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History on the high plains

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Nebraska is rich with history, and there are countless opportunities to learn about the state's heritage, from the American Indians who roamed its plains to the settlers who tamed its lands.

The true locals

Long before Nebraska was admitted into the Union in 1867, several American Indian nations called this land their home. The Omaha, Otoe-Missouria, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Pawnee, Lakota and Ponca are just some of the tribes who have enriched Nebraska with their cultures and traditions. Standing Bear, a Ponca chief from northeast Nebraska, was one famous American Indian who left an indelible legacy on Nebraska. After he was forcibly removed to a reservation in Oklahoma, Standing Bear argued that he was entitled to legal rights protected by the U.S. Constitution. He won his case and the American Indian was finally recognized as "a person within the meaning of the law." In 1977, Standing Bear was inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Visitors to the [Nebraska State Capitol](#) can find his likeness in a bronze bust in the Nebraska Hall of Fame and in a mural adorning the wall of the Memorial Chamber in the Capitol's 400-foot tower.

Frontier forts

In the early days of western settlement, military forts dotted Nebraska's landscape to protect pioneers headed west and to facilitate trade.



[Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), near present-day Fort Calhoun, was the first fort built west of the Missouri River. Established in 1820 on the recommendation of the Meriwether Lewis and William Clark expedition, it was important to the fur trade, river traffic and American Indian relations of the region. Travelers can visit restored buildings and watch live history demonstrations, like blacksmithing and gunsmithing at the Armorer's Shop. For the perfect mix of history and recreation, a visit to [Fort Robinson State Park](#) near Crawford fits the bill. Operational from 1873 to 1948, the fort served as the Red Cloud Indian Agency, a cavalry remount

station, a K-9 training center and a POW camp. It was here that renowned Oglala Sioux warrior Crazy Horse was killed while in custody in 1877. Visitors to the park can overnight in converted officers' quarters and hike and bike a network of trails that lace the pine-scented bluffs. At [Fort Kearny State Historical Park](#) near Kearney, travelers can walk on the parade grounds, visit the blacksmith shop and spend time in a stockade.

Military history

Military enthusiasts can find reminders of the past in towns and cities across the state. The Higgins boat, designed by a Nebraska native, played a crucial role in WWII. More than 20,000 of these boats were built and used as a landing craft for soldiers, allowing deployment in shallow waters for invasions such as that on Normandy Beach. Travelers are invited to come aboard a replica at the [Andrew Jackson Higgins National Memorial](#) in Columbus.



Aviation enthusiasts should look no further than the [Strategic Air & Space Museum](#) near Ashland. The museum, which houses a collection of legendary aircraft, missiles and spacecraft, boasts exhibits on Nebraska astronaut Clayton Anderson and the Strategic Air Command, a pivotal player during the Cold War era. The Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles in Lexington has over 100 examples of military transportation on display, including helicopters tanks, halftracks, ambulances and Jeeps, along with weapons, uniforms and equipment. Find more Nebraska history and other attractions at [VisitNebraska.gov](#).