at the Post Playhouse (group rates available), historic tours and museums, and Jeep rides through the majestic, pine-covered buttes. The [Trailside Museum of Natural History](#), 308-66-2929, houses a mammoth skeleton that stands 10 feet tall and an art gallery of American Indian and western art. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

[Last Chance Winery](#), 432 2nd St., 308-66-2712, is located in downtown Crawford. Enjoy sipping delicious wines at a winetasting, followed by a tour of the wine production facility. Advance notice is required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Enjoy a mouth-watering meal at the **Ranch House**, 445 Second St., 308-665-1231. Afterwards, spend time browsing the extensive upstairs art and antique gallery. So come on in, and they’ll rustle you up something tasty and delicious at this National Register of Historic Places landmark.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highway 2, west on Toadstool Road to Toadstool Geologic Park.

[Toadstool Geologic Park](#), 308-432-0300, northwest of Crawford, resembles the famous South Dakota Badlands and is one of the most dramatic landscapes in Nebraska. Over the centuries, the clay and sandstone in the area have been eroded by wind and rain to form toadstool-shaped formations. The park also contains valuable fossil deposits and the longest known mammal trackway of the Oligocene epoch—more than one mile. A one-mile loop trail from the campground highlights many fine examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations. A reconstructed sod house gives a glimpse into the past when prairie homesteaders used the only abundant building material available—sod. A hand water pump and full-accessible vault toilets are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

[Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site](#), 308-432-0300, is located a short drive northwest of Crawford. More than 10,000 years ago, a great catastrophe killed hundreds of bison, the largest mammals on the Great Plains. More than 600 bison skeletons have been unearthed here and the mystery of how and why they died in one place at one time is still under investigation. Feel free to make your own suggestions! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Along the way to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, make sure you stop at [High Plains Homestead](#), 308-665-2592, to enjoy some of the best pie in the world at the **Drifter Cookshack**. While there, spend some time visiting the recreated Old West village on the property, which features a working blacksmith shop, antique store and the Dirty Creek Saloon, where you can enjoy a cool, refreshing non-alcoholic drink. Make sure to stop by the old-fashioned general store to pick up that special gift or rustic souvenir. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Note: All but three miles to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, Toadstool Geologic Park and High Plains Homestead are on a well-maintained gravel road (Highway 2/71). No travel on the gravel roads should be attempted during or after rain.

30 minutes (24 miles) east of Crawford on Highway 20 to Chadron.
Chadron offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Tour 15

Discover What They Explored: Following the Trail of Lewis and Clark



Kreycik Riverview Elk Ranch, Niobrara



Day 1

Travel along the Private George Shannon Trail.

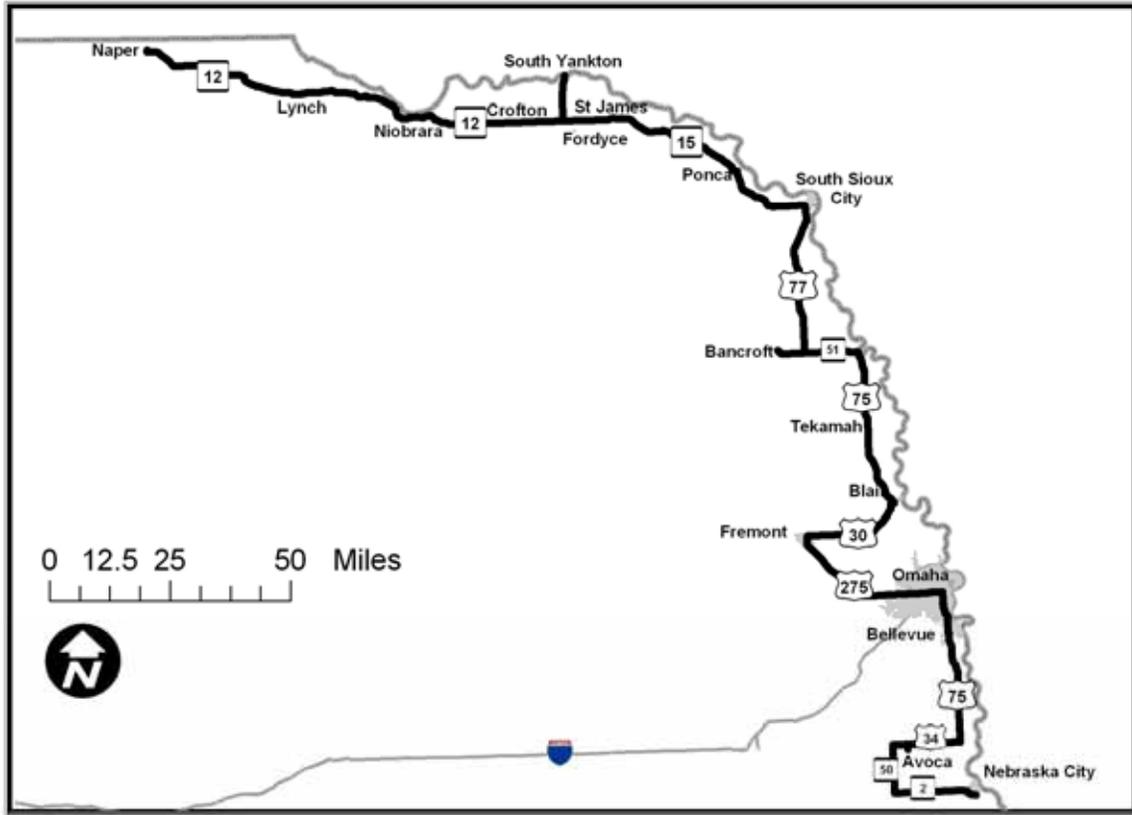
Sixteen communities along the Lewis and Clark Trail have joined together to create a unique and fun group tour activity—the **Private George Shannon Trail**. George Shannon was the youngest and most educated of the Corps of Discovery. Unfortunately, he also was the only one to be lost for 16 days in present day northeast Nebraska. To commemorate this, communities and two tribes in northeast Nebraska created 12 life-size, hand-carved Lewis and Clark statues. Stop in any businesses along the trail that display a bright yellow Shannon sign to pick up your passport and stamps to start enjoying the trail. As your group visits these communities, they have their passport stamped. Once they have collected all 12 Private Shannon stamps and 1 Lewis and Clark stamp, they will receive a beautiful limited edition print of Private Shannon to remember their time along the Shannon Trail. The communities along the Shannon Trail are Bloomfield, Crofton, Lindy, Santee, Niobrara, Verdigre, Winnetoon, Center, Creighton, Wausa, Hartington, Wynot and Verdel.

Naper

Start your Lewis and Clark Trail Tour in Naper at the [White Horse Ranch](#), 402-832-5560, where the American White Horse is bred. A museum and guided tour will thrill your group and give them an up-close view of ranch life in Nebraska.

1 hour, 10 minutes (37 miles) east on Highway 12 to Lynch.

Located along the **Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway** (Highway 12), Lynch is home to **Old Baldy**, 402-569-3202, which served as a historical landmark for riverboats. In 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition stopped here and saw its first prairie dog village. Make sure you stop in town to buy one of the famous Lynch Dawgs—a stuffed toy prairie dog for your collection—developed in celebration of the 2004 Lewis and Clark Commemoration. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.



40 minutes (26 miles) east on Highway 12 to Niobrara.

Located at the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri rivers, Niobrara had to be moved twice to higher ground due to flooding. Luckily your group tour doesn't have to worry about high water as they explore what Niobrara has to offer. The [Krevcik Riverview Elk Ranch](#), 88971 517 Ave., 402-857-3850, southwest of Niobrara State Park, is a fun place to go to encounter wildlife close up. Load your group into a covered wagon for an enjoyable ride around the picturesque ranch to see majestic elk and bison herds. You'll never forget the experience of hand feeding buffalo as they clamor to the wagon for corn! It's truly an experience! The gift shop sells a variety of buffalo-related products, clothing and food, such as tasty buffalo jerky (if you like it a little spicy, try the jalapeño flavor). Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

[Niobrara State Park](#), 89261 522 Ave., 402-857-3373, offers your group tour a wide variety of outdoor experiences, such as picnicking, swimming, boating, hiking on 14 miles of trails, fishing, horseback trail riding and wildlife watching. The **J. Alan Cramer Interpretive Center**, 402-857-3373, offers an exceptional view of the park and highlights the history and people of the area. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. If you visit between Memorial and Labor days, make sure to attend the buffalo cookout. With prior arrangements, your tour can experience the history and natural wonders of the Missouri River on the **Upper Missouri River Float Trip**, which follows the same path as Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.

The **Ponca Earthlodge** and **Ponca Tribal Museum**, 2543 Park Ave., 402-857-3519, display the rich culture and heritage of the Ponca Tribe and their influence on this region of Nebraska. The museum displays artifacts from Ponca history, American Indian artwork, tribal archive photographs and a gift shop that specializes in American Indian artwork. Located in the Powwow area, the **Ponca Native Garden** contains many varieties of plants that were used by the ancestral Ponca, such as maize, squash, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers, strawberries, sage and watermelon. An outer area of the garden includes plants that were beneficial to the Ponca Tribe and wildlife, such as buffalo berries, sweet potatoes, ground cherries and wild plums. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

10 minutes (5 miles) east on Highway 12 to Ohiya Casino.

See if Lady Luck is smiling on you at the **Ohiya Casino**, 52946 Highway 12, 402-857-3860, on the Santee Reservation. Located a few miles east of Niobrara, this 12,000-square-foot casino is owned and operated by the Santee Tribe. You also can purchase authentic American Indian jewelry, blankets and other crafts. Adjacent to the casino is the **Ohiya Casino Café**, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A weekend buffet and Sunday brunch are offered during the spring, summer and fall months. Get out your bucks and start having fun! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. As you travel across the reservation, you will go through the **Nebraska Everglades** where the highway is lined on both sides by marshes and water.

20 minutes (15 miles) east on Highway 12 to Crofton.

The historic [Argo Hotel](#), 211 W. Kansas St., 402-388-2400, in Crofton is a great place for your group to spend an afternoon relaxing on the spacious front porch. This beautiful hotel has been restored into a bed and breakfast, while the restaurant is able to accommodate group tours for full meals or afternoon teas. Spend time downstairs singing along with the player piano in the restored speakeasy tavern. And don't forget to ask your host about the Argo Hotel ghost! Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Make plans to spend time at the [Jolene Steffen Studio](#), 55472 888th Road, 402-357-3740, near the hamlet of Constance, east of Crofton. Her art reflects the things that mean the most to her—wide-open sky and rolling hills, beautiful wildflowers and garden flowers, children, animals, creeks and pastoral northeast Nebraska scenes. The vividness and quality of Jolene's works truly will amaze you! Plus, they are affordable to practically everyone, with most prices ranging from \$30 to more than \$500 for the larger pieces.

One of Nebraska's largest lakes, **Lewis and Clark Lake**, is located in the **Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area**, 402-388-4169, 7 miles north of Crofton on Highway 121. This is a prime area for bird watching, especially for bald eagles. Winter is a great time to visit when frigid temperatures freeze the lake and provide great opportunities for ice fishing, skating, and snowmobiling. The Corps of Engineers operates a power generation plant at **Gavins Point Dam**, 402-667-7873, and the [Lewis and Clark Visitor Center](#), 10 miles north on Highway 12, 402-667-2546. Tours of the power plant are given Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Listed on the Nebraska Survey of Historic Places, [Bow View Farm](#), 88664 550 Ave., 402-388-4798, offers your tour a glimpse into the rural way of life. A historical walking

tour of the farm's buildings and a low impact birding hike along Bluebird Trail are two activities awaiting your group tour. An on-farm store is located in a historic 1916 barn where you can purchase home-raised black oil sunflower birdseed, wild birdseed, birdfeeders, postcards, and other items. 1 mile west of Crofton on Highway 12 and 3¼ miles south on 550 Ave.

20 minutes (13 miles) north on Highway 121 to South Yankton.

The [Corps of Discovery Welcome Center](#), 402-667-6557, is located at the intersection of two historic transportation routes—the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Pan-American Highway (Highway 81). The visitor center boasts a gorgeous view of the Missouri River and the surrounding countryside from the scenic overlook. Other features of the center include interpretive panels that retell the story of Lewis and Clark, an art gallery and a gift shop full of Nebraska-made products. With advance scheduling, tours from the visitor center to area attractions can be arranged. Suggested tour time: 45-60 minutes.

25 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 81, east on Highway 12 to Fordyce.

[Prairie Blossom Trails](#), 55582 887 Road, 402-357-3702, near Fordyce is one of the few places in the country that graze Scottish Highland cattle. On your tour of the farm, you can get a firsthand view of these unique looking creatures, walk trails made by pioneer wagons of the past, or simply take in the breathtaking pasture landscape or sunset. Make sure you pick up some of the Scottish Highland beef. It's some of the best beef you'll ever eat! Group tours are offered between May 1 and October 31. Directions: (A) 3 miles south of Highways 81 and 12 junction, turn east on 887 Road, ¾ of a mile and south 1/3 of a mile; (B) 5 miles north to 887 Road from Pleasant Valley Store at Highways 81 and 84 junction.

Spend some time with certified organic farmers at [Marv and Ed's Farm](#), 55996 Highway 12, 402-357-2150 near Fordyce. You won't find any additives or preservatives here! These lifelong farmers raise a variety of organic vegetables and grains, such as corn, oats with sweet clover, alfalfa, turnips, soybeans and hay. You also can spend some time watching the many critters they raise—dairy cows and calves, herds of cattle, hens, turkeys, geese, hogs, Angora goats, and Guinea fowl. Tours are provided from May 1 to October 1. Directions: (A) 4 miles east and south of intersection of Highways 81 and 12; (B) north of Hartington, 3 miles west and south from intersection of Highways 12 and 57.

20 minutes (9 miles) east on Highway 12 to Bow Valley.

Grape growing and wine production facilities are sprouting up all over Nebraska. [Nissen Brothers Vineyards](#), 88560 566 Ave., 402-254-3426, near Bow Valley is home to one of the state's newest vineyards. Spend time with the owners learning about the process of growing grapes for wine. Directions: 3 miles north of Hartington on Highway 57 and 886 Road, then 2½ miles east to 566 Ave., then south ½ mile.

15 minutes (6 miles) east on Highway 12 to Wynot.

Located 2 miles east of Wynot off Highway 12, [St. James Marketplace](#), 89039 570 Ave., 402-357-3330, is located in a historical schoolhouse. Today it's home to a wonderful farmer's market, craft fair and tearoom that is ideal for an afternoon snack. A

variety of historical exhibits also are on display. This unique attraction is a must-see for your group tour. If your tour comes through in late September, plan to stay for the Heritage Fest. Inquire from the ladies at the marketplace about taking a side trip on **Rattlesnake Road**—one of the most breathtaking backcountry roads in the region. The **Wiseman Monument** along the road recounts a chilling pioneer murder story. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (marketplace), 1 hour (Rattlesnake Road). Note: The monument and scenic drive are via dirt roads, and no services are available.

45 minutes (29 miles) east on Highway 12 to Ponca.

Located a short drive north of Ponca on Highway 12, **Ponca State Park**, 402-755-2284, features one of Nebraska's most comprehensive outdoor/environmental education programs, including history, biology, ecology, astronomy, geology and archaeology of the area. With more than 20 miles of recreational trails, the park provides plenty of opportunities for your group to commune with nature. During the fall months, hayrack rides are available for groups of 15 or more. As part of the park's annual Hallowfest, the second weekend in October, haunted hayrack rides are given. Buffalo burgers, Lewis and Clark stew and fish fries are held in the summer and fall months. During spring, the park comes alive with the sounds of migratory and native songbirds. The **Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center**, 402-755-2284, boasts a large interpretive display and exhibit area, a field laboratory and plenty of meeting rooms. Make sure you drive to the tri-state overlook along the Missouri River for a phenomenal view of the river and surrounding countryside. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Towers of Time**, 402-755-2284, exhibit features relief carvings of the flora and fauna of three time periods in northeast Nebraska. A waterfall, pond, fountain and walking path complement the towers. Check it out after dark when the entire exhibit is beautifully lit.

30 minutes (22 miles) east on Highways 12 and 20 to South Sioux City.

South Sioux City offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Shopping for antiques in Fremont

55 minutes (26 miles) west on Highway 35, south on Highway 9 to Emerson.

Emerson, the only town in Nebraska located in three counties, is home to the **Iron Horse Bar and Casino**, 1010 S. Main St., 402-695-0180. Owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, this 2,000-square-foot facility offers Las Vegas fun and excitement, Nebraska style. The friendly staff at the Iron Horse will serve you up some great food and drinks while you're going for that big pay off! Great for small group tours.

50 minutes (23 miles) south on Highways 9 and 16 to Bancroft.

Bancroft was home to Nebraska Poet Laureate John G. Neihardt. The [John G. Neihardt State Historical Site](#), 306 W. Elm St., 402-648-3388, gives your tour a fascinating look at an individual who dedicated his entire life to understanding and helping the American Indians. His most famous book, *Black Elk Speaks*, chronicles many years of interviews with this famous Indian chief. Neihardt's study, where he wrote many of his books and poems, is located on the grounds of the center. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (32 miles) east on Highway 51, south on Highway 75 to Tekamah.

Enjoy a glass of full-bodied Nebraska wine and a tour of the operation at [Silvercreek Hill Vineyards](#), 3130 County Road M, 402-374-1602. The farm operation also raises corn, soybeans and cattle. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (19 miles) south on Highway 75 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (19 miles) west on Highway 91 to Nickerson.

The [Apple Barn at Fontenelle Orchard](#), 402-727-5272, features fresh, tree-ripe fruit that you can pick yourself. Tours of the orchard are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (9 miles) south on Highway 77 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

50 minutes (42 miles) east on Highway 275 to Omaha.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, the **largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars,

cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-foot of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to the Missouri River frontier. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that different ethnic groups have had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children's garden, herb garden, spring flowering walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon

Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a

beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Enjoy the view along the **Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway** as you make your way to Fort Calhoun and [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fulfilled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. The National Signature Event for the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place at Fort Atkinson in 2004. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses **Too Far North**, 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are custom-made labels for all occasions. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (40 miles) south on Highway 75, west on Highway 34 to Avoca.

Pumpkins, fall produce and decorations, a wooded walking trail, picnic grounds, antiques, and gifts await your group tour at an 1881 family farmstead. **Bloom Where You're Planted Pumpkin Patch & Barn Store**, 911 108th St., 402-267-4104, is a great escape back to the farm! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 34, south on Highway 50, east on Highway 2 to Nebraska City.

Nebraska City boasts a variety of exciting attractions and activities, plenty of history, shopping opportunities and beautiful scenery—all in one charming community. Nebraska City's pride and joy is [Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum](#), 2600 2nd Ave., 402-873-7222. Home of J. Sterling and Carolyn Morton, the 52-room Victorian-style mansion is a memorable stop for any group visit. J. Sterling Morton was the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland and helped establish Arbor Day as a holiday. There are quiet walking trails, gardens and nearby orchards with an "Apple House" where travelers can enjoy a variety of apple treats and buy souvenirs. Make sure you tour the National Arbor Day Foundation's "Tree Adventure," which includes touch-screen exhibits, a 20-minute film that shows the significance of trees and other exciting information about the environment. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

A fine example of Victorian architecture is the **Wildwood Center Historic House and The Barn Art Gallery**, 420 Steinhart Park Road, 402-873-6340. Built in 1869, Wildwood was home to Jasper Ware, an early banker in Nebraska City. All home furnishings are of the Victorian Era, and behind the house is a gallery that displays artwork of many Nebraska artisans. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Another major Nebraska City attraction is [Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village](#), 2012 4th Corso, 402- 873-3115. Part of the Underground Railroad for slaves, this restored site has many historical artifacts on display, as well as a restored village. You also can walk through the underground cave on the grounds. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Downtown Nebraska City is a treasure trove of antique and specialty retail stores where you can find clothing for everyone, crafts and works of art, Christmas decorations, books and specialty foods. On weekends a trolley is available to take your group around town. With its abundance of changing leaves and apple harvests, fall is one of the most beautiful seasons to visit Nebraska City. For overnight or meal service, look no further than the [Lied Conference Center and Arbor Day Farms](#), 2700 Sylvan Road, 402-873-8733. This environment-friendly facility offers state-of-the-art meeting rooms, spacious overnight rooms and excellent meals. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Make sure to spend some time sipping wine at one of Nebraska's newest wineries—[Arbor Trails Winery](#), 6450 J Road, 402-873-8888. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Experience firsthand the journey of Lewis and Clark at the [Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#), 100 Valmont Dr., 402-874-9900, which sits atop an 80-acre site overlooking the Missouri River. The center focuses on the recorded scientific discoveries of plants and animals made during the tour. Enjoy hands-on exploration activities, interactive exhibits, a life-size replica of the keelboat used by Lewis and Clark, and a 45-foot American Indian Earth Lodge. Suggested tour time: 2-3 hours. The **River Country Nature Center**, 114 S. 6th St., 402-873-3000, is open by appointment only and houses more than 400 preserved specimens of native Nebraska birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles in replicas of their natural habitats. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Free your mind and explore the artistic side of Nebraska City at the [Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts](#), 801 3rd Corso, 402-874-9600. The center is an art retreat for visual artists, writers, art scholars, choreographers and artists from across the nation. A main gallery and exhibition rooms display works of art for public viewing and are changed approximately every two months. Art classes held at the center are offered throughout the year and open to the public. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Apples, peaches, cherries, plums, grapes, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, squash, peppers, and more...oh my! Load up on delicious fresh fruits and vegetables at [Kimmel Orchard](#), 6045 G Road, 402-873-5293. A new shuttle path was developed to teach your group tour about the history and operation of the orchard. Benches, scenic resting spots, and picnic areas dot the hiking trail to let your tour enjoy spring's blossoms or the beautiful autumn colors. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Tour 16

Discover What They Explored: Following the Trail of Lewis and Clark

Extended Tour of Southeastern Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of southeast Nebraska to extend the *Discover What They Explored: Following the Trail of Lewis and Clark* tour:



The Lyceum, Brownville



40 minutes (34 miles) south on Highway 75, east on Highway 136 (Heritage Highway Scenic Byway) to Brownville.

At one time the bustling community of Brownville was to serve as Nebraska's "Gateway City," but when the railroad decided to locate in Omaha, Brownville's future looked grim. Fortunately the spunky locals refused to let their community die, and today's Brownville has become a genuine tourism destination. Your group can cruise down the Missouri River on the [Spirit of Brownville](#), 402-825-4211, take in a play or concert at the **Brownville Village Theatre**, 402-825-4121, or **Brownville Concert Hall**, 402-825-3331, shop in the quaint downtown, or sip wine at sunset on the deck of [Whiskey Run Creek Winery](#), 702 Main St., 402-825-4601. The **Captain Bailey House**, **Carson House** and **Furnas House**, 402-825-6001, are some of the many restored historic homes that are open to the public.

The **Meriwether Lewis Museum of Missouri River History**, 402-825-3341, a decommissioned U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredge boat, now houses a museum dedicated to the Missouri River. The **Governor Furnas Connector Trail** connects the **Governor Furnas Arboretum**, 402-825-6637, to the Missouri River. The trail boasts more than 200 types of trees, shrubs and flowers for you to enjoy. One of the town's newest tourist endeavors is the [Brownville Lyceum](#), 225 Main St., 402-825-4321, which opened April 2005. This haven for booklovers has many used books to purchase, a reading room in which to relax and read, and a small café that serves tasty dishes. Suggested tour time in town: 2-3 hours.

30 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 67 to Indian Cave State Park.
[Indian Cave State Park](#), 402-883-2575, includes more than 3,000 acres along the Missouri River. This pristine area is home to a variety of activities, such as camping,

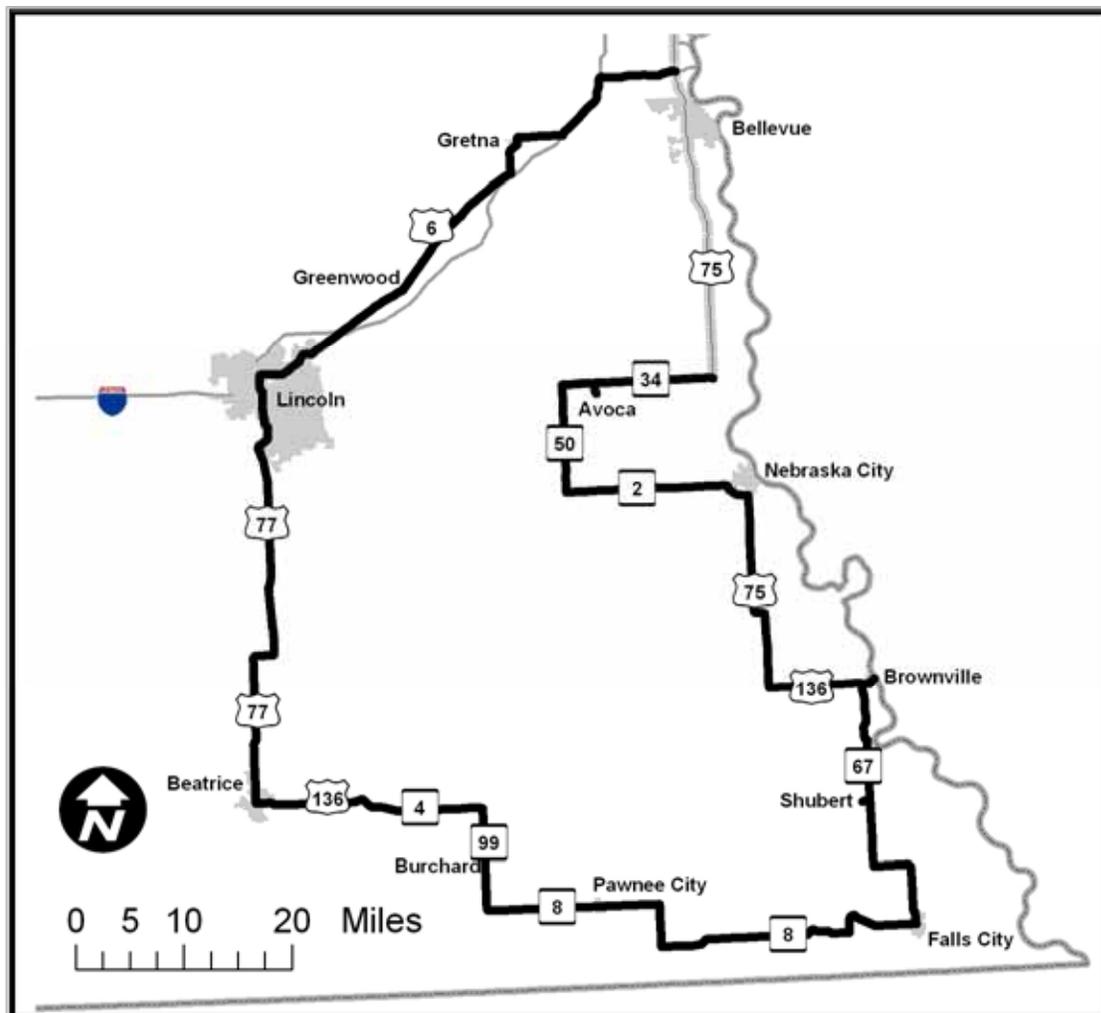
hiking, backpacking, picnicking, and nature and wilderness activities. There are 20 miles of hiking trails in the park. The fall months are particularly spectacular, and history buffs will enjoy the restored schoolhouse and general store from the old river town of St. Deroin. During the summer months, old-time crafts are demonstrated to visitors. You can reserve a group picnic shelter if needed. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

42 minutes (23 miles) south on Highways 67 and 73 to Falls City.

Two of Falls City's best attractions are the **Bell-Jenne House**, 402-245-3481, and the **Richardson County Historical Museum**, 402-245-3481. The Bell-Jenne House is an impressive two-story brick Italianate-style house built in 1881 and features eight period piece rooms to give your group tour a glimpse into life in the late 19th century. The Richardson County Historical Museum highlights the history and people of Falls City and the region. With advance planning, tours of both facilities can be scheduled. Suggested tour time of each attraction: 1 hour.

1 hour (41 miles) west on Highway 8 to Pawnee City.

Home of film stars Irish McCalla and Harold Lloyd, Pawnee City also is home to a very impressive historical museum complex. The [Pawnee County Historical Museum](#), 402-



852-3131, is comprised of 16 historic buildings that display antique furnishings, tools, vintage vehicles, rare photos, books, unique handcraft items and a variety of other artifacts. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. One of the city's newest and most unique attractions is the **Toy Pedal Clinic**, 402-852-2655, a museum dedicated to this fun toy of yesteryear. The museum displays more than 450 toy pedal cars, tractors, airplanes and a host of other small toys. Other collections at the museum include a John Deere room, kiddie car collection, kerosene lamps, quilts, bicycles, salt and pepper shakers and doll collection. Your tour also can observe museum staff while they restore old pedal cars. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Before leaving Pawnee City, stop by **Hallie's Restaurant and Lounge**, 604 9th St., 402-852-2445, for a yummy slice of homemade pie.

Enjoy the only winery and microbrewery in Nebraska! The [Schilling Bridge Winery and Microbrewery](#), 62193 710th Rd., 402-852-2400, offers Nebraska produced wines and handcrafted microbrews surrounded by more than eight acres of grapevines. The centerpiece of the landscape is an 1890 Limestone Rock Island Railroad bridge. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Also check out the **restored Harold Lloyd home**, 402-852-3131, in Burchard, 12 miles west of Pawnee City. The front room of the house contains memorabilia from Lloyd's life and acting career. Upon request, you can set up time for your group to watch a Harold Lloyd movie in his former home. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

1 hour (42 miles) west on Highway 8, north on Highway 99, west on Highways 4 and 136 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska's most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—[Homestead National Monument of America](#), 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country's first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city's excellent selection of restaurants and fine community theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

45 minutes north on Highway 77 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St.,

402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the “American Indian Gallery,” “The First Nebraskans,” “Nebraska Joins the Union,” and “Building the State.” Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska’s tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get “lost” in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight to try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) east on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (7 miles) east on Highway 6 to Ashland (Exit 426).

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights

the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

20 minutes (11 miles) east on Highway 6 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

30 minutes (22 miles) east on Highway 6 to Omaha.

Tour 17

Northern Exposure: A Tour of Northeastern Nebraska



Kreycik Elk Ranch, Niobrara



Day 1

Enter northeast Nebraska at South Sioux City, west on Highway 12.

30 minutes (22 miles) west on Highway 12 (Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway) to Ponca.

Located a short drive north of Ponca on Highway 12, [Ponca State Park](#), 402-755-2284, features one of Nebraska's most comprehensive outdoor/environmental education programs, including history, biology, ecology, astronomy, geology and archaeology of the area. With more than 20 miles of recreational trails, the park provides plenty of opportunities for your group to commune with nature. During the fall months, hayrack rides are available for groups of 15 or more. As part of the park's annual Halloweenfest, the second weekend in October, haunted hayrack rides are given. Buffalo burgers, Lewis and Clark stew and fish fries are held in the summer and fall months. During spring, the park comes alive with the sounds of migratory and native songbirds. The **Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center**, 402-755-2284, boasts a large interpretive display and exhibit area, a field laboratory and plenty of meeting rooms. Make sure you drive to the tri-state overlook along the Missouri River for a phenomenal view of the river and surrounding countryside. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Towers of Time**, 402-755-2284, exhibit features relief carvings of the flora and fauna of three time periods in northeast Nebraska. A waterfall, pond, fountain and walking path complement the towers. Check it out after dark when the entire exhibit is beautifully lit.

45 minutes (29 miles) west on Highway 12 to Wynot.

Located 2 miles east of Wynot off Highway 12, [St. James Marketplace](#), 89039 570 Ave., 402-357-3330, is located in a historical schoolhouse. Today it's home to a wonderful farmer's market, craft fair and tearoom that is ideal for an afternoon snack. A variety of historical exhibits also are on display. This unique attraction is a must-see for your group tour. If your tour comes through in late September, plan to stay for the Heritage Fest. Inquire from the ladies at the marketplace about taking a side trip on **Rattlesnake Road**—one of the most breathtaking backcountry roads in the region. The **Wiseman Monument** along the road recounts a chilling pioneer murder story. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (marketplace), 1 hour (Rattlesnake Road). Note: The monument and scenic drive are via dirt roads, and no services are available.

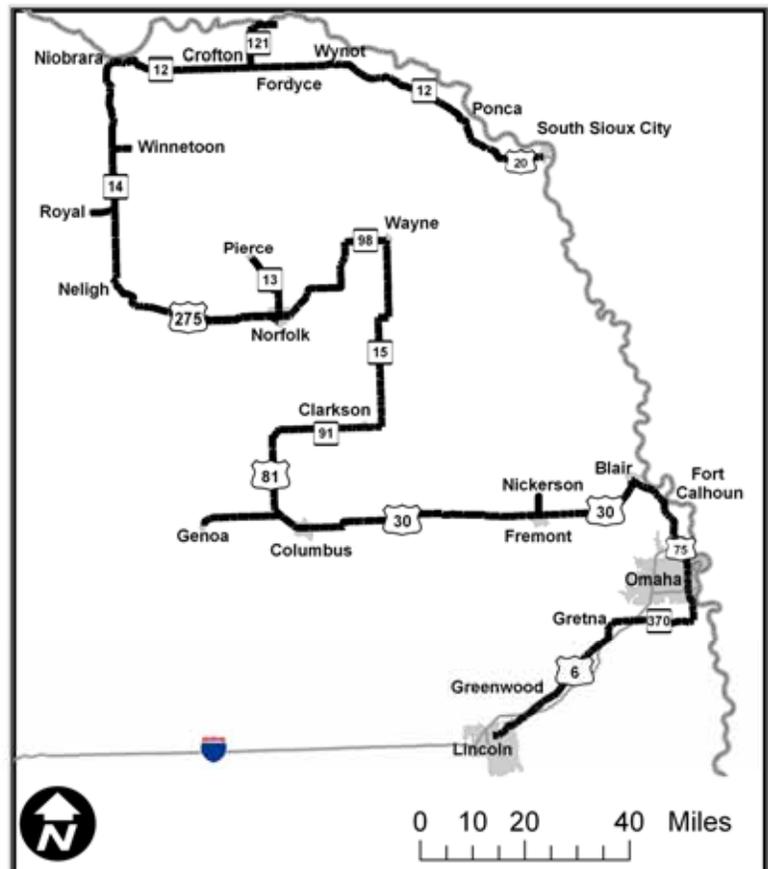
10 minutes (6 miles) west on Highway 12 to Bow Valley.

Grape growing and wine production facilities are sprouting up all over Nebraska. [Nissen Brothers Vineyards](#), 88560 566 Ave., 402-254-3426, near Bow Valley is home to one of the state's newest vineyards. Spend time with the owners learning about the process of growing grapes for wine. Directions: 3 miles north of Hartington on Highway 57 and 886 Road, then 2½ miles east to 566 Ave., then south ½ mile.

30 minutes (13 miles) west on Highway 12 to Fordyce.

[Prairie Blossom Trails](#), 55582 887 Road, 402-357-3702, near Fordyce is one of the few places in the country that graze Scottish Highland cattle. On your tour of the farm, you can get a firsthand view of these unique looking creatures, walk trails made by pioneer wagons of the past, or simply take in the breathtaking pasture landscape or sunset. Make sure you pick up some of the Scottish Highland beef. It's some of the best beef you'll ever eat! Group tours are offered between May 1 and October 31. Directions: (A) 3 miles south of Highways 81 and 12 junction, turn east on 887 Road, ¾ of a mile and south 1/3 of a mile; (B) 5 miles north to 887 Road from Pleasant Valley Store at Highways 81 and 84 junction.

Spend some time with certified organic farmers at [Marv and Ed's Farm](#), 55996 Highway 12, 402-357-2150 near Fordyce. You won't find any additives or preservatives here! These lifelong farmers raise a



variety of organic vegetables and grains, such as corn, oats with sweet clover, alfalfa, turnips, soybeans and hay. You also can spend some time watching the many critters they raise—dairy cows and calves, herds of cattle, hens, turkeys, geese, hogs, Angora goats, and Guinea fowl. Tours are provided from May 1 to October 1. Directions: (A) 4 miles east and south of intersection of Highways 81 and 12; (B) north of Hartington, 3 miles west and south from intersection of Highways 12 and 57.

25 minutes (13 miles) west on Highway 12, north on Highway 81 to South Yankton.

The [Corps of Discovery Welcome Center](#), 402-667-6557, is located at the intersection of two historic transportation routes—the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Pan-American Highway (Highway 81). The visitor center boasts a gorgeous view of the Missouri River and the surrounding countryside from the scenic overlook. Other features of the center include interpretive panels that retell the story of Lewis and Clark, an art gallery and a gift shop full of Nebraska-made products. With advance scheduling, tours from the visitor center to area attractions can be arranged. Suggested tour time: 45-60 minutes.

15 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 121 to Crofton.

The historic [Argo Hotel](#), 211 W. Kansas St., 402-388-2400, in Crofton is a great place for your group to spend an afternoon relaxing on the spacious front porch. This beautiful hotel has been restored into a bed and breakfast, while the restaurant is able to accommodate group tours for full meals or afternoon teas. Spend time downstairs singing along with the player piano in the restored speakeasy tavern. And don't forget to ask your host about the Argo Hotel ghost! Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Make plans to spend time at the [Jolene Steffen Studio](#), 55472 888th Road, 402-357-3740, near the hamlet of Constance, east of Crofton. Her art reflects the things that mean the most to her—wide-open sky and rolling hills, beautiful wildflowers and garden flowers, children, animals, creeks and pastoral northeast Nebraska scenes. The vividness and quality of Jolene's works truly will amaze you! Plus, they are affordable to practically everyone, with most prices ranging from \$30 to more than \$500 for the larger pieces.

One of Nebraska's largest lakes, **Lewis and Clark Lake**, is located in the **Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area**, 402-388-4169, 7 miles north of Crofton on Highway 121. This is a prime area for bird watching, especially for bald eagles. Winter is a great time to visit when frigid temperatures freeze the lake and provide great opportunities for ice fishing, skating, and snowmobiling. The Corps of Engineers operates a power generation plant at **Gavins Point Dam**, 402-667-7873, and the [Lewis and Clark Visitor Center](#), 10 miles north on Highway 12, 402-667-2546. Tours of the power plant are given Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Listed on the Nebraska Survey of Historic Places, [Bow View Farm](#), 88664 550 Ave., 402-388-4798, offers your tour a glimpse into the rural way of life. A historical walking tour of the farm's buildings and a low impact birding hike along Bluebird Trail are two activities awaiting your group tour. An on-farm store is located in a historic 1916 barn where you can purchase home-raised black oil sunflower birdseed, wild birdseed, birdfeeders, postcards, and other items. 1 mile west of Crofton on Highway 12 and 3¼ miles south on 550 Ave.

20 minutes (15 miles) west on Highway 12 to Ohiya Casino.

See if Lady Luck is smiling on you at the **Ohiya Casino**, 52946 Highway 12, 402-857-3860, on the Santee Reservation. Located a few miles east of Niobrara, this 12,000-square-foot casino is owned and operated by the Santee Tribe. You also can purchase authentic American Indian jewelry, blankets and other crafts. Adjacent to the casino is the **Ohiya Casino Café**, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A weekend buffet and Sunday brunch are offered during the spring, summer and fall months. Get out your bucks and start having fun! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. As you travel across the reservation, you will go through the **Nebraska Everglades** where the highway is lined on both sides by marshes and water.

10 minutes (5 miles) west on Highway 12 to Niobrara.

Located at the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri rivers, Niobrara had to be moved twice to higher ground due to flooding. Luckily your group tour doesn't have to worry about high water as they explore what Niobrara has to offer. The **Kreycik Riverview Elk Ranch**, 88971 517 Ave., 402-857-3850, southwest of Niobrara State Park, is a fun place to go to encounter wildlife close up. Load your group into a covered wagon for an enjoyable ride around the picturesque ranch to see majestic elk and bison herds. You'll never forget the experience of hand feeding buffalo as they clamor to the wagon for corn! It's truly an experience! The gift shop sells a variety of buffalo-related products, clothing and food, such as tasty buffalo jerky (if you like it a little spicy, try the jalapeño flavor). Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Niobrara State Park, 89261 522 Ave., 402-857-3373, offers your group tour a wide variety of outdoor experiences, such as picnicking, swimming, boating, hiking on 14 miles of trails, fishing, horseback trail riding and wildlife watching. The **J. Alan Cramer Interpretive Center**, 402-857-3373, offers an exceptional view of the park and highlights the history and people of the area. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. If you visit between Memorial and Labor days, make sure to attend the buffalo cookout. With prior arrangements, your tour can experience the history and natural wonders of the Missouri River on the **Upper Missouri River Float Trip**, which follows the same path as Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.

The **Ponca Earthlodge** and **Ponca Tribal Museum**, 2543 Park Ave., 402-857-3519, display the rich culture and heritage of the Ponca Tribe and their influence on this region of Nebraska. The museum displays artifacts from Ponca history, American Indian artwork, tribal archive photographs and a gift shop that specializes in American Indian artwork. Located in the Powwow area, the **Ponca Native Garden** contains many varieties of plants that were used by the ancestral Ponca, such as maize, squash, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers, strawberries, sage and watermelon. An outer area of the garden includes plants that were beneficial to the Ponca Tribe and wildlife, such as buffalo berries, sweet potatoes, ground cherries and wild plums. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (22 miles) south on Highway 14, east on Highway 59 to Winnetoon.

With only 59 residents, Winnetoon, 402-847-3368, is a sleepy Nebraska town, but a great stop for any group tour! Your first stop should be the post office/general store/antique

store, then stroll along the boardwalk to explore the many other buildings of this unique cowboy town. If you time it right, you might catch the “**Cowboy Chainsaw Carver**” at work as he uses his chain saw to turn an ordinary block of wood into a work of art. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

35 minutes (21 miles) west on Highway 59, south on Highway 14, west on Highway 20 to Royal.

Scientists claim that [Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park](#), 402-893-2000, near Royal is one of the richest fossil finds of its kind in the northern hemisphere. Millions of years ago, a giant volcano in Idaho spewed volcanic ash into the area for several months, suffocating thousands of camels, horses and other prehistoric mammals. The ash encased the animals intact, and today visitors can go to the “Rhino Barn” to watch staff diligently uncover whole skeletons. There also is a visitor center/gift shop at the facility. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Go wild at [Zoo Nebraska](#), 4030 Highway 20, 402-893-2002, where you can view chimpanzees, monkeys, tigers, parrots, birds of prey, reptiles, wolves and much more. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

35 minutes (26 miles) east on Highway 20, south on Highway 14 to Neligh.

Home to one of the few remaining water-powered mills in the state, [Neligh Mills State Historical Site](#), 402-887-4303, takes groups back to a time when the mill was the center of commerce for many towns. The mill’s colorful history is displayed throughout the facility. The Neligh Chamber of Commerce, 202 W. 4th St., 402-887-4195, can recommend several local spots for lunch. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Pierson Wildlife Museum Learning Center](#), 205 E. Fifth St., 402-887-4212, features one of the largest private wild game collections in the U.S., all in one exhibit that includes 100 full mounts and 50 head mounts from around the world. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

50 minutes (35 miles) east on Highway 275 to Norfolk.

Norfolk offers a number of exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Freedom Park, Columbus

Norfolk

Norfolk, northeast Nebraska's largest city, offers a fine selection of overnight and dining facilities that cater to the group tour market. While in town be sure to visit the [Elkhorn Valley Historical Museum](#), 515 Queen City Blvd., 402-371-3886. Here you'll see a great collection of historic artifacts relating to the area, including one of the few remaining antique square turn tractors that can make a full square turn so as not to waste field space to turn around. Memorabilia on Norfolk's two famous sons—*Tonight Show* host Johnny Carson and Thural Ravenscroft, the voice of Kellogg's™ "Tony the Tiger" are on display.

A must see is the **Johnny Carson Exhibit**. Norfolk was the boyhood home of Johnny Carson from age eight through high school. Mr. Carson donated a large collection of personal items to the museum, including videotapes, early boyhood photos and vintage photos of his stage and radio days, as well as many personal items. A display of Carson's special awards—six Emmy Awards, Kennedy Center Honors Medallion, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Television Hall of Fame, and many more are on display. A unique "Best Of" home theater showing favorite *Tonight Show* episodes and monologues chosen by Johnny himself for the museum are part of this impressive collection. A full-sized, life-like Carson mannequin delivers the monologues when visitors step close enough to the exhibit. In the immortal words of Ed McMahon, "Heeeeeeeere's Johnny!"

Also be sure to check out the **Willetta Lueschen Bird Library** at the museum. With prior arrangements, museum staff can take your group to the nearby cave for a "cool" break. Located close to the museum is the new [Norfolk Arts Center](#), 305 N. 5th St., 402-371-7199. This beautiful, new facility features an ever-changing traveling exhibit gallery, as well as showcases the works of local and regional artists. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 2 hours.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highways 81 and 13 to Pierce.

Wine making in Nebraska? You betcha! Located northeast of Pierce is Nebraska's first vineyard—[Cuthills Vineyards](#), 54663 853 Road, 402-329-4181. Walking tours of the vineyards are available, and depending on what time of year your group stops, you may be able to witness the winemaking progress. Fun things to do include sampling wines, relaxing on the spacious patio overlooking the vineyards, and eating a delicious catered meal in the historic barn. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

From Norfolk: 1 hour, 20 minutes (49 miles) east on Highway 35 to Wayne.

Home of the popular Wayne Chicken Show each July, Wayne also boasts a historic downtown district. The **Wayne State College Arboretum**, 1111 Main St., 402-375-7384, has an herb garden, nature center, trails and hundreds of varieties of plant life. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Garden Perennials**, 402-375-3615, is three acres of gardens and thousands of perennial flowers. Group tours of both facilities are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

90 minutes (57 miles) south on Highway 15, west on Highway 91 to Clarkson.

Clarkson enjoys two major claims to fame—its rich Czech heritage and the renowned [Bluebird Nursery](#), 519 Cherry St., 402-892-3457. The Clarkson Chamber of Commerce can arrange a Czech breakfast for your group (make sure you eat a kolach, a delicious Czech pastry) and arrange a tour of the outstanding nursery. The Bluebird Nursery is one of the largest in the Midwest, and they ship seeds and plants around the globe. As you tour this quaint community, you'll notice the influence that the nursery has had on it. Clarkson is one of Nebraska's more colorful communities and boasts some of the best-kept gardens and green spaces in the state. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour, 20 minutes (50 miles) west on Highway 91, south on Highway 81, west on Highway 22 to Genoa.

The [Genoa Indian School Museum](#), 209 E. Webster Ave., 402-993-6636, is the site of the former Indian Industrial School where American Indian youth were housed and educated for assimilation into white society. The students who attended the school were from 10 states and more than 20 tribes. Tours of the Manual Training Building are available throughout the year by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The [Genoa Historical Museum](#), 402 Willard Ave., 402-993-2330, boasts a nice collection of tribal and Mormon Trail exhibits. An original diary from Mormon Trail pioneer Henry Hudson is on exhibit. Original wagon ruts of the Mormon Trail are visible south of town. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

40 minutes (30 miles) east on Highway 22, south on Highway 81 to Columbus.

Columbus offers a wide variety of tours to fit the tastes of any group, from history buffs to modern technology enthusiasts. A 1904 steam locomotive, Quicentenary Belltower, and the [Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial](#), 2001 A.J. Higgins Road, 402-564-2769, are a few reasons to tour Freedom Park. The center point of the park is a life-size replica of the Higgins landing craft that he designed and built to help win WWII. The replica is made of steel and set in sand as if it were beached. Its ramp is down to let visitors walk inside, while sand samples collected from invasion beaches across the globe are mixed

with the sand that surrounds the craft. Equally impressive is the bronze eagle with a seven-foot wingspan that sits atop a steel structure made from material from the 2001 World Trade Center disaster in New York City. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. The [Platte County Historical Society Museum](#), 2916 16th St., 402-564-4553, features an 1857 log cabin complete with period furnishings. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Columbus boasts truly one of the best restaurants in Nebraska, **Dusters and the Gottsburg Brew Pub**, 2804 13th St., 402-564-8338. Dining here will make you think you're in a much larger city. Even though the menu is full of delicious dishes, and you can't go wrong with anything you chose, try the Chicken Kiev. You won't regret it! Columbus is known as the most industrialized city per capita in Nebraska, and the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 764 33rd Ave., 402-564-2769, can arrange industrial tours for your group. The attractive **St. Michael's Catholic Church**, 309 3rd St., 402-428-2675, in nearby Tarnov is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1 hour, 10 minutes (49 miles) east on Highway 30 to Fremont.

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the **Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad**, 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-8321, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Some special events that happen on the train include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour (shopping and museum), 3 hours (train ride/dinner).

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch from which to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

15 minutes (9 miles) north on Highway 77 to Nickerson.

The [Apple Barn at Fontenelle Orchard](#), 402-727-5272, features fresh, tree-ripe fruit that you can pick yourself. Tours of the orchard are available upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Fremont offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 3



Historic Old Market District, Omaha

40 minutes (24 miles) east on Highway 30 to Blair.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view wildlife year-round along the Missouri River. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand** that sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

15 minutes (9 miles) south on Highway 75 to Fort Calhoun.

Enjoy the view along the **Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway** as you make your way to Fort Calhoun and [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fun-filled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. The National Signature Event for the 200th Anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took place at Fort Atkinson in 2004. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses **Too Far North**, 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are custom-made labels for all occasions. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (16 miles) south on Highway 75 to Omaha.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, the **largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as

catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-feet of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to the Missouri River frontier. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that different ethnic groups have had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children's garden, herb garden, spring flowering walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) west on Interstate 80 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

15 minutes (11 miles) on Highway 6 to Exit 426.

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

10 minutes (7 miles) west on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 6 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group

can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the "American Indian Gallery," "The First Nebraskans," "Nebraska Joins the Union," and "Building the State." Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer

kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get “lost” in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight at try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Lincoln offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Tour 18

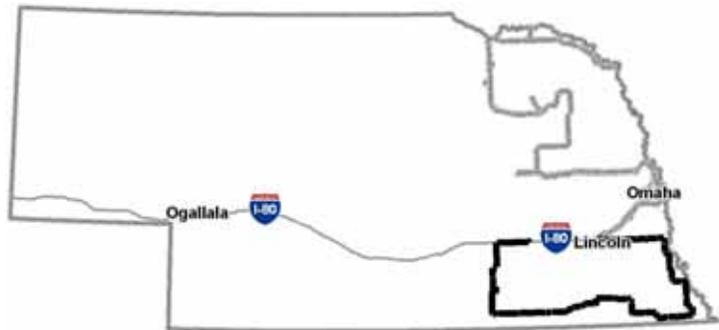
Northern Exposure

Optional Tour 1 of Southeastern Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of southeastern Nebraska to extend the *Northern Exposure* tour:



Whiskey Run Creek Winery, Brownville



45 minutes (25 miles) east on Highway 34, south on Highway 75 to Avoca.

Pumpkins, fall produce and decorations, a wooded walking trail, picnic grounds, antiques, and gifts await your group tour at an 1881 family farmstead. **Bloom Where You're Planted Pumpkin Patch & Barn Store**, 911 108th St., 402-267-4104, is a great escape back to the farm! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

45 minutes (25 miles) east on Highway 34, south on Highway 75 to Nebraska City.

Nebraska City boasts a variety of exciting attractions and activities, plenty of history, shopping opportunities and beautiful scenery—all in one charming community. Nebraska City's pride and joy is [Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum](#), 2600 2nd Ave., 402-873-7222. Home of J. Sterling and Carolyn Morton, the 52-room Victorian-style mansion is a memorable stop for any group visit. J. Sterling Morton was the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland and helped establish Arbor Day as a holiday. There are quiet walking trails, gardens and nearby orchards with an "Apple House" where travelers can enjoy a variety of apple treats and buy souvenirs. Make sure you tour the National Arbor Day Foundation's "Tree Adventure," which includes touch-screen exhibits, a 20-minute film that shows the significance of trees and other exciting information about the environment. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

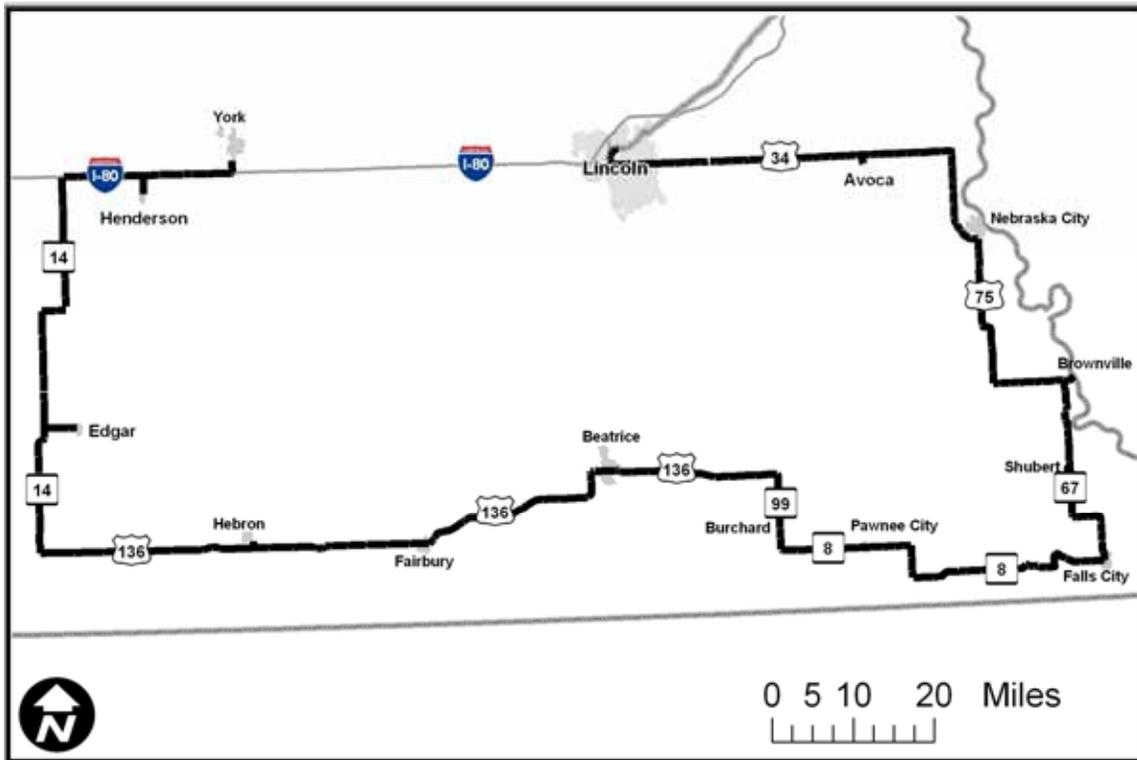
A fine example of Victorian architecture is the **Wildwood Center Historic House and The Barn Art Gallery**, 420 Steinhart Park Road, 402-873-6340. Built in 1869, Wildwood was home to Jasper Ware, an early banker in Nebraska City. All home furnishings are of the Victorian Era, and behind the house is a gallery that displays artwork of many Nebraska artisans. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Another major Nebraska City attraction is [Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village](#), 2012 4th Corso, 402- 873-3115. Part of the Underground Railroad for slaves, this restored site

has many historical artifacts on display, as well as a restored village. You also can walk through the underground cave on the grounds. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Downtown Nebraska City is a treasure trove of antique and specialty retail stores where you can find clothing for everyone, crafts and works of art, Christmas decorations, books and specialty foods. On weekends a trolley is available to take your group around town. With its abundance of changing leaves and apple harvests, fall is one of the most beautiful seasons to visit Nebraska City. For overnight or meal service, look no further than the [Lied Conference Center and Arbor Day Farms](#), 2700 Sylvan Road, 402-873-8733. This environment-friendly facility offers state-of-the-art meeting rooms, spacious overnight rooms and excellent meals. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Make sure to spend some time sipping wine at one of Nebraska’s newest wineries—[Arbor Trails Winery](#), 6450 J Road, 402-873-8888. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Experience firsthand the journey of Lewis and Clark at the [Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#), 100 Valmont Dr., 402-874-9900, which sits atop an 80-acre site overlooking the Missouri River. The center focuses on the recorded scientific discoveries of plants and animals made during the tour. Enjoy hands-on exploration activities, interactive exhibits, a life-size replica of the keelboat used by Lewis and Clark, and a 45-foot American Indian Earth Lodge. Suggested tour time: 2-3 hours. The **River Country Nature Center**, 114 S. 6th St., 402-873-3000, is open by appointment only and houses more than 400 preserved specimens of native Nebraska birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles in replicas of their natural habitats. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.



Free your mind and explore the artistic side of Nebraska City at the [Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts](#), 801 3rd Corso, 402-874-9600. The center is an art retreat for visual artists, writers, art scholars, choreographers and artists from across the nation. A main gallery and exhibition rooms display works of art for public viewing and are changed approximately every two months. Art classes held at the center are offered throughout the year and open to the public. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Apples, peaches, cherries, plums, grapes, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, squash, peppers, and more...oh my! Load up on delicious fresh fruits and vegetables at [Kimmel Orchard](#), 6045 G Road, 402-873-5293. A new shuttle path was developed to teach your group tour about the history and operation of the orchard. Benches, scenic resting spots, and picnic areas dot the hiking trail to let your tour enjoy spring's blossoms or the beautiful autumn colors. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (34 miles) south on Highway 75, east on Highway 136 (Heritage Highway Scenic Byway) to Brownville.

At one time the bustling community of Brownville was to serve as Nebraska's "Gateway City," but when the railroad decided to locate in Omaha, Brownville's future looked grim. Fortunately the spunky locals refused to let their community die, and today's Brownville has become a genuine tourism destination. Your group can cruise down the Missouri River on the [Spirit of Brownville](#), 402-825-4211, take in a play or concert at the **Brownville Village Theatre**, 402-825-4121, or **Brownville Concert Hall**, 402-825-3331, shop in the quaint downtown, or sip wine at sunset on the deck of [Whiskey Run Creek Winery](#), 702 Main St., 402-825-4601. The **Captain Bailey House**, **Carson House** and **Furnas House**, 402-825-6001, are some of the many restored historic homes that are open to the public.

The **Meriwether Lewis Museum of Missouri River History**, 402-825-3341, a decommissioned U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredge boat, now houses a museum dedicated to the Missouri River. The **Governor Furnas Connector Trail** connects the **Governor Furnas Arboretum**, 402-825-6637, to the Missouri River. The trail boasts more than 200 types of trees, shrubs and flowers for you to enjoy. One of the town's newest tourist endeavors is the [Brownville Lyceum](#), 225 Main St., 402-825-4321, which opened April 2005. This haven for booklovers has many used books to purchase, a reading room in which to relax and read, and a small café that serves tasty dishes. Suggested tour time in town: 2-3 hours.

30 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 67 to Indian Cave State Park.

[Indian Cave State Park](#), 402-883-2575, includes more than 3,000 acres along the Missouri River. This pristine area is home to a variety of activities, such as camping, hiking, backpacking, picnicking, and nature and wilderness activities. There are 20 miles of hiking trails in the park. The fall months are particularly spectacular, and history buffs will enjoy the restored schoolhouse and general store from the old river town of St. Derooin. During the summer months, old-time crafts are demonstrated to visitors. You can reserve a group picnic shelter if needed. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

42 minutes (23 miles) south on Highways 67 and 73 to Falls City.

Two of Falls City's best attractions are the **Bell-Jenne House**, 402-245-3481, and the **Richardson County Historical Museum**, 402-245-3481. The Bell-Jenne House is an impressive two-story brick Italianate-style house built in 1881 and features eight period piece rooms to give your group tour a glimpse into life in the late 19th century. The Richardson County Historical Museum highlights the history and people of Falls City and the region. With advance planning, tours of both facilities can be scheduled. Suggested tour time of each attraction: 1 hour.

1 hour (41 miles) west on Highway 8 to Pawnee City.

Home of film stars Irish McCalla and Harold Lloyd, Pawnee City also is home to a very impressive historical museum complex. The [Pawnee County Historical Museum](#), 402-852-3131, is comprised of 16 historic buildings that display antique furnishings, tools, vintage vehicles, rare photos, books, unique handcraft items and a variety of other artifacts. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. One of the city's newest and most unique attractions is the **Toy Pedal Clinic**, 402-852-2655, a museum dedicated to this fun toy of yesteryear. The museum displays more than 450 toy pedal cars, tractors, airplanes and a host of other small toys. Other collections at the museum include a John Deere room, kiddie car collection, kerosene lamps, quilts, bicycles, salt and pepper shakers and doll collection. Your tour also can observe museum staff while they restore old pedal cars. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Before leaving Pawnee City, stop by **Hallie's Restaurant and Lounge**, 604 9th St., 402-852-2445, for a yummy slice of homemade pie.

Enjoy the only winery and microbrewery in Nebraska! The [Schilling Bridge Winery and Microbrewery](#), 62193 710th Rd., 402-852-2400, offers Nebraska produced wines and handcrafted microbrews surrounded by more than eight acres of grapevines. The centerpiece of the landscape is an 1890 Limestone Rock Island Railroad bridge. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Also check out the **restored Harold Lloyd home**, 402-852-3131, in Burchard, 12 miles west of Pawnee City. The front room of the house contains memorabilia from Lloyd's life and acting career. Upon request, you can set up time for your group to watch a Harold Lloyd movie in his former home. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

1 hour (42 miles) west on Highway 8, north on Highway 99, west on Highways 4 and 136 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska's most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—[Homestead National Monument of America](#), 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country's first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art

research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city's excellent selection of restaurants and fine community theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

45 minutes (28 miles) west on Highway 136 to Fairbury.

Fairbury boasts more original brick-lined streets than any other community in Nebraska, and its downtown district offers many excellent shopping and dining opportunities, such as historic Fairbury Square. [Stagecoach Mall](#), 510 E. St., 402-729-4034, boasts a number of unique crafts and antiques. Be sure to stop and see the block-long Campbell Brothers Circus Mural that was painted on the side of Globe Rexall Drugstore. A short drive east of town is **Rock Creek Station State Historical Park**, 402-729-5777, which offers one of the best sites to see original wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail. The area served as a resting place for pioneers, and entrepreneurs set up trading posts there to provide goods for thousands of pioneers trekking west. In its heyday, Rock Creek also was a busy Pony Express station. In addition to its historical significance along the Oregon Trail and Pony Express, Rock Creek Station may be best known as the place where "Wild" Bill Hickok gained notoriety for killing his first victims. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (Fairbury), 1 hour (Rock Creek).

Make sure to spend some time at the [New Earth Clay Pottery and Art Gallery](#), 515 4th St., 402-729-3034, in downtown Fairbury. This pottery business has been around for more than 25 years, and features more than 25 Nebraska artists' artwork, including pottery, ceramics, glass, sculpture, paintings, photographs and jewelry. Pottery demonstrations and tours are available upon request.

Steele City Historical District, 402-729-5131, east of Rock Creek Station on Highway 112, features four old restored buildings—a 1900 stone blacksmith's shop, 1902 stone livery stable, 1880s stone Baptist church, and 1890 brick bank museum. The third Sunday in September, the tiny village hosts thousands of bargain hunters and history buffs who come for the annual flea market and antique farm machinery show.

40 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 136 to Hebron.

Travel down the **Heritage Highway Scenic Byway** (Highway 136) to Hebron, home of the **World's Largest Porch Swing**, 402-768-7156. This one-of-a-kind, unique attraction is a great group photo opportunity! There are wonderful shops in town and the Hebron Chamber of Commerce can arrange a refreshment break for the group. Suggested tour time: 30-45 minutes.

1 hour (50 miles) north on Highway 81 to York.

The big balloon tells you that you are nearing York. This community of just over 8,000 offers an outstanding array of restaurants and fast-food facilities. But it is best known for **Chances ‘R Restaurant and Lounge**, 124 W. 5th St., 402-362-7755, in downtown York. The “R,” as it is known locally, hosts more group tours than any other private restaurant in Nebraska—and for good reasons—huge portions at reasonable rates and good food made from scratch. If you happen to be in York on a Sunday morning, the “R” offers an outstanding Sunday brunch—a treat worth fasting for.

While in York, your group will be amazed by **Lee’s Legendary Marbles and Collectables**, 3120 S. Lincoln Ave., 402-362-0103. More than a half-million marbles are on display, including some very rare examples. Two other very nice York attractions are the **Anna Beemis Historical Museum**, 211 E 7th St., 402-363-2630, which features historic artifacts and the [Yorkshire Playhouse](#), 402-362-7060, which offers a taste of Broadway in small town Nebraska. Four productions are scheduled throughout the year, as well as special seasonal events and children’s theater productions. The theater is handicap accessible and group rates are available for performances.

20 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 34, south on Highway S93A to Henderson.

Marvel at beautiful life-size bronze sculptures and vibrant, colorful paintings that capture the true spirit of the west at [Friesen Gallery](#), 932 North Main St., 402-723-4977. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (17 miles) north on S93A, west on Highway 34 to Aurora.

Aurora is a charming community with two outstanding attractions: The [Plainsman Museum](#), 210 16th St., 402-694-6531, and the [Edgerton Explorit Center](#), 208 16th St., 402-694-4032. The Plainsman Museum offers Nebraska history under one roof. A sod house, Pony Express station, car collection and an outstanding doll collection are featured in the facility. Ag-related exhibits and equipment also are on display. Next door, the Edgerton Explorit Center is dedicated to Aurora native Harold “Doc” Edgerton—the inventor of the strobe light. The Explorit Center features examples of Edgerton’s work, as well as many hands-on science exhibits. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 1½ hour.

York offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Tour 19

Northern Exposure

Optional Tour 2 of Southeastern Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of southeast Nebraska to extend the *Northern Exposure* tour:



Wilbur Czech Festival, Wilbur



40 minutes (27 miles) south on Highway 77, west on Highway 33 to Crete.

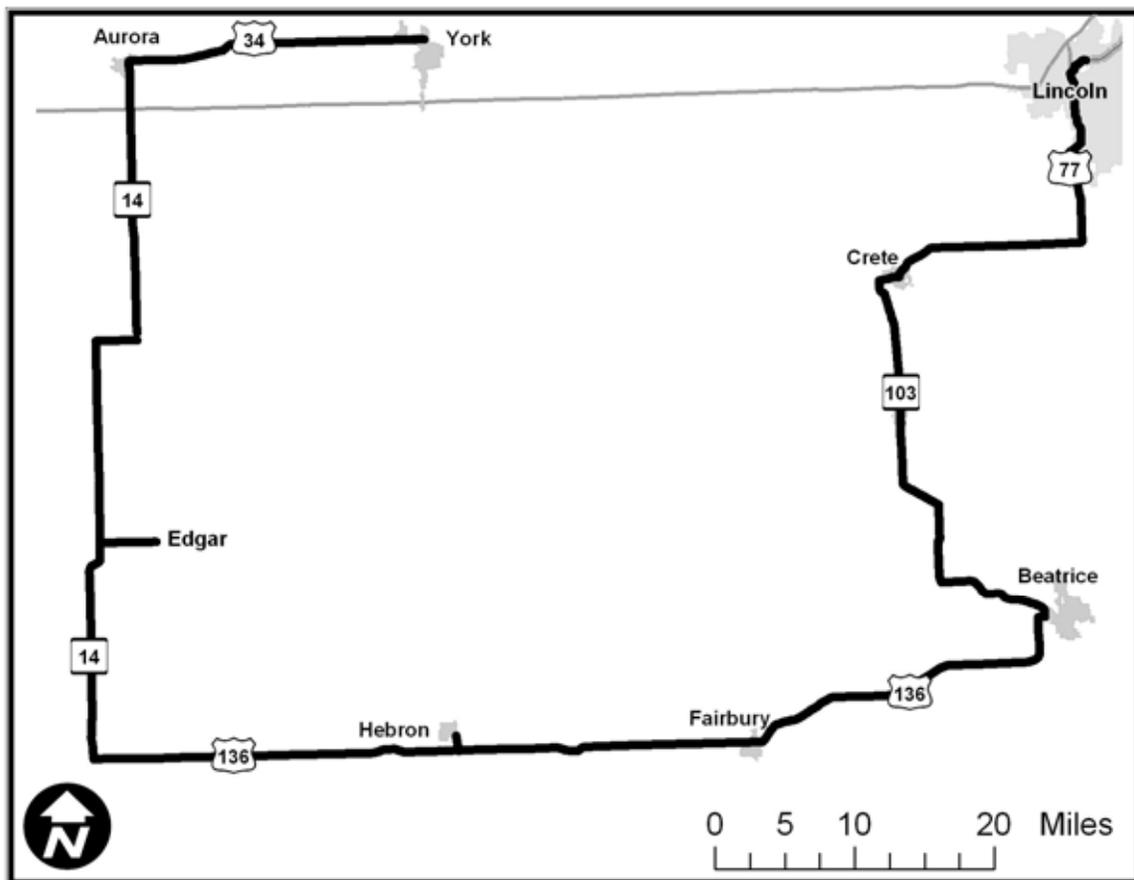
Since 2001, [Blue Valley Vineyard](#), SW 142nd St. and Stagecoach Road, 402-826-5700, in Crete has offered quality, handcrafted wines, a wine tasting room and gift shop that sell a variety of wine accessories. In the spring, summer and autumn your tour may stroll the grounds and enjoy wine on the patios and decks, while the warmth and hospitality of the tasting room awaits you in the winter. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

25 minutes (11 miles) south on Highway 103 to Wilber.

Everyone in Wilber is Czech—at least during the first weekend of August when the town hosts thousands for the Annual Wilber Czech Festival. The U.S. Congress proclaimed Wilber the National Czech Capitol and folks in Wilber take that seriously. However, you can get a sense of Czech heritage anytime you come to town. The **Wilber Czech Museum**, 102 W 3rd St., 402-821-2183, contains detailed information on the heritage of those who founded Wilber and on their homeland of Czechoslovakia. There is usually a quilting bee going on at the museum, and the ladies are always delighted to chat with you and show you around. Located next door to the museum is the **Wilber Bakery**, 104 W 3rd St., 402-821-2995, where your group must sample a kolach, also known as “Czech Danish.” Around the corner is the beautifully restored **Hotel Wilber**, 203 S. Wilson St., 402-821-2020, a wonderful bed and breakfast. Your group can tour the facility and grab a bite to eat. *Vitame Vas!* With advance notice, costumed guides are available to escort your group along walking tours of Wilber. These tours include a meal. Suggested tour time in town: 1½ hour.

45 minutes (26 miles) south on Highway 103, east on Highway 4 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska's most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—[Homestead National Monument of America](#), 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country's first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.



The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city's excellent selection of restaurants and fine community theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon

request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

45 minutes (28 miles) west on Highway 136 (Heritage Highway Scenic Byway) to Fairbury.

Fairbury boasts more original brick-lined streets than any other community in Nebraska, and its downtown district offers many excellent shopping and dining opportunities, such as historic Fairbury Square. [Stagecoach Mall](#), 510 E. St., 402-729-4034, boasts a number of unique crafts and antiques. Be sure to stop and see the block-long Campbell Brothers Circus Mural that was painted on the side of Globe Rexall Drugstore. A short drive east of town is **Rock Creek Station State Historical Park**, 402-729-5777, which offers one of the best sites to see original wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail. The area served as a resting place for pioneers, and entrepreneurs set up trading posts there to provide goods for thousands of pioneers trekking west. In its heyday, Rock Creek also was a busy Pony Express station. In addition to its historical significance along the Oregon Trail and Pony Express, Rock Creek Station may be best known as the place where “Wild” Bill Hickok gained notoriety for killing his first victims. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (Fairbury), 1 hour (Rock Creek).

Make sure to spend some time at the [New Earth Clay Pottery and Art Gallery](#), 515 4th St., 402-729-3034, in downtown Fairbury. This pottery business has been around for more than 25 years, and features more than 25 Nebraska artists’ artwork, including pottery, ceramics, glass, sculpture, paintings, photographs and jewelry. Pottery demonstrations and tours are available upon request.

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40 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 136 to Hebron.

Travel down the **Heritage Highway Scenic Byway** (Highway 136) to Hebron, home of the **World’s Largest Porch Swing**, 402-768-7156. This one-of-a-kind, unique attraction is a great group photo opportunity! There are wonderful shops in town and the Hebron Chamber of Commerce can arrange a refreshment break for the group. Suggested tour time: 30-45 minutes.

1 hour (36 miles) north on Highway 81, west on Highway 4, north on Highway 14, east on S18B to Edgar.

Good scents and good times at the [Sugar Shack Country Candle Company](#), 223 N. C St., 402-224-3211. Spend time browsing for that perfect scent to warm your heart, home or office. However, candles are not all that Sugar Shack specializes in; they also carry a wide assortment of candle accessories, enamelware, crockery, homemade fudge, soaps and coffees. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1½ hour (55 miles) west on Highway S18B, north on Highway 14, east on Highway 74, north on Highway 81 to York.

The big balloon tells you that you are nearing York. This community of just over 8,000 offers an outstanding array of restaurants and fast-food facilities. But it is best known for **Chances ‘R Restaurant and Lounge**, 124 W. 5th St., 402-362-7755, in downtown York. The “R,” as it is known locally, hosts more group tours than any other private restaurant in Nebraska—and for good reasons—huge portions at reasonable rates and good food made from scratch. If you happen to be in York on a Sunday morning, the “R” offers an outstanding Sunday brunch—a treat worth fasting for.

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York offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Tour 20

Northern Exposure

Optional Tour 3 of Southeastern Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of southeast Nebraska to extend the *Northern Exposure* tour:



Renaissance Festival, James Arthur Vineyards, Raymond



45 minutes (30 miles) east on Highway to Avoca.

Pumpkins, fall produce and decorations, a wooded walking trail, picnic grounds, antiques, and gifts await your group tour at an 1881 family farmstead. **Bloom Where You're Planted Pumpkin Patch & Barn Store**, 911 108th St., 402-267-4104, is a great escape back to the farm! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

45 minutes (25 minutes) east on Highway 34, south on Highway 75 to Nebraska City.

Nebraska City boasts a variety of exciting attractions and activities, plenty of history, shopping opportunities and beautiful scenery—all in one charming community. Nebraska City's pride and joy is [Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum](#), 2600 2nd Ave., 402-873-7222. Home of J. Sterling and Carolyn Morton, the 52-room Victorian-style mansion is a memorable stop for any group visit. J. Sterling Morton was the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland and helped establish Arbor Day as a holiday. There are quiet walking trails, gardens and nearby orchards with an "Apple House" where travelers can enjoy a variety of apple treats and buy souvenirs. Make sure you tour the National Arbor Day Foundation's "Tree Adventure," which includes touch-screen exhibits, a 20-minute film that shows the significance of trees and other exciting information about the environment. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

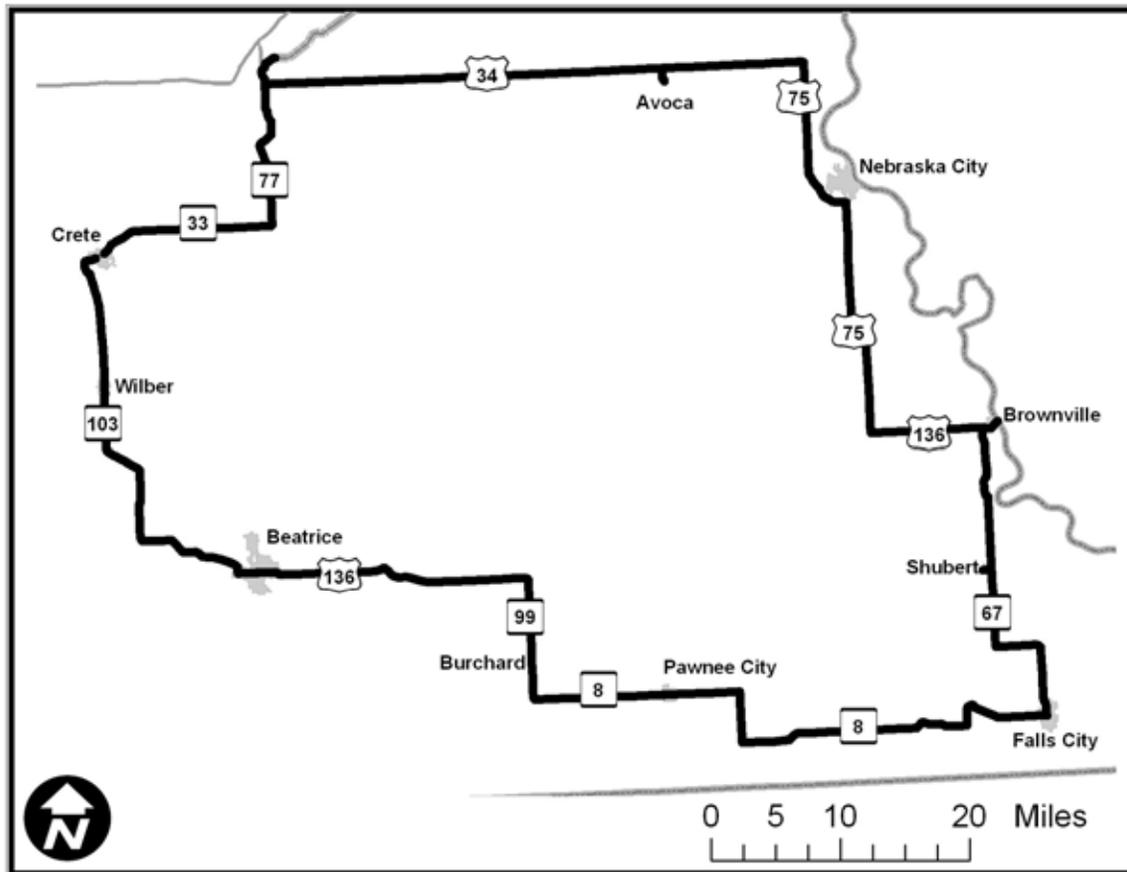
A fine example of Victorian architecture is the **Wildwood Center Historic House and The Barn Art Gallery**, 420 Steinhart Park Road, 402-873-6340. Built in 1869, Wildwood was home to Jasper Ware, an early banker in Nebraska City. All home furnishings are of the Victorian Era, and behind the house is a gallery that displays artwork of many Nebraska artisans. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Another major Nebraska City attraction is [Mayhew Cabin and Historical Village](#), 2012 4th Corso, 402- 873-3115. Part of the Underground Railroad for slaves, this restored site

has many historical artifacts on display, as well as a restored village. You also can walk through the underground cave on the grounds. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Downtown Nebraska City is a treasure trove of antique and specialty retail stores where you can find clothing for everyone, crafts and works of art, Christmas decorations, books and specialty foods. On weekends a trolley is available to take your group around town. With its abundance of changing leaves and apple harvests, fall is one of the most beautiful seasons to visit Nebraska City. For overnight or meal service, look no further than the [Lied Conference Center and Arbor Day Farms](#), 2700 Sylvan Road, 402-873-8733. This environment-friendly facility offers state-of-the-art meeting rooms, spacious overnight rooms and excellent meals. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Make sure to spend some time sipping wine at one of Nebraska’s newest wineries—[Arbor Trails Winery](#), 6450 J Road, 402-873-8888. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Experience firsthand the journey of Lewis and Clark at the [Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#), 100 Valmont Dr., 402-874-9900, which sits atop an 80-acre site overlooking the Missouri River. The center focuses on the recorded scientific discoveries of plants and animals made during the tour. Enjoy hands-on exploration activities, interactive exhibits, a life-size replica of the keelboat used by Lewis and Clark, and a 45-foot American Indian Earth Lodge. Suggested tour time: 2-3 hours. The **River Country Nature Center**, 114 S. 6th St., 402-873-3000, is open by appointment only and houses more than 400 preserved specimens of native Nebraska birds, mammals, fish,



amphibians and reptiles in replicas of their natural habitats. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Free your mind and explore the artistic side of Nebraska City at the [Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts](#), 801 3rd Corso, 402-874-9600. The center is an art retreat for visual artists, writers, art scholars, choreographers and artists from across the nation. A main gallery and exhibition rooms display works of art for public viewing and are changed approximately every two months. Art classes held at the center are offered throughout the year and open to the public. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Apples, peaches, cherries, plums, grapes, cauliflower, lettuce, onions, pumpkins, squash, peppers, and more...oh my! Load up on delicious fresh fruits and vegetables at [Kimmel Orchard](#), 6045 G Road, 402-873-5293. A new shuttle path was developed to teach your group tour about the history and operation of the orchard. Benches, scenic resting spots, and picnic areas dot the hiking trail to let your tour enjoy spring's blossoms or the beautiful autumn colors. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (34 miles) south on Highway 75, east on Highway 136 (Heritage Highway Scenic Byway) to Brownville.

At one time the bustling community of Brownville was to serve as Nebraska's "Gateway City," but when the railroad decided to locate in Omaha, Brownville's future looked grim. Fortunately the spunky locals refused to let their community die, and today's Brownville has become a genuine tourism destination. Your group can cruise down the Missouri River on the [Spirit of Brownville](#), 402-825-4211, take in a play or concert at the **Brownville Village Theatre**, 402-825-4121, or **Brownville Concert Hall**, 402-825-3331, shop in the quaint downtown, or sip wine at sunset on the deck of [Whiskey Run Creek Winery](#), 702 Main St., 402-825-4601. The **Captain Bailey House**, **Carson House** and **Furnas House**, 402-825-6001, are some of the many restored historic homes that are open to the public.

The **Meriwether Lewis Museum of Missouri River History**, 402-825-3341, a decommissioned U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredge boat, now houses a museum dedicated to the Missouri River. The **Governor Furnas Connector Trail** connects the **Governor Furnas Arboretum**, 402-825-6637, to the Missouri River. The trail boasts more than 200 types of trees, shrubs and flowers for you to enjoy. One of the town's newest tourist endeavors is the [Brownville Lyceum](#), 225 Main St., 402-825-4321, which opened April 2005. This haven for booklovers has many used books to purchase, a reading room in which to relax and read, and a small café that serves tasty dishes. Suggested tour time in town: 2-3 hours.

130 minutes (13 miles) south on Highway 67 to Indian Cave State Park.

[Indian Cave State Park](#), 402-883-2575, includes more than 3,000 acres along the Missouri River. This pristine area is home to a variety of activities, such as camping, hiking, backpacking, picnicking, and nature and wilderness activities. There are 20 miles of hiking trails in the park. The fall months are particularly spectacular, and history buffs will enjoy the restored schoolhouse and general store from the old river town of St.

Deroin. During the summer months, old-time crafts are demonstrated to visitors. You can reserve a group picnic shelter if needed. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (16 miles) south on Highways 67 and 73 to Falls City.

Two of Falls City's best attractions are the **Bell-Jenne House**, 402-245-3481, and the **Richardson County Historical Museum**, 402-245-3481. The Bell-Jenne House is an impressive two-story brick Italianate-style house built in 1881 and features eight period piece rooms to give your group tour a glimpse into life in the late 19th century. The Richardson County Historical Museum highlights the history and people of Falls City and the region. With advance planning, tours of both facilities can be scheduled. Suggested tour time of each attraction: 1 hour.

1 hour (41 miles) west on Highway 8 to Pawnee City.

Home of film stars Irish McCalla and Harold Lloyd, Pawnee City also is home to a very impressive historical museum complex. The **Pawnee County Historical Museum**, 402-852-3131, is comprised of 16 historic buildings that display antique furnishings, tools, vintage vehicles, rare photos, books, unique handcraft items and a variety of other artifacts. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. One of the city's newest and most unique attractions is the **Toy Pedal Clinic**, 402-852-2655, a museum dedicated to this fun toy of yesteryear. The museum displays more than 450 toy pedal cars, tractors, airplanes and a host of other small toys. Other collections at the museum include a John Deere room, kiddie car collection, kerosene lamps, quilts, bicycles, salt and pepper shakers and doll collection. Your tour also can observe museum staff while they restore old pedal cars. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Before leaving Pawnee City, stop by **Hallie's Restaurant and Lounge**, 604 9th St., 402-852-2445, for a yummy slice of homemade pie.

Enjoy the only winery and microbrewery in Nebraska! The **SchillingBridge Winery and Microbrewery**, 62193 710th Rd., 402-852-2400, offers Nebraska produced wines and handcrafted microbrews surrounded by more than eight acres of grapevines. The centerpiece of the landscape is an 1890 Limestone Rock Island Railroad bridge. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Also check out the **restored Harold Lloyd home**, 402-852-3131, in Burchard, 12 miles west of Pawnee City. The front room of the house contains memorabilia from Lloyd's life and acting career. Upon request, you can set up time for your group to watch a Harold Lloyd movie in his former home. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

1 hour (42 miles) west on Highway 8, north on Highway 99, west on Highways 4 and 136 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska's most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—**Homestead National Monument of America**, 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country's first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to

live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city's excellent selection of restaurants and fine community theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

45 minutes (26 miles) west on Highway 4, north on Highway 103 to Wilber.

Everyone in Wilber is Czech—at least during the first weekend of August when the town hosts thousands for the Annual Wilber Czech Festival. The U.S. Congress proclaimed Wilber the National Czech Capitol and folks in Wilber take that seriously. However, you can get a sense of Czech heritage anytime you come to town. The **Wilber Czech Museum**, 102 W 3rd St., 402-821-2183, contains detailed information on the heritage of those who founded Wilber and on their homeland of Czechoslovakia. There is usually a quilting bee going on at the museum, and the ladies are always delighted to chat with you and show you around. Located next door to the museum is the **Wilber Bakery**, 104 W 3rd St., 402-821-2995, where your group must sample a kolach, also known as “Czech Danish.” Around the corner is the beautifully restored **Hotel Wilber**, 203 S. Wilson St., 402-821-2020, a wonderful bed and breakfast. Your group can tour the facility and grab a bite to eat. *Vitame Vas!* With advance notice, costumed guides are available to escort your group along walking tours of Wilber. These tours include a meal. Suggested tour time in town: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (11 miles) north on Highway 103 to Crete.

Since 2001, [Blue Valley Vineyard](#), SW 142nd St. and Stagecoach Road, 402-826-5700, in Crete has offered quality, handcrafted wines, a wine tasting room and gift shop that sell a variety of wine accessories. In the spring, summer and autumn your tour may stroll the grounds and enjoy wine on the patios and decks, while the warmth and hospitality of the tasting room awaits you in the winter. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (27 miles) east on Highway 33, north on Highway 77 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the

State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the "American Indian Gallery," "The First Nebraskans," "Nebraska Joins the Union," and "Building the State." Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud,

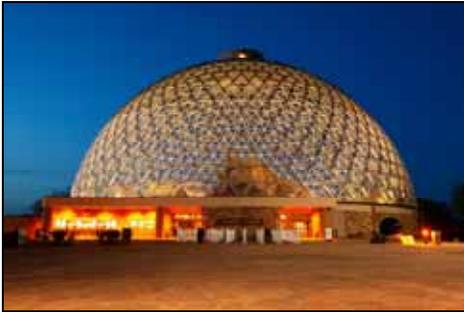
cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#)', 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get "lost" in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight at try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Tour 21

From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala



Henry Doorly Zoo, Omaha



Day 1

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, the **largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-feet of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition

spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to the Missouri River frontier. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that different ethnic groups have had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

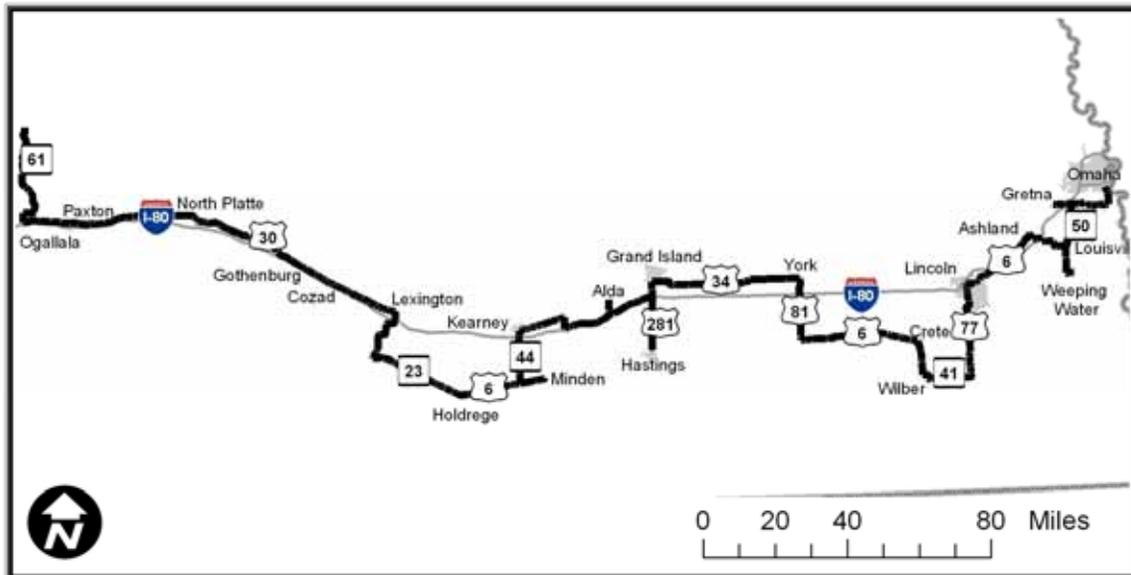
The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children's garden, herb garden, spring flowering walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-

553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.



West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian

lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (22 miles) west on Highway 370 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

20 minutes (10 miles) east on Highway 370, south on Highway 50 to Springfield.

In addition to a beautiful view of the surrounding countryside, the [Soaring Wings Winery](#), 17111 S. 138th St., 402-253-2479, offers wine tastings, tours and a gift shop. Experience an eclectic two-acre sculpture garden at the [Carl Weiss Sculpture Studio](#), 402-680-0642. The formal and informal gardens are dotted with sculptures from local and regional artists, including Carl Weiss' landscape concepts, bronze sculptures and artwork. Meander quietly along the walking paths at [Springcreek Gardens & Nursery](#), 12275 Main St., 402-253-8000, where a new plant or surprise is around every corner. The full service nursery and landscape design center offers more than 450 varieties of perennials, shrubs and landscape trees. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour.

Also in Springfield is the **Springfield Old Fashioned Soda Fountain**, 205 Main St., 402-253-2000, where you can enjoy an ice cream shake and remember old times. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

10 minutes (7 miles) south on Highway 50 to Louisville.

The [Louisville Art Gallery](#), 230 Main St., 402-234-2867, features more than 3,500-square-feet of exhibition space for sculptures, paintings, ceramics, pottery and fine art photography. **The Gallery Shop**, 127 Main St., 402-234-2669, is home to **Art Chicks**—where singing, dancing and frivolity are encouraged. You might find yourself wearing a feather boa and brandishing a magic wand as you explore the two shops and garden that make up the gallery. You can select a whimsical art piece and then indulge in a gourmet lunch. Call ahead for tours. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (12 miles) south on Highway 50 to Weeping Water.

A short drive from Omaha will bring you to the [Loft Community Theatre](#), 402-267-5400, near Weeping Water. Located in a converted 1924 hog barn, the “Born in a Barn” players have produced more than 300 plays since 1977. Four major productions run from May to October each year.

1 hour (32 miles) north on Highway 50, west on Highway 31 to Ashland (Exit 426).

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation’s freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska’s most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin’ cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group’s style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka’s five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

15 minutes (7 miles) west on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 6 to Lincoln.

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson.

The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the "American Indian Gallery," "The First Nebraskans," "Nebraska Joins the Union," and "Building the State." Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get "lost" in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE](#)

[at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight at try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Lincoln offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center, Gibbon

1 hour (40 miles) south on Highway 77, west on Highway 41 to Wilber.

Everyone in Wilber is Czech—at least during the first weekend of August when the town hosts thousands for the Annual Wilber Czech Festival. The U.S. Congress proclaimed Wilber the National Czech Capitol and folks in Wilber take that seriously. However, you can get a sense of Czech heritage anytime you come to town. The **Wilber Czech Museum**, 102 W 3rd St., 402-821-2183, contains detailed information on the heritage of those who founded Wilber and on their homeland of Czechoslovakia. There is usually a quilting bee going on at the museum, and the ladies are always delighted to chat with you and show you around. Located next door to the museum is the **Wilber Bakery**, 104 W 3rd St., 402-821-2995, where your group must sample a kolach, also known as “Czech Danish.” Around the corner is the beautifully restored **Hotel Wilber**, 203 S. Wilson St., 402-821-2020, a wonderful bed and breakfast. Your group can tour the facility and grab a bite to eat. *Vitame Vas!* With advance notice, costumed guides are available to escort your group along walking tours of Wilber. These tours include a meal. Suggested tour time in town: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (11 miles) north on Highway 103 to Crete.

Since 2001, [Blue Valley Vineyard](#), SW 142nd St. and Stagecoach Road, 402-826-5700, in Crete has offered quality, handcrafted wines, a wine tasting room and gift shop that sell a variety of wine accessories. In the spring, summer and autumn your tour may stroll the grounds and enjoy wine on the patios and decks, while the warmth and hospitality of the tasting room awaits you in the winter. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour (52 miles) west on Highways 33 and 6, north on Highway 81 to York.

The big balloon tells you that you are nearing York. This community of just over 8,000 offers an outstanding array of restaurants and fast-food facilities. But it is best known for **Chances ‘R Restaurant and Lounge**, 124 W. 5th St., 402-362-7755, in downtown York. The “R,” as it is known locally, hosts more group tours than any other private restaurant in Nebraska—and for good reasons—huge portions at reasonable rates and good food

made from scratch. If you happen to be in York on a Sunday morning, the “R” offers an outstanding Sunday brunch—a treat worth fasting for.

While in York, your group will be amazed by **Lee’s Legendary Marbles and Collectables**, 3120 S. Lincoln Ave., 402-362-0103. More than a half-million marbles are on display, including some very rare examples. Two other very nice York attractions are the **Anna Beemis Historical Museum**, 211 E 7th St., 402-363-2630, which features historic artifacts and the [Yorkshire Playhouse](#), 402-362-7060, which offers a taste of Broadway in small town Nebraska. Four productions are scheduled throughout the year, as well as special seasonal events and children’s theater productions. The theater is handicap accessible and group rates are available for performances.

20 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 34, south on Highway S93A to Henderson.

Marvel at beautiful life-size bronze sculptures and vibrant, colorful paintings that capture the true spirit of the west at [Friesen Gallery](#), 932 North Main St., 402-723-4977. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (17 miles) north on Highway S93A, west on Highway 34 to Aurora.

Aurora is a charming community with two outstanding attractions: The [Plainsman Museum](#), 210 16th St., 402-694-6531, and the [Edgerton Explorit Center](#), 208 16th St., 402-694-4032. The Plainsman Museum offers Nebraska history under one roof. A sod house, Pony Express station, car collection and an outstanding doll collection are featured in the facility. Ag-related exhibits and equipment also are on display. Next door, the Edgerton Explorit Center is dedicated to Aurora native Harold “Doc” Edgerton—the inventor of the strobe light. The Explorit Center features examples of Edgerton’s work, as well as many hands-on science exhibits. Suggested tour time for both facilities: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (33 miles) west on Highway 34 to Grand Island.

Experience pioneer life on 200 acres at the [Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer](#), 308-385-5316, which is one of the top 10 living history museums in the country. You can walk through an 1890s railroad town, push a handcart on the Mormon Trail, have a better understanding of American Indians at the Pawnee Earth Lodge, or explore the birth cottage of Oscar-winning actor Henry Fonda. A variety of special events are offered at the museum throughout the year. Add some mystery to your tour! Was there an island in Nebraska? Why is Grand Island a “train hot spot?” Who are the internationally known Abbots? Add a historic tour of the famous and infamous characters of Grand Island’s early days. See farming past to present with a look at local farms, “the business” behind agriculture, and tour some of the nation’s top agricultural manufacturing plants. The **Stuhr Museum Gift Shop** offers fantastic souvenirs and gifts. Tour time: 1-3 hours.

Grand Island abounds with art galleries, specialty stores and other shops where you can buy that hard-to-find gift or souvenir to remember your trip. Some shops you must make time for are **Prairie Winds Art Center**, 112 W. 3rd St., 308-381-4001, **The Warehouse Gallery**, 381 N. Walnut St., 308-382-8589, **The Gallery**, 3535 W. 13th St., 308-382-8701, **Maudie’s Stained Glass**, 301 W. 3rd St., 308-382-1993, **Heart of the Country**,

311 W. 3rd St., 308-382-2861, and **Bartenbach's Galleries**, 209 N. Locust St., 308-382-7575.

40 minutes (26 miles) south on Highway 281 to Hastings.

[Hastings Museum/Lied Super Screen Theater/J.M. McDonald Planetarium](#), 1330 N. Burlington Ave., 402-461-4629. Hastings is a lively community that regularly caters to the group tour market. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History has one of the best natural history collections in the region, including the “People of the Plains” exhibit from prehistoric times to historic trails and pioneer towns.

Hey Kool-Aid! *Kool-Aid: Discover the Dream* is an interactive exhibit that tells the story of the birth of one of America's favorite soft drinks. Lifelike murals and replicas, a fiber-optic river of Kool-Aid, interactive kiosks, and the original Kool-Aid Man costume help to tell the story.

The *Groundwater Discovery Adventure* teaches visitors about the Ogallala Aquifer (a large underground water reserve located underneath the Great Plains region) and the importance of groundwater to the settlement and development of the central plains. Some displays in this exhibit include a floor-to-ceiling mural of a prairie landscape, paleontology dig areas, a simulated spring that bubbles from the Ogallala Aquifer and through a raised stream into the room, a walking bridge, teepees and an 1857 log cabin. An interactive water display allows visitors to dam water in a stream, lift gates to irrigate crop areas, and divert the stream to flood a miniature town.

The J.M. McDonald Planetarium will schedule special show times for groups. Also located there, the former IMAX Theatre has been upgraded to the Lied Super Screen Theater. Documentary and full-length feature films are shown on the five-story high screen to provide an incredible viewing experience. Suggested tour time at the museum: 2 hours.

Don't leave Hastings without spending time browsing around for that perfect gift or souvenir at [Nebraska Food & Gift](#), 208 S. Burlington Ave., 402-462-8883. This exceptional gift store represents more than 170 Nebraska communities and features an eclectic variety of locally made products.

Colorful banners hang throughout the city during the summer proclaiming Hastings as the official birthplace of Kool-Aid. The local visitors bureau staff, 402-461-8400, can arrange unique dining experiences, tours of businesses and historic landmarks, evening entertainment and overnight accommodations for your group.

50 minutes (34 miles) north on Highway 281, west on Interstate 80 to Alda.

The [Nebraska Bird Observatory at the Crane Meadows Visitors Center](#), 888-382-1820, in Alda (6 miles west of Grand Island) offers a variety of Sandhill crane-related activities on 250 acres of pristine or restored prairie along the Platte River. Witness the awesome sights and sounds of “Wings Over the Platte”—an award-winning celebration of the world's largest crane migration (a half million Sandhill cranes). Year-round

programs and special events are available in the interpretive center. Suggested tour time: ½ hour (programs), 2-3 hours (guided tours), and 2 hours (Crane Lore Round the Campfire). As you visit the sights around Grand Island, keep your eyes peeled for 30 majestic Sandhill cranes all decked out for **Crane Mania**.

30 minutes (14 miles) west on Highway 30 to Gibbon.

Make sure you visit [Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center](#), 308-468-5282, near Gibbon, 30 minutes southeast of Kearney off Interstate 80. This 1,250-acre wildlife sanctuary is located on the banks of the Platte River. In early spring, more than one-half million Sandhill cranes pass through the area on their northward migration. Trips to crane viewing blinds are available every morning and evening in March and the first week in April. The Nicolson Audubon Center offers stunning views of the Platte River, interpretive displays, gift shop, and trails. An interesting tidbit about the facility is that it was constructed entirely of hay bales. Reservations are required for crane season viewing blinds in March. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. [George Spencer Vineyard and Tasting Room](#), 7155 Pawnee Rd., 308-468-5612, is a central Nebraska treasure that features internationally acclaimed Nebraska wines. Wine tasting, vineyard tours, a delicious dinner, and gift shop are yours to enjoy. Reservations for dinner are required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (34 miles) west on Highway 30 to Kearney.

Just east of Kearney, you will literally drive under one of Nebraska's newest group tour attractions—[The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument](#), 877-511-2724. Locally known as the Arch, no tour of Nebraska is complete without a stop at the only tourist attraction in America that is located over a federal interstate highway. Built to commemorate the westward expansion of America, the Arch highlights the west's original American Indian habitants, the Mormon, Oregon and California Trails and the pioneers who traveled these early routes. Other exhibits highlight the expansion of the railroad that founded many Nebraska towns, the Overland Stagecoach and Pony Express, the Lincoln Highway, as well as and modern marvels, such as the telegraph and fiber optics. Your group will learn about the history of transportation and communication along the famous Platte River Road through magnificent interactive exhibits and stunning audio/visual effects. The Arch also includes a food court and gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1-1½ hours.

See Nebraska in a whole new way at the [Museum of Nebraska Art \(MONA\)](#), 2401 Central Ave., 308-865-8559, which features works of art that highlight Nebraska and the Great Plains in 11 exciting galleries. This impressive museum is housed in a 1911 Renaissance revival historic post office that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to works by great artists, such as George Catlin, Robert Henri, J. Laurie Wallace, Grant Reynard, and John Falter, MONA boasts an original collection of works by John J. Audubon that focuses on indigenous Nebraska wildlife. The museum's permanent collection includes more than 5,000 works by artists of regional, national and international importance, prints and a number of impressive rotating collections. Visitors can relax and stroll outdoors through the Cliff Hillegass Sculpture Garden and browse through the museum shop for that perfect gift. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

For the nature lover, be sure to stop at [Cabela's](#), 3600 Highway 30, 308-237-7999, in Kearney—the “World’s Foremost Outdoor Outfitter.” This is Cabela’s second Nebraska store; the original is in Sidney. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

Wander through the stately mansion of one of Kearney’s most influential people. George Washington Frank, who developed projects that helped Kearney grow in the late 1800s, built the three-story [George E. Frank House](#), 2010 W. 24th St., 308-865-8284, in 1889. An annual Christmas walk at the Frank House starts after Thanksgiving and lasts for two weeks. Tours of the house can be arranged for groups throughout the year. The mansion’s Tiffany window was one of few such windows located in private residences in the Great Plains region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. A Union Pacific depot, train cabooses and six turn-of-the-century buildings at the [Trails and Rails Museum](#), 710 W. 11th St., 308-234-3041, highlight the importance that the railroad had on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. As you explore Kearney, be on the lookout for **Cranes on Parade**—6-foot fiberglass cranes, each one a unique and original work of art.

The Tri-cities Region of Kearney, Hastings and Grand Island offer many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 3



Pioneer Village, Minden

To Minden:

From Kearney: 35 minutes (23 miles) south on Highway 44, east on Highway 6.

From Hastings: 50 minutes (32 miles) west on Highway 6.

From Grand Island: 1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 281, west on Highway 6.

Minden is home to the world-famous [Harold Warp Pioneer Village](#), 800-445-4447. Twenty-six buildings, including a sod house, one-room school, Pony Express station, depot, general store and an 1884 church make up the village. It is home to the oldest

existing Buick and 350 other antique autos, 20 historic aircraft, 100 vintage tractors, guns, motorcycles, snowmobiles, boats, buggies, trains and trolleys. The historic crafts of spinning, weaving and broom-making are demonstrated for visitors year-round. If you come during the summer, plan to enjoy a nostalgic ride on an 1800-era steam carousel. A restaurant and gift shop is also on-site. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Be sure to also visit the [Minden Opera House](#), 322 E. 5th St., 308-832-0588, located in downtown Minden, only a few blocks from Pioneer Village. Built in 1891, the building has been restored into a beautiful multi-purpose facility that attracts live performances from around the country. The Opera House can cater breakfast for your group as well. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Minden knows how to celebrate Christmas. In fact, it's officially known as the "Christmas City." During the holiday season, the downtown district is ablaze with more than 12,000 lights for the annual "Light of the World" Christmas Pageant. This truly impressive sight has been a holiday staple in Minden since 1946.

40 minutes (23 miles) west on Highway 6 to Holdrege.

During World War II, this region of Nebraska housed several German prisoner of war (POW) camps. Many POWs settled in the area and became productive and valued residents. The [Nebraska Prairie Museum](#), 308-995-5015, in Holdrege has an impressive collection from Camp Atlanta, originally located five miles from Holdrege. Works of art by POWs, as well as a variety of other exhibits, are displayed. The museum also has several historical buildings on its grounds. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (41 miles) west on Highway 23, north on Highway 283 to Lexington.

The [Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles](#), 308-324-6329, is an impressive collection of military equipment and machinery. Suggested tour: 1 hour. Lexington also boasts two wineries—[Mac's Creek Vineyards and Winery](#), 308-324-0440, and [Millenium Wines Vineyard](#), 308-324-6094. So make sure you take time to sample their excellent Nebraska-produced wines and tour the vineyards and production facilities. Explore the history of Dawson County at the [Dawson County Historical Museum](#), 805 N. Taft St., 308-324-5340. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

25 minutes (19 miles) west on Highway 30 to Cozad.

Cozad is home of painter Robert Henri, who founded the Ash Can style of painting and became a major influence in the art world. In fact, his works hang in galleries in New York City and Paris, France. His childhood home is the **Robert Henri Museum and Historical Walkway**, 218 E. 8th St., 308-784-4154, where several of his original works of art are on display, along with other Henri-inspired art. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

15 minutes (11 miles) west on Highway 30 to the Swedish town of Gothenburg.

One of the few Pony Express stations, 308-537-3505, still standing in Nebraska is located in Gothenburg's charming city park. Original historic items are on display and your clients can send postcards to friends and family back home postmarked with the original Pony Express stamp. The **Sod House Museum**, 308-537-2680, at the Gothenburg Interstate 80 exit shows visitors how the pioneers lived and survived on the treeless Great

Plains. Both attractions have gift shops. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 45 minutes.

35 minutes (37 miles) west on Highway 30 to North Platte.

Birthplace of the rodeo, North Platte is a great group tour stop. Colonel William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody spent many years in North Platte where he originated the rodeo. His ranch, [Buffalo Bill State Historical Park](#), 308-535-8035, is the focal point of the city. You can tour his house, as well as his beautifully maintained historic barn. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. During the third week of June, the entire community dons their western duds for NEBRASKAland Days, 308-532-7939. It’s 10 days of western fun, ethnic celebrations and live entertainment! If a hands-on experience with trains is what you want, don’t miss the **Railroad Museum**, 308-532-4729, in Cody Park where you will find Union Pacific’s Challenger 3977—one of the largest steam locomotives ever built. Elk, peacock, geese, deer and a variety of other critters call the park home. Hint: they’ll like you better if you feed them. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Made famous by the book *Once Upon a Town* by Bob Greene, the North Platte World War II Canteen display is housed at the **Lincoln County Historical Museum**, 2403 N. Buffalo Bill Ave., 308-534-6579. The interpretative display details the story of the Canteen and its volunteers who, for 51 months, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week throughout World War II, met every U.S. military train to provide food, treats and hospitality to passengers. A community of less than 15,000 served more than six million service men and women free of charge. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Don’t miss the [20th Century Veterans’ Memorial](#), 2811 S. Jeffers St., 308-532-6579, which is dedicated to the men and women who have served their country. The memorial features larger than life bronze statues and wall murals that honor the five branches of the armed forces. A “Walk of Honor” that is lined by thousands of commemorative bricks shows the names of veterans. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

You can witness railroad history in the making at **Union Pacific Railroad’s Bailey Yard**, 308-532-4729. The largest rail car classification complex in the world, it stretches eight miles and covers nearly 3,000 acres. Get a panoramic view of this spectacular sight from the visitor observation deck and listen to an 8-minute audio presentation about this immense railroad facility. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Conveniently located at the intersection of Interstate 80 and Highway 83, [Fort Cody Trading Post](#), 308-532-8081, is one of the state’s largest and engagingly eclectic gift shops. Antiques, leather goods, jewelry, western gifts, novelties, books, clothing, gag gifts and a variety of other fun gifts and souvenirs can be picked up at Fort Cody. If it’s fun, it’s at Fort Cody! Make sure you walk through the Old West Museum in the back of the store to view the miniature version of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show—a 20,000-piece hand-carved animated display. Fort Cody is a definite must-see! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Artist’s Co-op Art and Gift Gallery**, 308-532-4729, is a must-see showcase of original work of west central Nebraska artists. Five large gallery rooms and an outdoor

sculpture garden provide great opportunities to view the works of art at your own leisure. Workshops are hosted by artist members and nationally acclaimed professional artists. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (33 miles) west on Highway 30 to Paxton.

It's off to one of Nebraska's most famous watering holes—[Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge](#), 308-239-4500, in Paxton. Ole's is known for its impressive collection of mounted animals, as well as quality food and exceptional hospitality that attracts many group tours to this unique restaurant. There is plenty of room for groups, and the delicious food will bring you back again and again. Suggested time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (21 miles) west on Highway 30 to Ogallala.

Once a bustling cowboy town with a very colorful reputation, Ogallala is now a family-friendly town that embraces its colorful western past. Be sure to make time to visit [Front Street](#), 519 E. 1st St., 308-284-6000, to watch **The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**—Nebraska's longest-running summer theatre. Belly up to the bar for a sarsaparilla or other beverage to wet your whistle while you watch showgirls and desperados perform. Plan a visit to the [Petrified Wood Gallery](#), 525 E. 1st St., 308-284-9996, after the show—one of Nebraska's most unique museums. This gallery of natural history specializes in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts. The Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office, 204 East A St, 308-284-4066, can arrange for you to visit legendary **Boot Hill** or the stately **Mansion on the Hill**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

Ogallala also is home to “Big Mac” or [Lake McConaughy](#)—the largest inland lake in the region, 308-284-8800. The lake is a water lover's paradise and offers white sand beaches, excellent fishing and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the water. The **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, 308-284-8800, is Nebraska's first water museum and interprets the significance of water to the state's past, present and future. With advance notice, the Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office can help arrange a beach party, boat rides and a tour of **Kingsley Dam**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. From late December to early March, the [Bald Eagle Viewing Center](#), 308-284-2332, is open below the dam and is one of the best locations in the region to view these magnificent birds.

View one of the largest, privately held lilac collections in the country—**The Lilacs of Meadowlark Hill**, 308-284-2524. The best time to visit is May during “Lilac Time,” when the air is heavy with the perfume wafting off these beautiful flowers. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 61 to Haythorn Ranch.

Take a step back in time at a working cattle ranch located in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills, north of Ogallala. The historical [Haythorn Ranch Tours and Figure Traditions Event Center](#), 308-355-4000, maintains a herd of more than 500 ranch-bred horses that are used in day-to-day ranching activities. It is the largest breeder of quarter horses in the U.S. and the second largest in the world. Call for reservations for large and small group tour packages. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Tour 22

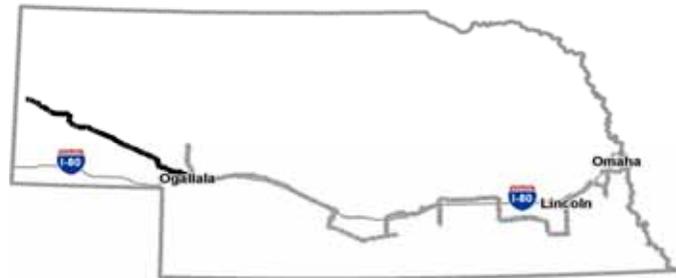
From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala

Optional Tour 1 of Western Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of western Nebraska to extend the *From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala* tour:



Front Street, Ogallala



At Ogallala, you can continue your trip west along Highway 26 and follow the famed Oregon and Mormon Trails. Highway 92/26 is one of Nebraska's scenic byways—the **Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway**.

45 minutes (31 miles) west on Highway 26 to Ash Hollow State Historical Park.

[Ash Hollow State Historical Park](#), 308-778-5651, is located on the west side of **Lake McConaughy** near Lewellen. The park boasts an unusual collection of prehistoric and pioneer history. Fossils from prehistoric animals were discovered in the area and many are displayed at the interpretive center. Ancient Indian tribes and early pioneers used the area as a staging or camping area. Nearby Windlass Hill is the site where pioneers had to lower wagon trains using a windlass—a device for hoisting or hauling. Today a hike up to Windlass Hill offers a spectacular view of deep wagon ruts still visible after 150 years. A visitors/interpretive center has displays of prehistoric rhinoceros, mammoths, mastodons and early pioneer history. A hiking trail from the visitor center leads to a spring at the bottom of the canyon. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

60 minutes (42 miles) west on Highway 26 to Broadwater.

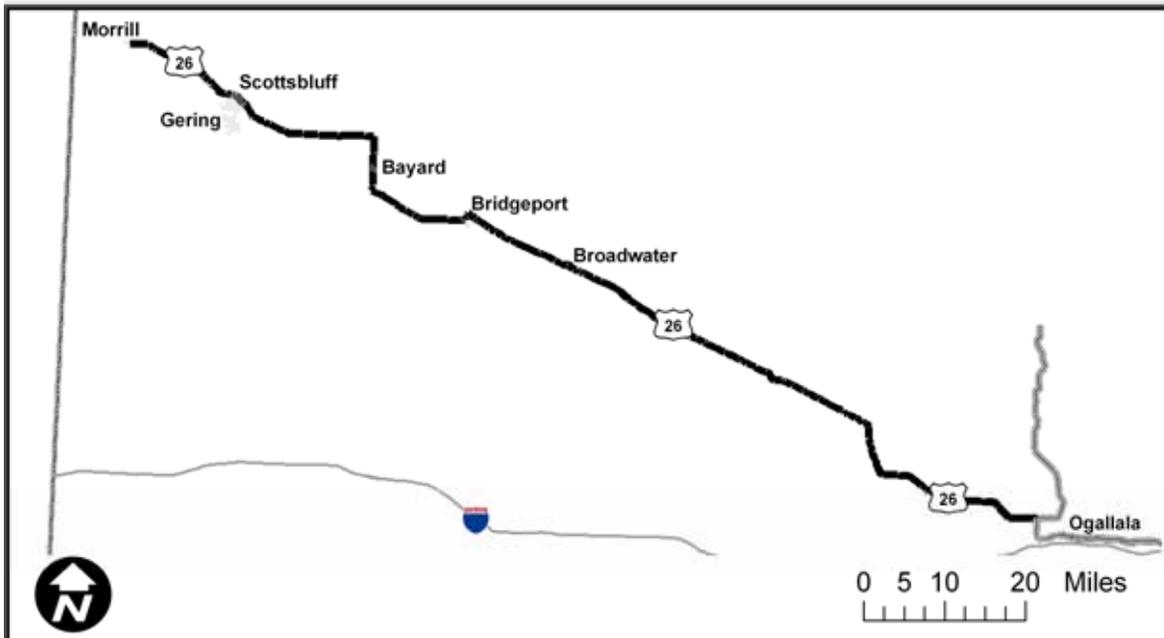
Pick up a knick-knack or groovy souvenir at a unique store along Highway 26 between Ogallala and Scottsbluff. **Tumbleweed Treasures**, Highway 26 and Guthrie St., 308-489-5420, in the hamlet of Broadwater is well worth the stop. The store is regularly open weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day. However, you can make prior arrangements with the owners to visit the store during other times. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

25 minutes (15 miles) west on Highway 26 to Bridgeport.

Highways 92 and 26 follow the Oregon, Mormon and Pony Express Trails, and were the first stretches of highway designated as an official Nebraska Scenic Byway—the **Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway**. Along the way your group will begin to

notice unusual rock formations along the horizon. When pioneers crossed Nebraska, there was little more than flat prairie stretching before them for weeks on end. You can imagine their excitement when they started to see a noticeable change in the landscape. The first two formations you'll come across are [Courthouse and Jail Rocks](#), 308-586-2581 (Chimney Rock Visitors Center), located on Highway 88 to the south of Highways 92 and 26. They were so named because of their similarity to courthouses and jail buildings back east. Note: No staff or tourist facilities are available at the site. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

No trip to Bridgeport is complete without sampling some of the best pastries and desserts in western Nebraska. The **Sweet Things Bakery**, 308-262-1024, in downtown Bridgeport is bound to satisfy even the most discriminating palates with its mouthwatering sweets.



25 minutes (16 miles) west on Highway 26 to Bayard.

“Towering to the heavens” is how one pioneer described Chimney Rock near Bayard—the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. At the base of the spire, the [Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitors Center](#), 308-586-2581, offers visitors fascinating stories from pioneer diaries about their trek westward. There is an audio-visual presentation and an impressive book and gift shop on site. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

To experience what it was like as a pioneer, nothing compares to the [Oregon Trail Wagon Train](#), 308-586-1850, one mile from Chimney Rock. Put on your best western duds and step back in time to the 1850s as your group boards a Conestoga wagon train for a bumpy ride alongside actual wagon ruts. Your group will enjoy campfire songs, stories and the most mouth-watering meal prepared over an open fire. It’s the perfect way

to end your day as an illuminated Chimney Rock lights up the night. Reservations required. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

35 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff or Highway 92 to Gering.

Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area’s colorful history are featured. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines in the [Farm and Ranch Museum](#), 2930 M St., 308-436-1989, at the base of Scotts Bluff National Monument. If your group tour comes during the third weekend in September, make plans to watch live demonstrations of various farming equipment during the annual Harvest Festival. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Enjoy pine-covered canyons and rugged rock buttes at the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center**, 308-436-3777, a short drive south of Gering. Nestled within the [Wildcat Hills](#), the nature center is located in one of the most beautiful regions of Nebraska. A wide variety and abundance of native wildlife can be enjoyed from the information center’s deck or along the more than 3 miles of hiking trails throughout the park. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Two museums in Gering that are worth visiting are the [Wyo-braska Museum of Natural History](#), 850 U St., 308-436-7104, which houses more than 300 mounted zoological specimens from around the world; and the [North Platte Valley Museum](#), 308-436-5411, which chronicles the history of the area through a variety of impressive displays, including a sod house, one-room schoolhouse and agricultural equipment from bygone days. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour.

The main lines of the western migratory trails converged at **Robidoux Pass**. Today, you can visit the reconstructed [Robidoux Trading Post](#) in beautiful **Carter Canyon**, south of Gering. Don’t miss the blacksmith shop monument and pioneer graves near the trading post. Suggested tour time (with scenic drive): 1½ hour. Contact the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau for tour information: 308-436-6886. The trading post is located on a dirt road, and no services are available along the road or at the site.

Directly to the north of Gering, Scottsbluff boasts a very impressive arts center—the **West Nebraska Arts Center**, 106 E. 18th St., 308-632-2226. It features a variety of artistic activities, including a gallery and gift shop that sells locally made gifts. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

The [Riverside Zoo](#), 1600 S. Beltline Highway West, 308-630-6236, is an impressive facility that features more than 300 animals representing 97 animal species from around

the world. Excellent picnic facilities and walking paths are available. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Enjoy a panoramic view of Scotts Bluff National Monument as you sip a refreshing glass of wine at the [Prairie Vine Vineyard and Winery](#), 308-623-2955. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Fillingham Exotic Animal Farm**, 308-623-1164, in Morrill, west of Scottsbluff on Highway 26, offers guided tours of exotic animals throughout the 275-acre farm. Some of the rare animals include a Z-donk, a zebus and an onyx. Reservations for guided tours are required. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Tour 23

From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala

Optional Tour 2 of Western Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of western Nebraska to extend the *From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala* tour:



Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering



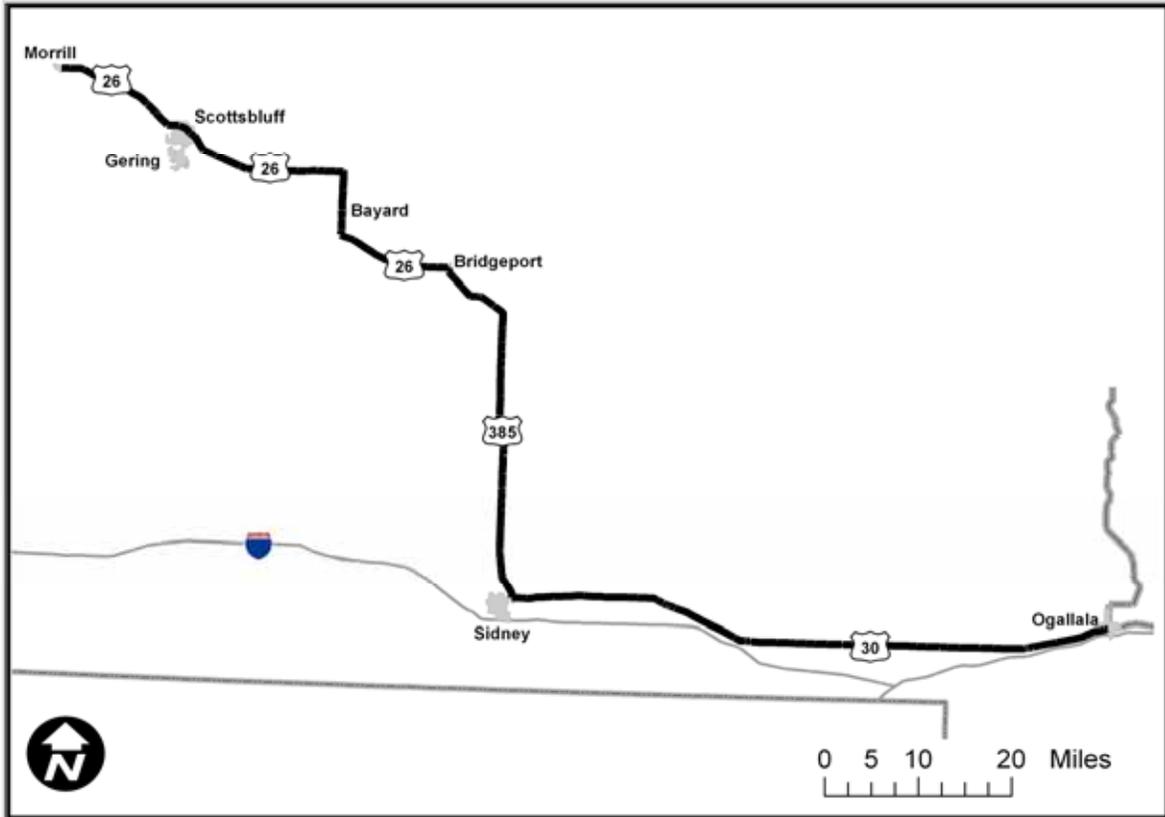
1 hour, 15 minutes (72 miles) on Highway 30 to Sidney.

Sidney is home to [Cabela's](#)—the world's largest outdoor outfitter, 115 Cabela Dr., 308-254-7889. This Nebraska-based international mail-order business started as a home-based business selling fishing lures through the mail. Today Cabela's has a mailing list of more than 3 million people from around the globe, and visitors to Sidney can shop in the giant retail store located right on Interstate 80. Bargain hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will have a great time at Cabela's. The store's centerpiece is a giant man-made mountain featuring dozens of mounted animals climbing to its peak. Dining and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Discover Sidney's colorful military past at **Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home**, 1153 6th Ave., 308-254-2150. Fort Sidney was originally constructed to protect Union Pacific Railroad workers from Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who were opposed to the railroad running through their territory. An 1872 powder magazine also remains of Fort Sidney. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

1 hour (42 miles) north on Highway 385 (Gold Rush Scenic Byway) to Bridgeport.

Highways 92 and 26 follow the Oregon, Mormon and Pony Express Trails, and were the first stretches of highway designated as an official Nebraska Scenic Byway—the **Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway**. Along the way your group will begin to notice unusual rock formations along the horizon. When pioneers crossed Nebraska, there was little more than flat prairie stretching before them for weeks on end. You can imagine their excitement when they started to see a noticeable change in the landscape. The first two formations you'll come across are [Courthouse and Jail Rocks](#), 308-586-2581 (Chimney Rock Visitors Center), located on Highway 88 to the south of Highways 92 and 26. They were so named because of their similarity to courthouses and jail buildings back east. Note: No staff or tourist facilities are available at the site. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

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Tour 24

From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala

Optional Tour 3 of Western Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of western Nebraska to extend the *From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala* tour:



Toadstool Geologic Park, Crawford



Day 1

1 hour, 15 minutes (72 miles) on Highway 30 to Sidney.

Sidney is home to [Cabela's](#)—the world's largest outdoor outfitter, 115 Cabela Dr., 308-254-7889. This Nebraska-based international mail-order business started as a home-based business selling fishing lures through the mail. Today Cabela's has a mailing list of more than 3 million people from around the globe, and visitors to Sidney can shop in the giant retail store located right on Interstate 80. Bargain hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will have a great time at Cabela's. The store's centerpiece is a giant man-made mountain featuring dozens of mounted animals climbing to its peak. Dining and restroom facilities are available. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Discover Sidney's colorful military past at **Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home**, 1153 6th Ave., 308-254-2150. Fort Sidney was originally constructed to protect Union Pacific Railroad workers from Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who were opposed to the railroad running through their territory. An 1872 powder magazine also remains of Fort Sidney. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

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1 hour (40 miles) east on Highways 26 and L62A, north on Highway 385 to Alliance.

The next best thing to Stonehenge, [Carhenge](#), 308-762-1520, is one of Nebraska’s crackerjack attractions and has stirred much controversy since its creation in 1987. An exact replica of the world-famous Stonehenge in England, Carhenge uses old cars in place of stones. The project was the brainchild of architect Jim Reinders. He and his

family gathered for a family reunion in Alliance and wanted to come up with a project to dedicate to Reinder's father. Jim spent many years in Europe and studied Stonehenge at great length. In 1987, he returned to his family farm and constructed Carhenge. At first it met with mixed reactions from local residents; however, Carhenge has now become a national sensation and one of Nebraska's unique attractions. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

Alliance also has one of the state's best historical museums—the **Knight Museum of High Plains Heritage**, 908 Yellowstone Ave., 308-762-2384. A variety of displays interpret the history of the city and the importance that the railroad played in its growth. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Carnegie Arts Center](#), 204 W. 4th St., 308-762-4571, features local and regional artists, gifts and a sculpture garden. **Sallows Conservatory and Arboretum**, 308-762-2384, features tropical and sub-tropical plants, and walking paths wind through the flower displays of the Sunken Gardens. Downtown Alliance also offers a variety of unique shopping and dining opportunities. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Step back in time to a slower, more relaxed pace at [Dobby's Frontier Town](#), 320 E. 25th St., 308-762-4321. This recreation of a turn-of-the-century western town boasts a homesteader's cabin, mercantile, bootlegger's cabin, post office, jail, baled straw house, and much, much more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Sweet Sage Spice and Gourmet Shoppe, 806 Box Butte Ave., 308-487-5599, in Hemingford, 20 miles northwest of Alliance on Highway 2, is an old-fashioned variety store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) north on Highway 385 to Chadron.

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, [Chadron State Park](#), 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups. Suggested tour time: 1-3 hours.

The [Museum of the Fur Trade](#), 6321 Highway 20, 308-432-3843, is located just outside Chadron. This one-of-a-kind facility displays artifacts from the lucrative fur-trading industry that was once a thriving business in northwest Nebraska in the early 1800s. The Bordeaux Trading Post, built in 1837, stands on the museum grounds and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Nebkota Dinner Train**, 111 N. Main St., 308-432-2487, offers dining car excursions through the scenic Pine Ridge area and three-hour dinner excursions on Friday

and Saturday evenings. Other attractions in Chadron include the [Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center](#), 1000 Main St., 308-432-6401, located on the campus of Chadron State College. The center is dedicated to the study of Nebraska and High Plains culture, literature and history. The Heritage Room hosts a collection of Sandoz's books and poems. The **Dawes County Historical Museum**, 341 Country Club Road, 308-432-4999, shares the story of the area throughout several buildings of the museum complex, such as an original log house and barn, schoolhouse and railroad caboos.

Chadron offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site, Crawford

35 minutes (27 miles) west on Highway 20 to Crawford.

Take the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** to Crawford, home of Nebraska's largest state park—[Fort Robinson State Park](#), 308-665-2900. It was at Fort Robinson where the great Lakota warrior Crazy Horse surrendered in 1877. A stone marker shows the spot where he was mortally wounded. Fort Robinson also was the site of the famous Cheyenne Outbreak and home to the "Buffalo Soldiers," an African-American garrison in a segregated army. Many activities are available at "Fort Rob," including buffalo stew cookouts, theatrical presentations at the Post Playhouse (group rates available), historic tours and museums, and Jeep rides through the majestic, pine-covered buttes. The [Trailside Museum of Natural History](#), 308-66-2929, houses a mammoth skeleton that stands 10 feet tall and an art gallery of American Indian and western art. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

[Last Chance Winery](#), 432 2nd St., 308-66-2712, is located in downtown Crawford. Enjoy sipping delicious wines at a winetasting, followed by a tour of the wine production facility. Advance notice is required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Enjoy a mouth-watering meal at the **Ranch House**, 445 Second St., 308-665-1231. Afterwards, spend time browsing the extensive upstairs art and antique gallery. So come on in, and they'll rustle you up something tasty and delicious at this National Register of Historic Places landmark.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highway 2, west on Toadstool Road to Toadstool Geologic Park.

[Toadstool Geologic Park](#), 308-432-0300, northwest of Crawford, resembles the famous South Dakota Badlands and is one of the most dramatic landscapes in Nebraska. Over the centuries, the clay and sandstone in the area have been eroded by wind and rain to form toadstool-shaped formations. The park also contains valuable fossil deposits and the longest known mammal trackway of the Oligocene epoch—more than one mile. A one-mile loop trail from the campground highlights many fine examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations. A reconstructed sod house gives a glimpse into the past when prairie homesteaders used the only abundant building material available—sod. A hand water pump and full-accessible vault toilets are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

[Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site](#), 308-432-0300, is located a short drive northwest of Crawford. More than 10,000 years ago, a great catastrophe killed hundreds of bison, the largest mammals on the Great Plains. More than 600 bison skeletons have been unearthed here and the mystery of how and why they died in one place at one time is still under investigation. Feel free to make your own suggestions! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Along the way to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, make sure you stop at [High Plains Homestead](#), 308-665-2592, to enjoy some of the best pie in the world at the **Drifter Cookshack**. While there, spend some time visiting the recreated Old West village on the property, which features a working blacksmith shop, antique store and the Dirty Creek Saloon, where you can enjoy a cool, refreshing non-alcoholic drink. Make sure to stop by the old-fashioned general store to pick up that special gift or rustic souvenir. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Note: All but three miles to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, Toadstool Geologic Park and High Plains Homestead are on a well-maintained gravel road (Highway 2/71). No travel on the gravel roads should be attempted during or after rain.

From Crawford: 35 minutes (27 miles) west on Highway 20 to Harrison.

Grab a quick snack or something to drink in Harrison, also known as “Nebraska’s Top Town.” With an elevation of 4,878 feet above sea level, it enjoys the highest elevation of any Nebraska community. Make sure you have your camera ready; Harrison is surrounded by some of the most scenic countryside in the state.

30 minutes (22 miles) south on Highway 29 to Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

[Agate Fossil Beds National Monument](#), 301 River Road, 308-668-2211, south of Harrison, is a fossil lover’s paradise. Fossilized mammals from 19 million years ago are embedded and easily visible in the walls and canyons of the 3,000-acre national monument. There are miles of easy-to-navigate hiking trails throughout the property and the visitor center interprets the history and significance of the area. Agate Fossil Beds also tell the story of “Captain” James Cook—a former professional hunter, guide, Army scout and owner of the nearby Agate Springs Ranch. For 50 years, the ranch was a haven for American Indians, such as Chief Red Cloud. Cook welcomed and fed his guests, and in return, they repaid his generosity by presenting him with gifts throughout the years. In time, these gifts became a sizable and important collection of American Indian artifacts,

which are now permanently displayed in the visitor center. This is truly a unique collection and a must-see exhibit! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

45 minutes (43 miles) south on Highway 29, east on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff/Gering. Scottsbluff/Gering offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 3



Chimney Rock National Historical Site, Bayard

Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area’s colorful history are featured. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

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Tour 25

Get Your Kicks on Highway 6



Omaha Skyline



Day 1

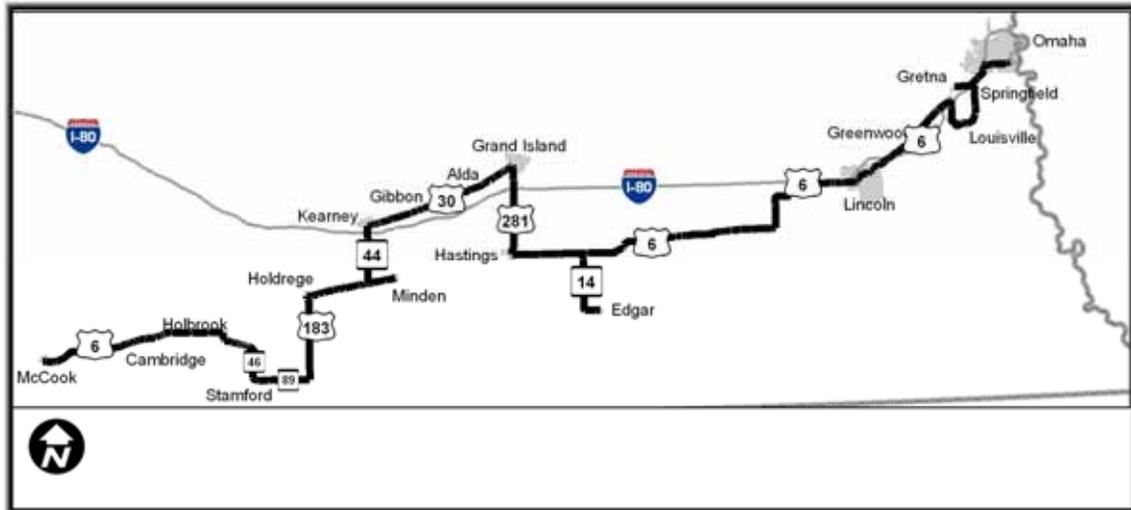
Begin your Highway 6 Tour in Omaha.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, the **largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and the newly opened **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo also boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. The zoo's newest exhibit, **Orangutan Forest**, boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant**, or concession stands throughout the zoo. Suggested tour time: 3-4 hours.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn of the century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-feet of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a

first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.



The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to the Missouri River frontier. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that different ethnic groups have had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children’s garden, herb garden, spring flowering walk, Victorian garden, festival garden and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and gift shop also is available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-453-5615, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market. One of downtown's newest attractions is the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202, which is scheduled to open in October 2005.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won for portraying Father Flanagan, stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible, and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. Self-guided tour information and on-site café available. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (22 miles) west on Interstate 80 to Gretna.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The [Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall](#), 402-746-7632, will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The **Aksarben Aquarium**, 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to people of all faiths. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

15 minutes (10 miles) east on Highway 370, south on Highway 50 to Springfield.

In addition to a beautiful view of the surrounding countryside, the [Soaring Wings Winery](#), 17111 S. 138th St., 402-253-2479, offers wine tastings, tours and a gift shop. Experience an eclectic two-acre sculpture garden at the [Carl Weiss Sculpture Studio](#), 402-680-0642. The formal and informal gardens are dotted with sculptures from local and regional artists, including Carl Weiss' landscape concepts, bronze sculptures and artwork. Meander quietly along the walking paths at [Springcreek Gardens & Nursery](#), 12275 Main St., 402-253-8000, where a new plant or surprise is around every corner. The full service nursery and landscape design center offers more than 450 varieties of perennials, shrubs and landscape trees. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour.

Also in Springfield is the **Springfield Old Fashioned Soda Fountain**, 205 Main St., 402-253-2000, where you can enjoy an ice cream shake and remember old times. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

10 minutes (7 miles) south on Highway 50 to Louisville.

The [Louisville Art Gallery](#), 230 Main St., 402-234-2867, features more than 3,500-square-feet of exhibition space for sculptures, paintings, ceramics, pottery and fine art photography. **The Gallery Shop**, 127 Main St., 402-234-2669, is home to **Art Chicks**—where singing, dancing and frivolity are encouraged. You might find yourself wearing a feather boa and brandishing a magic wand as you explore the two shops and garden that make up the gallery. You can select a whimsical art piece and then indulge in a gourmet lunch. Call ahead for tours. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (21 miles) north on Highway 31, west on Highway 6 to Exit 426.

Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln, **Exit 426** is home to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your motorcoach can drive through the safari, or, with prior arrangements, your group can board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The city of Ashland is the gateway to the Exit 426 attractions, and offers a number of fun-filled and exciting group tour opportunities to explore. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling and toe tappin' cowboy shows await your group tour at **Double D Ranch**, 6790 Grover St., 402-944-6144. So don your best cowboy hat and get ready to sing along and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi! Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

If a tasty glass of fine wine and a relaxing setting are more your group's style, come on by for a sample at [Four Winds Vineyard](#), 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays. Afterwards, spend some time shopping for antiques in the charming downtown district.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local

delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

10 minutes (7 miles) west on Highway 6 to Greenwood.

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 6 to Lincoln.

Lincoln offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Fort Kearny State Historical Park

Lincoln

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate bordering the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. Guided tours of the building are provided. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. After viewing the State Capitol building, make sure you visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, unique shops, bars and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market. If you're looking for unique Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-

2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite 300, 402-542-6742. This unique candy store offers licorice from across the globe, such as France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, the U.K. and Ireland. Suggested tour time in the Haymarket: 2 hours.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, are in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits include a number of permanent exhibits that chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the "American Indian Gallery," "The First Nebraskans," "Nebraska Joins the Union," and "Building the State." Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour. People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose and residences that were turned into exhibits. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center also boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy whiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1½ hour. Get “lost” in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight to try it in the dark! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

40 minutes (30 miles) south on Highway 77, west on Highway 33 to Crete.

Since 2001, [Blue Valley Vineyard](#), SW 142nd St. and Stagecoach Road, 402-826-5700, in Crete has offered quality, handcrafted wines, a wine tasting room and gift shop that sell a variety of wine accessories. In the spring, summer and autumn your tour may stroll the grounds and enjoy wine on the patios and decks, while the warmth and hospitality of the tasting room awaits you in the winter. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

25 minutes (12 miles) south on Highway 103 to Wilber.

Everyone in Wilber is Czech—at least during the first weekend of August when the town hosts thousands for the Annual Wilber Czech Festival. The U.S. Congress proclaimed Wilber the National Czech Capitol and folks in Wilber take that seriously. However, you can get a sense of Czech heritage anytime you come to town. The **Wilber Czech Museum**, 102 W 3rd St., 402-821-2183, contains detailed information on the heritage of those who founded Wilber and on their homeland of Czechoslovakia. There is usually a quilting bee going on at the museum, and the ladies are always delighted to chat with you and show you around. Located next door to the museum is the **Wilber Bakery**, 104 W 3rd St., 402-821-2995, where your group must sample a kolach, also known as “Czech Danish.” Around the corner is the beautifully restored **Hotel Wilber**, 203 S. Wilson St., 402-821-2020, a wonderful bed and breakfast. Your group can tour the facility and grab a bite to eat. *Vitame Vas!* With advance notice, costumed guides are available to escort your group along walking tours of Wilber. These tours include a meal. Suggested tour time in town: 1½ hour.

2 hours (61 miles) west on Highway 41, south on Highway 15, west on Highway 74, south on Highway 14, east on Highway S18B to Edgar.

Good scents and good times at the [Sugar Shack Country Candle Company](#), 223 N. C St., 402-224-3211. Spend time browsing for that perfect scent to warm your heart, home or office. However, candles are not all that Sugar Shack specializes in; they also carry a wide assortment of candle accessories, enamelware, crockery, homemade fudge, soaps and coffees. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour (40 minutes) west on Highway S18B, north on Highway 14, west on Highway 6 to Hastings.

[Hastings Museum/Lied Super Screen Theater/J.M. McDonald Planetarium](#), 1330 N. Burlington Ave., 402-461-4629. Hastings is a lively community that regularly caters to the group tour market. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History has one of the best natural history collections in the region, including the “People of the Plains” exhibit from prehistoric times to historic trails and pioneer towns.

Hey Kool-Aid! *Kool-Aid: Discover the Dream* is an interactive exhibit that tells the story of the birth of one of America’s favorite soft drinks. Lifelike murals and replicas, a fiber-optic river of Kool-Aid, interactive kiosks, and the original Kool-Aid Man costume help to tell the story.

The *Groundwater Discovery Adventure* teaches visitors about the Ogallala Aquifer (a large underground water reserve located underneath the Great Plains region) and the importance of groundwater to the settlement and development of the central plains. Some displays in this exhibit include a floor-to-ceiling mural of a prairie landscape, paleontology dig areas, a simulated spring that bubbles from the Ogallala Aquifer and through a raised stream into the room, a walking bridge, teepees and an 1857 log cabin. An interactive water display allows visitors to dam water in a stream, lift gates to irrigate crop areas, and divert the stream to flood a miniature town.

The J.M. McDonald Planetarium will schedule special show times for groups. Also located there, the former IMAX Theatre has been upgraded to the Lied Super Screen Theater. Documentary and full-length feature films are shown on the five-story high screen to provide an incredible viewing experience. Suggested tour time at the museum: 2 hours.

Don’t leave Hastings without spending time browsing around for that perfect gift or souvenir at [Nebraska Food & Gift](#), 208 S. Burlington Ave., 402-462-8883. This exceptional gift store represents more than 170 Nebraska communities and features an eclectic variety of locally made products.

Colorful banners hang throughout the city during the summer proclaiming Hastings as the official birthplace of Kool-Aid. The local visitors bureau staff, 402-461-8400, can arrange unique dining experiences, tours of businesses and historic landmarks, evening entertainment and overnight accommodations for your group.

40 minutes (26 miles) north on Highway 281 to Grand Island.

Experience pioneer life on 200 acres at the [Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer](#), 308-385-5316, which is one of the top 10 living history museums in the country. You can walk through an 1890s railroad town, push a handcart on the Mormon Trail, have a better understanding of American Indians at the Pawnee Earth Lodge, or explore the birth cottage of Oscar-winning actor Henry Fonda. A variety of special events are offered at the museum throughout the year. Add some mystery to your tour! Was there an island in Nebraska? Why is Grand Island a “train hot spot?” Who are the internationally known

Abbotts? Add a historic tour of the famous and infamous characters of Grand Island's early days. See farming past to present with a look at local farms, "the business" behind agriculture, and tour some of the nation's top agricultural manufacturing plants. The **Stuhr Museum Gift Shop** offers fantastic souvenirs and gifts. Tour time: 1-3 hours.

Grand Island abounds with art galleries, specialty stores and other shops where you can buy that hard-to-find gift or souvenir to remember your trip. Some shops you must make time for are **Prairie Winds Art Center**, 112 W. 3rd St., 308-381-4001, **The Warehouse Gallery**, 381 N. Walnut St., 308-382-8589, **The Gallery**, 3535 W. 13th St., 308-382-8701, **Maudie's Stained Glass**, 301 W. 3rd St., 308-382-1993, **Heart of the Country**, 311 W. 3rd St., 308-382-2861, and **Bartenbach's Galleries**, 209 N. Locust St., 308-382-7575.

30 minutes (16 miles) west on Highway 30 to Alda.

The [Nebraska Bird Observatory at the Crane Meadows Visitors Center](#), 888-382-1820, in Alda (6 miles west of Grand Island) offers a variety of Sandhill crane-related activities on 250 acres of pristine or restored prairie along the Platte River. Witness the awesome sights and sounds of "Wings Over the Platte"—an award-winning celebration of the world's largest crane migration (a half million Sandhill cranes). Year-round programs and special events are available in the interpretive center. Suggested tour time: ½ hour (programs), 2-3 hours (guided tours), and 2 hours (Crane Lore Round the Campfire). As you visit the sights around Grand Island, keep your eyes peeled for 30 majestic Sandhill cranes all decked out for **Crane Mania**.

30 minutes (14 miles) west on Highway 30 to Gibbon.

Make sure you visit [Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center](#), 308-468-5282, near Gibbon, 30 minutes southeast of Kearney off Interstate 80. This 1,250-acre wildlife sanctuary is located on the banks of the Platte River. In early spring, more than one-half million Sandhill cranes pass through the area on their northward migration. Trips to crane viewing blinds are available every morning and evening in March and the first week in April. The Nicolson Audubon Center offers stunning views of the Platte River, interpretive displays, gift shop, and trails. An interesting tidbit about the facility is that it was constructed entirely of hay bales. Reservations are required for crane season viewing blinds in March. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. [George Spencer Vineyard and Tasting Room](#), 7155 Pawnee Rd., 308-468-5612, is a central Nebraska treasure that features internationally acclaimed Nebraska wines. Wine tasting, vineyard tours, a delicious dinner, and gift shop are yours to enjoy. Reservations for dinner are required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

25 minutes (18 miles) west on Highway 30 to Kearney.

Just east of Kearney, you will literally drive under one of Nebraska's newest group tour attractions—[The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument](#), 877-511-2724. Locally known as the Arch, no tour of Nebraska is complete without a stop at the only tourist attraction in America that is located over a federal interstate highway. Built to commemorate the westward expansion of America, the Arch highlights the west's original American Indian habitants, the Mormon, Oregon and California Trails and the

pioneers who traveled these early routes. Other exhibits highlight the expansion of the railroad that founded many Nebraska towns, the Overland Stagecoach and Pony Express, the Lincoln Highway, as well as and modern marvels, such as the telegraph and fiber optics. Your group will learn about the history of transportation and communication along the famous Platte River Road through magnificent interactive exhibits and stunning audio/visual effects. The Arch also includes a food court and gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1-1½ hours.

See Nebraska in a whole new way at the [Museum of Nebraska Art \(MONA\)](#), 2401 Central Ave., 308-865-8559, which features works of art that highlight Nebraska and the Great Plains in 11 exciting galleries. This impressive museum is housed in a 1911 Renaissance revival historic post office that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to works by great artists, such as George Catlin, Robert Henri, J. Laurie Wallace, Grant Reynard, and John Falter, MONA boasts an original collection of works by John J. Audubon that focuses on indigenous Nebraska wildlife. The museum's permanent collection includes more than 5,000 works by artists of regional, national and international importance, prints and a number of impressive rotating collections. Visitors can relax and stroll outdoors through the Cliff Hillegass Sculpture Garden and browse through the museum shop for that perfect gift. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

For the nature lover, be sure to stop at [Cabela's](#), 3600 Highway 30, 308-237-7999, in Kearney—the “World's Foremost Outdoor Outfitter.” This is Cabela's second Nebraska store; the original is in Sidney. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

Wander through the stately mansion of one of Kearney's most influential people. George Washington Frank, who developed projects that helped Kearney grow in the late 1800s, built the three-story [George E. Frank House](#), 2010 W. 24th St., 308-865-8284, in 1889. An annual Christmas walk at the Frank House starts after Thanksgiving and lasts for two weeks. Tours of the house can be arranged for groups throughout the year. The mansion's Tiffany window was one of few such windows located in private residences in the Great Plains region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. A Union Pacific depot, train caboose and six turn-of-the-century buildings at the [Trails and Rails Museum](#), 710 W. 11th St., 308-234-3041, highlight the importance that the railroad had on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. As you explore Kearney, be on the lookout for **Cranes on Parade**—6-foot fiberglass cranes, each one a unique and original work of art.

35 minutes (23 miles) south on Highway 44, east on Highway 6 to Minden.

Minden is home to the world-famous [Harold Warp Pioneer Village](#), 800-445-4447. Twenty-six buildings, including a sod house, one-room school, Pony Express station, depot, general store and an 1884 church make up the village. It is home to the oldest existing Buick and 350 other antique autos, 20 historic aircraft, 100 vintage tractors, guns, motorcycles, snowmobiles, boats, buggies, trains and trolleys. The historic crafts of spinning, weaving and broom-making are demonstrated for visitors year-round. If you come during the summer, plan to enjoy a nostalgic ride on an 1800-era steam carousel. A restaurant and gift shop is also on-site. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Be sure to also visit the [Minden Opera House](#), 322 E. 5th St., 308-832-0588, located in downtown Minden, only a few blocks from Pioneer Village. Built in 1891, the building has been restored into a beautiful multi-purpose facility that attracts live performances from around the country. The Opera House can cater breakfast for your group as well. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Minden knows how to celebrate Christmas. In fact, it's officially known as the "Christmas City." During the holiday season, the downtown district is ablaze with more than 12,000 lights for the annual "Light of the World" Christmas Pageant. This truly impressive sight has been a holiday staple in Minden since 1946.

Overnight at Minden's Pioneer Village.

Day 3



Nebraska Prairie Museum, Holdrege

40 minutes (23 miles) west on Highway 6 to Holdrege.

During World War II, this region of Nebraska housed several German prisoner of war (POW) camps. Many POWs settled in the area and became productive and valued residents. The [Nebraska Prairie Museum](#), 308-995-5015, in Holdrege has an impressive collection from Camp Atlanta, originally located five miles from Holdrege. Works of art by POWs, as well as a variety of other exhibits, are displayed. The museum also has several historical buildings on its grounds. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (34 miles) west on Highway 6, south on Highway 46 to Stamford.

Relive the days of the American Plains Indians at **Living History Teepee**, 308-868-9400. Agricultural tours, a working family farm, and pumpkin patch will delight everyone on your group tour. Spend a relaxing autumn afternoon searching for just the right pumpkin or enjoying a hayrack ride at **Pumpkin Corners**, 308-868-4121. Suggested tour time at both attractions: 1½ hour.

50 minutes (34 miles) west on Highway 89, north on Highway 283, west on Highway 6 to Holbrook.

Visit the [GROW Nebraska](#) store, 416 Central Ave., 888-476-9632, in Holbrook where your tour can purchase locally made and Nebraska-made crafts, products and souvenirs. Call ahead to make sure the store is open for your tour's arrival.

15 minutes (9 miles) west on Highway 6 to Cambridge.

Two outstanding tourist attractions in Cambridge are the [Cambridge Bed and Breakfast](#), 606 Parker St., 308-697-3220, and the [Sondra L. Jonson Studios](#), 716 Nelson St., 800-720-8574. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Cambridge Bed and Breakfast is a neoclassical style, three-story home, completed in 1910. The house's owners host a living history tour experience where your tour can learn about the Faling family (the house's original owners), life in rural Nebraska, neoclassical architecture, and marvel at the house's beautifully designed interior. Special events, such as high tea, dessert or an ice cream social can be provided to groups of 10 or more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Between 1998 and 2002, Sondra L. Jonson created more than 14 life-sized sculptures to display in six states. Her small bronze statues appear in collections throughout the United States and Europe, including the White House and the Vatican. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. For more information on tours in Cambridge, contact the Cambridge Economic Development office at 308-697-3711.

35 minutes (26 miles) west on Highway 6 to McCook.

McCook is southwest Nebraska's commerce center and offers excellent restaurants, shops and boutiques to explore, as well as one of the most charming historical downtown districts in the state. One of the nation's most influential senators, George Norris, was born in McCook. An independent thinker, Norris helped create the Rural Electrification Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority Act (which brought electricity to many rural parts of the country), and the one-house legislative body in Nebraska—the Unicameral. The [George Norris Home](#), 706 Norris Ave., 308-345-8484, is a branch of the Nebraska State Historical Society. Groups can view artifacts from Norris' life as well as memorabilia from his 45 years in Congress. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Museum of the High Plains**, 421 Norris Ave., 308-345-3661, boasts a number of fine exhibits, including pioneer artifacts from the late 1800s, historic photographs, clothing and rooms devoted to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Senator George Norris, and three former Nebraska governors (Frank Morrison, Ralph Brooks, and Ben Nelson). The museum also has an impressive model railroad exhibit to demonstrate the railroad's impact on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Hands down! **Sehnert's Bakery and Bieroc Café**, 312 Norris Ave., 308-345-6500, has some of the best cheesecake in Nebraska, possibly the entire U.S! In addition to cheesecake, your group can enjoy a variety of other mouthwatering dishes and desserts.

McCook offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Tour 26

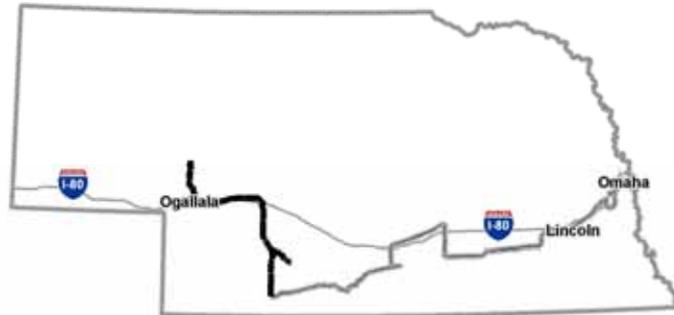
Get Your Kicks on Highway 6

Extended Tour of Southwestern Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of southwest Nebraska to extend the *Get Your Kicks on Highway 6* tour:



20th Century War Memorial, North Platte



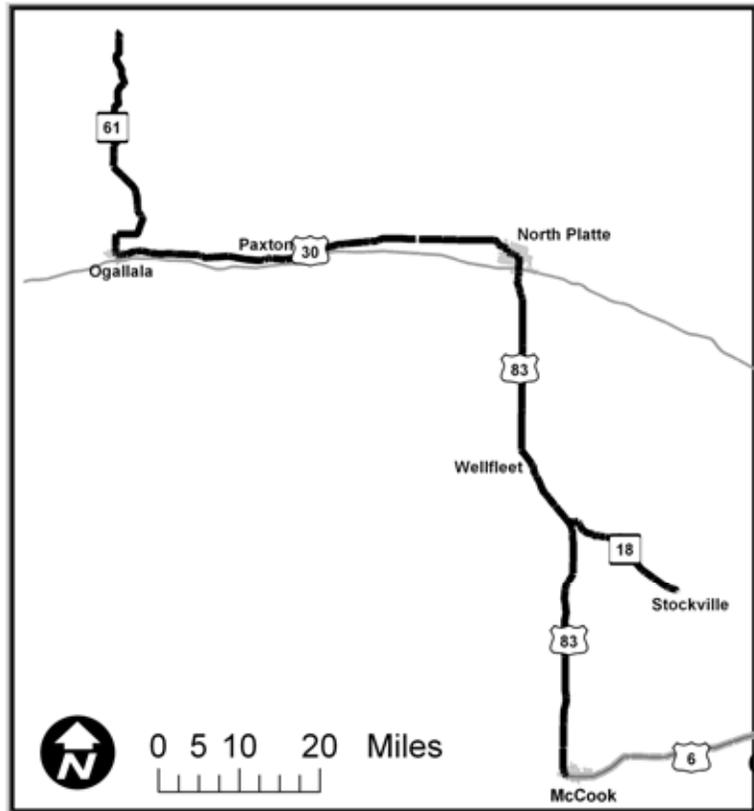
90 minutes (51 miles) north on Highway 83, east on Highways 23 and 18 to Stockville.
[Perk's Prairie Paradise](#), 308-367-8782, is truly one of Nebraska's hidden historic gems. This privately-owned tribute to Nebraska's pioneer spirit and history boasts 19 structures that visitors can walk through, including a one-room schoolhouse, sod house, church, saloon, two-story house and a replicated "pioneer street" featuring a boardwalk along false building facades. The buildings depict a surveyor's office, millinery shop, dentist office and carpenter's shop, among others. You gotta see it to believe it! A refreshment break can be provided. Suggested tour time: 2½-3 hours.

50 minutes (26 miles) west on Highways 18 and 23, north on Highway 183 to Wellfleet.
Wellfleet is home to a unique Nebraska attraction, [Dancing Leaf Earth Lodge and Cultural Learning Center](#), 6100 E. Opal Springs Road, 308-963-4233. Your group will experience primitive American Indian life. Groups may enjoy nature hikes, canoeing and delicious buffalo stew dinners. Enjoy the earth lodge and learn about the importance of the medicine wheel. Guided tours of the area can be scheduled with prior notice. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

35 minutes (27 miles) north on Highway 183 to North Platte.
Birthplace of the rodeo, North Platte is a great group tour stop. Colonel William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody spent many years in North Platte where he originated the rodeo. His ranch, [Buffalo Bill State Historical Park](#), 308-535-8035, is the focal point of the city. You can tour his house, as well as his beautifully maintained historic barn. Suggested

tour time: 1½ hour. During the third week of June, the entire community dons their western duds for NEBRASKAland Days, 308-532-7939. It's 10 days of western fun, ethnic celebrations and live entertainment! If a hands-on experience with trains is what you want, don't miss the **Railroad Museum**, 308-532-4729, in Cody Park where you will find Union Pacific's Challenger 3977—one of the largest steam locomotives ever built. Elk, peacock, geese, deer and a variety of other critters call the park home. Hint: they'll like you better if you feed them. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Made famous by the book *Once Upon a Town* by Bob Greene, the North Platte World War II Canteen display is housed at the **Lincoln County Historical Museum**, 2403 N. Buffalo Bill Ave., 308-534-6579. The interpretative display details the story of the Canteen and its volunteers who, for 51 months, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week throughout World War II, met every U.S. military train to provide food, treats and hospitality to passengers. A community of less than 15,000 served more than six million service men and women free of charge. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Don't miss the [20th Century Veterans' Memorial](#), 2811 S. Jeffers St., 308-532-6579, which is dedicated to the



men and women who have served their country. The memorial features larger than life bronze statues and wall murals that honor the five branches of the armed forces. A "Walk of Honor" that is lined by thousands of commemorative bricks shows the names of veterans. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

You can witness railroad history in the making at **Union Pacific Railroad's Bailey Yard**, 308-532-4729. The largest rail car classification complex in the world, it stretches eight miles and covers nearly 3,000 acres. Get a panoramic view of this spectacular sight from the visitor observation deck and listen to an 8-minute audio presentation about this immense railroad facility. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Conveniently located at the intersection of Interstate 80 and Highway 83, [Fort Cody Trading Post](#), 308-532-8081, is one of the state's largest and engagingly eclectic gift shops. Antiques, leather goods, jewelry, western gifts, novelties, books, clothing, gag

gifts and a variety of other fun gifts and souvenirs can be picked up at Fort Cody. If it's fun, it's at Fort Cody! Make sure you walk through the Old West Museum in the back of the store to view the miniature version of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show—a 20,000-piece hand-carved animated display. Fort Cody is a definite must-see! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Artist's Co-op Art and Gift Gallery**, 308-532-4729, is a must-see showcase of original work of west central Nebraska artists. Five large gallery rooms and an outdoor sculpture garden provide great opportunities to view the works of art at your own leisure. Workshops are hosted by artist members and nationally acclaimed professional artists. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (33 miles) west on Highway 30 to Paxton.

It's off to one of Nebraska's most famous watering holes—**Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge**, 308-239-4500, in Paxton. Ole's is known for its impressive collection of mounted animals, as well as quality food and exceptional hospitality that attracts many group tours to this unique restaurant. There is plenty of room for groups, and the delicious food will bring you back again and again. Suggested time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (21 miles) west on Highway 30 to Ogallala.

Once a bustling cowboy town with a very colorful reputation, Ogallala is now a family-friendly town that embraces its colorful western past. Be sure to make time to visit **Front Street**, 519 E. 1st St., 308-284-6000, to watch **The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**—Nebraska's longest-running summer theatre. Belly up to the bar for a sarsaparilla or other beverage to wet your whistle while you watch showgirls and desperados perform. Plan a visit to the **Petrified Wood Gallery**, 525 E. 1st St., 308-284-9996, after the show—one of Nebraska's most unique museums. This gallery of natural history specializes in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts. The Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office, 204 East A St, 308-284-4066, can arrange for you to visit legendary **Boot Hill** or the stately **Mansion on the Hill**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

Ogallala also is home to "Big Mac" or **Lake McConaughy**—the largest inland lake in the region, 308-284-8800. The lake is a water lover's paradise and offers white sand beaches, excellent fishing and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the water. The **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, 308-284-8800, is Nebraska's first water museum and interprets the significance of water to the state's past, present and future. With advance notice, the Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office can help arrange a beach party, boat rides and a tour of **Kingsley Dam**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. From late December to early March, the **Bald Eagle Viewing Center**, 308-284-2332, is open below the dam and is one of the best locations in the region to view these magnificent birds.

View one of the largest, privately held lilac collections in the country—**The Lilacs of Meadowlark Hill**, 308-284-2524. The best time to visit is May during "Lilac Time," when the air is heavy with the perfume wafting off these beautiful flowers. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 61 to Haythorn Ranch.

Take a step back in time at a working cattle ranch located in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills, north of Ogallala. The historical [Haythorn Ranch Tours and Figure Traditions Event Center](#), 308-355-4000, maintains a herd of more than 500 ranch-bred horses that are used in day-to-day ranching activities. It is the largest breeder of quarter horses in the U.S. and the second largest in the world. Call for reservations for large and small group tour packages. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Tour 27

Westward Ho!

Following The Oregon and Mormon Trails



Willa Cather State Historical Site, Red Cloud



Day 1

Enter Nebraska from Kansas Interstate 29 at Highway 159 to Falls City.

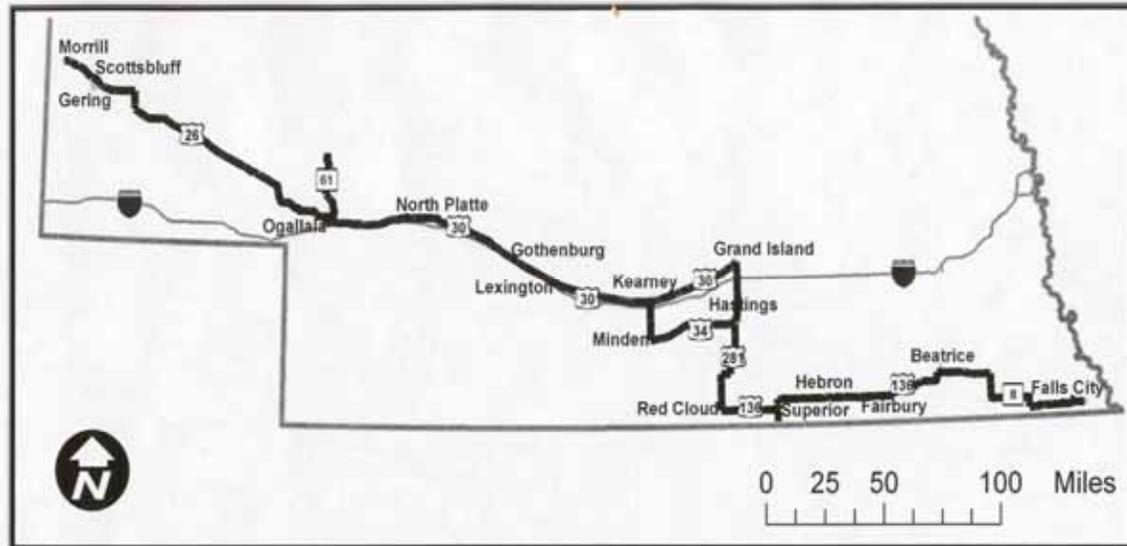
Two of Falls City's best attractions are the **Bell-Jenne House**, 402-245-3481, and the **Richardson County Historical Museum**, 402-245-3481. The Bell-Jenne House is an impressive two-story brick Italianate-style house built in 1881 and features eight period piece rooms to give your group tour a glimpse into life in the late 19th century. The Richardson County Historical Museum highlights the history and people of Falls City and the region. With advance planning, tours of both facilities can be scheduled. Suggested tour time of each attraction: 1 hour.

1 hour (41 miles) west on Highway 8 to Pawnee City.

Home of film stars Irish McCalla and Harold Lloyd, Pawnee City also is home to a very impressive historical museum complex. The [Pawnee County Historical Museum](#), 402-852-3131, is comprised of 16 historic buildings that display antique furnishings, tools, vintage vehicles, rare photos, books, unique handcraft items and a variety of other artifacts. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. One of the city's newest and most unique attractions is the **Toy Pedal Clinic**, 402-852-2655, a museum dedicated to this fun toy of yesteryear. The museum displays more than 450 toy pedal cars, tractors, airplanes and a host of other small toys. Other collections at the museum include a John Deere room, kiddie car collection, kerosene lamps, quilts, bicycles, salt and pepper shakers and doll collection. Your tour also can observe museum staff while they restore old pedal cars. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Before leaving Pawnee City, stop by **Hallie's Restaurant and Lounge**, 604 9th St., 402-852-2445, for a yummy slice of homemade pie.

Enjoy the only winery and microbrewery in Nebraska! The [Schilling Bridge Winery and Microbrewery](#), 62193 710th Rd., 402-852-2400, offers Nebraska produced wines and handcrafted microbrews surrounded by more than eight acres of grapevines. The centerpiece of the landscape is an 1890 Limestone Rock Island Railroad bridge. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Also check out the **restored Harold Lloyd home**, 402-852-3131, in Burchard, 12 miles west of Pawnee City. The front room of the house contains memorabilia from Lloyd's life and acting career. Upon request, you can set up time for your group to watch a Harold Lloyd movie in his former home. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.



1 hour (42 miles) west on Highway 8, north on Highway 99, west on Highways 4 and 136 to Beatrice.

Beatrice is a growing city with a wonderful heritage. One of Nebraska's most outstanding attractions is located near Beatrice—[Homestead National Monument of America](#), 8523 W. Highway 4, 402-223-3514. President Abraham Lincoln signed the country's first Homestead Act, which gave Americans free plots of land as long as they agreed to farm it for a specific period of time. One of the first homesteaders to sign up was Daniel Freeman who settled in the area now encompassed by Homestead National Monument of America. Visitors can see artifacts from early pioneer life and learn what it was like to live in the often-harsh environment. There are hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses that have never been plowed, and living history demonstrations to delight and educate you. In the next few years, the facility will be expanding to include a new state-of-the-art research center to house homesteading records. An outstanding bookstore that boasts an impressive variety of books for all ages is located on-site. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The [Gage County Museum](#), 402-228-1679, in Beatrice houses many outstanding collections pertaining to the area, such as an exhibit on Beatrice native and Hollywood actor Robert Taylor. The city's excellent selection of restaurants and fine community theatre naturally cater to the group tour market. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. **Cedar Creek Pottery**, 37639 S. 80th Road, 402-228-0138, housed in an old country church, is filled with handcrafted pottery and floral creations. Demonstrations are provided upon request. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Downtown Beatrice boasts a thriving downtown district that offers a variety of different shopping opportunities.

45 minutes (28 miles) west on Highway 136 to Fairbury.

Fairbury boasts more original brick-lined streets than any other community in Nebraska, and its downtown district offers many excellent shopping and dining opportunities, such as historic Fairbury Square. [Stagecoach Mall](#), 510 E. St., 402-729-4034, boasts a number of unique crafts and antiques. Be sure to stop and see the block-long Campbell Brothers Circus Mural that was painted on the side of Globe Rexall Drugstore. A short drive east of town is **Rock Creek Station State Historical Park**, 402-729-5777, which offers one of the best sites to see original wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail. The area served as a resting place for pioneers, and entrepreneurs set up trading posts there to provide goods for thousands of pioneers trekking west. In its heyday, Rock Creek also was a busy Pony Express station. In addition to its historical significance along the Oregon Trail and Pony Express, Rock Creek Station may be best known as the place where “Wild” Bill Hickok gained notoriety for killing his first victims. Suggested tour time: 1 hour (Fairbury), 1 hour (Rock Creek).

Make sure to spend some time at the [New Earth Clay Pottery and Art Gallery](#), 515 4th St., 402-729-3034, in downtown Fairbury. This pottery business has been around for more than 25 years, and features more than 25 Nebraska artists’ artwork, including pottery, ceramics, glass, sculpture, paintings, photographs and jewelry. Pottery demonstrations and tours are available upon request.

Steele City Historical District, 402-729-5131, east of Rock Creek Station on Highway 112, features four old restored buildings—a 1900 stone blacksmith’s shop, 1902 stone livery stable, 1880s stone Baptist church, and 1890 brick bank museum. The third Sunday in September, the tiny village hosts thousands of bargain hunters and history buffs who come for the annual flea market and antique farm machinery show.

40 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 136 to Hebron.

Travel down the **Heritage Highway Scenic Byway** (Highway 136) to Hebron, home of the **World’s Largest Porch Swing**, 402-768-7156. This one-of-a-kind, unique attraction is a great group photo opportunity! There are wonderful shops in town and the Hebron Chamber of Commerce can arrange a refreshment break for the group. Suggested tour time: 30-45 minutes.

1 hour (37 miles) west on Highway 136, south on Highway 14 to Superior.

The name says it all...Superior! This small, rural community is known as Nebraska’s “Victorian Capitol,” thanks to Lady Vestey. She started life as Evelene Brodstone in Superior. During the Great Depression, she moved to Chicago and worked at the Vestey Meat Packing Company as a stenographer. She worked her way up in the company and was, at one time, the highest paid female executive in the world. Although she was a world traveler, she never forgot her roots in Nebraska. Learn more about Lady Vestey and her life at the **Nuckolls County Museum**, 612 E. 6th St., 402-879-4144. The museum also boasts a wonderful collection of American Indian artifacts, some which belonged to Chief Red Cloud.

To commemorate Lady Vestey's life, Superior has concentrated on promoting its Victorian charm, and offers tours of Victorian homes. Your tour also can enjoy a Victorian tea and a trip through a local doll factory. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Enjoy a tasty glass of wine at the newly opened [Meyer Vineyards](#), 200 W. 15th St., 402.879.3001. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (29 miles) north on Highway 14, west on Highway 136 to Red Cloud.

Follow the **Heritage Highway Scenic Byway** (Highway 136) to Red Cloud—the childhood home of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather. Cather wrote eloquently about life on the Great Plains and many of the buildings and rural characteristics that visitors see today are featured in her books. Her childhood home, as well as several historic buildings throughout town, is open for tours. The [Red Cloud Opera House](#), 411 N. Webster St., 402-746-2641, has been renovated and includes a bookstore, art gallery, theatre and a variety of Cather memorabilia. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. The **Webster County Historical Museum**, 721 W. 4th St., 402-746-2444, housed in a stately mansion and two other adjacent buildings, is one of Nebraska's nicest county museums. An impressive mounted animal display in the attic is a must see. Guided tours of the museum grounds can be arranged. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

1 hour (41 miles) north on Highway 281 to Hastings.

[Hastings Museum/Lied Super Screen Theater/J.M. McDonald Planetarium](#), 1330 N. Burlington Ave., 402-461-4629. Hastings is a lively community that regularly caters to the group tour market. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History has one of the best natural history collections in the region, including the "People of the Plains" exhibit from prehistoric times to historic trails and pioneer towns.

Hey Kool-Aid! *Kool-Aid: Discover the Dream* is an interactive exhibit that tells the story of the birth of one of America's favorite soft drinks. Lifelike murals and replicas, a fiber-optic river of Kool-Aid, interactive kiosks, and the original Kool-Aid Man costume help to tell the story.

The *Groundwater Discovery Adventure* teaches visitors about the Ogallala Aquifer (a large underground water reserve located underneath the Great Plains region) and the importance of groundwater to the settlement and development of the central plains. Some displays in this exhibit include a floor-to-ceiling mural of a prairie landscape, paleontology dig areas, a simulated spring that bubbles from the Ogallala Aquifer and through a raised stream into the room, a walking bridge, teepees and an 1857 log cabin. An interactive water display allows visitors to dam water in a stream, lift gates to irrigate crop areas, and divert the stream to flood a miniature town.

The J.M. McDonald Planetarium will schedule special show times for groups. Also located there, the former IMAX Theatre has been upgraded to the Lied Super Screen Theater. Documentary and full-length feature films are shown on the five-story high screen to provide an incredible viewing experience. Suggested tour time at the museum: 2 hours.

Don't leave Hastings without spending time browsing around for that perfect gift or souvenir at [Nebraska Food & Gift](#), 208 S. Burlington Ave., 402-462-8883. This exceptional gift store represents more than 170 Nebraska communities and features an eclectic variety of locally made products.

Colorful banners hang throughout the city during the summer proclaiming Hastings as the official birthplace of Kool-Aid. The local visitors bureau staff, 402-461-8400, can arrange unique dining experiences, tours of businesses and historic landmarks, evening entertainment and overnight accommodations for your group.

45 minutes (26 miles) north on Highway 281 to Grand Island.

Experience pioneer life on 200 acres at the [Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer](#), 308-385-5316, which is one of the top 10 living history museums in the country. You can walk through an 1890s railroad town, push a handcart on the Mormon Trail, have a better understanding of American Indians at the Pawnee Earth Lodge, or explore the birth cottage of Oscar-winning actor Henry Fonda. A variety of special events are offered at the museum throughout the year. Add some mystery to your tour! Was there an island in Nebraska? Why is Grand Island a "train hot spot?" Who are the internationally known Abbotts? Add a historic tour of the famous and infamous characters of Grand Island's early days. See farming past to present with a look at local farms, "the business" behind agriculture, and tour some of the nation's top agricultural manufacturing plants. The **Stuhr Museum Gift Shop** offers fantastic souvenirs and gifts. Tour time: 1-3 hours.

Grand Island abounds with art galleries, specialty stores and other shops where you can buy that hard-to-find gift or souvenir to remember your trip. Some shops you must make time for are **Prairie Winds Art Center**, 112 W. 3rd St., 308-381-4001, **The Warehouse Gallery**, 381 N. Walnut St., 308-382-8589, **The Gallery**, 3535 W. 13th St., 308-382-8701, **Maudie's Stained Glass**, 301 W. 3rd St., 308-382-1993, **Heart of the Country**, 311 W. 3rd St., 308-382-2861, and **Bartenbach's Galleries**, 209 N. Locust St., 308-382-7575.

The [Nebraska Bird Observatory at the Crane Meadows Visitors Center](#), 888-382-1820, in Alda (6 miles west of Grand Island) offers a variety of Sandhill crane-related activities on 250 acres of pristine or restored prairie along the Platte River. Witness the awesome sights and sounds of "Wings Over the Platte"—an award-winning celebration of the world's largest crane migration (a half million Sandhill cranes). Year-round programs and special events are available in the interpretive center. Suggested tour time: ½ hour (programs), 2-3 hours (guided tours), and 2 hours (Crane Lore Round the Campfire). As you visit the sights around Grand Island, keep your eyes peeled for 30 majestic Sandhill cranes all decked out for **Crane Mania**.

1 hour (51 miles) west on Highway 30 to Kearney.

Just east of Kearney, you will literally drive under one of Nebraska's newest group tour attractions—[The Great Platte River Road Archway Monument](#), 877-511-2724. Locally known as the Arch, no tour of Nebraska is complete without a stop at the only tourist attraction in America that is located over a federal interstate highway. Built to

commemorate the westward expansion of America, the Arch highlights the west's original American Indian habitants, the Mormon, Oregon and California Trails and the pioneers who traveled these early routes. Other exhibits highlight the expansion of the railroad that founded many Nebraska towns, the Overland Stagecoach and Pony Express, the Lincoln Highway, as well as modern marvels, such as the telegraph and fiber optics. Your group will learn about the history of transportation and communication along the famous Platte River Road through magnificent interactive exhibits and stunning audio/visual effects. The Arch also includes a food court and gift shop. Suggested tour time: 1-1½ hours.

See Nebraska in a whole new way at the [Museum of Nebraska Art \(MONA\)](#), 2401 Central Ave., 308-865-8559, which features works of art that highlight Nebraska and the Great Plains in 11 exciting galleries. This impressive museum is housed in a 1911 Renaissance revival historic post office that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to works by great artists, such as George Catlin, Robert Henri, J. Laurie Wallace, Grant Reynard, and John Falter, MONA boasts an original collection of works by John J. Audubon that focuses on indigenous Nebraska wildlife. The museum's permanent collection includes more than 5,000 works by artists of regional, national and international importance, prints and a number of impressive rotating collections. Visitors can relax and stroll outdoors through the Cliff Hillegass Sculpture Garden and browse through the museum shop for that perfect gift. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

For the nature lover, be sure to stop at [Cabela's](#), 3600 Highway 30, 308-237-7999, in Kearney—the “World's Foremost Outdoor Outfitter.” This is Cabela's second Nebraska store; the original is in Sidney. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

Wander through the stately mansion of one of Kearney's most influential people. George Washington Frank, who developed projects that helped Kearney grow in the late 1800s, built the three-story [George E. Frank House](#), 2010 W. 24th St., 308-865-8284, in 1889. An annual Christmas walk at the Frank House starts after Thanksgiving and lasts for two weeks. Tours of the house can be arranged for groups throughout the year. The mansion's Tiffany window was one of few such windows located in private residences in the Great Plains region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. A Union Pacific depot, train caboose and six turn-of-the-century buildings at the [Trails and Rails Museum](#), 710 W. 11th St., 308-234-3041, highlight the importance that the railroad had on the region. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. As you explore Kearney, be on the lookout for **Cranes on Parade**—6-foot fiberglass cranes, each one a unique and original work of art.

The Tri-Cities Region of Kearney, Hastings and Grand Island offer many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 2



Bailey Yard, North Platte

To Minden:

From Kearney: 35 minutes (23 miles) south on Highway 44, east on Highway 6.

From Hastings: 50 minutes (32 miles) west on Highway 6.

From Grand Island: 1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 281, west on Highway 6.

Minden is home to the world-famous [Harold Warp Pioneer Village](#), 800-445-4447. Twenty-six buildings, including a sod house, one-room school, Pony Express station, depot, general store and an 1884 church make up the village. It is home to the oldest existing Buick and 350 other antique autos, 20 historic aircraft, 100 vintage tractors, guns, motorcycles, snowmobiles, boats, buggies, trains and trolleys. The historic crafts of spinning, weaving and broom-making are demonstrated for visitors year-round. If you come during the summer, plan to enjoy a nostalgic ride on an 1800-era steam carousel. A restaurant and gift shop is also on-site. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Be sure to also visit the [Minden Opera House](#), 322 E. 5th St., 308-832-0588, located in downtown Minden, only a few blocks from Pioneer Village. Built in 1891, the building has been restored into a beautiful multi-purpose facility that attracts live performances from around the country. The Opera House can cater breakfast for your group as well. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes. Minden knows how to celebrate Christmas. In fact, it's officially known as the "Christmas City." During the holiday season, the downtown district is ablaze with more than 12,000 lights for the annual "Light of the World" Christmas Pageant. This truly impressive sight has been a holiday staple in Minden since 1946.

35 minutes (23 miles) west on Highway 6, north on Highway 44 to Fort Kearny State Historical Park.

Located south of the city of Kearney, [Fort Kearny State Historical Park](#), 308-865-5305, is an impressive state historic park. In its 23 years as a military post, Fort Kearny came to symbolize westward expansion and development. It was the first fort built to protect travelers on the Oregon Trail. It also was the headquarters for the military and civil governments, an important stage station, a home station of the Pony Express, an outfitting depot for numerous American Indian campaigns, and home of the famed Pawnee Scouts under the leadership of Frank and Luther North. Visitors can explore a

recreated stockade area and view historical artifacts of the Oregon Trail. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

[Fort Kearny State Recreational Area](#), 1020 V Road, 308-865-5305, is located only a short drive from the state historical park. If you visit Nebraska during March or early April, you can witness the spectacular annual Sandhill crane migration. Fort Kearny State Recreational Area is an ideal bird viewing area. An abandoned railroad line across the Platte River has been converted into a hiking and biking trail and provides excellent bird viewing opportunities for your group. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

45 minutes (41 miles) west on Highway 30 to Lexington.

The [Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles](#), 308-324-6329, is an impressive collection of military equipment and machinery. Suggested tour: 1 hour. Lexington also boasts two wineries—[Mac's Creek Vineyards and Winery](#), 308-324-0440, and [Millenium Wines Vineyard](#), 308-324-6094. So make sure you take time to sample their excellent Nebraska-produced wines and tour the vineyards and production facilities. Explore the history of Dawson County at the [Dawson County Historical Museum](#), 805 N. Taft St., 308-324-5340. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (30 miles) west on Highway 30 to the Swedish town of Gothenburg.

One of the few Pony Express stations, 308-537-3505, still standing in Nebraska is located in Gothenburg's charming city park. Original historic items are on display and your clients can send postcards to friends and family back home postmarked with the original Pony Express stamp. The **Sod House Museum**, 308-537-2680, at the Gothenburg Interstate 80 exit shows visitors how the pioneers lived and survived on the treeless Great Plains. Both attractions have gift shops. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 45 minutes.

30 minutes (24 miles) west on Highway 30 to Maxwell.

Established in 1863, [Fort McPherson National Cemetery](#), 308-582-4433, near Maxwell is Nebraska's only national cemetery. The fort provided protection for the building of the railroad and settlers on their westward trek. Today, it is one of the most beautiful cemeteries you will see and the final resting place for more than 6,700 war veterans from the Civil War to modern conflicts. Group tours of the cemetery are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

20 minutes (16 miles) west on Highway 30 to North Platte.

Birthplace of the rodeo, North Platte is a great group tour stop. Colonel William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody spent many years in North Platte where he originated the rodeo. His ranch, [Buffalo Bill State Historical Park](#), 308-535-8035, is the focal point of the city. You can tour his house, as well as his beautifully maintained historic barn. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. During the third week of June, the entire community dons their western duds for NEBRASKAland Days, 308-532-7939. It's 10 days of western fun, ethnic celebrations and live entertainment! If a hands-on experience with trains is what you want, don't miss the **Railroad Museum**, 308-532-4729, in Cody Park where you will find Union Pacific's Challenger 3977—one of the largest steam locomotives ever

built. Elk, peacock, geese, deer and a variety of other critters call the park home. Hint: they'll like you better if you feed them. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Made famous by the book *Once Upon a Town* by Bob Greene, the North Platte World War II Canteen display is housed at the **Lincoln County Historical Museum**, 2403 N. Buffalo Bill Ave., 308-534-6579. The interpretative display details the story of the Canteen and its volunteers who, for 51 months, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week throughout World War II, met every U.S. military train to provide food, treats and hospitality to passengers. A community of less than 15,000 served more than six million service men and women free of charge. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Don't miss the [20th Century Veterans' Memorial](#), 2811 S. Jeffers St., 308-532-6579, which is dedicated to the men and women who have served their country. The memorial features larger than life bronze statues and wall murals that honor the five branches of the armed forces. A "Walk of Honor" that is lined by thousands of commemorative bricks shows the names of veterans. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

You can witness railroad history in the making at **Union Pacific Railroad's Bailey Yard**, 308-532-4729. The largest rail car classification complex in the world, it stretches eight miles and covers nearly 3,000 acres. Get a panoramic view of this spectacular sight from the visitor observation deck and listen to an 8-minute audio presentation about this immense railroad facility. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Conveniently located at the intersection of Interstate 80 and Highway 83, [Fort Cody Trading Post](#), 308-532-8081, is one of the state's largest and engagingly eclectic gift shops. Antiques, leather goods, jewelry, western gifts, novelties, books, clothing, gag gifts and a variety of other fun gifts and souvenirs can be picked up at Fort Cody. If it's fun, it's at Fort Cody! Make sure you walk through the Old West Museum in the back of the store to view the miniature version of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show—a 20,000-piece hand-carved animated display. Fort Cody is a definite must-see! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Artist's Co-op Art and Gift Gallery**, 308-532-4729, is a must-see showcase of original work of west central Nebraska artists. Five large gallery rooms and an outdoor sculpture garden provide great opportunities to view the works of art at your own leisure. Workshops are hosted by artist members and nationally acclaimed professional artists. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (33 miles) west on Highway 30 to Paxton.

It's off to one of Nebraska's most famous watering holes—[Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge](#), 308-239-4500, in Paxton. Ole's is known for its impressive collection of mounted animals, as well as quality food and exceptional hospitality that attracts many group tours to this unique restaurant. There is plenty of room for groups, and the delicious food will bring you back again and again. Suggested time: 1 hour.

30 minutes (21 miles) west on Highway 30 to Ogallala.

Once a bustling cowboy town with a very colorful reputation, Ogallala is now a family-friendly town that embraces its colorful western past. Be sure to make time to visit [Front Street](#), 519 E. 1st St., 308-284-6000, to watch **The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**—Nebraska’s longest-running summer theatre. Belly up to the bar for a sarsaparilla or other beverage to wet your whistle while you watch showgirls and desperados perform. Plan a visit to the [Petrified Wood Gallery](#), 525 E. 1st St., 308-284-9996, after the show—one of Nebraska’s most unique museums. This gallery of natural history specializes in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts. The Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office, 204 East A St, 308-284-4066, can arrange for you to visit legendary **Boot Hill** or the stately **Mansion on the Hill**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

Ogallala also is home to “Big Mac” or [Lake McConaughy](#)—the largest inland lake in the region, 308-284-8800. The lake is a water lover’s paradise and offers white sand beaches, excellent fishing and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the water. The **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, 308-284-8800, is Nebraska’s first water museum and interprets the significance of water to the state’s past, present and future. With advance notice, the Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office can help arrange a beach party, boat rides and a tour of **Kingsley Dam**. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. From late December to early March, the [Bald Eagle Viewing Center](#), 308-284-2332, is open below the dam and is one of the best locations in the region to view these magnificent birds.

View one of the largest, privately held lilac collections in the country—**The Lilacs of Meadowlark Hill**, 308-284-2524. The best time to visit is May during “Lilac Time,” when the air is heavy with the perfume wafting off these beautiful flowers. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (20 miles) north on Highway 61 to Haythorn Ranch.

Take a step back in time at a working cattle ranch located in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills, north of Ogallala. The historical [Haythorn Ranch Tours and Figure Traditions Event Center](#), 308-355-4000, maintains a herd of more than 500 ranch-bred horses that are used in day-to-day ranching activities. It is the largest breeder of quarter horses in the U.S. and the second largest in the world. Call for reservations for large and small group tour packages. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

Ogallala offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

Day 3



Farm and Ranch Museum, Gering

45 minutes (31 miles) west on Highway 26 from Ogallala to Ash Hollow State Historical Park.

[Ash Hollow State Historical Park](#), 308-778-5651, is located on the west side of **Lake McConaughy** near Lewellen. The park boasts an unusual collection of prehistoric and pioneer history. Fossils from prehistoric animals were discovered in the area and many are displayed at the interpretive center. Ancient Indian tribes and early pioneers used the area as a staging or camping area. Nearby Windlass Hill is the site where pioneers had to lower wagon trains using a windlass—a device for hoisting or hauling. Today a hike up to Windlass Hill offers a spectacular view of deep wagon ruts still visible after 150 years. A visitors/interpretive center has displays of prehistoric rhinoceros, mammoths, mastodons and early pioneer history. A hiking trail from the visitor center leads to a spring at the bottom of the canyon. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

60 minutes (42 miles) west on Highway 26 to Broadwater.

Pick up a knick-knack or groovy souvenir at a unique store along Highway 26 between Ogallala and Scottsbluff. **Tumbleweed Treasures**, Highway 26 and Guthrie St., 308-489-5420, in the hamlet of Broadwater is well worth the stop. The store is regularly open weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day. However, you can make prior arrangements with the owners to visit the store during other times. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

25 minutes (15 miles) west on Highway 26 to Bridgeport.

Highways 92 and 26 follow the Oregon, Mormon and Pony Express Trails, and were the first stretches of highway designated as an official Nebraska Scenic Byway—the **Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway**. Along the way your group will begin to notice unusual rock formations along the horizon. When pioneers crossed Nebraska, there was little more than flat prairie stretching before them for weeks on end. You can imagine their excitement when they started to see a noticeable change in the landscape. The first two formations you'll come across are [Courthouse and Jail Rocks](#), 308-586-2581 (Chimney Rock Visitors Center), located on Highway 88 to the south of Highways 92 and 26. They were so named because of their similarity to courthouses and jail buildings back east. Note: No staff or tourist facilities are available at the site. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

No trip to Bridgeport is complete without sampling some of the best pastries and desserts in western Nebraska. The **Sweet Things Bakery**, 308-262-1024, in downtown Bridgeport is bound to satisfy even the most discriminating palates with its mouthwatering sweets.

25 minutes (16 miles) west on Highway 26 to Bayard.

“Towering to the heavens” is how one pioneer described Chimney Rock near Bayard—the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. At the base of the spire, the [Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitors Center](#), 308-586-2581, offers visitors fascinating stories from pioneer diaries about their trek westward. There is an audio-visual presentation and an impressive book and gift shop on site. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

To experience what it was like as a pioneer, nothing compares to the [Oregon Trail Wagon Train](#), 308-586-1850, one mile from Chimney Rock. Put on your best western duds and step back in time to the 1850s as your group boards a Conestoga wagon train for a bumpy ride alongside actual wagon ruts. Your group will enjoy campfire songs, stories and the most mouth-watering meal prepared over an open fire. It’s the perfect way to end your day as an illuminated Chimney Rock lights up the night. Reservations required. Suggested tour time: 2 hours.

35 minutes (25 miles) west on Highway 26 to Scottsbluff or Highway 92 to Gering.

Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area’s colorful history are featured. Suggested tour time: 1-2 hours.

Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines in the [Farm and Ranch Museum](#), 2930 M St., 308-436-1989, at the base of Scotts Bluff National Monument. If your group tour comes during the third weekend in September, make plans to watch live demonstrations of various farming equipment during the annual Harvest Festival. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Enjoy pine-covered canyons and rugged rock buttes at the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center**, 308-436-3777, a short drive south of Gering. Nestled within the [Wildcat Hills](#), the nature center is located in one of the most beautiful regions of Nebraska. A wide variety and abundance of native wildlife can be enjoyed from the information center’s deck or along the more than 3 miles of hiking trails throughout the park. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Two museums in Gering that are worth visiting are the [Wyo-braska Museum of Natural History](#), 850 U St., 308-436-7104, which houses more than 300 mounted zoological specimens from around the world; and the [North Platte Valley Museum](#),

308-436-5411, which chronicles the history of the area through a variety of impressive displays, including a sod house, one-room schoolhouse and agricultural equipment from bygone days. Suggested tour time for each attraction: 1 hour.

The main lines of the western migratory trails converged at **Robidoux Pass**. Today, you can visit the reconstructed [Robidoux Trading Post](#) in beautiful **Carter Canyon**, south of Gering. Don't miss the blacksmith shop monument and pioneer graves near the trading post. Suggested tour time (with scenic drive): 1½ hour. Contact the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau for tour information: 308-436-6886. The trading post is located on a dirt road, and no services are available along the road or at the site.

Directly to the north of Gering, Scottsbluff boasts a very impressive arts center—the **West Nebraska Arts Center**, 106 E. 18th St., 308-632-2226. It features a variety of artistic activities, including a gallery and gift shop that sells locally made gifts. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

The [Riverside Zoo](#), 1600 S. Beltline Highway West, 308-630-6236, is an impressive facility that features more than 300 animals representing 97 animal species from around the world. Excellent picnic facilities and walking paths are available. Suggested tour time: 2 hours. Enjoy a panoramic view of Scotts Bluff National Monument as you sip a refreshing glass of wine at the [Prairie Vine Vineyard and Winery](#), 308-623-2955. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

The **Fillingham Exotic Animal Farm**, 308-623-1164, in Morrill, west of Scottsbluff on Highway 26, offers guided tours of exotic animals throughout the 275-acre farm. Some of the rare animals include a Z-donk, a zebus and an onyx. Reservations for guided tours are required. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Tour 28

Westward Ho!

Following The Oregon and Mormon Trails Extended Tour of Northwestern Nebraska

Following is an optional tour of northwestern Nebraska to extend the *Westward Ho! Following the Oregon and Mormon Trails* tour:



Oregon Trail Wagon Train, Bayard

45 minutes (43 miles) west on Highway 26, north on Highway 29 to Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

[Agate Fossil Beds National Monument](#), 301 River Road, 308-668-2211, south of Harrison, is a fossil lover's paradise. Fossilized mammals from 19 million years ago are embedded and easily visible in the walls and canyons of the 3,000-acre national monument. There are miles of easy-to-navigate hiking trails throughout the property and the visitor center interprets the history and significance of the area. Agate Fossil Beds also tell the story of "Captain" James Cook—a former professional hunter, guide, Army scout and owner of the nearby Agate Springs Ranch. For 50 years, the ranch was a haven for American Indians, such as Chief Red Cloud. Cook welcomed and fed his guests, and in return, they repaid his generosity by presenting him with gifts throughout the years. In time, these gifts became a sizable and important collection of American Indian artifacts, which are now permanently displayed in the visitor center. This is truly a unique collection and a must-see exhibit! Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

30 minutes (22 miles) north on Highway 29 to Harrison.

Grab a quick snack or something to drink in Harrison, also known as "Nebraska's Top Town." With an elevation of 4,878 feet above sea level, it enjoys the highest elevation of any Nebraska community. Make sure you have your camera ready; Harrison is surrounded by some of the most scenic countryside in the state.

35 minutes (27 miles) east on Highway 20 to Crawford.

Take the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** to Crawford, home of Nebraska's largest state park—[Fort Robinson State Park](#), 308-665-2900. It was at Fort Robinson where the great Lakota warrior Crazy Horse surrendered in 1877. A stone marker shows the spot where he was mortally wounded. Fort Robinson also was the site of the famous

Cheyenne Outbreak and home to the “Buffalo Soldiers,” an African-American garrison in a segregated army. Many activities are available at “Fort Rob,” including buffalo stew cookouts, theatrical presentations at the Post Playhouse (group rates available), historic tours and museums, and Jeep rides through the majestic, pine-covered buttes. The [Trailside Museum of Natural History](#), 308-66-2929, houses a mammoth skeleton that stands 10 feet tall and an art gallery of American Indian and western art. Suggested tour time: 3 hours.

[Last Chance Winery](#), 432 2nd St., 308-66-2712, is located in downtown Crawford. Enjoy sipping delicious wines at a winetasting, followed by a tour of the wine production facility. Advance notice is required. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour. Enjoy a mouth-watering meal at the **Ranch House**, 445 Second St., 308-665-1231. Afterwards, spend time browsing the extensive upstairs art and antique gallery. So come on in, and they’ll rustle you up something tasty and delicious at this National Register of Historic Places landmark.

30 minutes (15 miles) north on Highway 2, west on Toadstool Road to Toadstool Geologic Park.

[Toadstool Geologic Park](#), 308-432-0300, northwest of Crawford, resembles the famous South Dakota Badlands and is one of the most dramatic landscapes in Nebraska. Over the centuries, the clay and sandstone in the area have been eroded by wind and rain to form toadstool-shaped formations. The park also contains valuable fossil deposits and the longest known mammal trackway of the Oligocene epoch—more than one mile. A one-mile loop trail from the campground highlights many fine examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations. A reconstructed sod house gives a glimpse into the past when

prairie homesteaders used the only abundant building material available—sod. A hand water pump and full-accessible vault toilets are available. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.



[Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site](#), 308-432-0300, is located a short drive northwest of Crawford. More than 10,000 years ago, a great catastrophe killed hundreds of bison, the largest mammals on the Great Plains. More than 600 bison skeletons have been unearthed

here and the mystery of how and why they died in one place at one time is still under investigation. Feel free to make your own suggestions! Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

Along the way to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, make sure you stop at [High Plains Homestead](#), 308-665-2592, to enjoy some of the best pie in the world at the **Drifter Cookshack**. While there, spend some time visiting the recreated Old West village on the property, which features a working blacksmith shop, antique store and the Dirty Creek Saloon, where you can enjoy a cool, refreshing non-alcoholic drink. Make sure to stop by the old-fashioned general store to pick up that special gift or rustic souvenir. Suggested tour time: 1 hour. Note: All but three miles to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, Toadstool Geologic Park and High Plains Homestead are on a well-maintained gravel road (Highway 2/71). No travel on the gravel roads should be attempted during or after rain. 30 minutes (24 miles) east of Crawford on Highway 20 to Chadron.

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, [Chadron State Park](#), 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups. Suggested tour time: 1-3 hours.

The [Museum of the Fur Trade](#), 6321 Highway 20, 308-432-3843, is located just outside Chadron. This one-of-a-kind facility displays artifacts from the lucrative fur-trading industry that was once a thriving business in northwest Nebraska in the early 1800s. The Bordeaux Trading Post, built in 1837, stands on the museum grounds and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The **Nebkota Dinner Train**, 111 N. Main St., 308-432-2487, offers dining car excursions through the scenic Pine Ridge area and three-hour dinner excursions on Friday and Saturday evenings. Other attractions in Chadron include the [Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center](#), 1000 Main St., 308-432-6401, located on the campus of Chadron State College. The center is dedicated to the study of Nebraska and High Plains culture, literature and history. The Heritage Room hosts a collection of Sandoz's books and poems. The **Dawes County Historical Museum**, 341 Country Club Road, 308-432-4999, shares the story of the area throughout several buildings of the museum complex, such as an original log house and barn, schoolhouse and railroad caboos.

1 hour, 15 minutes (55 miles) south on Highway 385 (Gold Rush Scenic Byway) to Alliance.

The next best thing to Stonehenge, [Carhenge](#), 308-762-1520, is one of Nebraska's crackerjack attractions and has stirred much controversy since its creation in 1987. An exact replica of the world-famous Stonehenge in England, Carhenge uses old cars in

place of stones. The project was the brainchild of architect Jim Reinders. He and his family gathered for a family reunion in Alliance and wanted to come up with a project to dedicate to Reinder's father. Jim spent many years in Europe and studied Stonehenge at great length. In 1987, he returned to his family farm and constructed Carhenge. At first it met with mixed reactions from local residents; however, Carhenge has now become a national sensation and one of Nebraska's unique attractions. Suggested tour time: ½ hour.

Alliance also has one of the state's best historical museums—the **Knight Museum of High Plains Heritage**, 908 Yellowstone Ave., 308-762-2384. A variety of displays interpret the history of the city and the importance that the railroad played in its growth. Suggested tour time: 1 hour.

The [Carnegie Arts Center](#), 204 W. 4th St., 308-762-4571, features local and regional artists, gifts and a sculpture garden. **Sallows Conservatory and Arboretum**, 308-762-2384, features tropical and sub-tropical plants, and walking paths wind through the flower displays of the Sunken Gardens. Downtown Alliance also offers a variety of unique shopping and dining opportunities. Suggested tour time at each attraction: 1 hour. Step back in time to a slower, more relaxed pace at [Dobby's Frontier Town](#), 320 E. 25th St., 308-762-4321. This recreation of a turn-of-the-century western town boasts a homesteader's cabin, mercantile, bootlegger's cabin, post office, jail, baled straw house, and much, much more. Suggested tour time: 1½ hour.

Sweet Sage Spice and Gourmet Shoppe, 806 Box Butte Ave., 308-487-5599, in Hemingford, 20 miles northwest of Alliance on Highway 2, is an old-fashioned variety store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists. Suggested tour time: 45 minutes.

Alliance offers many exceptional lodging facilities for your group tour.

1 hour, 45 minutes (85 miles) south on Highway 385 to Sidney and Interstate 80.

Tour 29

The Four Seasons of Nebraska

Like many other states, the summer months are the busiest time for Nebraska's community events and festivals. However, Nebraska communities offer a variety of fun-filled and exciting events throughout the year. Many of these events are group tour friendly, and with advance notice special group accommodations and rates are available. Contact the local convention and visitors bureau or chamber of commerce for assistance with locating lodging, meal arrangements, and group activities during events.

A sampling of Nebraska's many events and festivals that might interest your group tour is included below. For a complete and up-to-date listing of events across Nebraska, refer to the enclosed *Nebraska Festivals Guide*, or go to www.VisitNebraska.org and click on "Events."

Spring

Springtime in Nebraska is an active one, especially in central Nebraska as thousands of Sandhills cranes and other waterfowl return to the area during the annual spring migration. For five weeks during March and April, 90 percent of the world's Sandhill cranes (nearly 500,000) return to the Platte River region in central Nebraska. The central flyway for these impressive birds runs through this area, providing excellent viewing opportunities as they fly overhead or rest in a field. The communities of Hastings, Grand Island, and Kearney are the focal points for viewing this impressive migration. In addition to the cranes, more than 10 million ducks and geese also can be seen, as well as the endangered Whooping Crane and majestic American Bald Eagle around Hastings. The Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History boasts the largest whooping crane display in the United States and the state's largest display of Nebraska's native and migratory birds. The Platte River Valley Bird Observatory at Crane Meadows in Wood River (6 miles west of Grand Island) offers a variety of Sandhill cranes related activities on 250 acres of pristine or restored prairie along the Platte River. The Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center in Gibbon (20 miles east of Kearney) has exceptional education displays, and indoor viewing area of the river, and much more.

Several birding spots are designated for group tours, including viewing blinds on the banks of the Platte River. Due to the popularity of the spring migration, it is advisable to contact a local Convention and Visitors Bureau to make arrangements for guided tours, private blind tours, meals, and visits to other area attractions. Weekends are the busiest, so visits during the week are recommended. See *Day Trips from the Tri-Cities* for suggested tours.

If you're looking for sweet scents, go no farther than Ogallala's Meadowlark Hill Lilac Collection. With 830 varieties of lilacs, this is the world's largest private collection. The air during the first two weeks in May is filled with the scent of five acres of lilacs. 800-658-4390.

Following is a partial list of the many spring festivals and events that happen in Nebraska. Refer to the enclosed *Nebraska Festival Guide* for more information on these and other spring events:

March

Clay Center—Spring Wing Ding

Gibbon—Crane Watcher’s Event

Madison—Dr. Seussfest

April

Brownville—Wine, Writers, and Song Festival

Fort Calhoun—Living History Weekend

Highway 14—POP-IN (Products on Parade)

Nebraska City—Arbor Day Celebration

North Platte—Bluegrass Festival

Red Cloud—Willa Cather Spring Festival

Wahoo—Spring Polka Fest

May

Beatrice—Heartland Storytelling Festival

Brownville—Spring Flea Market, May Day Celebration

Kearney—Memorial Day Living History Weekend

Omaha—Florence Days at the Mill, Nebraska Renaissance Faire & Medieval Pageant

Ord—Evelyn Sharp Days

Raymond—James Arthur Vineyards Renaissance Festival

Shelton—Lincoln Highway Festival

Springfield—Spring Wine and Music Festival

Wisner—Art Fest

May-October

Lincoln—Farmers Market

Summer

Summer means lazy days of lemonade and watermelon under tall shade trees, hot weather, swimming pools, 4th of July celebrations, county fairs, outdoor barbeques, picnics, and best of all—vacation! Like most states, Nebraska’s busiest time of the year is during the summer when every community seems to be having a community festival, art show or music festival. From the Missouri River to Wyoming, and from South Dakota to Kansas, Nebraska’s small towns and big cities will delight you and excite you with their fun-filled events and activities! Following is a partial list of the many summer festivals and events that happen in Nebraska. Refer to the enclosed *Nebraska Festival Guide* for more information on these and other summer events:

May (Memorial Day)

Superior—Victorian Festival

June

Ainsworth—Middle of Nowhere Days
Clarkson—Czech Festival
Crawford—Intertribal Gathering
Comstock—Comstock Windmill Festival
Dannebrog—Grundlovsfest
Fairbury—Rock Creek Trails Days
Hastings—Cottonwood Festival
Lexington—Vines and Wines
McCook—Buffalo Commons Storytelling Festival
Norfolk—Northeast Nebraska Ethnic Festival
North Platte—NEBRASKAland Days
Oakland—Swedish Festival
Ogallala—Rubber Chicken Festival
Omaha—Taste of Omaha, Nebraska Shakespeare Festival, Summer Arts Festival
Stromsburg—Swedish Festival
St. Libory—Hope Blues Festival
St. Paul—Weekend with the Arts
Verdigre—Kolach Days

July

Bellevue—Native American Music Festival, River Fest
Chadron—Fur Trade Days
Fremont—John C. Fremont Days
Grand Island—A Romantic Night in the Old Town
Kearney—Art in the Park
Lincoln—Meadowlark Music Festival, July Jamm
Ogallala—Cowboy Capital Arts Festival
Seward—Nebraska's Official 4th of July Celebration
Springfield—Wine and Arts Festival
Valentine—Nebraska Star Party
Wayne—Wayne Chicken Show
Winnebago—Winnebago Pow Wow

August

Ainsworth—National Country Music Festival
Bellevue—Offutt Air Force Base Air Show
Hastings—Kool-Aid Days
Lincoln—Capital City Ribfest
Macy—Omaha Pow Wow
Niobrara—Ponca Pow Wow
Omaha—Art in Bloom Festival
Pierce—Wine and Blues Festival
Rockville—Rockstock Lobster Festival
Wilber—Wilber Czech Festival

Fall

The leaves are changing—winter’s coming! One Nebraska region that is exceptionally lovely during the fall is the Sandhills located in the north central part of the state. The Sandhills are the largest grass-stabilized sand dunes in the northern hemisphere. Mile upon mile of rolling sand dunes in an area that is larger than the Sahara Desert are covered with grasses that turn a brilliant auburn color in the fall. Trees along the Missouri River burst forth each fall with a spectacular color show that at times can rival those of the northeastern states. From Niobrara, where the Missouri River enters Nebraska to Rulo, where it flows into Missouri, the river’s banks are well worth a drive during early fall. Forested bluffs, scenic views, open bottomlands, bountiful cropland, and small town charm await your group tour as you enjoy the rich, golden colors of fall. Two scenic byways—Highway 12 (Outlaw Trail) and Highway 75 (Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway)—offer your tour plenty of places to rest, shop, play or dine. Communities along these routes and in these regions are happy to provide information on exceptional areas to view scenic fall colors.

Fall in Nebraska also is harvest time, and a time when communities come together to celebrate the harvest and the coming of winter. Following is a partial list of the many fall festivals and events that happen in Nebraska. Refer to the enclosed *Nebraska Festival Guide* for more information on these and other fall events:

September

Brownville—Fall Flea Market
Grand Island—Husker Harvest Days
Hayes Center—Grand Duke Alexis Rendezvous
Lexington—Antique and Craft Extravaganza
Nebraska City—Apple Jack Festival
Omaha—River City Roundup Fair and Festival
Plattsmouth—Kass Kounty King Korn Karnival

September-October

Gretna—Vala’s Pumpkin Patch

October

Beatrice—Harvest Festival
Brownville—Old Time Autumn
Doniphan—Fall Festival
Elyria—Pumpkin Festival
McCook—Freedom Flight and Balloon Festival
Omaha—Autumn Ambience Festival
Orleans—Applefest
Ponca—Hallowfest
Scotia—Haunted Hollow
Shubert—Haunted Hollow
Superior—Harvest Festival

Valentine—Old West Days and Cowboy Poetry Gathering

November

Gering—Harvest Festival

Grand Island—Husker Harvest Days

Winter

January

Lexington—Eagle Viewing

Avoca—Quack Off Duck Races

February

Cedar Rapids—Polar Bear Dip & Chili Cook-off

During the holiday season, Nebraska is a beautiful place to bring your group tour. Many Nebraska communities offer wonderful holiday light displays, charming shops and boutiques, musical pageants, and an abundance of festive cheer.

Christmas on The Prairie

The first weekend in December, Christmas on The Prairie gives visitors a glance back to simpler times when families gathered to can fruits and vegetables to give as gifts. Old-fashioned sing-a-longs and worship services fill the air with a festive atmosphere. Enjoy homemade treats, buy handmade holiday gifts and ornaments, and see hundreds of luminaries at the Saunders County Museum in Wahoo. Directions: 20 minutes north of Lincoln on Highway 77, or 20 minutes west of Omaha on Highway 92. 402-443-4001.

Old Time Christmas in Historic Brownville

Held the first weekend in December, groups can tour historical homes that are brilliantly decked out for the holiday season. A cup of hot-spiced cider will take the chill off as your group enjoys this charming Missouri River town during the holidays. Directions: 1 hour south of Omaha on Highway 75, east on Highway 136. 402-825-4211.

Home for the Holidays in Nebraska City

Kick off the holiday season with a weekend full of seasonal activities in Nebraska City. A parade of costumed characters leads Santa Claus as he arrives in a horse-drawn sleigh. The parade winds through downtown, ending at the city Christmas tree that Santa magically lights. The annual Christmas Tour of Homes is a popular event as homeowners decorate for the holidays and open their homes to the public. A Trolley Tour of Christmas Lights in the evening tops off the weekend. Directions: 45 minutes south of Omaha on Highway 75, 45 minutes southeast of Lincoln on Highway 2, two hours north of Kansas City area on Interstate 29. 402-873-3000.

The Light of the World Christmas Pageant in Minden

Minden is Nebraska's "Official Christmas City" and has been presenting a locally written and produced Christmas pageant since 1946. The charming downtown square is adorned

with more than 12,000 Christmas lights. The Minden Opera House and Harold Warp Pioneer Village are open for tours. From Kearney: 20 minutes south on Highway 10. 308-832-1811.

Dickens in the Market

You won't be boiled in your own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through your heart this Christmas. Omaha's historic Old Market district comes alive with a Dicken's flair the first full weekend in December. The district's cobblestone streets and 19th Century buildings make the district ideal for the costumed characters straight out of a Dicken's novel that roam the streets. Groups can enjoy carriage rides, sing-a-longs, and of course lots of great shopping opportunities. 402-444-4662.

Old Fashioned Danish Christmas in Dannebrog

Glaedelig Jul! This annual event celebrates the community's rich Danish heritage. Groups can watch quilting demonstrations, enjoy Danish delicacies, and find treasures in the Old World shops. Directions: 15 minutes north of Grand Island on Highways 281 and 58. 402-226-2237.

Star City Holiday Weekend and Parade in Lincoln

The Star City's downtown and historic Haymarket district glows with thousands of lights and luminaries during the entire month of December. The highlight is the annual Star City Holiday Parade—Nebraska's largest holiday event. Held the second Saturday in December, the parade features dozens of huge inflatable balloons characters and large scale fantastic floats that meander through downtown Lincoln on Saturday morning. There also are numerous other holiday activities throughout the city during the weekend celebration. 402-434-5348.

Christmas Past & Present at the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer in Grand Island

This annual event showcases what Christmas was like in a pioneer community around the turn of the century. Railroad Town features dozens of buildings from the late 1800s decked out with handmade ornaments. Groups can wander through the town, which is lit using hundreds of kerosene lanterns, and visit with the townspeople as they prepare for their holiday celebrations. 308-382-4400.

Christmas At the Cody's in North Platte

Local groups come together to decorate William F. Cody's magnificent home for the holidays. The entire house is adorned with lights, and you will be greeted with Christmas carols, roasted chestnuts, hot apple cider, and a horse drawn sleigh ride. 308-532-4729.

Hastings Celebration of Lights

The celebration includes live reindeer, entertainers, and Santa's unveiling of miles of white lights. Throughout December the Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History showcases an annual Festival of Christmas Trees decorated with dozens of different themes. The J.M. McDonald Planetarium features their holiday showing of "Tis

the Season.” Directions: 45 minutes east of Minden on Highway 6 or 25 miles south of Grand Island on Highway 281. 402-461-2370.

Annual O’Conner House Christmas Tour

Held each November in Homer, each of the house’s 14 rooms is decorated for the holidays. Following the tour, you can enjoy a mug of hot apple cider and fresh baked ginger cookies that were baked in a replica of the house’s original stove. 402-494-1307.

Some of Nebraska’s outstanding light displays are Craddick’s Country Christmas in Seward, Hart’s Light Display in Cozad, Christmas Wonderland near Springfield, Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, and Folsom Children’s Zoo in Lincoln.

There are many other wonderful holiday light displays across Nebraska. Also, most towns decorate their downtown shopping districts for the holidays and offer great holiday shopping and discounts. Chamber of Commerce offices can suggest driving tours to view area lights and holiday decorations. Nebraska’s urban centers also have a fantastic selection of stores, antique shops, modern malls, and historic shopping districts.