

The World's Breadbasket: An Agricultural Tour through Nebraska

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Day 1

Omaha

Our first activity this morning is north Omaha and a visit to **Florence Mill**, where we connect agriculture, history and art. Founded in 1846, the mill and 1915 grain elevator served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days from the Civil War to the Cold War, and today, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We also make a stop at the **Mormon Trail Center** to relive a pioneer adventure on the Mormon Trail. Guided or self-guided tours through numerous artifacts, including a full-size covered wagon with an ox team, a log cabin, a handcart and interactive, electronic and fiber optic exhibits tell their stories.

After lunch in the historic Old Market, we head to the **Durham Museum** in the former Union Station to explore the history and settlement of Nebraska's largest city. Make sure to head to the platform downstairs for the chance to walk through authentic train cars and other exhibits. Our next stop is **Father Flanagan's Boys Town** in West Omaha to learn more about this exceptionally heartwarming story of how Father Flanagan worked to create a haven for wayward boys and now girls when he purchased Overlook Farm in 1921. For dinner tonight, we explore Germany and experience the German concept of *Gemütlichkeit* (coziness) at the **German American Society**. Delicious comfort food followed by traditional German entertainment is on the menu. *Willkommen in Deutschland! Overnight: Omaha*

Day 2

Nebraska City, Nehawka

This morning, we head south to spend the day in Nebraska City, Home of Arbor Day. Our first stop is the **Kregel Windmill Factory Museum**, where we will step back in time to see a factory from the Industrial Revolution. This unique museum houses more than one million artifacts and is a time capsule from an important period in the history and expansion of our nation. Next, spend some time at **Arbor Lodge State Historical Park** and wander the rooms of the beautiful estate of J. Sterling Morton, founder of Arbor Day. Built in 1855, this four-room frame house was remodeled over the years to become the magnificent 52-room mansion it is today. The mansion's rooms are filled with authentic furnishings and displays that capture the life and times of this great Nebraska visionary.

Afterward, we tour **Arbor Day Farm**, a 260-acre working farm orchard and forest, which also is a National Historic Landmark, with an experienced nature interpreter. We can visit the 50-foot-high Tree Adventure treehouse for an amazing view of the farm and take home a tree seedling from the Lied Greenhouse. Our final stop in Nebraska City is **Kimmel Orchard & Vineyard**. This working orchard and vineyard is the best destination for fresh, locally grown produce and other homegrown Nebraska products. As we make our way to Lincoln, we stop for dinner at **Slattery Vintage Estates** in Nehawka, which offers more than 70 varieties of Nebraska wine and beer, along with an outdoor kitchen featuring authentic wood-fired pizzas. *Overnight: Lincoln*

Day 3

Lincoln

After breakfast, we head to Lincoln, Nebraska's capital city. Our first stop is the **International Quilt Study Center & Museum**, where we will discover the many stories and religious contexts woven into quilts at the world's largest publicly held quilt collection. The behind-the-scenes tour takes visitors face to face with quilts that are hundreds of years old. Afterward, we make our way to **Larsen Tractor Test Museum** on the University of Nebraska East Campus to visit the only tractor testing museum and tractor test laboratory in the world. On display are more than 25 tractors highlighting the advancements in tractor testing technology, which established power and performance standards and solved agricultural problems around the world.

After lunch, our final stop in Lincoln is one that no tour of the city is complete without. At 15 stories and 400 feet tall, the iconic **Nebraska State Capitol** is the second-tallest statehouse in the country and offers a spectacular view of the city from its 14th-floor observation level. Our nature tour of Lincoln includes some interesting stops. First, the **Valhalla Bee Farm** supplies the bees that live on the Cornhusker Hotel's roof. Spend time with the beekeepers to find out how they started this business and the benefits to a sustainable bee population. Afterward, we can take a walking tour of the **Pollinator Flyway Walking Tour** in downtown Lincoln before heading to **Sleepy Bee Lavender Farm** for a tour of their lavender fields.

Overnight: Lincoln

Day 4

York, Grand Island, Hastings

This morning, we head west to York and **Wessels Living History Farm** to learn firsthand how farm life and agriculture have changed from the 1920s to modern-day farming techniques and technologies at this interactive and educational working farm. **Mennonite Heritage Park** in nearby Henderson is the ideal destination to hear costumed storytellers recount stories about the Henderson Mennonites and explain how this group is connected to the Amish and Old Mennonites in Pennsylvania and why these Germans from Russia immigrated to Nebraska.

Upon arrival in Grand Island, our first stop is at **Stuhr Museum** for lunch and a chance to step back into the past. Declared one of the top ten living history museums in the country, this amazing museum transports us back to the early pioneer and settlement days of Nebraska. It is time to head to **Raising Nebraska** at Fonner Park. This 25,000-square-foot interactive museum connects consumers with farmers who raise their food by explaining the steps from "farm to fork." Experience a virtual combine harvest experience, a full-sized pivot irrigation system, a 50-foot-long interactive floor map of Nebraska, and an interactive dinner table. We continue our agricultural tour in central Nebraska at **Prairie Loft Center** near Hastings. This unique interactive agricultural center gives a deeper understanding of agriculture and how it connects people to the land and our food. *Overnight: Kearney*

Day 5

Holdrege

After breakfast, we take a short drive south to Holdrege to tour **Phelps County Feeders**, where we will learn more about what it takes to care for and feed cattle at this family-owned feedlot. Next, we take a tour of **Nebraska Star Beef** to learn how they market, sell, and ship their product from central Nebraska to all over the world. Lunch is at **Catrina's Mexican Cuisine** in downtown Holdrege before we head for a tour of the **Nebraska Prairie Museum** to view its World War II interpretive center displays, including a scale replica of the original German POW Camp Atlanta, southwest of Holdrege. Also exhibited are items donated by former military personnel who worked there, POWs who were interned there and local families and businesses who hired the POWs during the war. Now it is time for a true Nebraska culinary treat at **The Speakeasy**, where we will feast on some of the most mouthwatering steaks you will ever enjoy. *Overnight: Kearney*

Day 6

Kearney, North Platte

We start the day with a visit to **The Archway**, an impressive interactive museum that commemorates the nation's westward expansion through interactive exhibits and self-guided audio tours. On a side note, at a height of 310 feet, this

is the only tourist attraction in the country to span a federal interstate highway. Now, it is off to North Platte and a tour of the **Golden Spike Tower & Visitor Center** for a bird's eye view of the world's largest railroad classification yard from the 7th-floor open-air observation deck or the 8th-floor enclosed deck.

Afterward, we head out into the fields with **Dusty Trails** for an afternoon sandhill crane viewing tour during the most active time of day for these birds, where we can witness some of their unique courtship behaviors. North Platte's "**Here's the Beef**" Tour at the West Central Research & Extension Office has educators and a chef from a local restaurant available to explain the steps needed to raise and process beef from pasture to the table. Afterward, we can feast on a delicious Nebraska beef dinner prepared onsite. *Overnight: North Platte*

Day 7

North Platte

Start the day off right with a special treat of an ice cream donut sandwich, waffle sundae or other tasty concoction at **Double Dips Ice Creamery**, located in North Platte's historic Canteen District. After breakfast, we take a leisurely stroll through salvaged and repurposed historic grain bins to forage out that perfect antique treasure at **Grain Bin Antique Town** before heading to lunch in North Platte. After lunch, we spend time with **Miller Farms**, a third-generation working farm that produces corn, soybeans, wheat and hay, where we will experience a little bit of farm life from aboard a tractor-pulled wagon through the corn and hay fields to learn more about farming in Nebraska. **Fort Cody Trading Post** is one of Nebraska's most eclectic gift and souvenir shops. Do not miss the working 20,000-piece miniature replica of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and tour Old West exhibits in the newly renovated museum.

Now we head to Buffalo Bill State Historical Park to "**Ride with the Wild Bunch.**" We will meet Colonel William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and his wife to hear about their lives and their interesting adventures. We will end our day in North Platte with "**Wine with the Stars**" Tours, sipping local wines at Feather River Vineyard under the wide-open Nebraska skies. A local astronomer will be onsite with telescopes to highlight the celestial bodies you are viewing in the night sky. *Overnight: North Platte*

Day 8

Ogallala, Gering

After breakfast, we head further west to Ogallala, once known as the "town too tough for Texans," where our first stop is at the **Petrified Wood Gallery**, where we explore Native American artifacts and delicate works of art and carvings formed from pieces of ancient, petrified wood from around the world. Across the street is **Front Street and Cowboy Museum**, a recreation of an 1880s Old West main street, where we will enjoy an authentic western-style lunch at the Crystal Palace Saloon. From June to mid-August, do not miss the Crystal Palace Revue, a rootin' tootin' western shootout, complete with cowboys and showgirls.

Our westward journey takes us along the Western Trails Scenic & Historic Byway to Gering and our first stop. **Scotts Bluff National Monument** is an imposing natural formation that served as 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. We round out the day with a wagon train dinner at the **Legacy of the Plains Museum**. While there, we learn 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 9

Kimball

After breakfast, we head south to Kimball 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. We continue west to Kimball near the

Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming state lines for an informative tour of **EJE Ranch** to 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.

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