

# NEBRASKA SKY + LAND



The ideal time of year for this itinerary is during the annual sandhill crane migration from mid-February to mid-April.

## Day 1 Travel Day

Upon arrival in Omaha, we check into our hotel to freshen up before dinner at **Gorat's Steakhouse**, one of Warren Buffett's (the Oracle of Omaha) favorite restaurants, a local tradition for more than 70 years, hosting celebrities and dignitaries from around the world. Make sure to try butter brickle ice cream, Warren's favorite flavor.  
*Overnight: Omaha*

## Day 2 Omaha, Bellevue

After breakfast at the hotel, we head out to start our "winged" tour of Nebraska with a hands-on bird art project at **Hot Shops Art Center**. This impressive 92,000-square-foot art center is a living art museum home to more than 70 artists in residence specializing in a wide variety of artistic media, from glass blowing and pottery to bronze casting and blacksmithing. Now we head to Omaha's heart, its historic **Old Market** for lunch and some free time to shop and take in the district's many unique sights and sounds. After lunch we head south of Omaha to **Offutt Air Force Base** in Bellevue. While there we can tour the Air Traffic Control Tower to witness how the controllers manage the airspace around Offutt and work with Eppley Airfield. We also can visit the 557th Weather Wing. Offutt is home to the only weather wing in the U.S. Air Force and visitors will learn how these specialists develop weather forecasts for the Air Force and Army. *Note: additional visitor security information is required to visit the air force base.*



Raptor Woodland Refuge

Afterward we head to **Fontenelle Forest Nature Center** to learn about the facility's dedication to help injured birds of prey at the Raptor Woodland Refuge. Here owls, hawks, falcons, and other species that no longer can survive in the wild live within "homes" designed to fit their natural habitats. A behind the scenes tour shows how these birds are fed and learn how staff use them to educate the public about their habits and habitats. 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 3 Ashland, Greenwood, Lincoln

After breakfast we depart Omaha for Ashland and the **Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum**, a 300,000-square-foot museum featuring aircraft from various world conflicts, an impressive array of aircraft that helped preserve peace during the Cold War, an onsite restoration hanger, and several spacecraft exhibits highlighting our nation's missions to space. Before departure, we enjoy lunch at SAC Lunch Café. Now it is off to Nebraska's largest candy outlet. **Baker's Candies** in Greenwood is home to the famous chocolate meltaways, decadent fudge, gourmet confections, and other sweet treats available direct from the factory.



Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum

Upon arrival in Lincoln, Nebraska's capital city, our first stop is the iconic **Nebraska State Capitol**. At 15 stories and 400-feet-tall this is the second-tallest statehouse in the country and offers a spectacular bird's eye view of the city from its 14<sup>th</sup> floor observation level. Next, we pay a

visit to the **Valhalla Bee Farm** which supplies the bees living on the Cornhusker Hotel's roof. We will spend time with the beekeepers to find out how they started this business and the benefits to a sustainable bee population. Dinner tonight is in one of the historic **Haymarket District's** many restaurants. Before retiring for the night, try a nightcap in one of its upscale hot spots. *Overnight: Lincoln*

#### Day 4 Lincoln, York, Kearney

After lunch we make our way south of Lincoln to **Sleepy Bee Lavender Farm** for a tour of their lush lavender fields before heading to Denton to explore **Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center**, an 850-acre tallgrass prairie nature preserve near Denton, southwest of Lincoln. It is home to more than 220 bird species, 30 mammal species, 350 plants, and 50 butterfly species. It is now time to depart Lincoln and head to lunch at **Chances "R,"** one of York's most popular group dining establishments. Definitely recommend the salad bar. Upon arrival in Kearney, our first stop is at **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 we head back to the hotel to freshen up for an early dinner at **Alley Rose** to feast on one of its delicious locally prepared signature dishes. After dinner, we head out to **Rowe Sanctuary** for a guided sunset sandhill crane viewing on the banks of the Platte River where thousands of cranes end their daily routine of foraging for food in the surrounding fields to rest for the night in the river. *Overnight: Kearney*

#### Day 5 North Platte

After breakfast we head west to North Platte where our first stop will be the home of one of the town's most iconic characters, William 'Buffalo Bill' Cody at the **Buffalo Bill State Historical Park**. Built in 1886, his elegant home and a huge barn sit on the 25 acres of what was originally a 4,000-acre spread called Scout's Rest Ranch. Afterward, we head to nearby **Lincoln County Historical Museum** for a tour and to learn 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, one of the greatest volunteer efforts in history. We round out our time here with a delicious canteen style meal that would have been served then and a presentation of the WWII Canteen from a local historian.



After lunch, it is time for a different view of the cranes when we load onto a bus at **Dusty Trails** for a guided tour of the sandhill cranes as they forage for food in pastures and fields around the Platte River. Now we head to the **Golden Spike Tower** for a private tour and bird's eye view of the world's largest railroad classification yard from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor open air observation deck or the 8<sup>th</sup> floor enclosed deck. Dinner tonight will be served aloft overlooking the Yard. *Overnight: North Platte*

#### Day 6 Grand Island

After breakfast, we head back east to Grand Island where our first stop will be **Fred's Flying Circus**. This whimsical, 3D art display is the creation of the late Fred Schritt and truly is a unique, "sky-high" art exhibit. Our next stop is **The Chocolate Bar** downtown for a cup of delicious coffee and to try some of their amazing chocolates before heading to **Arts and Drafts** to unleash our inner artist by creating our own sandhill crane painting. Now it is time to go back into the past at **Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer** where we start our exploration with a delicious lunch of fresh, homemade salads, sandwiches and more at Stuhr Bistro. 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. We also will have an opportunity to go behind the scenes to see how the museum stores and catalogues its many acquisitions.

Now it is off to one of Grand Island's coolest attractions, **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, full-sized pivot irrigation system, a 50-foot-long interactive floor map of Nebraska, and an interactive dinner table. Speaking of dinner, tonight we will enjoy a delicious farm-to-table dinner at Raising Nebraska along with entertainment, a hands-on learning experience, or fascinating presentation by a noted local speaker. *Overnight: Grand Island*

### Day 7 Alda

Our early morning destination is **Crane Trust Nature & Visitor Center** near Alda where we will witness one of nature’s most amazing natural phenomena during a sunrise sandhill crane viewing from a blind on the Platte River. Afterward, we head back to Grand Island for a full breakfast before returning to Omaha for an afternoon departure.

**Note:** Groups that flew into Omaha to start this itinerary can return to Omaha and depart from there or continue from North Platte to depart from Denver International Airport. Drive time from North Platte to DIA: 3 hrs. 40 mins.



For more information about this and other Nebraska sample group itineraries:

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