

NEBRASKA TOURISM COMMISSION 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

VISITNEBRASKA.COM



Nebraska
HONESTLY. IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.

NEBRASKA TOURISM COMMISSION

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Commissioners after October 2018
meeting in Nebraska City.

THE MISSION OF THE NEBRASKA TOURISM COMMISSION IS TO EXPAND NEBRASKA'S DYNAMIC AND DIVERSE TRAVEL INDUSTRY, MAKING IT MORE VIABLE BY CREATING AWARENESS AND ATTRACTING INCREASED VISITORS, WHICH RESULTS IN GREATER TOURISM REVENUE AND ECONOMIC GAIN THROUGHOUT THE STATE.



DIRECTOR'S REPORT



It's the start of a new year, which means it's time to look back on everything we accomplished in 2018 and look forward to challenges we'll face in 2019. For me personally, it's hard to believe that I've been part of the Nebraska Tourism Commission for two years now – time does truly fly.

The past year was full of exciting accomplishments including the highest lodging tax collection ever for a fiscal year, 6.98% higher than the previous; a successful ad campaign focused specifically on the spectacular Sandhill Crane Migration; a change in marketing strategy that moved our marketing dollars out of state resulting in a nearly 6% growth in traffic to VisitNebraska.com; another record-breaking year for the extremely popular Passport program; and a great Tourism Conference where more than 250 industry partners gathered in Nebraska City to learn, share and build an even more cohesive voice for Nebraska tourism, the state's third largest industry.

The frosting on the cake was when the introduction of our new ad campaign at the Tourism Conference immediately went viral – and “Nebraska. Honestly, it's not for everyone” was in the news coast-to-coast and was the buzz for a surprisingly long period of time with pretty much favorable reviews. In fact, media coverage reached an estimated 884,301,401 people with a publicity value worth over \$7.1 million, a number larger than the Commission's entire annual budget and more than three times our paid media budget. Nebraska was top-of-mind in cities and towns across the country.

Understand all of that happened without spending a dollar advertising our new campaign. The dollars will be spent starting mid-January when we kick off our sandhill crane migration effort in Denver, Topeka, Wichita, Kansas City and Sioux Falls. That's when the “rubber will hit the road,” followed by the kick off of our spring/summer campaign in April. We'll be watching closely, and will keep you all up to date.

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Nebraska Tourism Commission • 402-471-1558

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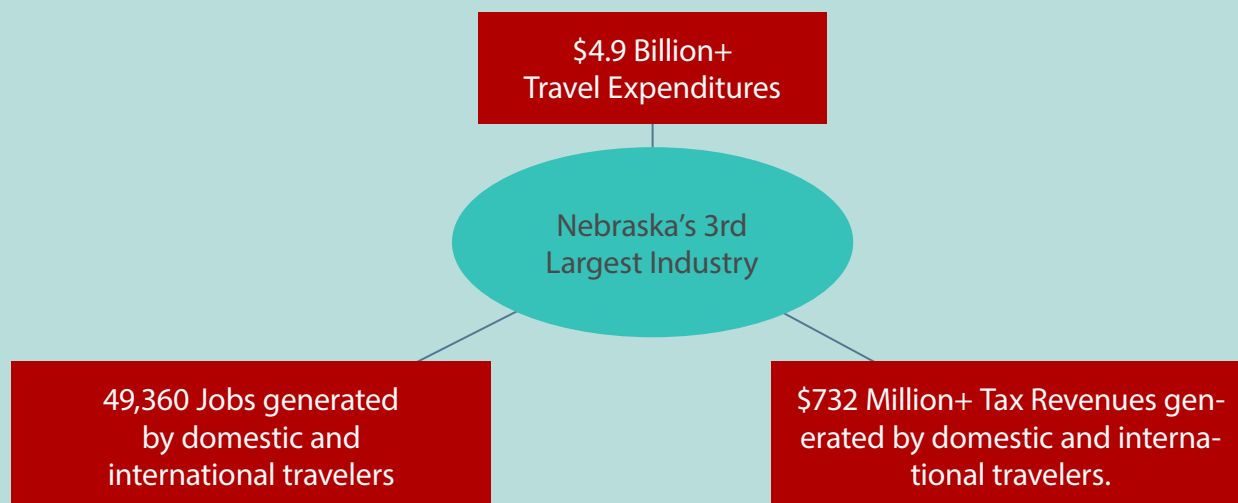
FINANCIAL REPORT

- The Nebraska Tourism Commission's annual budget is approximately \$6.5 million. The Tourism Commission was appropriated about \$6.5 million in cash funds from the State Lodging Tax for operations and \$852,600 of the appropriated budget is for State Aid. There is no State General Fund appropriations in FY 2017-18.
- As of November 2018, the lodging tax collections totaled \$5,489,451.89, which is up from \$5,157,064.47 in November 2017, a 6.4% increase.
- Final 2018 (calendar year) lodging tax revenue numbers will be available at VisitNebraska.com in February 2019.



**FEBRUARY, MARCH, MAY,
AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND
NOVEMBER 2018 WERE ALL
RECORD-BREAKING MONTHS
FOR LODGING TAX COLLECTION**

NEBRASKA'S TRAVEL INDUSTRY ECONOMIC IMPACT



Source: The U.S. Travel Association Impact of Travel and State Economies 2016

GRANTS

THE NEBRASKA TOURISM TOMMISSION RECEIVED **76 GRANT APPLICATIONS** IN 2018.

COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANT AWARDEES

- Omaha Sports Commission
- Nebraska City Tourism & Commerce, Inc
- Friends of the International Quilt Study Center
- Opera Omaha
- Maha Music Festival
- Golden Spike Tower
- Lincoln Calling
- Visit Omaha



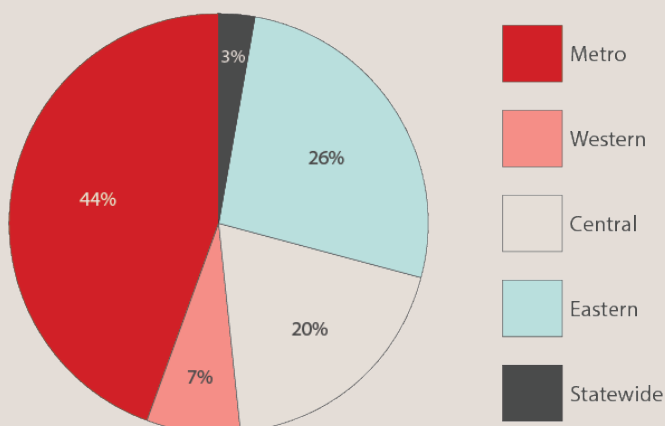
**2018 GRANT
APPLICANTS
WERE AWARDED
\$835,548
IN FUNDING**



MARKETING GRANT AWARDEES

- Visit Omaha
- Cheyenne County Tourism
- Kearney Visitors Bureau
- Western Nebraska Tourism Coalition
- Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Omaha Equestrian Foundation
- Rabble Mill
- Kearney Cultural Partners
- North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau
- Willa Cather Foundation
- Sports Nebraska
- Columbus/Platte County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Hastings Museum
- Lied Lodge at Arbor Day Farm
- Museum of Nebraska Art
- Norfolk Area Visitors Bureau
- Grand Island Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway
- Gering Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- McCook/Red Willow County Visitors Bureau
- Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation
- Joslyn Castle
- Red Cloud Area Chamber
- Fontenelle Forest
- Southwest Tourism Coalition
- Minden Chamber of Commerce
- Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation
- Wessels Living History Farm
- Kearney's Classic Car Collection
- Star City Pride
- Brownville Cultural Center
- Friends of Lied Center for Performing Arts
- The Archway
- Northwest Nebraska Tourism
- Red Path Gallery and Tasting Room
- Knox County Economic Development
- Calinda's Pot Shop & Art Gallery
- Mustang Club of America
- Genoa US Indian School Foundation
- Gage County Historical Society's
- Legal Aid of Nebraska and Center for Rural Affairs
- Seward Arts Council
- Harchelroad Motors
- The 2018 Renaissance Festival
- Legacy of the Plains Museum

2018 Marketing Grant Recipients
(By Region)



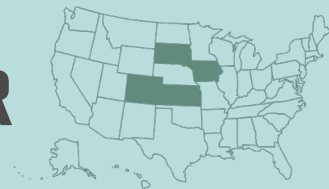
ADVERTISING

In 2018, Nebraska Tourism did two large advertising pushes. An advertising campaign for the sandhill crane migration and a traditional spring/summer campaign. These advertising efforts included billboards, TV, print, digital, cinema, baseball sponsorships and other methods, aimed at visitors in target markets. All creative assets were from the Through My Eyes storytelling campaign produced in 2016. The media buy budget for 2018 was \$1,735,241.

NEBRASKA TOURISM'S 2018 TARGET MARKETS

Denver
Kansas City
Topeka

Wichita
Sioux Falls
Des Moines



NEBRASKA TOURISM RECEIVED OVER 32 MILLION IMPRESSIONS FROM ADVERTISING PLACEMENTS IN 2018.

Print publications included Midwest Living, Reader's Digest and Conde Nast Traveler



CO-OP MARKETING

Nebraska Tourism worked with statewide partners on print and interactive Co-Ops in 2018. The total Co-Op budget was \$119,707.

PARTNERS INCLUDED:

KOOLAID DAYS, SANDHILLS JOURNEY SCENIC BYWAY, HASTINGS MUSEUM, KEARNEY VISITORS BUREAU, MCCOOK, ALLIANCE, NORTH PLATTE/LINCOLN COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU, COLUMBUS, NEBRASKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDATION, SCOTTSBLUFF COUNTY, GOTHENBURG, OGALLALA, KIMBALL, GOLDEN SPIKE TOWER, THE ARCHWAY, HOOKER COUNTY, ROBERT HENRI MUSEUM & ART GALLERY AND PIONEER VILLAGE

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED:

AAA LIVING, AAA MIDWEST TRAVELER, AAA WORLD, AMERICAN ROAD, BIRDS & BLOOMS, COUNTRY LIVING, TRAINS, TRUE WEST AND TRIPADVISOR.COM



If you could see Nebraska through my eyes, you'd see a spectacle
so immense, it could only be described as "epic."

An awakening of such scale and magnitude that it stirs your soul.

Breathtaking.

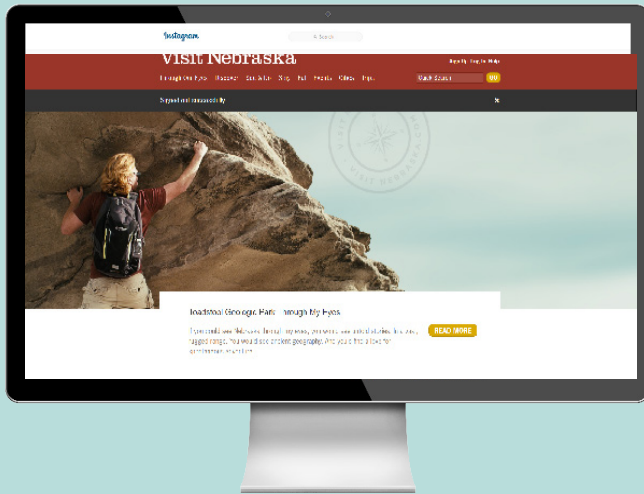
Beautiful.

Cinematic.

My name is Jameon, and this is the Sandhill Crane migration
through my eyes.



VISITNEBRASKA.COM AND TRAVEL GUIDE



VISITNEBRASKA.COM 2018 STATISTICS

•393,646 Users

Up 6.09% from 2017



•493,835 Sessions

Up 6.23% from 2017



•1,535,508 Pageviews

Up 16.90% from 2017



NEBRASKA TOURISM PRINTED **200,000** TRAVEL GUIDES IN 2018

Travel Guides were requested from all 50 states and numerous countries.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Nebraska Tourism uses two primary social media channels, Facebook and Instagram. Both saw success in 2018.



13,805 followers
Up 25.6% from 2017



36,335 likes
Up 21.5% from 2017



IN 2018 NEBRASKA TOURISM BOOSTED **39 SOCIAL POSTS**, REACHING AN ADDITIONAL **6.3 MILLION PEOPLE**

NEBRASKA PASSPORT

2018 NEBRASKA PASSPORT STATISTICS:

- There were 95% more prize entry sheets submitted and 50% more Passports requested in 2018 than 2017.
- The average number of stamps submitted per participant was 31.
- Participants included residents from 418 Nebraska communities and 46 states.
- Passport participants ranged in age from 1-year-old to 98-years-old.



INDIAN CAVE STATE PARK

We made our way through the 2 stamps in Nebraska City on our way the Indian Cave State Park. While at the Indian Caves we enjoyed hiking, learning and of course seeing the cave. I love how the passport program has sparked an excitement from my 3 teenagers to explore their environment and see the awesome sites Nebraska has to offer.

- Sara (Lincoln, NE)

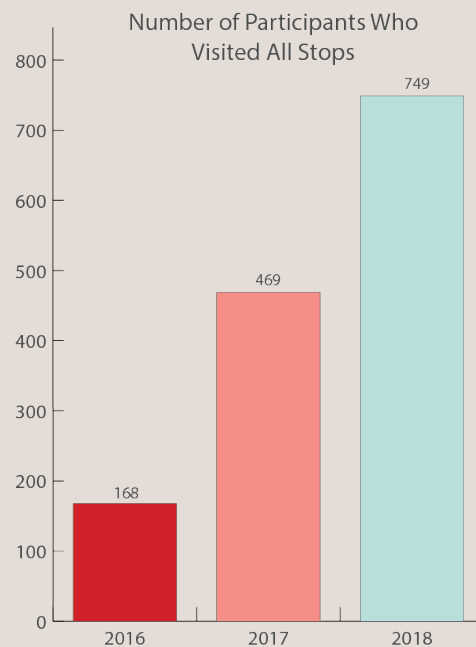


48,895
PASSPORT BOOKLETS
WERE REQUESTED
IN 2018



TOP 15 MOST VISITED STOPS

1. UNL Dairy Store, Lincoln
2. Rabbit Hole Bakery, Lincoln
3. Piezano's, Lincoln
4. The Archway, Kearney
5. Zio's Pizza, Omaha
6. Wave Pizza Co., Grand Island
7. Platte Valley Antique Mall, Greenwood
8. Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln
9. Mahoney State Park, Ashland
10. Passageway Gallery, Omaha
11. The Durham Museum, Omaha
12. Gene Roncka Willow Point Gallery, Ashland
13. Milady Coffeehouse, Fremont
14. Bottle Rocket Brewing Co., Seward
15. Shopping Tripps, Kearney



"We've been very busy and excited about the number of Passport visitors we've had. They have all been so wonderful and it's been fun hearing their stories about their other Passport travels. We are so grateful for this program and have recommended it to other businesses in town."
Amanda Rekasis, owner of the Sugar Bee in Hickman



MEDIA TOURS

In 2018, Nebraska Tourism hosted 23 writers/influencers through group media tours and individual visits to the state. These writers work for top national, regional and niche publications. Publications include National Geographic, Tribune News Service, Big Life Magazine, Lonely Planet, Mother Nature Network, Food & Wine, UNITED Hemispheres, Saveur, Thrillist and more.

THESE TOURS HAVE
PRODUCED MEDIA
EXPOSED TO
677,772,696
POTENTIAL VISITORS

The 2018 Media Tours were:

- Crane Migration Media Tour in March
- Sandhills/Valentine Media Tour in May
- Wild West Media Tour in June
- Culinary Harvest Media Tour in September



OTHER MEDIA

In 2018, Nebraska Tourism

- Sent out **31 press releases** related to tourism business and Nebraska destinations and events.
- Did **74 TV and radio interviews**.
- Garnered over **\$10 million in coverage** from press releases and story pitching.

EDUCATION

2018 PLAINS SAFARIS CONFERENCE

This conference combined three conferences into one large-scale event. The Nebraska Tourism Commission's annual Agri/Eco-Tourism Workshop, the Heartland Scenic Byways Annual Conference and the Center for Great Plains Studies Great Plains Symposium. This conference provided the avenue to explore how tourism in the Great Plains and around the globe could boost conservation, assist landowners, and build thriving rural communities. The fifty plus speakers featured sessions for businesses, government leaders, ranchers, conservationists, community partners and academics, as well as wide-ranging discussions about preserving the stunning beauty of Great Plains ecology. Eleven field trips provided hands-on opportunities for attendees to see regional ecotourism and agritourism attractions. Over three hundred attended the conference.

Speakers included:

- Joel Sartore, National Geographic photographer
- Dan Flores, author of American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains
- Nils Odendall, CEO, NamibRand Nature Reserve
- Okwa Sarefno, owner, Nature Leadership
- Martha Kauffman, World Wildlife Fund's
- Micheal Forsberg, photographer
- Many more



2018 NEBRASKA TOURISM CONFERENCE

Nebraska City, the Home of Arbor Day, was the hosting community for the 2018 Nebraska Tourism Conference from October 16-18, with 252 attendees consisting of visitors' bureaus, destination owners and forty sponsors supporting the conference.

Educational sessions, activities, and networking opportunities were held. Dean Savoca, national speaker with over 25 years' experience in the hospitality industry shared interesting insights about essential attributes of being a successful leader. Jonah Sachs, author and digital marketing expert, introduced the concept of

"Unsafe Thinking" and breaking the status quo. Best and Worst Practices in Sports Tourism Marketing, Travel Trends, Producing Videos, Signage, Grants, Developing Bicycle Tourism and Watchable Wildlife Adventures were just some of the other sessions offered. Nebraska Tourism's new marketing campaign for 2019 was also unveiled at the conference.

The conference concluded by celebrating the Nebraska Tourism Industry's best and brightest at the Celebrate Nebraska Awards Banquet. The celebration concluded with the bestowing of the Tourism Industry Awards and the prestigious Henry Fonda award.

**SEWARD'S PAT COLDIRON WAS
HONORED WITH THE
HENRY FONDA AWARD AT THE 2018
NEBRASKA AWARDS BANQUET.**



GROUP TOURS

In 2018 Nebraska Tourism hosted three familiarization tours for Group Tour operators in the hopes that they would bring their bus tours to the state. The tours were:

Sandhill Cranes, Cars, and Cuisine
April 2-5, 2018



Western Nebraska's Buffalo Bill, Oregon Trail, Pioneer Experience
April 30-May 5, 2018

Northeast Nebraska American Indian Heritage, Cowboy Life, Airboats, Bison
September 17-20, 2018



In 2018, Nebraska Tourism attended Group Marketplaces promoting the state as a group tour destination. The conferences were:

American Bus Association (Charlotte, NC)
Select Traveler Conference (Louisville, KY)
IPW (Denver, CO)
Travel Alliance Partners (Atlantic City, NJ)
National Tour Association (Milwaukee, WI)

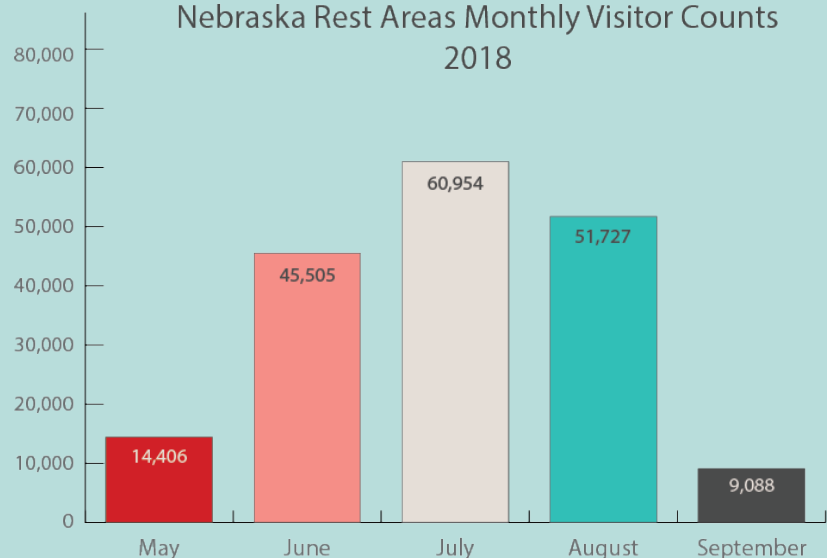
**ACCORDING TO THE
AMERICAN BUS
ASSOCIATION
FOUNDATION,
MOTORCOACH
TRAVEL GENERATED
\$71.51 MILLION
IN NEBRASKA IN 2018.**

TRAVEL COUNSELOR PROGRAM

**NEBRASKA TOURISM
STAFFED 14 REST AREAS
OVER THE SUMMER
ALLOWING TRAVEL
COUNSELORS TO ASSIST
180,000+ TRAVELERS.**

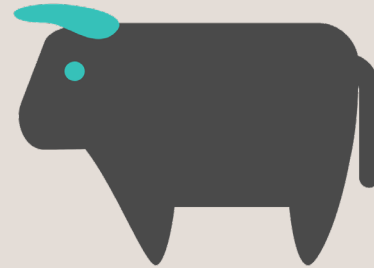


Nebraska Rest Areas Monthly Visitor Counts
2018



NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW

Nebraska Tourism was a major sponsor for the National Western Stock Show and received one premium exhibit space in the Expo Hall, where people could learn more about a Nebraska vacation and take a photo in a tank.



705,574 VISITORS WALKED THROUGH THE GATES AT THE 2018 NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW.

IT WAS THE SECOND-HIGHEST ATTENDED SHOW IN THEIR 112-YEAR HISTORY.

NEBRASKA STATE FAIR



The 2018 Nebraska State Fair ran from August 24 through September 3 in Grand Island. Nebraska Tourism had a booth in the expo building, distributing travel guides and other marketing material for partners from across the state. The booth was run by Nebraska Tourism staff and volunteers.



314,805 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE 2018 NEBRASKA STATE FAIR



HONESTLY. IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.

At the 2018 Nebraska Tourism Conference, the new marketing campaign was unveiled. The premise, Nebraska may not be on everyone's bucket list of places to visit, but if you like experiences that are unpretentious and uncomplicated or if you enjoy escaping the big city life for moments of solitude in the open plains, creating your own fun or exploring the quirkiness the state has to offer, chances are, you will like it here.

The campaign will launch in target markets in winter of 2019.

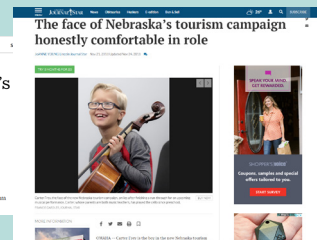
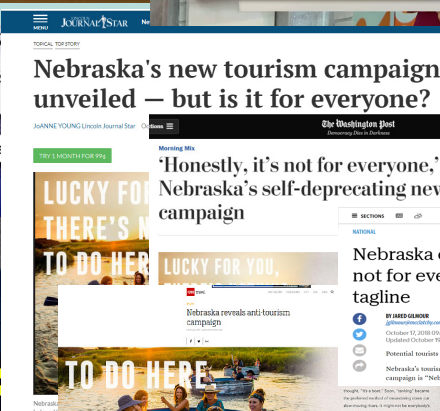
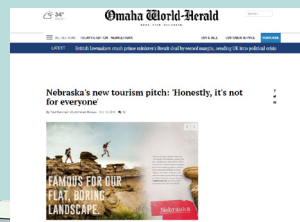


COFFEE MUGS FEATURING THE NEW CAMPAIGN LOGO WERE FEATURED ON **LIVE WITH KELLY AND RYAN** ON DECEMBER 13TH, A RESULT OF STAFF MAILING THEM MUGS

Nebraska. Honestly, it's not for everyone," was a hot topic after it was unveiled at the 2018 Nebraska Tourism Conference in October. Some highlights of coverage received because of the campaign are as follows:

- Media coverage of the campaign reached over 884 million people.
- **The Late Show with Stephen Colbert's** opening monologue on his October 19th show was about the new Nebraska Tourism Campaign.
- **LIVE with Kelly and Ryan** talked about the new campaign on multiple occasions
- The **Omaha World-Herald** named "Nebraska's saucy new tourism slogan" the most popular story on Omaha.com in 2018.
- Additional big name coverage of the campaign includes: **Today Show**, **TIME**, **New York Post**, **NPR**, **Washington Post**, **ABC News**, **Fox**, **AdWeek**, **Chicago Tribune**, **Thrillist**, **theSKIMM**, **CNN** and more.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CAMPAIGN HAD A **PUBLICITY VALUE OF OVER \$7.1 MILLION, MORE THAN THE NEBRASKA TOURISM COMMISSION'S ENTIRE ANNUAL BUDGET & THREE TIMES MORE THAN NEBRASKA TOURISM'S PAID MEDIA BUDGET**



LUCKY FOR YOU, THERE'S NOTHING TO DO HERE.

In Nebraska, we believe that only boring people get bored. So we invent our own fun. Like when we realized that a livestock tank would float, and thought, "It's a boat." Soon, "tanking" became the preferred method of meandering down our slow-moving rivers. It might not be everybody's cup of tea, but if it sounds as good to you as it did to us, go to VisitNebraska.com for a free Travel Guide. And welcome aboard.

Nebraska
HONESTLY. IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.

ANOTHER DAY ON THE DUSTY PLAINS.

Nebraska
HONESTLY. IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.

MAYBE CALLING THEM PLAINS WAS A POOR CHOICE OF WORDS.

Many people think of Nebraska as flat, featureless and unappealing, probably due to its location in the heart of the Great Plains. Perhaps we should have called them the Great Dazzling Spectacles or something, because to us, the Plains are anything but plain. They're majestic, beautiful and awe-inspiring in their own way. Not everyone can appreciate that. But if you can, go to **VisitNebraska.com** for your free Travel Guide. And prepare to be greatly dazzled.

Nebraska
HONESTLY, IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.