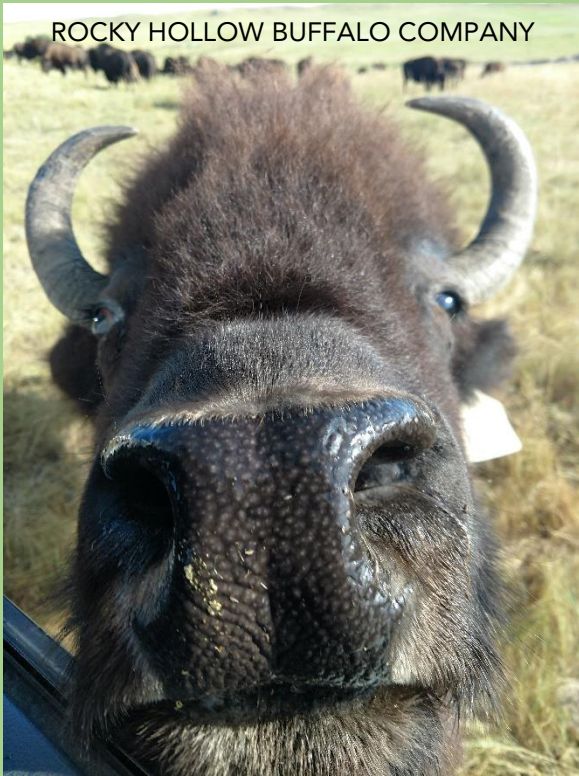


ROCKY HOLLOW BUFFALO COMPANY



Buffalo, Bones, and Books: Traveling the Fossil Freeway

The Fossil Freeway is an enjoyable and scenic drive between Denver and Colorado's Front Range to South Dakota's Black Hills through western Nebraska. While exploring this one-of-a-kind highway corridor connecting the region's rich fossil history, we hand-feed bison and learn more about these sentinels of the Great Plains, explore a natural shortgrass prairie setting, and take in a stunning view of the Oregon Trail and North Platte River Valley from an elevation of more than 800 feet.

Our trip also takes us to a remote part of the state, the windswept High Plains region and Oglala National Grasslands of northwest Nebraska where we explore one of the world's most significant Miocene Epoch mammal fossil sites and gain a greater understanding of the area's Native American culture and livelihood. And we hear the many stories and tales of early pioneer and settler life in this often-hostile landscape where hearty adventurers, fur trappers, and others carved out a living.

Day 1 Kimball County

We start our tour of western Nebraska at **EJE Ranch** and learn about the High Plain's short grass prairie on a working ranch and the opportunity to venture out into the prairie to see this fragile ecosystem firsthand. Next, we head north along the Fossil Freeway to **Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company**. This working ranch raises grass fed bison and you will have the unique opportunity to view these majestic animals up-close and learn how they have thrived for thousands of years in western Nebraska's High Plains region. *Overnight: Gering*

Day 2 Gering, Bayard

After breakfast, we will start the day at **Scotts Bluff National Monument**. This imposing natural formation was a prominent landmark for American Indians, fur traders, and Oregon and Mormon trail pioneers. At 800 feet above the North Platte River, a drive to the summit offers a tremendous view of the entire valley and the wagon ruts still visible at the base. Afterward, we follow the footsteps of early pioneers at **Robidoux 1851 Trading Post** along the historic Oregon Trail where pioneer graves and eroded trail ruts complete the history. After

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lunch, we head to **Chimney Rock National Historic Site** along the **Western Trails Scenic & Historic Byway**. Chimney Rock was the most recognized landmark along the Overland Trails and today a newly renovated visitor center highlights the fascinating stories of the early westward migrating pioneers and other explorers and inhabitants. Once we return to Gering, we head to **Legacy of the Plains** for an authentic wagon train dinner. While there we can hear more about the lives and stories of the people who explored and settled the High Plains of Nebraska. Exhibits focus on the archeology of Native American and Westward expansions, the lives of pioneering settlers, the establishment of irrigation, the diversity of cultures on the High Plains, and the innovative technologies and cultural practices of raising animals and crops in a semi-arid environment.
Overnight: Gering

Day 3 Harrison, Crawford, Chadron

After breakfast, we venture into the remote landscape of northwest Nebraska to **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument**, an internationally recognized fossil site from the Miocene Epoch. The visitor center also includes an impressive collection of artifacts gifted to James Cook by leaders of great Native American nations like Red Cloud and American Horse. We also can enjoy a behind-the-scenes peek at valuable artifacts that normally are not on display. Next, we head into Nebraska's Pine Ridge to **Fort Robinson State Historic Park**. First used as a fort from the early days of the Old West until after World War II, today we can enjoy historic tours, jeep and stagecoach rides, and the chance to view bison and purebred Texas longhorn herds.



Now it is time to head out onto the vast High Plains of the Oglala National Grassland to **Hudson-Meng Education & Research Center**. This one-of-a-kind destination houses one of the most important paleo-archeological discoveries in North America where the bones of hundreds of *Bison antiquus* (an extinct form of the modern bison) died after the last Ice Age. Watch as modern archeologists conduct research and uncover these bones for better study. Next stop is Chadron at the one-of-a-kind **Museum of the Fur Trade**, the only museum in the country dedicated to preserving the nation's fur-trading industry. While there, explore the onsite Bordeaux Trading Post (built 1837), which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and view items from the 2015 Academy Award winning movie, *The Revenant* starring Leonardo DiCaprio.



Our last stop today is the **Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center** to learn more about 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." *Overnight: Chadron*