

# North Platte: Explore Southwest Nebraska

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## Day 1

### North Platte

After breakfast, we begin our time in North Platte at **Lincoln County Historical Museum**, where we tour the facility and learn more about the North Platte Canteen, one of the most heartwarming stories to come out of the war years. Over the course of WWII, volunteers from around North Platte fed, comforted and supported over six million servicemen and women as they traveled through on their way to the front. This experience offers a look into one of the greatest volunteer efforts the U.S. has ever seen. The tour includes historical museum exhibits, a canteen-style meal, and an informative presentation of the WWII Canteen from a local historian. Afterward, we climb aboard Union Pacific's steam locomotive at **Cody Park Railroad Museum**, where we also can see UP's #6922, the largest diesel locomotive ever made, peek inside the historic Hershey Depot, and climb aboard a mail car and caboose to view historic railroad memorabilia.

Lunch will be the "**Here's the Beef**" tour at the West Central Research & Extension Office. Educators and a chef from a local restaurant will be on hand to explain the steps needed to raise and process beef from pasture to the table. Afterward, we can feast on a delicious Nebraska beef lunch. Next, we will stroll through salvaged and repurposed historic grain bins to forage out that perfect antique treasure at **Grain Bin Antique Town** before heading to **Fort Cody Trading Post**, 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.

Next on our tour is the **Golden Spike Tower**. Rising eight stories above the tracks, the tower offers a panoramic view of Union Pacific's Bailey Yard, the largest classification rail yard in the world, from an open-air platform or enclosed viewing area. Over 10,000 rail cars pass through Bailey Yard each day, and you can see it all from your bird's eye view atop the tower. Now imagine having a private catered meal served on the 8th floor as the sun sets over the railyard. This is truly an experience you don't want to miss. We will end our day in North Platte with "**Wine with the Stars**," sipping local wines at **Feather River Vineyard** under the wide-open Nebraska skies. A local astronomer will be on site with telescopes to highlight the celestial bodies you are viewing in the night sky. *Overnight: North Platte*

## Day 2

### Ogallala, Paxton

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, before making our way to Ogallala, once known as the "town too tough for Texans" where our first stop will be north of town at Lake McConaughy, Nebraska's largest reservoir at more than 22 miles long. We will visit the state's first water center, **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, to learn more about the importance of water to the state's past, present and future.

A drive across the dam and photo opportunities round out our water experience before heading back to Ogallala for an authentic western-style lunch in the **Crystal Palace Saloon at Front Street and Cowboy Museum**, a recreation of an 1880s Old West main street. From June to mid-August, do not miss the **Crystal Palace Revue**, a rootin' tootin' western shootout,

complete with cowboys and showgirls. Across the street is the **Petrified Wood Gallery**, where we can explore Native American artifacts and delicate works of art and carvings formed from pieces of ancient, petrified wood from around the world. Our final stop in Ogallala is to catch a glimpse into how Ogallala's upper-class residents lived at **Mansion on the Hill**, a fully furnished Victorian-style mansion. As we head back to North Platte, our dinner stop will be at **Ole's Big Game Steakhouse** in Paxton, where we will enjoy a delicious Nebraska dinner amidst more than 200 big game trophies and mementos from Ole's worldwide safaris. *Overnight: North Platte*

### **Day 3**

#### **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.

Depending on the time of year, a guided wildlife tour at **Funk Peterson Wildlife Trail** is available and a great way to become better acquainted with the wildlife and birds of this important watershed area. Before dinner, we make a stop at **Lost Way Brewery** to sample their amazing hand-crafted beers and root beer. Afterward, 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: North Platte*

### **Day 4**

#### **Kearney, North Platte**

This morning, we head north of Kearney to Pleasanton to tour one of Nebraska's newest agricultural industries, the cultivation and processing of hemp for therapeutic uses at **Sweetwater Hemp Company**. The owners will explain the process of extracting and handling hemp to create products for medicinal purposes, such as depression, pain, and other ailments. We return to Kearney for a tour of the **Classic Car Collection**, where we can wander through more than 200 classic cars that highlight the evolution and art of the automobile and its impact on our lives.

Afterward, lunch is at **Alley Rose** in downtown Kearney to feast on one of its delicious locally prepared signature dishes. Now it is time to discover the art of Nebraska at the **Museum of Nebraska Art**, where more than 6,000 works by artists of regional, national, and international importance are on display. Next, we are off 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 310 feet, this is the only tourist attraction in the country to span a federal interstate highway.

Upon arrival back in North Platte, it is time 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. Afterward, hop aboard a horse-drawn wagon to the nearby **Lincoln County Historical Museum** and have a deliciously prepared Dutch oven dinner. A tour of the museum, including an authentic recreated Old West town and artifacts highlighting the story of the famous World War II North Platte Canteen, will round out your day. *Overnight: North Platte*

### **Day 5**

#### **North Platte**

After breakfast, it is time to get wet at **Dusty Trails** for a truly Nebraskan activity, leisurely floating down the North Platte River in a horse watering tank. Chairs and coolers can be placed in the tanks for an even more enjoyable time. Lunch today is at one of North Platte's newest restaurants, **The Cedar Room**, an American Fusion restaurant and the first of its kind in North Platte.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Let me help you plan your next exciting Nebraska group tour itinerary!

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