

Cosmopolitan to Cowboys

Nebraska's Great Platte River Road



On this itinerary, we'll follow the path of the great American west along one of the nation's busiest migration and transportation routes, the Great Platte River Road. Today, Interstate 80 follows this route, taking us through diverse landscapes and terrains. The cosmopolitan urban centers of Omaha and Lincoln in eastern Nebraska, the fertile farmlands and migratory birding paths of central Nebraska and the Central Flyway, and the wide-open and sprawling vistas of western Nebraska make up this exciting land of contrasts.

DAY 1

Omaha

Our first stop this morning is the **National Park Service Visitor Center** where Meriwether Lewis will meet us and talk about his journey up the Missouri River with William Clark before we embark on an exciting **guided city tour of Omaha**. Next, we'll explore the history and settlement of Nebraska's largest city at the **Durham Museum**. Located in the former Union Station, this top museum offers us the chance to walk through authentic train cars on display on the downstairs station platform. Our lunch stop is a traditional Greek meal at **St. John Greek Orthodox Church** followed by lessons in Greek dancing and culture. For dessert, we'll make a short stop at the **Lithuanian Bakery** for a delicious Lithuanian pastry.

After lunch, we head to west Omaha and **Father Flanagan's Boys Town** where an experienced guide will give an insider's view of life in the Village and recount the many inspiring stories of Father Flanagan and his vision to help wayward boys. We'll wrap up our first full day on Nebraska's Old West frontier by travelling back in time to 1879. We'll dine at the historic **General Crook House at Fort Omaha** where General Crook and his wife Mary have invited us to a delicious 3-course dinner at their new Italianate-style home. Remember that we are in the Old West and there's been talk among the locals of a band of not so friendly cowboys who have started holding up visitors to our fine city. We hope this doesn't happen tonight, but if it does, we'll make sure you get back to your hotel safely...and with all your valuables intact.

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DAY 2

Omaha • Bellevue • Lincoln

Our first stop this morning is the **Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters** in north Omaha where you'll learn more about the great Mormon Migration to the west through a number of interactive exhibits and displays. Explore the adjacent Mormon Pioneer Cemetery dating from 1846-1848. Afterward, we head to Bellevue and the **Fontenelle Forest Nature Center**, a 1,400-acre conservation area overlooking the Missouri River and home to Nebraska's only wild raptor recovery program. After lunch, we head west on Interstate 80 to Lincoln, Nebraska's capital city where we'll start out with a tour of the impressive **Nebraska State Capitol**. At 15 stories and 400 feet tall, it is the second-tallest statehouse in the country and offers a spectacular view of the city from the observation.

Afterward, we head to the **Larsen Tractor Test Museum**, the only tractor testing museum and tractor test laboratory in the world. This unique museum displays more than 25 tractors highlighting the advancements in tractor testing technology, which established power and performance standards and solved agricultural problems worldwide. Before we depart the University of Nebraska's East Campus, we make one final stop at the **UNL Dairy Store** for a tour and tasty post-lunch ice cream treat. Our next stop is the **International Quilt Study Center**, which houses the world's largest publicly held quilt collection. We'll tour its high-tech storage facility and quilt exhibitions before going "behind the scenes" to view quilts that are hundreds of years old. We end our day in Lincoln with a wonderful meal and entertainment at **Screamers Dining & Cabaret**.

DAY 3

Lincoln • York County • Grand Island

Our first stop in Lincoln this morning is the **Museum of American Speed**, a 135,000 sq. ft. museum that presents a chronology of automotive racing and speed equipment development while preserving, interpreting, and displaying items significant in racing and automotive history. Now we depart Lincoln and continue westward on Interstate 80 to York and lunch at **Chances "R,"** one of the city's most popular group dining destinations. Afterward, we step back in time to the ancient world of Mesopotamia, Rome, and other great civilizations at the **Clayton Museum of Ancient History**. While there, spend a few moments reflecting in front of an accurate reproduction of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. You even can write a prayer and leave in it the wall. Next stop is Henderson and the **Mennonite Heritage Park**, where costumed storytellers will enlighten us about the Henderson Mennonites, and tell us how this group is connected to the Amish and Old-Mennonites in Pennsylvania and how these Germans from Russia immigrated to Nebraska. Grand Island is home to the **Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer**. Noted as one of the top ten living history museums in the country, the museum complex transports us back to the early pioneer and settlement days of Nebraska. The **Fonner Rotunda** houses one of the state's finest collections of cowboy and Native American art and artifacts. For dinner, we dine at **Chocolate Bar** in downtown Grand Island where we'll enjoy homemade fare made with the freshest ingredients.

DAY 4

Grand Island • Kearney

Before departing Grand Island this morning, we'll take in **Raising Nebraska** where we'll explore this interactive 25,000 sq. ft. museum that connects consumers with farmers who raise their food by explaining the steps from "farm to fork." Experience a virtual combine harvest experience, full-sized pivot irrigation system, grain bin video theater, a 50-foot-long interactive floor map of Nebraska, and an interactive dinner table. We make a stop at the **Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center** near Gibbon to learn more about the majestic Sandhill cranes, and other migratory birds, during their migration each spring through Nebraska's Central Flyway. As we enter Kearney, our first stop is lunch at **Alley Rose** where we'll dine on a variety of delicious offerings within a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere. The afternoon begins with a guided tour of the **Classic Car Collection**. This impressive museum includes more than 140 vintage automobiles from the

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early 1900's to the 1980's and it has been called the "best public car attraction between Chicago and Denver!" Next stop is the **Archway**, an impressive interactive museum that commemorates the nation's westward expansion. At a height of 310 feet, the Archway is the only tourist attraction in the country to span a federal interstate highway. We leave Kearney and head westward to North Platte and "Cowboy Country."

DAY 5

North Platte • Ogallala

We'll start the morning off with a bird's eye, 360-degree view of Union Pacific Railroad's Bailey Yard-the world's largest railroad classification yard-from atop the 95-foot tall, 8-story **Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center**. Historical and regional railroad memorabilia can be purchased in the gift shop. Afterward, we'll head to the home of Colonel William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody where we'll meet him and his wife who will give us a guided tour of their home and the historic barn at **Buffalo Bill State Historical Park**. The transportation to our next destination is a little different. We'll hop aboard a wagon that will take us from the park to the **Lincoln County Historical Museum** where we'll enjoy a **Dutch oven lunch** followed by a guided tour of the facility. We'll explore the recreated town and learn more about the story of the famous **North Platte Canteen** during World War II. One thing to watch out for on the ride to the museum though is masked robbers who have their eye on the money you'll also be carrying with you on the wagon. Before departing North Platte, we'll make a short stop at **Fort Cody Trading Post**, one of the state's largest, and most eclectic gift shops. Explore the Old West Museum in the back of the store and don't miss the 20,000-piece, hand-carved animated miniature version of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Next stop is Ogallala, the "town too tough for Texas" where we'll enjoy a delicious western cowboy dinner at **Front Street and Cowboy Museum**.

DAY 6

Ogallala • Sidney • Kimball

Our first stop this morning before departing Ogallala is the unique **Petrified Wood and Art Gallery**, a natural history gallery specializing in ancient woods, fossils and Native American artifacts. We continue our journey westward onto the High Plains of Nebraska to Sidney where we'll explore **Camp Lookout**, the oldest structure in Sidney and an important military outpost. Lunch is at **Windbreak Bar & Grill** in Kimball where we'll sample tasty fare before heading to **EJE Ranch** to learn more about the region's short grass prairie on this working ranch. We'll have the chance to go out into the prairie to learn more about this fragile ecosystem up-close. Our final stop before departing Nebraska is **Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company** north of Kimball here we'll visit a working ranch that raises grass fed bison. We'll even be able to hand feed the bison hay biscuits, a unique experience you can't get in many places.

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.gov or 402-471-3795.

Day 1

Breakfast in Omaha
National Park Service Visitor Center
Guided City Tour of Omaha
Durham Museum
St. John Greek Orthodox Church (Lunch)
Lithuanian Bakery
Father Flanagan's Boys Town
General Crook House at Fort Omaha (Dinner)

Day 2

Breakfast in Omaha
Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters
Fontenelle Forest Nature Center
Lunch in Sarpy County or Lincoln
Nebraska State Capitol
Larsen Tractor Test Museum
UNL Dairy Story
International Quilt Study Center
Screamers Dining & Cabaret (Dinner)

Day 3

Breakfast in Lincoln
Museum of American Speed
Chances "R" (Lunch)
Clayton Museum of Ancient History
Mennonite Heritage Park
Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
Chocolate Bar (Dinner)

Day 4

Breakfast in Grand Island
Raising Nebraska
Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center
Alley Rose (Lunch)
Classic Car Collection
Archway
Dinner in North Platte

Day 5

Golden Spike Tower & Visitor Center (Breakfast)
Buffalo Bill State Historical Park
Lincoln County Historical Museum (Lunch)
Fort Cody Trading Post
Front Street and Cowboy Museum (Dinner)

Day 6

Breakfast in Ogallala
Petrified Wood and Art Gallery
Camp Lookout
Windbreak Bar & Grill (Lunch)
EJE Ranch
Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company



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