



Buffalo, Bones, and Books

Traveling the Fossil Freeway

Western Nebraska is full of exciting group tour opportunities, especially along the aptly named the Fossil Freeway (Highway 71) from Kimball to Chadron. Join us as we follow along this highway where we'll be able to hand feed buffalo, learn what it takes to make a home in a repurposed missile silo, and explore an internationally recognized fossil site. We'll also venture deep into the windswept High Plains region and Oglala National Grasslands of northwest Nebraska and hear stories and tales of how life was for early pioneers and settlers in this hearty region of the state.

Day 1

Kimball County

We begin our tour in Kimball County with lunch at **Windbreak Bar & Grill** before heading out to **EJE Ranch** to learn about the High Plains Region's short grass prairie on this working ranch. We'll actually have an opportunity to venture out into the prairie to learn more about this fragile ecosystem first hand. Afterward, we'll hit a unique stop in western Nebraska when we visit a couple who converted a **1960 era Atlas E Missile Silo** into a comfortable home. They'll give us a tour of their approximately 29,500 square foot living space, located on 18 acres southwest of Kimball, and talk to us about how they converted it into their house. Dinner this evening will be at the **Potter Community Theatre** where the **Potter Melodrama** actors will entertain us with a lively performance.

Day 2

Kimball County • Bayard • Scotts Bluff County

After breakfast, we depart Kimball and continue our journey northward along the **Fossil Freeway** to **Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company**. There we'll visit a working ranch that raises grass fed bison and have the unique opportunity to hand feed the buffalo hay biscuits. Something most people cannot say they've ever done. Afterward, we'll stop for lunch at **Laura Lee's Double L Country Store and Café**. Fresh ingredients, mouthwatering pies, excellent daily specials and a small gift store make this hilltop spot a "must stop at." After lunch we head to Bayard for an informative visit of **Chimney Rock**, the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. Early pioneers saw this towering feature for days on the open horizon. The newly renovated **Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitor Center** highlights the fascinating stories from these pioneers and others as they continued their westward migration. Dinner tonight is an **Oregon Trail Cookout at Five Rocks Amphitheatre**.

Day 3

Scotts Bluff County

Breakfast today is at **Barn Anew B&B**, a renovated 100-year-old barn located near Oregon Trail wagon ruts and within the imposing shadow of **Scotts Bluff National Monument**. After breakfast, we'll visit this natural formation that was a prominent landmark for American Indians, fur traders, and Oregon and Mormon trail pioneers who used it as a guide westward. At 800 feet above the North Platte River, a drive to the summit gives you a tremendous view of the entire valley and the wagon ruts that are still visible at the base. A gift shop and museum in the visitor center show the historical importance of the trail and the area's colorful history.

Lunch today will be a farm-to-table affair at **Legacy of the Plains** where we'll also learn about the lives and stories of the people who explored and settled the High Plains of Nebraska. Located on the Oregon Trail, the museum's exhibits focus on the archeology of Native American and Westward Expansions, the lives of pioneering settlers, the establishment of irrigation, the development of rural communities, the diversity of culture on the High Plains, and the innovative technologies and cultural practices of raising animals and crops in the semi-arid environment. Next we'll head south of town to the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center** where we'll learn more about the unique flora and fauna of the beautiful and rugged Wildcat Hills region. Dinner will be in Gering.

Day 4

Northwest Nebraska

After breakfast we depart Gering and head farther north on the Fossil Freeway to **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument** in remote Sioux County of northwest Nebraska. We'll explore this internationally recognized fossil site where mammal bones from the Miocene Epoch are on display. The adjacent Agate Springs Ranch was home to James H. Cook and his wife who regularly welcomed leaders of great Native American nations like Red Cloud and American Horse. A modern visitor facility features exhibits highlighting the fossils found on the ranch and the impressive collection of **Native American artifacts** gifted to James Cook by Red Cloud and others. While there we'll take a behind-the-scenes peek at valuable artifacts that normally are not on display.

After lunch at **Gate City Hotel and Grill** in Crawford, we'll step back in time at **Fort Robinson State Historic Park**, which offers historic tours, jeep and stagecoach rides, and the chance to view bison and purebred Texas longhorn herds. First used as a fort from the early days of the Old West until after World War II, the fort was the site of the 1879 Cheyenne Outbreak and the death of famed Sioux Chief Crazy Horse. While at the fort, we'll enjoy a delicious lunch. Now it's time to head deeper into the vast High Plains and the **Oglala National Grassland** to explore a one-of-a-kind destination, **Hudson-Meng Education & Research Center**, which houses one of the most important paleo-archeological discoveries in North America. After the last Ice Age, hundreds of *Bison antiquus* (an extinct form of the modern bison) died here. People have wondered about the origin of this bone bed since its discovery in 1954, and archeologists today continue to research the exact nature of past events and the role that ancient Paleo-Indian people may have played. Our last stop today is a wonderfully prepared Nebraska steak dinner served at **High Plains Homestead**. Located within the **Oglala National Grassland**, this authentic recreation of an Old West cow town comes complete with delicious meals, unique lodging experiences, horse corrals, and fossil collecting.

Day 5

Northwest Nebraska

After breakfast at **Bean Broker**, our first stop in Chadron is the **Museum of the Fur Trade**, the only museum in the country dedicated to preserving the nation's fur-trading industry. We can also explore the **Bordeaux Trading Post** (built 1837), which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Items from the 2015 Academy Award winning movie, *The*

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Revenant starring Leonardo DiCaprio, will be on display. Next we'll explore the history and culture of the High Plains region and the interesting life and literature of Nebraska author Mari Sandoz, author of "Old Jules" and "Crazy Horse," at the **Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center**. Our last stop in Chadron is at the **Eleanor Barbour Cook Museum of Geology** located on the Chadron State College Campus where we'll explore rocks, minerals, and fossils from Nebraska, the surrounding region, and around the world. Exhibits include the Ohme collection of agates, jade and petrified wood.

For more information about this itinerary and other exciting group tour opportunities, contact Micheal Collins, Group Tour Manager, with the Nebraska Tourism Commission at micheal.collins@nebraska.com or 402-471-3795.

Day 1

Windbreak Bar & Grill (Lunch)
EJE Ranch
Missile Silo House
Potter Community Theatre (Dinner)

Day 2

Breakfast in Kimball
Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company
Double L Country Store (Lunch)
Chimney Rock National Historic Site
Oregon Trail Cookout at Five Rocks (Dinner)

Day 3

Barn Anew B&B (Breakfast)
Scotts Bluff National Monument
Legacy of the Plains (Lunch)
Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area & Nature Center
Dinner in Scotts Bluff County

Day 4

Breakfast in Scotts Bluff County
Agate Fossil Beds National Monument
The Gate City Hotel & Grill (Lunch)
Fort Robinson State Historical Park
Hudson-Meng Education & Research Center
High Plains Homestead (Dinner)

Day 5

Bean Broker (Breakfast)
Museum of the Fur Trade
Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center
Lunch in Chadron
Eleanor Barbour Cook Museum of Geology



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