



Westward Ho!

Following the Overland Trails through Nebraska

In the 1800's, the journey to a new life in the west was a long and arduous one. Fortunately, today we can cover the same territory quickly and easily in a modern motorcoach. On this itinerary, we'll follow the footsteps of early explorers and pioneers as we go on our own journey across this great state following the Mormon, Oregon, and California Trails, and the Pony Express.

DAY 1

Omaha

We start our Overland Trail trek in Omaha with an exciting **guided city tour** before exploring more in-depth 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. Next, it's off to the historic **Old Market** district before finding an excellent restaurant for lunch to fortify us on our westward journey. Next stop is in north Omaha at the **Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters** where we'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. Next, we head west to **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.

DAY 2

Lincoln

Once we reach Lincoln, Nebraska's capital city, 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

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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. 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

Beatrice • Fairbury • Red Cloud

We start our day in Beatrice at **Homestead National Monument of America** where we'll step back to a time when the Homestead Act of 1862 enticed millions of people to move to the frontier and cultivate this often-harsh landscape. Explore the Homestead Heritage Center, hiking trails through virgin prairie grasses, and living history demonstrations. One group of European pioneers who settled in southeast Nebraska was the Welsh. After lunch at the **Black Crow**, we'll visit the **Welsh Heritage Center** in Wymore to learn more about this ethnic group that settled in southeast Nebraska. Next, we head west toward Fairbury where we will connect with the Oregon Trail, which entered Nebraska not too far from here. Our first stop is **Rock Creek Station State Historical Park**, one of the best sites to view original wagon ruts of the Oregon and California trails. This also is where "Wild" Bill Hickok gained notoriety for killing his first victims. We have lunch in nearby Fairbury before continuing our journey westward to Hebron for a short stop at the quirky **World's Largest Porch Swing**. Next on our Overland Trail adventure is historic Red Cloud, home to Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather. Tour Willa's childhood home and seven renovated buildings that were important to her life and books at **Willa Cather State Historic Site**. The restored 1885 **Red Cloud Opera House** houses a bookstore, art gallery, theatre, and Willa Cather memorabilia.

DAY 4

Hastings • Grand Island

The **Hastings Museum** is home to one of the best natural history collections in the state, and its one-of-a-kind *Kool-Aid: Discover the Dream* interactive exhibit highlights the story of the birth of one of America's favorite soft drinks. Lifelike murals and replicas, a fiber-optic river of Kool-Aid, interactive kiosks and the original Kool-Aid Man costume tell the story. No visit to the museum is complete without taking in an amazing show in the planetarium. For lunch we'll stop at **Tommy Gunz Bistro** in Grand Island where we'll enjoy hand-prepared entrees within a prohibition era speakeasy experience. 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. Next, 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.

DAY 5

Kearney • Gothenburg • North Platte

Upon arrival in Kearney, we'll make a stop at **The Archway**. This impressive, three-story, interactive museum commemorates the nation's westward expansion and is the only tourist attraction in the nation located over a federal interstate highway. As we continued our westward trek along the Oregon and Mormon trails we'll visit Gothenburg to explore an authentic **Pony Express station**. The Sam Macchette station was used as a fur trading post/ranch housing along the Oregon Trail southwest of Gothenburg. A second authentic Pony Express station is the Midway, located on its original ranch site south of town. An experienced guide can meet us to regale stories of the Pony Express' short-lived existence and talk about how it connected the nation prior to the telegraph. We depart Gothenburg and make our way to North

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Platte, home to NEBRASKAland Days and “Buffalo Bill” Cody. **Fort Cody Trading Post** is 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, we head to the **Golden Spike Tower & Visitor Center** for a spectacular 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 tower. Historical and regional railroad memorabilia can be purchased in the gift shop. After lunch, we head to our final stop in North Platte, **Buffalo Bill State Historical Park**, home of Colonel William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody. Here we’ll meet him and his wife who will give us a tour of their place and talk about their interesting adventures. We’ll hop aboard a wagon that will take us from the park to the **Lincoln County Historical Museum** where we’ll enjoy guided tour of the facility. We’ll also 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 from Buffalo Bill’s house though is masked robbers who have their eye on the money you’ll also be carrying with you on the wagon. Our

DAY 6

Ogallala • Lewellen • Bayard • Gering

Upon arrival in Ogallala, also known as the “Town too tough for Texas,” we’ll head to **Front Street and Cowboy Museum** for an authentic western style dinner. Our first stop this morning is the **Petrified Wood and Art Gallery**, a natural history gallery specializing in ancient woods, fossils and Native American artifacts. Then we’ll tour the 1887 Victorian **Mansion on the Hill** to learn how Ogallala’s wealthier citizens lived. Next, we continue our Overland Trail journey along the North Platte River to Lewellen and **Ash Hollow State Historical Park** where we can view original pioneer wagon ruts at this major trail stopover. Explore Ash Hollow Cave and learn about the area’s history, archaeology, paleontology and Native Americans at the visitor center. A short jaunt to downtown Lewellen and **The Most Unlikely Place** is our lunch stop today. As we eat a delicious lunch prepared with locally produced ingredients, we can admire gorgeous pastels, watercolors, glass etchings and wood sculptures created by local artists. After lunch, we depart for Bayard to visit **Chimney Rock**, the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. The **Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitor Center** highlights fascinating stories from pioneers as they trekked westward.

Our final destination along our Nebraska Overland Trail experience is Gering. First, we’ll visit **Scotts Bluff National Monument**. This natural formation 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. Next stop is **Legacy of the Plains** where we’ll learn about the lives and stories of the people who explored and settled the High Plains of Nebraska.

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
Guided City Tour of Omaha
Durham Museum
Old Market (Lunch)
Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters
Father Flanagan's Boys Town

Day 2

Breakfast in Lincoln
Larsen Tractor Test Museum
International Quilt Study Center
Lunch in Lincoln
Nebraska State Capitol
Museum of American Speed
Historic Haymarket District
Screamers Dining & Cabaret (Dinner)

Day 3

Breakfast in Lincoln
Homestead National Monument of America
Black Crow (Lunch)
Welsh Heritage Center
Rock Creek Station State Historical Park
World's Largest Porch Swing
Willa Cather State Historic Site
Red Cloud Opera House
Dinner in Hastings

Day 4

Breakfast in Hastings
Hastings Museum
Tommy Gunz Bistro (Lunch)
Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
Raising Nebraska
Dinner in Grand Island

Day 5

Breakfast in Grand Island
The Archway
Pony Express Station
Lunch in North Platte
Fort Cody Trading Post
Golden Spike Tower & Visitor Center
Buffalo Bill State Historical Park
Lincoln County Historical Museum (Dinner)

Day 6

Breakfast in Ogallala
Front Street and Cowboy Museum
Petrified Wood and Art Gallery
Mansion on the Hill
Ash Hollow State Historical Park
The Most Unlikely Place (Lunch)
Chimney Rock National Historic Site
Scotts Bluff National Monument
Legacy of the Plains (Dinner)



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