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## Best year yet for Nebraska Passport program, Ponca woman wins grand prize

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LINCOLN, Neb. (Oct. 24, 2016)— The tales shared by travelers on NebraskaPassport.com tell a story of an exciting summer for the participants of the 2016 Nebraska Passport program. Some saying, “We never knew that there were this many wonderful places to visit,” and “Lots of miles, lots of fun.” This year 168 participants submitted Passports with all 80 stops stamped, that number is more than double the amount Nebraska Tourism received in 2015.

One of those go-getters is Jo Hogan of Ponca, Neb., the winner of the grand prize drawing in the 2016 Nebraska Passport program. She will receive an Omaha Steaks Culinary Calendar package valued at over \$1,000, in addition to other small program prizes. Hogan said, “Our friends who participated in the Nebraska Passport tour in the past were so enthused and complimentary that my daughter Kim and I decided to embark on a summer mother-daughter adventure across our great state. Throughout the course of our journey we learned a lot about Nebraska. We laughed until our sides hurt, had numerous adventures and made many new friends along the way, proving how friendly Nebraskans really are. This was a memorable trip of a lifetime and we can’t wait to do it again.”

The winner of the 300 Nebraska Lottery scratch coupons for this year’s Passport program is David Gilman of Elkhorn, Neb.

Travelers who visited participating locations and collected stamps could also earn prize t-shirts, duffle bags, selfie sticks, coffee mugs and gift baskets with Nebraska-made products.

Passport program coordinator, Erin Wirth, commented, “I am thrilled with the success

of this year's Passport program. I am overwhelmed with positive feedback from both the Passport destinations and the participants. Each year the program helps more and more people discover the hidden gems of Nebraska while creating lifelong memories."

#### 2016 Passport program Statistics:

- More than 26,440 travelers participated in the program
- 1,292 Passports were submitted for prizes (more than double as many as 2015)
- 87,492 total stamps were collected (more than three times as many as 2015)
- The average number of stamps on submitted Passports was 30
- The most visited stop was the Museum of the Fur Trade in Chadron
- Participants included Nebraska residents from over 219 communities and 28 states
- Nebraska on Film was the most popular tour

Applications are now being accepted for the Nebraska Tourism's 2017 Passport program. To be considered as a featured destination in the 2016 Nebraska Passport program, go to <http://nebraskapassport.com/> and fill out an online application before December 16, 2016 at 5 p.m. (CST). Questions about participating in the program can be directed to Erin Wirth at [erin.wirth@nebraska.gov](mailto:erin.wirth@nebraska.gov) or 402-471-3789.

Before applying, please consider that, if selected, your destination must:

- Be open regular and reasonable hours (including at least one weekend day), and be staffed by friendly people who can stamp Passport booklets.
- Pay a \$100 participation fee to cover cost of custom stamps (*no fee is necessary to apply, the fee is collected at a later date only if you are selected as a 2017 Passport stop.*)
- The program prohibits charging participants for admission in order to receive a stamp. Most visitors will naturally invest money in things they wish to see, buy, eat, or experience, but due to program guidelines, Passport stops cannot impose purchases upon the participant.

**To see video interviews of some of the participants who completed all 80 stops go to:**

[https://youtu.be/dt0SFzdD\\_yM](https://youtu.be/dt0SFzdD_yM)

**To learn more about how the Nebraska Passport program promotes Nebraska tourist attractions and small businesses go to:**

<https://youtu.be/GExLJYh0qgE>

*For more information about travel, events and unique destinations in Nebraska, order your free travel guide today at [VisitNebraska.com](http://VisitNebraska.com). Then stay connected with Nebraska Tourism on our [Visit Nebraska Facebook page](#), on [Twitter](#), on [Pinterest](#), on [Instagram](#) and on [YouTube](#).*

*The mission of the Nebraska Tourism Commission is to expand Nebraska's dynamic and diverse travel industry making it more viable by creating awareness, attracting increased visitors which results in greater tourism revenue and economic gain throughout the state. To learn more, go to [VisitNebraska.com](http://VisitNebraska.com).*

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