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- Fun Party Spots & More



Visiting the Neighbors...

Friendly and Fun Lincoln

By Laura Sutherland



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Lincoln Nebraska makes it to the top of many Quality of Life, Affordability and All Around Nice People Who Live There lists. But as a vacation destination it's slightly off the radar. People tend to drive through it rather than to it.

When we finally decided to check it out and stay for a few nights, I admit I had lowered expectations. I expected to find lots of corn, football, steak and ... more corn, rather than anything especially cool and cutting edge.

But when I started mentioning to certain friends that I was going, their reactions intrigued me. The documentary film maker raved: "fantastic poetry program at the University" and sent me a link to its American Life in Poetry program; and a gourmet chef pal sent me some recent articles about its impressive farm-to-table restaurant scene.

It dawned on me that this must be a sophisticated city.... and I found it to be just that — a culturally sophisticated big town that values good food, the arts, children, niceness and college football, and has plenty to do to make it a worthwhile stop. Here are my top picks for a few days with the kids in Lincoln.

1. LINCOLN CHILDREN'S ZOO

At this small, treasure-of-a-zoo, kids can get close to every exhibit and then do something active to blow off steam. While other Midwestern zoos like Omaha's and St. Louis's get most of the attention, Lincoln's Children's Zoo is well worth a visit as it's one of the very best small zoos in the country, perfectly suited to young children who often find the big blockbuster zoos overwhelming.

Exhibits are tailored to tiny ones — windows extend nearly to the floor, and outdoor walls are often see-through so children in strollers can watch the animals more easily. There are plenty of opportunities to touch — we stroked a prickly hedgehog–like tenrec, a silky chinchilla, a flying squirrel and a bumpy bearded dragon throughout our morning there.

Kids love to watch the long-limbed, athletic gibbons swing hand-to-hand across their big enclosure. A few steps away, the kids can ape the apes on a climbing structure of their own and swing to their heart's content. Nearby, bright pink flamingos perch on stilt-like legs and children are enchanted to watch them ... for a minute. But right next door are half a dozen giant "eggshells" that the children can jump into and play baby bird for as long as they want.

While it's the clever interplay of exhibit and activity and the chance to get close to the animals and touch them that matters most to the kids, parents like me appreciate the zoo's concern for animal welfare and the breeding of endangered animals. It doesn't try to do too much, so what it does it can do well.

lincolnzoo.org

2. SPRING CREEK PRAIRIE AUDUBON CENTER

Once upon a prairie, there were vast oceans of tall grasses that covered the middle of the country for thousands of miles. Today, only 2 percent of the native prairie remains in this part of the Midwest.

Thankfully, the Audubon Society has preserved its own little piece of prairie just outside of Lincoln. Look out across the virgin prairie from the Visitor's Center (with its "please touch" section meant for children) to get the big picture view. Then head outside to hike through the tall grass. We picked up a pocket naturalist guide in the gift shop so we could identify a few of the birds, bugs, wildflowers and plants we might see.

You can also borrow a "Discovery" backpack from the Center. There are six types to pick from to help you view the prairie from different perspectives – artist, photographer, writer, bird watcher, botanist and our favorite – the burrowing animal.

springcreekprairie.audubon.org

3. THE HISTORIC HAYMARKET AREA

This section of downtown Lincoln is host to all kinds of chic restaurants, shops, and the latest thing – a huge digital outdoor screen called The Cube that occasionally shows family movies.

It's fun to wander around to explore the world's largest licorice store (with a few other kinds of candy, too) and to grab a bite in one of its cafes or restaurants. We liked Bread and Cup, open for breakfast, lunch and dinner with a good selection of kid-pleasing dishes and a menu that constantly changes with what's in season. If your children like Indian food, The Cellar is a winner for dinner.

4. TOURS OF MEMORIAL STADIUM - HOME OF THE CORNHUSKERS

College football is everything in Nebraska and the University's Memorial Stadium is right downtown next to the Haymarket. It's been home to the Huskers since it opened in 1923 and has the NCAA record for consecutive sellouts – 325 since 1962 and still counting, with a seating capacity of 87,000. Call to arrange a free tour… and bring along a small football so your kids can toss it around when they get onto the field.
huskers.com (402) 472-3333.



5. LINCOLN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

An apple tree "grows" three stories high and links the floors of this inventive museum chock full of hands-on experiences for kids. It's a toss-up to predict what kids like best of the many deliciously fun activities, but we heard consistent raves about the make-believe grocery store, climb-aboard train, the life-size prairie dog town tunnels and enormous and multi-faceted water play area (bring a dry set of clothes!).
lincolnchildrensmuseum.org





6. THE MUSEUM OF AMERICAN SPEED

Rocket-like racecars, engines built for speed, crazy roadsters and souped-up stock cars gleam with shiny paint jobs and polished chrome at this huge museum – everything here has been restored to mint condition. Other unusual collections, like antique hood ornaments, old album covers related to cars, lunch boxes, toy cars and soap box racers cover three floors.

Very young children may get frustrated here – they'll want to climb in the cars – and especially into the enchanting collection of child-size cars from all decades. But the pre-teen and teens (and their fathers) we saw were in heaven admiring the cars and imagining themselves rocketing around the track.
museumofamericanspeed.com





As an author and freelance writer, Laura Sutherland has covered family travel for more than 20 years.

The Washington Post Online

The Washington Post

Pioneer Village in Nebraska, a blast from a highly inventive past



In Minden, Neb., take a side trip into yesteryear at Pioneer Village, right, to see artifacts of Americana. (Robin Soslow)

BY ROBIN SOSLOW July 3

Good thing I'd pulled off the highway for gas in central Nebraska, or I would have missed a terrific side trip.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/pioneer-village-in-nebraska-a-blast-from-a-highly-inventive-past/2014/07/03/72482516-0146-11e4-b8ff-89afd3fad6bd_story.html

The Washington Post

"Anything nearby worth seeing?" I asked the cashier. At the midpoint of my first cross-country trip years ago, I was eager to reach the Rocky Mountains five hours west. But my legs ached for a break from highway driving.

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Highway 10, a.k.a. Harold Warp Memorial Drive, still leads to Pioneer Village, as I happily confirmed on a recent road trip. This isn't some Williamsburg-like reenactor production, but a 20-acre wonderland of once mind-boggling and still mind-blowing testaments to American ingenuity.

Harold Warp knew about ingenuity. At age 20, in 1924, he patented Flex-O-Glass, a translucent weatherproof plastic he'd invented to enclose the chicken coops on his Nebraska farm. (Flex-O-Glass was the precursor to Plexiglas.) Success enabled him to acquire things — not status symbols, but machines, vehicles and other inventions that propelled industry and culture forward.

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It makes sense to find Pioneer Village in this heartland. It's the midpoint of cross-country routes, including a modern interstate, historic Lincoln Highway, even the Oregon, Mormon, California and Pony Express trails. And there's land aplenty for a citizen to create a 20-acre shrine to American ingenuity

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Soslow is an arts and outdoors writer based in Florida. She can be reached at rsoslow@gmail.com.

DETAILS:

Pioneer Village

138 East U.S. Highway 6

308-832-1181

Minden, Neb.

pioneervillage.org

Daily 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. $14; ages 6 to 12 $7; age 5 and younger free.

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Expect the unexpected in Nebraska

Jeff Frischkorn
Special to The News-Herald

The problem with fly-over or drive-through states such as Nebraska is that many folks really don't know what they are flying over or driving through.

But any family taking Interstate 80 west this summer ought to plan stop-over days around North Platte, Neb. — or perhaps forgo traveling further west altogether.

What awaits?

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Superlatives: Visit the Western Hemisphere's largest hand-planted forest or view from eight stories up the world's largest railroad yard.

Relive history: Visit Buffalo Bill's homestead ranch or one of the last remaining Pony Express way-station cabins.

Shop to drop: A 50-year-old business just-off-the-freeway boasts being "an Old Timey Tourist Trap" for those scrounging through 15 wooden grain silos converted into individual antique shops.

Northwest Nebraska is entrepreneurial, natural and – yes – unnatural. And independent, proud and super-friendly Nebraskans would have it no other way.

The area's rich natural resources first drew the American Indians, then explorers followed by rail-



Jeff Frischkorn

Tanks originally used to water livestock have been retrofitted for float trips down Nebraska's Middle Loupe River.

Travelers' checks

Fly to reach North Platte, Neb., but it's not convenient. A flight originating in Cleveland would use Denver, Rapid City, S.D., or Omaha, Neb., as its destination followed by a three- to four-hour drive in a rental car.

Driving makes more sense because Interstate 80 also includes the Ohio Turnpike and continues on to North Platte, a distance of about 1,100 miles from Mentor. Another familiar route is Route 20, which also runs to northwest Nebraska.

Nebraska Tourism Commission, 301 Centennial Mall South, 1st Floor, Lincoln, NE 68509; 402-471-1588; www.visitnebraska.com.

North Platte/Lincoln County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 315 W. Eugene Ave., North Platte, NE 69101; 308-532-4729; www.visitnorthplatte.com.

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park, 2921 Scouts Ranch State Historical Park, North Platte, NE; 308-535-8035; www.ngpc.state.ne.us/parks/guides/parksearch/showpark.asp?/Area_No=38.

Dancing Leaf Cultural Learning Center, 6100 E. Opal Springs Road, Wellfleet, NE 69170; 308-963-4233; www.dancingleaf.com.

Dusty Trails Stables and Outfitting, 7455 W. Correction Line Road, North Platte, NE 69101; 308-530-0048; visitnorthplatte.com/attraction/dusty-trails-stables-and-outfitting.

Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center, 1249 N. Homestead Road, North Platte, NE 69101; 308-532-9920; www.goldenspiketower.com.

Grain Bin Antique Town, 10641 S. Old Hwy 83, North Platte, NE 69101; 308-539-7401 (owner's cell phone); www.grainbinantiquetown.com.

Lincoln County Historical Museum, 2403 N. Buffalo Ave., North Platte, NE 69101; 308-534-5640; www.lincolncountymuseum.org.

Sandhills Motel and Glidden Canoe Rentalm, 507 SW 1st Street, Mullen, NE 69152; 308-546-2206; www.sandhillsmotel.com.

Nebraska National Forest Bessey Ranger District, POB 39, 40637 Liver Loop, Halsey, NE 69142; 308-533-2257. www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nebraska/about-forest/

roaders and, ultimately, ranchers, farmers and settlers. All found much to appreciate about this part of the nation's 16th-largest state.

The region's important rivers were the country's first system for moving commerce and people. The Platte River's two island-braided branches link up at North Platte and then flow into the Missouri River at Omaha.

This river system was later traced by the Oregon, California and the Mormon Pioneer trails.

In the early days of the Pony Express the river also became that short-lived but historically rich business' GPS.

Often said to be "too thick to drink but too thin to plow," the Platte is one of this country's most storied waterways, with its north branch becoming a stellar travelers' route that continues to this day.

Just to the east of North Platte is one of the last remaining Pony Express wooden station structures, carefully restored and proudly displayed at a well-maintained park in Gothenburg, Neb.

Legendary soldier Buffalo Bill Cody first became an Army scout at a fort on the Platte and its north branch and later built his 4,000-acre Scout Ranch as a retreat whenever he grew tired of his Wild West Show.

Only about 25 acres of the original site remains as the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historic Park with Cody's original but carefully maintained home, a large barn and other outbuildings, all of which are open to the public.

Nearby is the Lincoln County Historical Museum with original structures from the mid- to late-1800s, including a church, home, barbershop, schoolhouse, and even a jail.

Here is found an even more intriguing story: Volunteers during World War II greeted every service person stopping en route on the Union Pacific Railroad. From a few days after the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor into 1946, some 6 million service personnel from all branches, male and female, and all races, were treated by North Platte volunteers to sandwiches, cookies, hardboiled eggs, angel-food cake, coffee and tea.

No service member was ever charged a cent, no train was ever missed and no one was ever refused food, drink and a comforting smile. For more than a few of the service men and women passing-through on their way west to the Pacific Theater or east to the Atlantic Theater, this was their last home-cooked sandwich or dessert.

For sheer fun, few things around North Platte beat the 2-year-old Grain Bin Antique Town. Here, 15 relocated and restored are nearly 80-year-old wooden, octagon granaries chock-full of antiques.

Several of the former granaries are rented to area antique dealers, but most are filled with old treasures assembled by Grain Bin Antique Town's owner, Lori Clinch, whose motto is "only genuinely old stuff."

"I never throw anything away," Cinch said. "It's in my DNA."

Not lost on these Nebraskans is their rich pre-European history. Nearby and to the south of North Platte along Medicine Creek is the 115-acre Dancing Leaf Cultural Learning Center.

The recreated complex is devoted to the Paleoamericans of 1,000 years ago with artifacts and an authentically built earth lodge. It attracts more than 5,000 visitors annually.

But it is the Union Pacific Railroad that drives much of the present and future for the region.

The railroad's gigantic 2,850-acre Bailey Yard — 8-1/2 miles long and 2-1/2 miles wide — is the world's largest.

Other statistics are just as staggering: The rail yard employs 2,600 people, handles on average 155 trains and 10,000 rail cars daily around-the-clock. Its 14 sets of rail lines includes 315 miles of track, and the complex feeds the trains with 18 million gallons of diesel fuel monthly.

View the Bailey Yard from its 8-story-tall Golden Spike Tower and Visitors Center, where its seventh floor gives a 360-degree open-air view. In inclement weather, take an elevator one floor up for a 360-degree glass-enclosed view. It's no surprise to learn that this is one of North Platte's most visited tourist destinations.

A 130-mile drive north on Nebraska Route 97 from North Platte goes into the heart of the state's Sand Hills with its epicenter at Valentine, Neb.

The undulating Sand Hills — from 19,600 square miles to 23,600 square miles, depending on whom you ask — are a series of vegetated sand dunes remaining from the last Ice Age and over-laying the vital Ogallala Aquifer.

In 1984 the Sand Hills were declared to be a National Natural Landmark — and its natural resource-rich land is unique and so vitally important that five national state and nonprofit refuges, forests and preserves are found here.

Yet this area is far from a look-but-do-not-touch area. The rural McPherson, Hooker, Thomas, Blaine and Cherry counties all have plenty of hands-on places.

Cherry County alone encompasses 6,010 square miles with 6,000 humans spread over two time zones.

By comparison, the combined size of Lake, Geauga, Cuyahoga and Ashtabula counties is only about half that of Cherry County. It's big country with big things to see and do.

Most enjoyable for me was a float down the Middle Loup River. Fed almost exclusively by springs bubbling up from the Ogallala aquifer, the Middle Loup is defined by hydrologists as the world's most consistently flowing river, seldom varying in volume.

It never floods and rarely freezes.

This makes it perfect for floating and not just for inflatable rafts, canoes, kayaks or even inner tubes. The Middle Loup River inspired enterprising businessman Mitch Glidden with his opportunity.

Observing the round, galvanized steel tanks used to water livestock, Glidden uses the 8-foot- and 9-foot-diameter-by-2-foot-tall tanks as boats on the sure and steady Middle Loup River.

Because Nebraska does not require non-motorized vessels to be either registered or licensed Glidden discovered he can use the livestock watering tanks as vessels without otherwise going through any governmental red tape.

Removable steel seats, conforming to the tank's interior wall, are fabricated by Glidden's son, and life jackets and boat cushions are provided for everyone. But nearly all adults use them as seats with children required to wear them.

Throughout the undulating float stretch the water's depth runs from knee- to waist-deep. So, should a tank run afoul of an obstruction, it's simple to hop out, tow the vessel into the stream's main current and continue the journey downstream.

View mule deer, wild turkeys, coyotes and other Sand Hill critters on a float, but you're having so much fun it's difficult to remain silent long enough to not to scare away game.

Further north at the Cherry County county seat of Valentine is the Niobrara River, where floats conducted by Graham Canoe Outfitters use more conventional rubber river rafts, canoes and kayaks. Tanking is illegal in the city's adjacent 19,131-acre Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge — a preserve generating "oohs" and "ahhs" with its high bluffs of contrasting forms layering startling colors along both banks.

Midway between North Platte and Valentine, poke around the 141,864-acre Nebraska National Forest, split into two districts.

Nebraska's national forest contains more than just a handful of western and eastern cedars and juniper trees. It's 90,000-acre Bessey Ranger District has the Western Hemisphere's largest hand-planted forest, approximately 20,000 acres. Meeting ground for hunters, anglers, campers, hikers and wildlife watchers the forest is home to a tree nursery whose root stock is shipped all over the country — to the tune of 2.5 million to 3 million plants annually.

These northwest Nebraskans come from enterprising, hardy people. Meet Rose, Neb., self-taught cowboy boot maker Kyle Rosfeld and Kaycee Orr-Hoffman, a Thedford, Neb., self-taught cowboy hat maker along with David Hutchinson, also from Rose, who successfully established a herd of organically (grass, not grain) raised American bison.

Other do-it-yourselfers include vintners Greg and Tim Nollette of Nenzel, Neb., and boutique vinegar maker George Paul of Cody, Neb.

What I mostly learned about northwest Nebraska on my five-day trip was that when one turns off Interstate 80, it's best to simply expect the unexpected.

The Washington Post

Prices may vary in areas outside metropolitan Washington.

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SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2014

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SIDE ORDER

A prairie tribute to pioneering spirits

BY ROBIN SOSLOW

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travel@washpost.com

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PHOTOS BY ROBIN SOSLOW

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pioneervillage.org
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The Willoughby, Ohio News Herald

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Tanks originally used to water livestock have been retrofitted for float trips down Nebraska's Middle Loupe River.

Travelers' checks

Fly to reach North Platte, Neb., but it's not convenient. A flight originating in Cleveland would use Denver, Rapid City, S.D., or Omaha, Neb., as its destination followed by a three- to four-hour drive in a rental car.

Driving makes more sense because Interstate 80 also includes the Ohio Turnpike and continues on to North Platte, a distance of about 1,100 miles from Mentor. Another familiar route is Route 20, which also runs to northwest Nebraska.

Nebraska Tourism Commission, 301 Centennial Mall South, 1st Floor, Lincoln, NE 68509; 402-471-1588; www.visitnebraska.com.

North Platte/Lincoln County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 315 W. Eugene Ave., North Platte, NE 69101; 308-532-4729; www.visitnorthplatte.com.

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park, 2921 Scouts Ranch State Historical Park, North Platte, NE; 308-535-8035; www.ngpc.state.ne.us/parks/guides/parksearch/showpark.asp?/Area_No=38.

Dancing Leaf Cultural Learning Center, 6100 E. Opal Springs Road, Wellfleet, NE 69170; 308-963-4233; www.dancingleaf.com.

Dusty Trails Stables and Outfitting, 7455 W. Correction Line Road, North Platte, NE 69101; 308-530-0048; visitnorthplatte.com/attraction/dusty-trails-stables-and-outfitting.

Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center, 1249 N. Homestead Road, North Platte, NE 69101; 308-532-9920; www.goldenspiketower.com.

Grain Bin Antique Town, 10641 S. Old Hwy 83, North Platte, NE 69101; 308-539-7401 (owner's cell phone); www.grainbinantiquetown.com.

Lincoln County Historical Museum, 2403 N. Buffalo Ave., North Platte, NE 69101; 308-534-5640; www.lincolncountymuseum.org.

Sandhills Motel and Glidden Canoe Rentalm, 507 SW 1st Street, Mullen, NE 69152; 308-546-2206; www.sandhillsmotel.com.

Nebraska National Forest Bessey Ranger District, POB 39, 40637 Liver Loop, Halsey, NE 69142; 308-533-2257. www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nebraska/about-forest/

ranchers, farmers and settlers. All found much to appreciate about this part of the nation's 16th-largest state.

The region's important rivers were the country's first system for moving commerce and people. The Platte River's two island-braided branches link up at North Platte and then flow into the Missouri River at Omaha.

This river system was later traced by the Oregon, California and the Mormon Pioneer trails.

In the early days of the Pony Express the river also became that short-lived but historically rich business' GPS.

Often said to be "too thick to drink but too thin to plow," the Platte is one of this country's most storied waterways, with its north branch becoming a stellar travelers' route that continues to this day.

Just to the east of North Platte is one of the last remaining Pony Express wooden station structures, carefully restored and proudly displayed at a well-maintained park in Gothenburg, Neb.

Legendary soldier Buffalo Bill Cody first became an Army scout at a fort on the Platte and its north branch and later built his 4,000-acre Scout Ranch as a retreat whenever he grew tired of his Wild West Show.

Only about 25 acres of the original site remains as the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historic Park with Cody's original but carefully maintained home, a large barn and other outbuildings, all of which are open to the public.

Nearby is the Lincoln County Historical Museum with original structures from the mid- to late-1800s, including a church, home, barbershop, schoolhouse, and even a jail.

Here is found an even more intriguing story: Volunteers during World War II greeted every service person stopping en route on the Union Pacific Railroad. From a few days after the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor into 1946, some 6 million service personnel from all branches, male and female, and all races, were treated by North Platte volunteers to sandwiches, cookies, hardboiled eggs, angel-food cake, coffee and tea.

No service member was ever charged a cent, no train was ever missed and no one was ever refused food, drink and a comforting smile. For more than a few of the service men and women passing-through on their way west to the Pacific Theater or east to the Atlantic Theater, this was their last home-cooked sandwich or dessert.

For sheer fun, few things around North Platte beat the 2-year-old Grain Bin Antique Town. Here, 15 relocated and restored are nearly 80-year-old wooden, octagon granaries chock-full of antiques.

Several of the former granaries are rented to area antique dealers, but most are filled with old treasures assembled by Grain Bin Antique Town's owner, Lori Clinch, whose motto is "only genuinely old stuff."

"I never throw anything away," Cinch said. "It's in my DNA."

Not lost on these Nebraskans is their rich pre-European history. Nearby and to the south of North Platte along Medicine Creek is the 115-acre Dancing Leaf Cultural Learning Center.

The recreated complex is devoted to the Paleoamericans of 1,000 years ago with artifacts and an authentically built earth lodge. It attracts more than 5,000 visitors annually.

But it is the Union Pacific Railroad that drives much of the present and future for the region.

The railroad's gigantic 2,850-acre Bailey Yard — 8-1/2 miles long and 2-1/2 miles wide — is the world's largest.

Other statistics are just as staggering: The rail yard employs 2,600 people, handles on average 155 trains and 10,000 rail cars daily around-the-clock. Its 14 sets of rail lines includes 315 miles of track, and the complex feeds the trains with 18 million gallons of diesel fuel monthly.

View the Bailey Yard from its 8-story-tall Golden Spike Tower and Visitors Center, where its seventh floor gives a 360-degree open-air view. In inclement weather, take an elevator one floor up for a 360-degree glass-enclosed view. It's no surprise to learn that this is one of North Platte's most visited tourist destinations.

A 130-mile drive north on Nebraska Route 97 from North Platte goes into the heart of the state's Sand Hills with its epicenter at Valentine, Neb.

The undulating Sand Hills — from 19,600 square miles to 23,600 square miles, depending on whom you ask — are a series of vegetated sand dunes remaining from the last Ice Age and over-laying the vital Ogallala Aquifer.

In 1984 the Sand Hills were declared to be a National Natural Landmark — and its natural resource-rich land is unique and so vitally important that five national state and nonprofit refuges, forests and preserves are found here.

Yet this area is far from a look-but-do-not-touch area. The rural McPherson, Hooker, Thomas, Blaine and Cherry counties all have plenty of hands-on places.

Cherry County alone encompasses 6,010 square miles with 6,000 humans spread over two time zones.

By comparison, the combined size of Lake, Geauga, Cuyahoga and Ashtabula counties is only about half that of Cherry County. It's big country with big things to see and do.

Most enjoyable for me was a float down the Middle Loup River. Fed almost exclusively by springs bubbling up from the Ogallala aquifer, the Middle Loup is defined by hydrologists as the world's most consistently flowing river, seldom varying in volume.

It never floods and rarely freezes.

This makes it perfect for floating and not just for inflatable rafts, canoes, kayaks or even inner tubes. The Middle Loup River inspired enterprising businessman Mitch Glidden with his opportunity.

Observing the round, galvanized steel tanks used to water livestock, Glidden uses the 8-foot- and 9-foot-diameter-by-2-foot-tall tanks as boats on the sure and steady Middle Loup River.

Because Nebraska does not require non-motorized vessels to be either registered or licensed Glidden discovered he can use the livestock watering tanks as vessels without otherwise going through any governmental red tape.

Removable steel seats, conforming to the tank's interior wall, are fabricated by Glidden's son, and life jackets and boat cushions are provided for everyone. But nearly all adults use them as seats with children required to wear them.

Throughout the undulating float stretch the water's depth runs from knee- to waist-deep. So, should a tank run afoul of an obstruction, it's simple to hop out, tow the vessel into the stream's main current and continue the journey downstream.

View mule deer, wild turkeys, coyotes and other Sand Hill critters on a float, but you're having so much fun it's difficult to remain silent long enough to not to scare away game.

Further north at the Cherry County county seat of Valentine is the Niobrara River, where floats conducted by Graham Canoe Outfitters use more conventional rubber river rafts, canoes and kayaks. Tanking is illegal in the city's adjacent 19,131-acre Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge — a preserve generating "oohs" and "ahhs" with its high bluffs of contrasting forms layering startling colors along both banks.

Midway between North Platte and Valentine, poke around the 141,864-acre Nebraska National Forest, split into two districts.

Nebraska's national forest contains more than just a handful of western and eastern cedars and juniper trees. It's 90,000-acre Bessey Ranger District has the Western Hemisphere's largest hand-planted forest, approximately 20,000 acres. Meeting ground for hunters, anglers, campers, hikers and wildlife watchers the forest is home to a tree nursery whose root stock is shipped all over the country — to the tune of 2.5 million to 3 million plants annually.

These northwest Nebraskans come from enterprising, hardy people. Meet Rose, Neb., self-taught cowboy boot maker Kyle Rosfeld and Kaycee Orr-Hoffman, a Thedford, Neb., self-taught cowboy hat maker along with David Hutchinson, also from Rose, who successfully established a herd of organically (grass, not grain) raised American bison.

Other do-it-yourselfers include vintners Greg and Tim Nollette of Nenzel, Neb., and boutique vinegar maker George Paul of Cody, Neb.

What I mostly learned about northwest Nebraska on my five-day trip was that when one turns off Interstate 80, it's best to simply expect the unexpected.

The Farmerville, Louisiana Gazette

Northern Pike:
Jackfish On Steroids

I remember it well although it happened several decades ago. I was a kid, fishing Molido Creek behind our house with my dad's rod and reel and his favorite lure, a brown fishy-looking River Runt.

Casting next to cypress knees, I managed to tie into a few Kentucky bass that made their home in the creek.

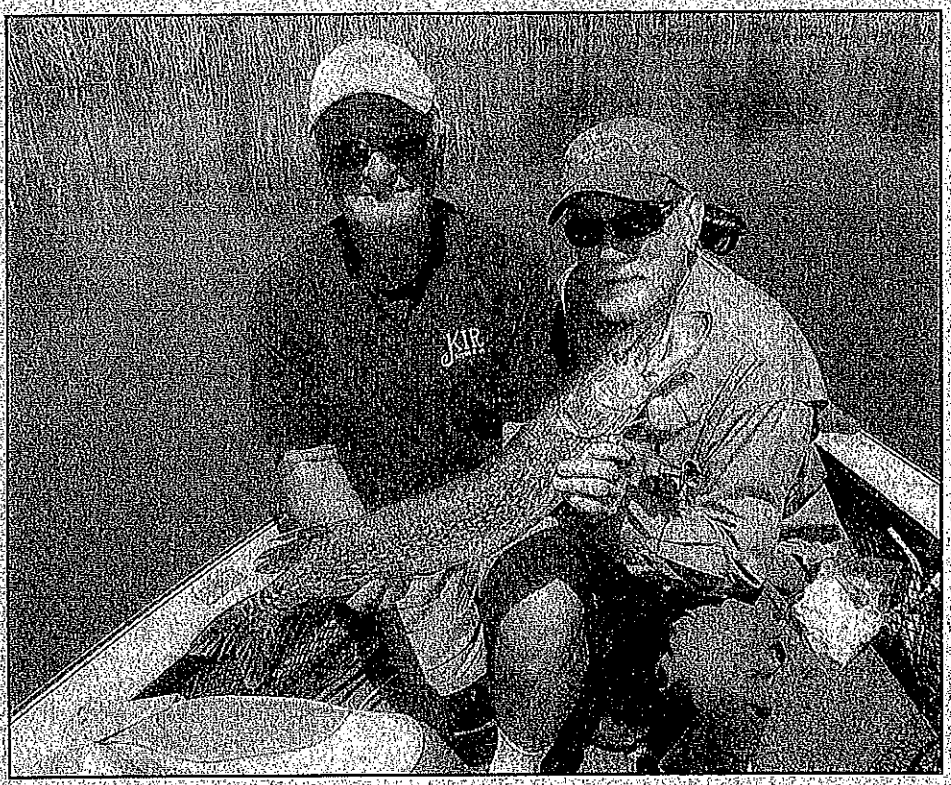
Up ahead, I saw a laydown log in the water that was the ideal ambush spot for a bass. My cast was perfect, gently nudging the log as it landed. Two turns of the reel handle and WHAM – I got a smashing strike.

Setting the hook, expected to see a bass leaping from the surface in an effort to dislodge the River Runt. Instead, what I saw for a brief instant before sharp teeth severed the line, was a jackfish. In a flash he was gone, making one last leap with my dad's lure dangling from his ugly jaws.

From that point forward, I hated those fish. All they were good for was to cut your line and steal your lure and they were so bony, you couldn't eat one. I admit on more than one occasion when I was able to land a jackfish, I'd smack it on the head with a boat paddle before tossing it back in the water. I reasoned that turtles have to eat too.

The jackfish I caught are more accurately known as chain pickerel. If one weighed two pounds, it was a good one. My nephew, Tommy, once caught one from my boat on Lake Claiborne that tipped the scales at 4.44 pounds. We entered it in the Louisiana Fish Records and for awhile, it occupied the top spot and still sits in the number eight spot in the records; 5.75 pounds is the current state record.

If jackfish were dogs, they'd be a Chihuahua. A couple of weeks ago, I was introduced to the Great Dane of the pike world, a Northern pike. With the exception of different markings on the side, these fierce-looking, toothy fish closely resemble our jackfish but are much larger. The North American record stands at a whopping 46-plus pounds.



Glynn Harris photo

Glynn Harris holds a 10-pound northern pike he caught during a recent expedition with guide Jerry Steinke on Lake McConaughy in Nebraska.



GLYNN HARRIS

Fishing Lake McConaughy near Ogallala, Neb. – as a guest of the Ogallala Keith County Chamber of Commerce on a trip arranged by Geiger and Associates Public Relations firm – I tied into one of these big rascals.

A thunderstorm the previous night had cleared by the time we got to the lake. A brisk breeze was blowing, making fishing on the big, open lake virtually impossible. However, guide Jerry Steinke, motored us behind some standing timber where the water was more calm. I was casting a big white spinner bait and was bringing it to the boat when ten feet out, my lure disappeared and I felt a jolt. I had a fish on.

"It's a northern," my guide said as he readied the net, "a good one too."

The fight was ferocious and my first reaction when I spotted the fish was to keep a tight line as memories of that Molido jackfish returned. Fortunately, Steinke got the net under the fish before it took my spinner and I was looking at my first northern pike. The fish measured over 31 inches long with an estimated weight of ten pounds, almost twice what the Louisiana state record is for jackfish. After photos, we returned it to the lake because a big pike is one of the species sought after by anglers in this part of the country.

I'm thankful to the local Chamber of Commerce for arranging such a trip for me to catch this big pike and when I see my buddies back at home, I can show them the picture of what a jackfish on steroids looks like.

Glynn Harris may be reached by emailing hominy@suddenlink.net.



TRAVEL

CATEGORIES

COLOR OF MONEY
COMMENTARY
DIASPORA
EDUCATION
ENTERTAINMENT
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FREEDOM QUEST
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HEALTH
INSIDE PHILLY
OASIS
ROAD AND RIDES
SENIORS
SPORTS
STATESIDE
STYLE
SUN BLOG
TRAVEL
WEEK IN REVIEW

July 25, 2014

Western Nebraska, the rediscovered country (part two)



Category: Travel Posted by: Donnell

ABOVE PHOTO: *Dirty Creek Saloon*

By Renée S. Gordon

"It does not matter where his body lies for it is grass, but where his Spirit is."
–Black Elk on Crazy Horse's gravesite

Two events, the Westward Migration and the Homestead Act, had a major impact on Nebraska. The first groups of nonindigenous people in the region were hunters, traders and fur trappers who followed established Indian trails. In 1813, Robert Stuart and a group of Oregon trappers trekked their way into the Platte Valley and this journey is cited as the beginnings of the Oregon Trail. Milton Sublette, in 1830, is credited with being the first to lead a wagon train along the trail for fur trading purposes. Eleven years later the first wagon train of pioneers set out. It has been estimated that more than 350,000 emigrants crossed Nebraska via a historic trail in the 1800s on their way west. The 2,000-mile trip from Missouri to the coast took four months with the Nebraska portion lasting one month.

The Mormons fled religious persecution in 1846-47 in their first migration. Departing from Illinois their leader, Brigham Young, had the pioneer party follow the Platte River's north bank to avoid contact with other emigrants who generally followed the south bank. Thousands of Mormons followed the trail to the Great Basin for the following decade. In 1855-56, some Mormons who could not afford wagons and oxen took to the trail with handcarts. Their use was so grueling that they soon became obsolete.

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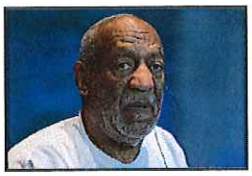
WATCH Maleficent

+RECENT NEWS


Week In Review

ABOVE PHOTO: Bill Cosby (Randy Miramontez / Shutterstock.com) By Maryclaire Dale Associated Pres

Comment


Week In Review

ABOVE PHOTO: Eric Garner (AP Photo) By Tom Hays and Colleen Long Associated Press NEW YORK R



Three African Americans, Oscar Crosby, Green Flake and Hank Lay, are among the original 148 settlers listed on the "This is the Place" Monument. They made the initial journey with Young to Salt Lake. Flake made the trip a second time in 1848 after returning east to lead 91 Mormons to "Zion." Ninety-one people followed him, 34 of which were black.

Eighteen treaties were signed from 1825 to 1892 between the federal government and the Native Americans of Nebraska. Each treaty wrested land, in what had been deemed Indian Territory, from native control. The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act sealed their fate when it opened the region to settlement by whites. Because of the slow pace at which the people were settling and because President Abraham Lincoln wanted to settle the land prior to the end of the Civil War, he urged the government to pass the Homestead Act of 1862 and to complete a transcontinental railroad. The railroad received huge land grants and the Homestead Act gifted 160 ares of land to anyone, including women, who lived on their acreage for five years. In 1861, Nebraska banned slavery and in 1867 it was admitted to the Union.

Alliance was founded in 1888 and was settled by homesteaders, many of whom had served in the Civil War. One of the settler's biggest problems was a dearth of teachers. The town would lure them there with a job but even the least attractive women married almost immediately. They soon found it necessary to have them sign a contract that forbid them to wed for two years. www.cityofalliance.net

One of Alliance's most unusual sites is the 10 acre Carhenge, Jim Reinders' 1987 monument to his father. Reinders used 38 gray spray-painted vintage cars to reproduce England's Stonehenge. The cars are either buried or welded together to a height of 15 to 16-ft and replicate the same dimensions as Stonehenge. Additional works are featured in the adjacent Car Art Reserve and gifts and services are available at the Pit Stop Shop. In June 2014, *USA Today* designated Carhenge one of the top three quirky landmarks in the country. Admission is free, it provides a great photo op and you absolutely must stop to explore. No surprise, Reinders expressed a desire to have his ashes placed in the car's ashtrays upon his death. www.carhenge.com

Knight Museum and Sandhills Center interprets life in the region through five themes including a broad-ranging display of Native America artifacts, homestead and ranch memorabilia and railroad objects. The museum's research center is an excellent repository of books, photographs, official records and genealogical information. www.knightmuseum.com

Crawford, Nebraska is located at the heart of many of Nebraska's most unique sites and three miles from Fort Robinson. The village was founded in 1886 and the location was selected because the law said that towns could be no closer than three miles to a fort. It was named in honor of Lt. Emmet Crawford, a soldier from the fort who was killed in Mexico. This was the town where soldiers came for recreation and at one point Calamity Jane ran a tent show with a troop of dancing girls. www.crawfordnebraska.net

The largest dune field in the Western Hemisphere and largest "grass stabilized" dune field in the world is a 20,000-sq. mile area known as the Sandhills of Nebraska. Formed about 8,000-years ago, the Sandhills are made up of granulated quartz sand dunes as high as 400-ft. held in place by grass. Native Americans once hunted bison there but today it is home to more than 500,000 cattle. In 1984, the dunes were designated a National Natural Landmark. www.thenebraskasandhills.com

For more than 70-years Fort Robinson was the most significant military post in the area. It was established in 1874 as Camp Robinson. Its charge was to protect and supply the Red Cloud Indian Agency and protect the nearby Sidney-Deadwood Trail. The agency was relocated in 1877 and a year later the camp became Fort Robinson. It was named in honor of Lt. Levi Robinson who, while gathering wood in 1874, was killed by Red Cloud Agency Indians. www.stateparks.com/fort_robinson

The fort figures prominently in African American history because it was the base for the 9th and 10th cavalry regiments at various times. In 1885 the fort became regimental headquarters for the 9th. Their two most noted missions were being sent to quell the Pine Ridge Reservation Ghost Dance uprising in 1890 and their famous 104-mile, 24-hour, cavalry ride in December of 1890. After the grueling ride the 9th arrived the day after the battle. They found the 7th Cavalry, previously Custer's unit, pinned down by Oglala Sioux warriors in a White Clay Creek canyon. They attacked from two sides and saved the 7th. In 1898 the 9th left Fort Robinson for the Spanish American War where they would see service in Cuba.

Comment



Freedom Quest

By J. Whyatt Mondesire Think of the decision by a St. Louis County Grand Jury not to indict former F

Comment



Inside Philly

ABOVE PHOTO: Isaiah Thomas By Kiarra Solomon @by_kiarra If he won, he'd be the youngest person e

Comment



Inside Philly

ABOVE PHOTO: Michael Brown (AP photo) Rev. Terrence D. Griffith, the President of the Black Cler

Comment



Education

Something just occurred to me! I've been writing "The Literary Lounge" column here in the Phil

Comment



Stateside

ABOVE PHOTO: Attorney General Eric Holder (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite) By Kate Brumback assoc

Comment



Stateside

ABOVE PHOTO: This undated photo provided by the family's attorney shows Tamir Rice. Rice, 12

Comment



The 10th Cavalry arrived in Robinson in 1902 after fighting in the Battle of San Juan Hill. While it served as their regimental headquarters in 1906, they participated in the capture of Utes who left their Utah reservation. This would be the final northern plains military action against regional tribes. The 10th left the fort for the Philippines in 1907.

During the tenure of the black cavalries the 2nd and 3rd African American graduates of West Point and the first black chaplain, Henry Plummer, served there. Twenty-three black soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for conspicuous valor during the Indian Wars, 10 of these men served at Fort Robinson.

The impact of the black regiments at Fort Robinson on African American history cannot be overstated. Their presence enticed other blacks to move to the Great Plains. Many retired soldiers went on to become cowboys, as did other African Americans, eventually constituting an estimated third of the entire cowboy population.

Fort Robinson State Park is an outstanding destination whether you are seeking outdoor activities, immersive history experiences or a base from which to explore regional sites and attractions. The fort was decommissioned in 1946 but the complex includes 62 original and reconstructed buildings. Overnight accommodations are offered in the lodge and historic officer's quarters and 100 camping sites are available as well as a full service restaurant. www.outdoornebraska.org

This is Nebraska's largest state park and visitors should begin with an orientation tour by horse-drawn wagon, on horseback or in an open-air jeep. While on the tour special note should be taken of the early wooden buildings with native rock foundations and the brick buildings constructed after 1909.

Ta-sunko-witko, known to nonindigenous people as Crazy Horse, was born about 1843 to Lakota parents. During his youth he witnessed many scenes of military excess against his people and while a teenager he joined his first war party and developed a reputation for bravery. He was present at the Little Big Horn.

Nomadic bands of Indians had been ordered to return to their reservations in January of 1876. When this did not occur they were relentlessly pursued by the military. Word was sent to Crazy Horse that if he surrendered his people would be given their own reservation and on May 6, 1877 he surrendered to General Crook at the Red Cloud Agency. In September he left the reservation to place his ailing wife in the care of his parents and Crook ordered him arrested believing he might return to warfare.

On September 5, 1877, as Crazy Horse was being escorted to the guardhouse he was stabbed. Accounts vary as to who struck the fatal blow. He was carried to the Adjutant's Office where, in spite of medical attention, he died. His father was present and it is documented that his last words were "Wash-tâ," meaning, "it is good." Crazy Horse clung to the old ways and no photographic image or signature of his exists. His parents buried his body, as he requested, secretly in the hills and his gravesite remains unknown. Exacting reconstructions of the guardhouse and office are on the grounds of Fort Robinson in their original locations. Interpretive markers are located outside of the buildings and a marker indicates the spot where he was wounded.

Adjacent to these two buildings is the Cheyenne Outbreak Barracks where 149 Cheyenne were imprisoned and broke out in January of 1879. The building was converted into a barracks for enlisted men and their families in 1890. In 1898 the barracks, then occupied by Buffalo Soldiers, caught fire killing the two children of Sgt. Harvey Wallace of the 9th Cavalry.

Fort Robinson Museum is housed in the 1905 Post Headquarters. A 10-minute film, "The Many Lives of Fort Robinson," provides a good overview and featured artifacts interpret the fort's entire history. An outstanding series of displays is presented in a historic, fully outfitted, barracks. The story of the Buffalo Soldiers at the fort is fully related here through photographs, artifacts and documents. www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/fortrob

The region's geologic story is recounted in the Trailside Museum of Natural History. Their most impressive exhibit is "Clash of the Mammoths." More than 10,000-years ago, in the course of combat, the tusks of two bull mammoths became inextricably locked together and they died near Crawford. Their skeletal remains were discovered in 1962 and were put on display in 2006. www.trailside.unl.edu

There is something about Nebraska's history and scenic beauty that moves its residents to preserve and protect it. One more of the really special aspects of Western Nebraska is that there are opportunities for visitors to experience unique accommodations surrounded by magnificent vistas and authentic artifacts and

antiques.

High Plains Homestead is located on Pine Ridge within close proximity to the Badlands. This creative complex features a series of relocated and restored buildings that are furnished as they would have been in an 1800's settlement. The structures include a post office, Deep Creek School, Badland's Mercantile and Dirty Creek Saloon complete with swinging doors.

The six lodging options, the caballero, cowboy, hunter, homesteader, saloon girl and warrior are representative of individuals that would have been commonly visible in the Old West. The Drifter Cookshack serves three meals a day to registered guests and the occasional stranger passing through who has heard of their reputation for great food and homemade baked goods.

Your hosts, Mike and Linda Kesselring, will assist in arranging fossil hunting, birding, fishing, hunting and stargazing activities. A tip, Mike is a wealth of information on the culture of Old Western Nebraska and he is happy to share. www.highplainshomestead.com

Barn Anew is a luxury B&B in the shadow of rugged buttes and historic trails. The property was originally the homestead of a Pennsylvania widow with three children who arrived with no money and found the land devoid of trees and moisture. The original home was a four room wood frame that was eventually expanded to 17 rooms. Accommodations are decorated with 1880-90 bedroom sets and modern amenities. Guests have the option of sleeping inside or opting for a sheepherder's wagon just outside.

Hosts Allan and Cher Maybee taught on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming and throughout those years they collected the Native American art that is displayed throughout the Barn. This is a rare opportunity to closely examine the intricacy of the beadwork, the textiles and the sheer beauty of the colors used to convey emotions and spirituality. Colonel Maybee is extremely well versed in Native American and Western culture and he will share with you his knowledge and expertise. The Barn is available for weddings, family reunions and other private events. It is a 2014 winner of Tripadvisor's Certificate of Excellence. Reservations are highly recommended. www.barnanew.com

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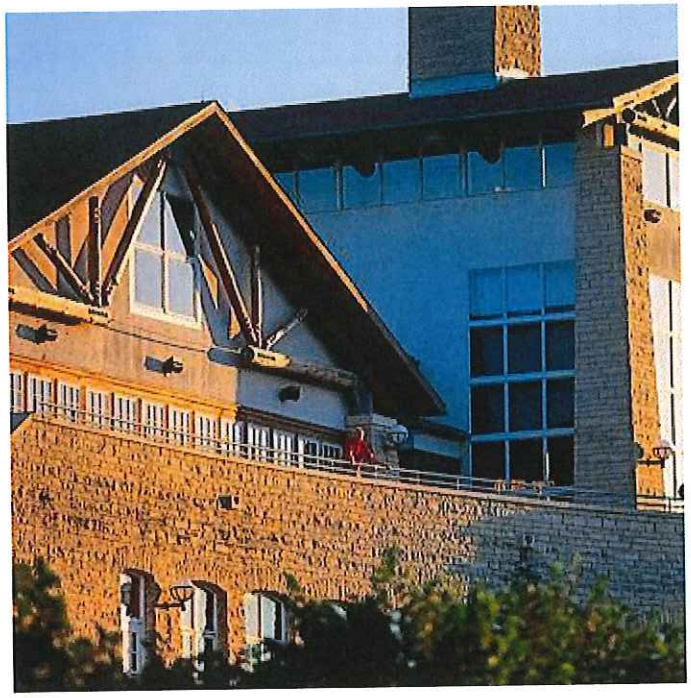
100 Best Midwest Small-Town Getaways

Midwest Living editors have been visiting the region's small towns for more than 20 years. Here are our top 100 places to escape for a little shopping, sightseeing and relaxing.



Pioneer spirit in Nebraska

Nebraska City Newcomers travel here to visit the striking Lied Lodge *(left)* and the farm of Arbor Day founder J. Sterling Morton. They return for shops downtown and riverboat rides in nearby Brownville.
Crawford Home of Fort Robinson and site of key western events, this town's Pine Ridge landscape entertains visitors with hiking, biking and golf.
Valentine A cowboy spirit prevails in a town that's the base for canoe trips on the famed Niobrara River.
Scottsbluff Get a taste of the Oregon Trail life at the namesake bluff, Chimney Rock and pioneer museums.
Ogallala Real-life cowboys hang out in a base for visitors to Lake McConaughy's white beaches.

The Philadelphia Sun Online

Western Nebraska, the rediscovered country (part two)



ABOVE PHOTO: *Dirty Creek Saloon*

By Renée S. Gordon

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Three African Americans, Oscar Crosby, Green Flake and Hank Lay, are among the original 148 settlers listed on the "This is the Place" Monument. They made the initial journey with Young to Salt Lake. Flake made the trip a second time in 1848 after returning east to lead 91 Mormons to "Zion." Ninety-one people followed him, 34 of which were black.

Eighteen treaties were signed from 1825 to 1892 between the federal government and the Native Americans of Nebraska. Each treaty wrested land, in what had been deemed Indian Territory, from native control. The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act sealed their fate when it opened the region to settlement by whites. Because of the slow pace at which the people were settling and because President Abraham Lincoln wanted to settle the land prior to the end of the Civil War, he urged the government to pass the Homestead Act of 1862 and to complete a transcontinental railroad. The railroad received huge land grants and the Homestead Act gifted 160 ares of land to anyone, including women, who lived on their acreage for five years. In 1861, Nebraska banned slavery and in 1867 it was admitted to the Union.

Alliance was founded in 1888 and was settled by homesteaders, many of whom had served in the Civil War. One of the settler's biggest problems was a dearth of teachers. The town would lure them there with a job but even the least attractive women married almost immediately. They soon found it necessary to have them sign a contract that forbid them to wed for two years. www.cityofalliance.net

One of Alliance's most unusual sites is the 10 acre Carhenge, Jim Reinders' 1987 monument to his father. Reinders used 38 gray spray-painted vintage cars to reproduce England's Stonehenge. The cars are either buried or welded together to a height of 15 to 16-ft and replicate the same dimensions as Stonehenge. Additional works are featured in the adjacent Car Art Reserve and gifts and services are available at the Pit Stop Shop. In June 2014, *USA Today* designated Carhenge one of the top three quirky landmarks in the country. Admission is free, it provides a great photo op and you absolutely must stop to explore. No surprise, Reinders expressed a desire to have his ashes placed in the car's ashtrays upon his death. www.carhenge.com

Knight Museum and Sandhills Center interprets life in the region through five themes including a broad-ranging display of Native America artifacts, homestead and ranch memorabilia and railroad objects. The museum's research center is an excellent repository of books, photographs, official records and genealogical information. www.knightmuseum.com

Crawford, Nebraska is located at the heart of many of Nebraska's most unique sites and three miles from Fort Robinson. The village was founded in 1886 and the location was selected because the law said that towns could be no closer than three miles to a fort. It was named in honor of Lt. Emmet Crawford, a soldier from the fort who was killed in Mexico. This was the

town where soldiers came for recreation and at one point Calamity Jane ran a tent show with a troop of dancing girls. www.crawfordnebraska.net

The largest dune field in the Western Hemisphere and largest "grass stabilized" dune field in the world is a 20,000-sq. mile area known as the Sandhills of Nebraska. Formed about 8,000-years ago, the Sandhills are made up of granulated quartz sand dunes as high as 400-ft. held in place by grass. Native Americans once hunted bison there but today it is home to more than 500,000 cattle. In 1984, the dunes were designated a National Natural Landmark. www.thenebraskasandhills.com

For more than 70-years Fort Robinson was the most significant military post in the area. It was established in 1874 as Camp Robinson. Its charge was to protect and supply the Red Cloud Indian Agency and protect the nearby Sidney-Deadwood Trail. The agency was relocated in 1877 and a year later the camp became Fort Robinson. It was named in honor of Lt. Levi Robinson who, while gathering wood in 1874, was killed by Red Cloud Agency Indians. www.stateparks.com/fort_robinson

The fort figures prominently in African American history because it was the base for the 9th and 10th cavalry regiments at various times. In 1885 the fort became regimental headquarters for the 9th. Their two most noted missions were being sent to quell the Pine Ridge Reservation Ghost Dance uprising in 1890 and their famous 104-mile, 24-hour, cavalry ride in December of 1890. After the grueling ride the 9th arrived the day after the battle. They found the 7th Cavalry, previously Custer's unit, pinned down by Oglala Sioux warriors in a White Clay Creek canyon. They attacked from two sides and saved the 7th. In 1898 the 9th left Fort Robinson for the Spanish American War where they would see service in Cuba.

The 10th Cavalry arrived in Robinson in 1902 after fighting in the Battle of San Juan Hill. While it served as their regimental headquarters in 1906, they participated in the capture of Utes who left their Utah reservation. This would be the final northern plains military action against regional tribes. The 10th left the fort for the Philippines in 1907.

During the tenure of the black cavalries the 2nd and 3rd African American graduates of West Point and the first black chaplain, Henry Plummer, served there. Twenty-three black soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for conspicuous valor during the Indian Wars, 10 of these men served at Fort Robinson.

The impact of the black regiments at Fort Robinson on African American history cannot be overstated. Their presence enticed other blacks to move to the Great Plains. Many retired soldiers went on to become cowboys, as did other African Americans, eventually constituting an estimated third of the entire cowboy population.

Fort Robinson State Park is an outstanding destination whether you are seeking outdoor activities, immersive history experiences or a base from which to explore regional sites and attractions. The fort was decommissioned in 1946 but the complex includes 62 original and reconstructed buildings. Overnight accommodations are offered in the lodge and historic

officer's quarters and 100 camping sites are available as well as a full service restaurant. www.outdoornebraska.org

This is Nebraska's largest state park and visitors should begin with an orientation tour by horse-drawn wagon, on horseback or in an open-air jeep. While on the tour special note should be taken of the early wooden buildings with native rock foundations and the brick buildings constructed after 1909.

Ta-sunko-witko, known to nonindigenous people as Crazy Horse, was born about 1843 to Lakota parents. During his youth he witnessed many scenes of military excess against his people and while a teenager he joined his first war party and developed a reputation for bravery. He was present at the Little Big Horn.

Nomadic bands of Indians had been ordered to return to their reservations in January of 1876. When this did not occur they were relentlessly pursued by the military. Word was sent to Crazy Horse that if he surrendered his people would be given their own reservation and on May 6, 1877 he surrendered to General Crook at the Red Cloud Agency. In September he left the reservation to place his ailing wife in the care of his parents and Crook ordered him arrested believing he might return to warfare.

On September 5, 1877, as Crazy Horse was being escorted to the guardhouse he was stabbed. Accounts vary as to who struck the fatal blow. He was carried to the Adjutant's Office where, in spite of medical attention, he died. His father was present and it is documented that his last words were "Wash-tå," meaning, "it is good." Crazy Horse clung to the old ways and no photographic image or signature of his exists. His parents buried his body, as he requested, secretly in the hills and his gravesite remains unknown. Exacting reconstructions of the guardhouse and office are on the grounds of Fort Robinson in their original locations. Interpretive markers are located outside of the buildings and a marker indicates the spot where he was wounded.

Adjacent to these two buildings is the Cheyenne Outbreak Barracks where 149 Cheyenne were imprisoned and broke out in January of 1879. The building was converted into a barracks for enlisted men and their families in 1890. In 1898 the barracks, then occupied by Buffalo Soldiers, caught fire killing the two children of Sgt. Harvey Wallace of the 9th Cavalry.

Fort Robinson Museum is housed in the 1905 Post Headquarters. A 10-minute film, "The Many Lives of Fort Robinson," provides a good overview and featured artifacts interpret the fort's entire history. An outstanding series of displays is presented in a historic, fully outfitted, barracks. The story of the Buffalo Soldiers at the fort is fully related here through photographs, artifacts and documents. www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/fortrob

The region's geologic story is recounted in the Trailside Museum of Natural History. Their most impressive exhibit is "Clash of the Mammoths." More than 10,000-years ago, in the course of combat, the tusks of two bull mammoths became inextricably locked together and they died near Crawford. Their skeletal remains were discovered in 1962 and were put on display in 2006. www.trailside.unl.edu

There is something about Nebraska's history and scenic beauty that moves its residents to preserve and protect it. One more of the really special aspects of Western Nebraska is that there are opportunities for visitors to experience unique accommodations surrounded by magnificent vistas and authentic artifacts and antiques.

High Plains Homestead is located on Pine Ridge within close proximity to the Badlands. This creative complex features a series of relocated and restored buildings that are furnished as they would have been in an 1800's settlement. The structures include a post office, Deep Creek School, Badland's Mercantile and Dirty Creek Saloon complete with swinging doors.

The six lodging options, the caballero, cowboy, hunter, homesteader, saloon girl and warrior are representative of individuals that would have been commonly visible in the Old West. The Drifter Cookshack serves three meals a day to registered guests and the occasional stranger passing through who has heard of their reputation for great food and homemade baked goods.

Your hosts, Mike and Linda Kesselring, will assist in arranging fossil hunting, birding, fishing, hunting and stargazing activities. A tip, Mike is a wealth of information on the culture of Old Western Nebraska and he is happy to share. www.highplainshomestead.com

Barn Anew is a luxury B&B in the shadow of rugged buttes and historic trails. The property was originally the homestead of a Pennsylvania widow with three children who arrived with no money and found the land devoid of trees and moisture. The original home was a four room wood frame that was eventually expanded to 17 rooms. Accommodations are decorated with 1880-90 bedroom sets and modern amenities. Guests have the option of sleeping inside or opting for a sheepherder's wagon just outside.

Hosts Allan and Cher Maybee taught on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming and throughout those years they collected the Native American art that is displayed throughout the Barn. This is a rare opportunity to closely examine the intricacy of the beadwork, the textiles and the sheer beauty of the colors used to convey emotions and spirituality. Colonel Maybee is extremely well versed in Native American and Western culture and he will share with you his knowledge and expertise. The Barn is available for weddings, family reunions and other private events. It is a 2014 winner of Tripadvisor's Certificate of Excellence. Reservations are highly recommended. www.barnanew.com

Rediscover the passion of those who made Nebraska great. Immerse yourself in Nebraska!

I wish you smooth travels!

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES



DAVID & KAY SCOTT

Travelers load into a lined cattle feeder for a pleasant Nebraska day of tanking along the river.

Getting Tanked in Nebraska

BY DAVID AND KAY SCOTT

We've canoed, sailed, kayaked, and tubed. We've rafted Yosemite's Merced River and taken a ship from Helsinki to Stockholm. However, we had never tanked a river. That's right, tanked. Not only had we not tanked a river, until a recent trip to Nebraska we had never even heard of tanking a river. Welcome to the cornhusker state where there is more to do than watch college football.

Vacationers often lump Nebraska with Oklahoma, Kansas, and South Dakota as rectangular states separating the Rocky Mountains from the Midwest and East Coast. Nebraska isn't quite a rectangle, but you probably get the picture. The four states represent long drives (if only they were vertical rather than horizontal) through cornfields and grass-covered plains that seem to go on forever. Slow down a little and take some time to explore these states and you are likely to come upon some interesting places and activities. This is how we discovered tanking.

Tanking involves climbing in a livestock tank — the kind you see in cow pastures — with several friends and floating down a river. It requires little effort and is about as enjoyable an activity as we've experienced. One fellow passenger in the tank in which we were passengers commented, "I knew I would enjoy this, but it's even better than I expected."

Tanks utilized to float a river can be metal or thick plastic; ours was metal. A couple of oars are provided, but it's not like you need to spend much time with them. The tanks typically roll off most obstructions. When they occasionally get hung up, oars can be used to push away from the bank or an obstruction in the river. Overall, tanking offers a time to sit back, enjoy a conversation with fellow tankers, view the landscape, hopefully see some wildlife, and, perhaps, knock back a cold one. Life doesn't get much better.

Our own tanking took place on the Middle Loup (French for "wolf"), a spring-fed river near the small town of Mullen in the Sandhills region of Nebraska. Mullen is about 80 miles north of North Platte. The Middle Loup is one of three rivers (as you can probably guess, the other two are the North Loup and the South Loup) feeding the Loup River that flows into the Platte. Each tank included removable semi-circular steel benches that fit snuggly around the inside wall. The benches are sturdy and don't shift in the event a tank hits an obstruction. The guide for our group said he originally used beach chairs, but soon changed to benches that offer more stability and durability.

Tankers on the Middle Loup River can choose either a two-hour or five-hour trip. The cost is $20 for adults and $10 for children 12 and under regardless of which option is chosen. Children 6 years and younger with their own life jacket are free.

• TANKING | 8E



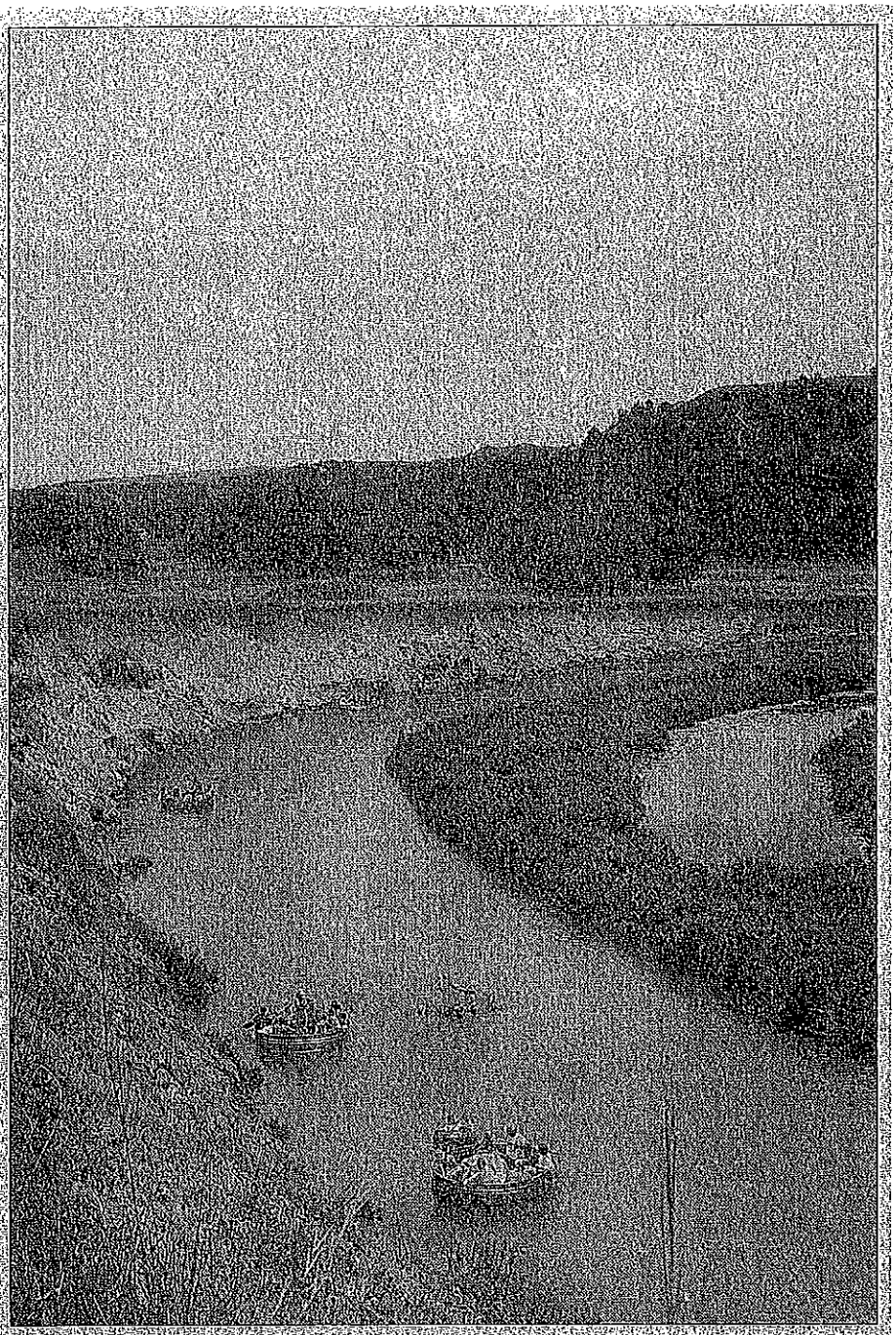
DAVID & KAY SCOTT

A helping hand releases travelers snared by tree limbs.



DAVID & KAY SCOTT

Travelers take it easy 'tanking' down the river.



DAVID & KAY SCOTT

Using cattle feeders, travelers enjoy a ride down a Nebraska river in a pursuit referred to as 'tanking.'

TANKING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX

Thus, for $60, a family of two adults and two children can enjoy most of a day on the river. The price includes a shuttle to and from the river.

The outfitter, Glidden Canoe Rentals, also offers canoes and kayaks that provide a faster trip and more exercise. Canoes and kayaks are especially popular on the nearby Dismal River that involves swift current, sharp turns, and obstructions that make it considerably more challenging than the Middle Loup. No tankin' on the Dismal.

For additional information about tanking on the Loup, visit www.sandhillsmotel.com (yes, this couple also own a motel), or call (308) 546-2206. You might ask about the Polar Bear Tank Race that takes place each year on the last day of February. Participating in this annual event would certainly be something to tell your friends about.

David and Kay Scott are authors of "Complete Guide to the National Park Lodges" (Globe Pequot). They live in Valdosta.

The London Free Press Saturday, March 1, 2014

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The smokiness of the mozzarella is a great match with the eggplant.

Jill Wilcox presents Baked Eggplant with Smoked Mozzarella as a main course or side dish.
Weekend Dining, Page F5



COVERSTORY

Meet the flockers



Thousands of sandhill cranes kettle from the Platte River at dawn near Kearney, Neb.

PHOTOS BY WAYNE NEWTON

A mannequin of a 1950s diner server stands ready with coffee inside the Great Platte River Archway, a museum spanning I-80 in Kearney, Neb.

Some 500,000 sandhill cranes swoop into Nebraska during spring migration

WAYNE NEWTON
Special to QMI Agency

Jane Goodall doesn't take a vacation cruise in mid-March, so why should I?

The world renowned scientist is in western Nebraska, and so am I, although we missed crossing paths by a few hours. We're there for the same purpose, to witness what National Geographic calls one of the greatest wildlife phenomenon in North America — the spring migration of the sandhill cranes.

Goodall, who earned fame for her decades of work studying primates in Africa, is leading a group of birders who have paid $5,000 for her expert company and the experience of watching tens of thousands of the large, grey birds wake from their pre-dawn slumber along the Platte River and take off in massive squadrons across the winter sky, scavengers of the acres and acres of nearby Nebraska corn fields.

I've been up since 5 a.m., arriving from nearby Kearney to a packed parking lot at the Rowe Sanctuary and led as silently as possible to a blind, where there is no conversation above a whisper and no complaining about the -10 C temperature, even from the group of Floridians, who wisely stocked up beforehand at the giant Cabella's sporting goods store in Kearney.

Sunrise brings feeding time and a cacophony of calls and coos from the thousands of birds on the flat, slow-flowing river. Suddenly, as if directed by an air traffic controller, groups of hundreds of cranes start taking off in V-shaped formations until all are gone, only to return to the river at dusk.

It's breathtaking and, for a first-time birdwatcher such as myself, surreal.

see **NEBRASKA** | Page F2

NEBRASKA

Migrating cranes draw curious birders

From Page F1

From late February through to April, an estimated 500,000 sandhill cranes will stop and linger on the Platte River as part of their spring migration along North America's central flyway from areas such as Texas to their summer homes in Canada's Prairie provinces, Northern Ontario, the Arctic and Alaska.

The birds stay for two or three weeks, fattening up before continuing their journey. Nightly, there are about 70,000 cranes at the Rowe Sanctuary.

The cranes, mostly grey but some reddish brown, stand more than a metre tall with wingspans approaching two metres.

The spring migration has attracted serious and casual birders from every state and several countries, including Canada.

"It's not just a gathering of birds, it's also a gathering of people," said Nebraska-based conservation photographer Michael Forsberg, whose photos grace the walls of the Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA).

Located in a former U.S. post office built in 1911, MONA is one of Kearney's surprising treasures and one of several spots birders will go to warm up and experience Nebraskan hospitality between dawn and dusk.



WAYNE NEWTON/SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY

A museum in Hastings, Neb., features a diorama of sandhill cranes among its extensive displays of animals, birds and reptiles.

Admission is free and the collection includes more than 5,000 works either by Nebraskan artists or featuring scenes from the state. There are works by John James Audubon and James Henri, who lived in nearby Cozad where his controversial family is remembered with a museum.

Also not to be missed is the Great Platte River Road Archway, a stunning interactive museum spanning Interstate 80. It tells the story of transportation and communication in Nebraska, from Pony Express and the hand-pulled wagons used on the Mormon Trail to the Lincoln Highway tourist camps that popped up at the dawn of automobile travel.

GOOD EATS

- Dickey's Barbecue Pit at the Great Platte River Road Archway, I-80.
- Thunderhead Brewing Company, Craft Beer and Pizza, 18 East 21st St., Kearney.
- Alley Rose, 2013 Central Ave., downtown Kearney.

LEARN MORE

- Rowe Sanctuary, rowesanctuary.org.
- Kearney Visitors Bureau, visitkearney.org.
- Jane Goodall Institute, janegoodall.org/travel.

Great Scot!

Whether *you take the high road* or *speed on a bonnie boat* as was done in Scottish lore, visiting Scotland this year has much promise as the proud highland nation welcomes the world to its Homecoming Scotland 2014 celebrations.

In addition to marquee events, the Commonwealth Games July 23 - Aug. 3 and the Ryder Cup Sept. 26-28, Scotland will host scores of special food, arts and entertainment events.

As a guest of Visit Britain representing Sun Media, I'll get a taste of what's to come.

Join me on Twitter Thursday through March 13. My itinerary includes pony trekking at the Mains of Taymouth, walking along the John Muir Way, and touring Stirling Castle and the site of the Battle of Bannockburn.

For more information: visitscotland.com

barbara.taylor@sunmedia.ca
Twitter.com at suntravelgal

The Permanent Tourist

Blog

Wine and Dine Adventure of the Week – What's In Nebraska?

When people found out I was going to Nebraska, the question they asked most often was "What's in Nebraska?". Well, I really didn't know, that's why I wanted to go. What I discovered was a delightfully diverse place full of surprises! Not only does Nebraska have great food, but they have some amazing historical, cultural and just plain fun places to visit. Over the next few days, I'd like to share some of what I discovered…

Parts of Nebraska looked exactly as I'd pictured…



while others I found, were unexpected treats…

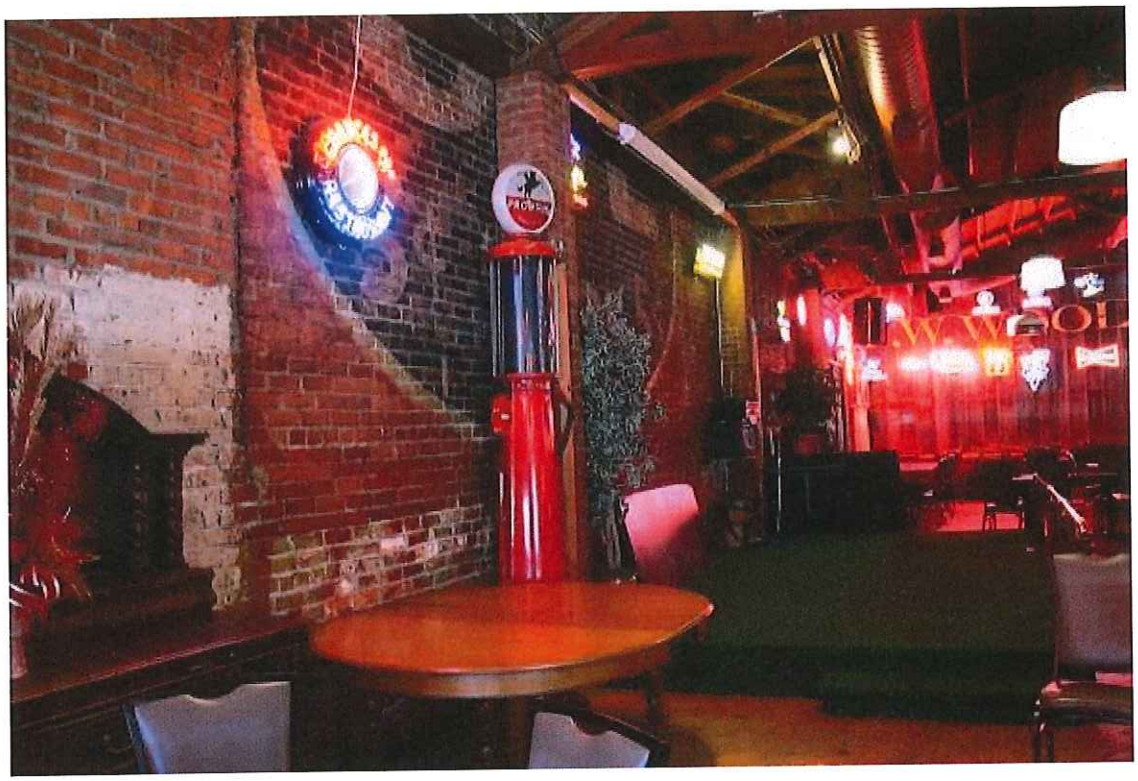


I'd always heard that mid-westerners cooking couldn't compare with Southern cuisine, but I'm here to tell you…those people can cook!

At "Chances R," a very popular restaurant in the little town of York, I had a culinary experience I was unprepared for…their famous fried chicken and gravy tasted exactly like my Mama's! I have never had that happen! Usually, they get 'something wrong', but at Chances R, they got everything right!



The cavernous bar/gathering room in the back of the restaurant is decorated with classic neon signs, antiques and even has the original brick wall of the adjoining building as its back wall, where you can see the remnants of old painted advertisements.



Another surprise was the Henderson Mennonite Heritage Park…where I not only had an interesting history lesson, but a yummy treat as well. The volunteers who run the park had coffee and their traditional Dutch Apple Prieshki waiting for us when we arrived.



The crust was delicate, flaky and the taste…oh so wonderful! I wanted to eat two, but it was so close to lunch…now I wish I had! (The ladies graciously shared their recipe with me and I have included it at the end of this post.)

I have tasted a lot of pizza, but I have never had a pizza made by a German guy, who runs a place called The Danish Baker, until I visited Nebraska! Tom makes the most heavily cheese laden pizza I have ever seen because, as he says "I make it the way I like it".



Apparently lots of other people do too because Tom's Thursday Pizza days have people making the trip to tiny Dannebrog to dine from all over Nebraska, many other states, even Italy and Denmark. His place is small and often diners share their table with strangers, but what a nice place to meet new friends! Tom often serenades his customers with his guitar, singing original songs about his life, family and his faith. What a pleasant way to spend an evening…



Another great place for pizza is Napoli's, in Grand Island, where owner Florio Ramadoni, serves up fresh homemade southern Italian cooking.



Everything is made according to the authentic recipes he learned at his mother's side, even the bread is made fresh daily. (Below is a sample of his vegetarian pizza.) The wine list is top-notch, with over 100 choices. For a taste of real Italian cooking, you can't beat Napoli's!



I expected to find fried chicken, even pizza in Nebraska, but a big surprise was the Lao/Thai cuisine I tried at the family-owned Vientiane restaurant in Grand Island. Alex was our host for the evening and answered our questions about the unusual combinations available at the family's eatery…



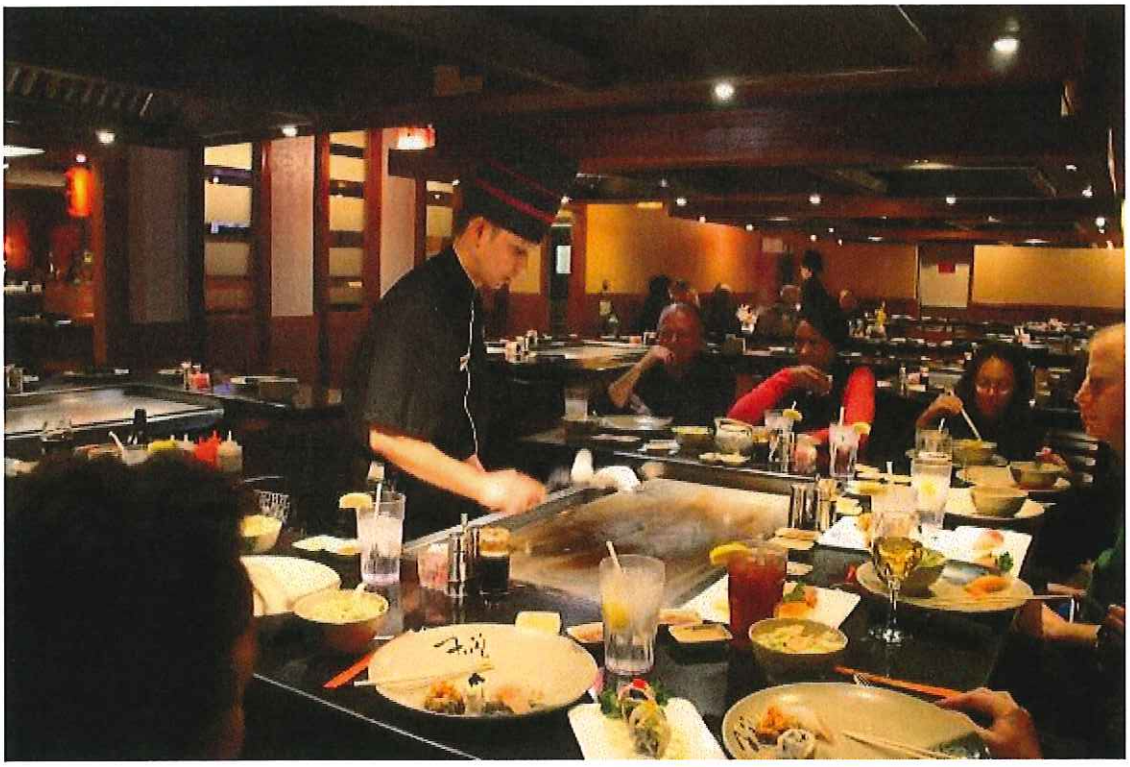
everything is freshly prepared and the crispy crunchy wraps just melted in my mouth. I could have eaten a dozen of them! In fact, I was so enthralled with them, I forgot to take a picture!



Japanese cuisine is also available in Grand Island and while I am not a fan of sushi, I had to admit…at Fuji's, they made some of the prettiest sushi I had ever seen.



Our chef for the night was engaging and I admired his skill and dexterity with his knife…



All in all, I had some marvelous culinary experiences in Nebraska…an unexpected delight. If you are ever driving through Nebraska…don't just keep driving…stop in…take a break…enjoy taking a look around. Like me, you will be surprised at what you find…



For more information contact: www.visitgrandisland.com or www.yorkvisitors.org

As promised, I have included the recipe for the Apple Prieshki below…tomorrow, I will share some of the interesting historical places I discovered in south central Nebraska!



1/2 cup lard (or shortening)

1 Tbsp. butter

1/2 tsp. salt

1/4 tsp. baking powder

1/3 cup ice water

1 1/2 cups flour, sifted

Mix together flour, salt and baking powder. Add lard to flour mix and work in with fingers or a pastry blender. Add the ice water, a little at a time, mixing until the dough holds together. Place on lightly floured surface and roll out about 1/4″ thick and then cut into 5 inch squares.

Filling: Take 2 Granny Smith apples, peel, core and cut into pieces, place a Tbsp. of apple pieces in the middle of pastry square and put 1 tsp. butter on top, sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar.

Close square by pinching corners together and then the sides of pastry.

Bake @ 350 degrees about 20 minutes or until brown. (You can brush with powdered sugar/milk glaze while still warm.)

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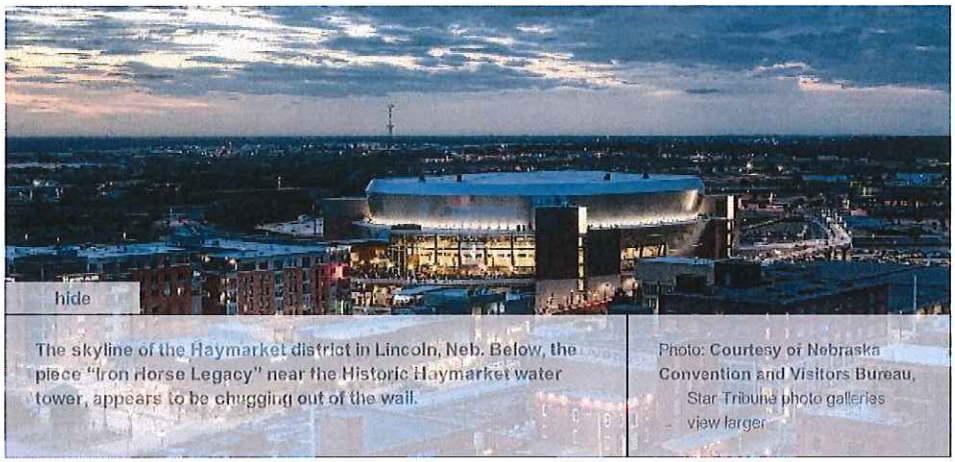
Midwest Traveler: Revived district enlivens Lincoln, Neb.

Article by: KATHLEEN SCHEDIN STOEHR SPECIAL TO THE STAR TRIBUNE Updated: July 12, 2014 - 10:08 PM



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The skyline of the Haymarket district in Lincoln, Neb. Below, the piece "Iron Horse Legacy" near the Historic Haymarket water tower, appears to be chugging out of the wall.

Photo: Courtesy of Nebraska Convention and Visitors Bureau, Star Tribune photo galleries view larger

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A recent renovation of the Haymarket district in Lincoln, Neb., makes having fun there awfully easy. And if it has been awhile since you strolled the area, you are in for quite a surprise. After a $346 million redevelopment of the district, there's ample opportunity to catch a show or a game, eat a top-notch meal and discover original art or that antique gem.

The area bordered by Q and R streets is considered Nebraska's first entertainment district. The Railyard Public Market, a year-round entertainment venue, crowns one corner and Pinnacle Bank Arena, home of the Cornhuskers — as well as a live-music venue — holds down the opposite corner. How big is this arena? Megastars Sir Paul McCartney, Katy Perry and Pearl Jam are booked in upcoming months.

Yet this walkable area retains all the charm of a historic district: eclectic antique shops and high-end restaurants, which land across the street from brewpubs and established art galleries. There's way too much to do in one day.

Where to go

One of the best antique shops I've found anywhere is adjacent to the Lincoln Station building. Burlington Antiques (www.burlingtonantiques.com; 1-402-475-7502) has a way of making everything old look shiny, new and appealing, and it also has an affable staff ready to help you find whatever you are looking for. I found way too much, it seems, by the look of my stuffed car trunk.

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The piece "Iron Horse Legacy" near the Historic Haymarket water tower in Lincoln, Neb., seems to come chugging out of the wall.

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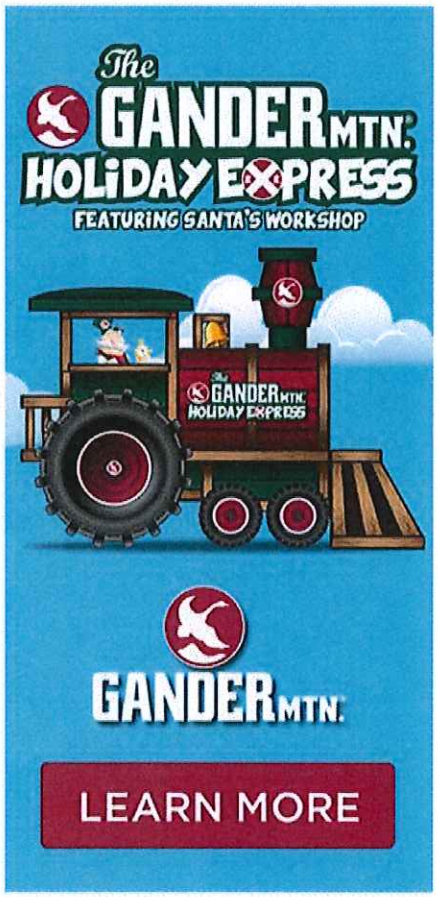

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Nearby, make an effort to stop in at the Burkholder Project on P Street (www.burkholderproject.com; 1-402-477-3305). The building, which fueled the Haymarket district renewal, houses a lively collection of 36 art and design studios, with three levels of small to large galleries connected by a sun-filled atrium. This was the brainchild of Anne Burk- holder, who in 1987 bought the building in order to create a place where a community of artists could collaborate, exchange ideas and have space to do their crafts. Walk in the front door and turn left, and you might find Anne in front of a canvas, creating her next original oil.

If photos are more your thing, head over to wildlife photographer Michael Forsberg's gallery store (www.michaelforsberg.com) on 8th Street. An avid photographer of the sandhill cranes that migrate through Nebraska every year, Forsberg depicts their delicate but powerful force in the natural world. I also love his work documenting bison on the Midwest prairies.

The Railyard on Canopy Street (www.canopyst.com) hosts a seasonal farmers' market through Oct. 11 with standard market fare, arts and crafts, and produce from 8 a.m. to noon every Saturday, rain or shine. There are also plenty of bar/restaurant/nightclub choices within the Railyard zone, and fun purveyors such as Breezy Island Ice and the Doughnut Hole within the public market area.

Finally, swing by the intriguing brick relief train mural "Iron Horse Legacy" in the vicinity of 7th and Q streets, near the Historic Haymarket water tower. Created in 1990, the train appears to be chugging its way out of the wall and into the flower bed below it.

Where to eat

It was a beautiful Tuesday afternoon when my husband and I walked into JTK Cuisine & Cocktails in the Lincoln Station building (jtkrestaurant.com; 1-402-435-0161). The sign outside said it was only open for dinner, and we were the lone couple in the place for lunch. The food is delicious and priced very reasonably. If the Cubano sandwich with locally sourced and smoked pork is on offer, do not hesitate to order it.

Walk kitty-corner across the street and land at Lazlo's Brewery & Grill (lazlosbreweryandgrill.com; 1-402-434-5636). It's a sports bar, where the brews are cold and delicious and the atmosphere is great. It's the oldest brewery in Nebraska, with a patio where you can sit and watch the world go by.

Around dinnertime, my husband was craving a steak and a Manhattan. We googled and found Single Barrel (www.thesinglebarrel.com; 1-402-904-4631) on 10th Street, with a whiskey list as long as my arm and a Yelp review that said the food was great. Our reservation was at 8:30 p.m. and we walked in expecting a full restaurant. Again, the place was nearly empty. We got our food, fabulous and flavorful. But soon our server began to get edgy, and told us in a respectful way that we might want to clear out soon. "It gets weird here," is all he'd say.

That decided it: We'd stick around. Soon, a mechanical bull was situated in the middle of the restaurant. Odd birds begin to trickle in, wearing flip-flops, sports jerseys and cowboy hats. Glassware was pulled, and out came plastic cups. OK, time to leave, just as a smoky-voiced lead singer began to growl from the adjacent stage, and the bull began to swing. But that steak was perfectly done and delicious, and that whiskey list was impressive. Later, we looked at each other and said, "We should have stayed."

Where to stay

For lodging within the district, you have a couple of options: Hyatt Place Hotel will put you squarely in the entertainment sector on Q Street, across from the Railyard (lincolndowntownhaymarket.place.hyatt.com; 1-402-742-6007). It's a seven-story, smoke-free building (three levels are condominiums) offering exceptional views.

Another option is the Hilton Garden Inn on R Street (tinyurl.com/pvogpk5; 1-402-475-9000), or the Holiday Inn Downtown on North 9th Street (tinyurl.com/od8p6w6; 1-402-475-4011.

Kathleen Schedin Stoehr is a Twin Cities-based writer and editor.

lived simply goes solar

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The Ruston Daily Leader

Searching for smallmouth bass in Neb.



By Glynn Harris

I packed up and headed north last week to try the fishing in another part of the country, the state of Nebraska.

Why did I leave the comforts of home to fly to Denver, rent a car and drive over 1,000 miles across the plains of Nebraska just to fish five different lakes?

Nebraska has largemouth bass. Louisiana has largemouth bass. Nebraska has catfish. Louisiana has catfish. Nebraska has crappie. Louisiana has crappie. Nebraska has white bass and hybrid stripers and bluegills. Louisiana has all these species as well.

There must have been something else added to the invitation the Geiger public relations firm sent me that hooked me, and there was.

Nebraska has walleyes. Louisiana doesn't. Nebraska has yellow perch. Nada for the Sportsman's Paradise. Nebraska has northern pike. You might find its cousin, the pickerel (jackfish) in Louisiana but not a northern swims in our state's waters, and Nebraska has smallmouth bass, absent from Louisiana's warm waters.

When my invitation arrived, it didn't take me long to check the "I want to go" box and start the ball rolling for my trip. I have fished for smallmouth bass on a few other occasions but up until now, these bronze sluggers had eluded me. As soon as I has handed a fully rigged fishing rod on the first lake I fished last week, I let it be known to my guide that if I didn't catch anything else, I wanted to come home with the notch of a smallmouth bass on my belt. The word spread to guides of the other four lakes we fished and these hard working and congenial guys did their best to accommodate me.

Aric Riggins guided my two partners, John Felsher, Brad Uhl and me on Red Willow Reservoir and while we caught fish, not a smallmouth was seen.

The second day, Jerry Lytle, who has fished the professional bass circuit and knows the address of every fish on Swanson Lake, tried. We caught a bunch of fish but alas, no smallmouth.

Next it was on to massive Lake McConaughy under the guidance of guide Jerry Steinke. Plenty of fish. Smallie? Nada.

Box Butte lake was next, a beautiful body of water where I was assured a smallmouth would be there just waiting to fulfill this Louisiana fisherman's dream. Sorry, among the several species of fish guide Mike Hulquist and I caught, not a smallmouth could be found.

Time was getting short and with one more fishing hole, Lake Minatare, left on the schedule before I had to head home, I had resigned myself to the sobering truth that I'd come home having caught a bunch of fish, everything but a smallmouth bass. Then guide Cody Bohl entered the picture.

Lake Minatare is known for its excellent walleye fishery and Bohl, who has won several walleye fishing tournaments, had my partner and me bringing several legal sized walleyes to the boat using a Fireball jig with an interesting and repulsive additive to the jig, a live leech.

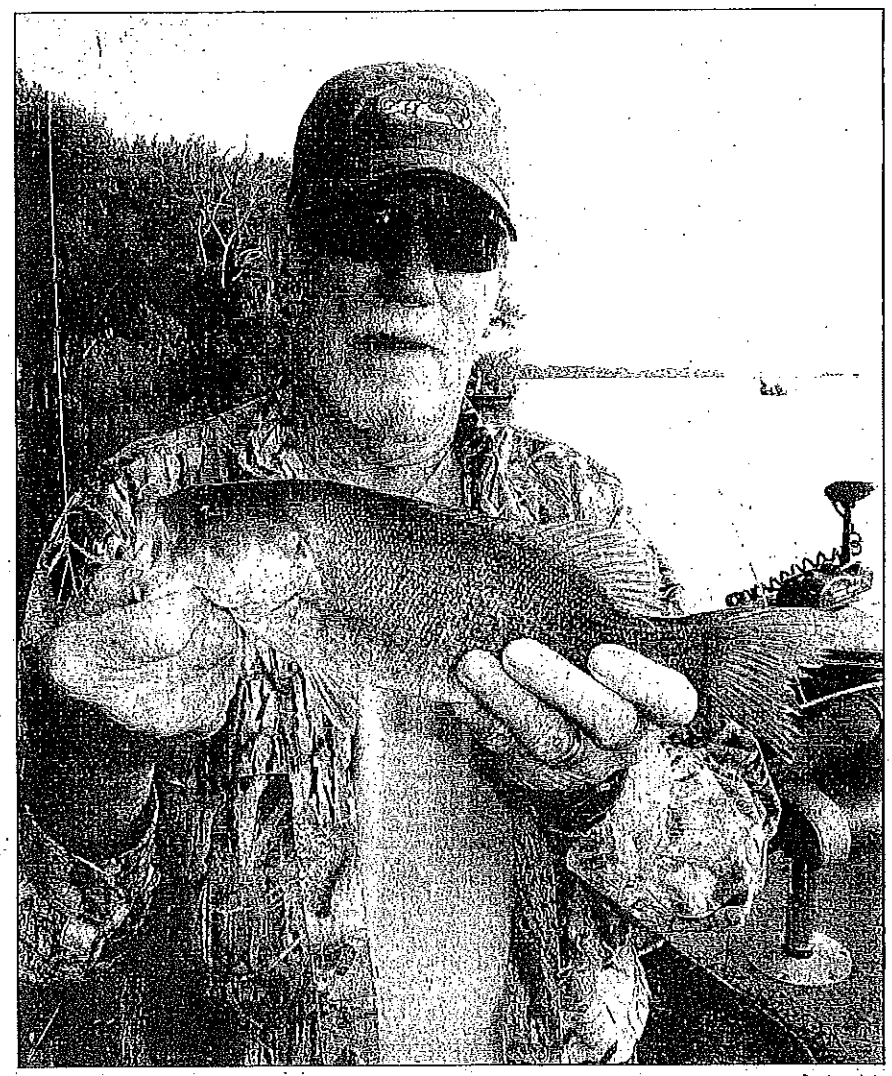
"The best way to get a leech on your hook is to let it attach to your thumb before inserting the hook," Bohl said. I tried to do as Bohl instructed but for the life of me, I just couldn't let that little blood sucker latch onto my thumb. Instead, I made a stab and wherever the hook entered, that was where it stayed.

After catching several walleyes, I flipped the jig and leech into a pocket of willows and felt it latch onto an underwater branch. A flip and tug and the lure came free and I got an immediate hit, bringing what I thought was another walleye to Bohl's waiting net.

"I don't want to jinx you," said Bohl as he watched the fish fighting just below the surface, "but I think you have a smallmouth bass."

Sliding the fish into the net, he hoisted it for me to see. It was, indeed, the smallmouth I had come to catch and finally, the pressure was off.

The trip would have been a smashing success even without a smallmouth but the one I caught was like adding a dollop of Blue Bell to a steaming bowl of peach cobbler.



Courtesy photo

The smallmouth bass that eluded writer Glynn Harris until the last day, proved to be a slam dunk on a fishing trip to Nebraska last week.

FISHING REPORT

BLACK BAYOU: Bass are in the grass and some are being caught on topwaters and floating worms. Crappie are around grass with a few hitting jigs and shiners. Bream are fair around shallow beds on worms and crickets. For latest information, contact the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

CANEY LAKE: Bass are schooling and a good many fish, slot size and under, are hitting shad imitation lures. Bigger fish are hitting at night on Shaky heads, Brush Hogs and spinners. Lunker of the week was a 10.02 pounder caught by Mark Gagnon from Alexandria. Crappie are around the deep tops and some are being caught casting Road Runners. Chinquapins are on the points while some bluegills are still bedding and hitting crickets and worms. Catfish are biting shallow on noodles baited with wieners and cut bait. For more information, call Brown's Landing at 318-259-6649 or the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

CHENIERE LAKE: Bass are fair on Wobbleheads and topwater lures. Crappie are scattered while bream are still bedded and hitting crickets and worms. Call the Honey Hole at 323-8707 for more information.

LAKE CLAIBORNE: Stripers are schooling and hitting bucktails and spoons. Bass are best late afternoon on crank baits. Crappie are fair; bream are slow. Catfish are biting cold worms, blood and cheese baits on trotlines. For latest information, call Tim Lofton at Kel's Cove at 927-2264.

LAKE D'ARBONNE: Bass fishing is best at night on spinner baits and soft plastics. Crappie are in the sloughs with best catches made fishing jigs and shiners over deep tops. Bream and catfish continue to bite cold worms and crickets off the banks. For latest information, call Anderson's Sport Center at 318-368-9669 or the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

OUACHITA RIVER: Crappie are improving in the river lakes, bayou and creeks fishing 4- to 14-foot water on Bobby Garland Monkey Milk and Blue Thunder as well as hair jigs. Bass are fest fishing Rat-L-Traps and Carolina rigs in bends and points on the river. For current information, call the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

LAKE POVERTY POINT: Bass to 9 pounds have been caught on spinners, crank baits and Zoom worms, Red Bug pattern. Crappie are scattered; catfish are good on cut bait while bream are fair. For latest reports, call Poverty Point Marina at 318-878-0101.

LAKE ST. JOHN: Bass are good early and late on topwater lures with jigs and soft plastics later in the day. Bream are fair, catfish are improving while crappie are slow. Call Ken Mahoney at 318-757-0013 for latest reports and fishing conditions.

LAKE YUCATAN: The water is falling but fishing is slow; only a few barfish reported. For latest information, call James Lachney at 318-467-2259.

LAKE BRUIN: The water level is fairly high and bass have been good on Junebug finesse worms and chrome/blue Rat-L-Traps with Bandit 200 series and black buzz baits best at night. Hybrid stripers are also hitting Rat-L-Traps. Crappie are fair around deep piers on Bobby Garland Blue Thunder jigs. Bream are good but running small. Catfishing is best on night crawlers. For latest information, call Colby or Seth at 318-766-0075.

Veteran outdoor writer Glynn Harris of the Ruston Daily Leader can be reached at hominy@suddenlink.net.

The Ruston Daily Leader

Northern pike — Jackfish on steroids



By Glynn Harris

I remember it well although it happened several decades ago. I was a kid, fishing Molido Creek behind our house with my dad's rod and reel and his favorite lure, a brown fishy-looking River Runt.

Casting next to cypress knees, I managed to tie into a few Kentucky bass that made their home in the creek.

Up ahead, I saw a lay-down log in the water that was the ideal ambush spot for a bass and my cast was perfect, gently nudging the log as it landed. Two turns of the reel handle and WHAM! — I got a smashing strike.

Setting the hook, expected to see a bass leaping from the surface in an effort to dislodge the River Runt. Instead, what I saw, for a brief instant before sharp teeth severed the line, was a jackfish. In a flash he was gone, making one last leap with my dad's River Runt dangling from his ugly jaws.

From that point forward, I hated those fish. All they were good for was to cut your line and steal your lure and they were so bony, you couldn't eat one. I admit on more than one occasion when I was able to land a jackfish, I'd smack it on the head with a boat paddle before tossing it back in the water. I reasoned that turtles have to eat too.

The jackfish I caught are more accurately known as chain pickerel. If one weighed two pounds, it was a good one. My nephew, Tommy, once caught one from my boat on Lake Claiborne that tipped the scales at 4.44 pounds. We entered it in the Louisiana Fish Records and for a while, it occupied the top spot and still sits in the number eight spot in the records; 5.75 pounds is the current state record.

If jackfish were dogs, they'd be a Chihuahua.

A couple of weeks ago, I was introduced to the Great Dane of the pike world, a Northern pike.

With the exception of different markings on the side, these fierce looking toothy fish closely resemble our jackfish but are much larger with a North American record sitting at a whopping 46-plus pounds.

While fishing Lake McConaghy near Ogallala, Nebraska as a guest of the Ogallala Keith County Chamber of Commerce on a trip arranged by Geiger and Associates Public Relations firm, I tied into one of these big rascals.

A thunderstorm the previous night had cleared by the time we got to the lake but a brisk breeze was blowing, making fishing on this big open lake virtually impossible. However, guide Jerry Steinke, motored us behind some standing timber where the water was more calm.

I was casting a big white spinner bait and was bringing it to the boat when ten feet out, my lure disappeared and I felt a jolt. I had a fish on.

"It's a northern," my guide said as he readied the net, "a good one too."

The fight was ferocious and my first reaction when I spotted the fish was to keep a tight line as memories of that Molido jackfish returned. Fortunately, Steinke got the net under the fish before it took my spinner and I was looking at my first northern pike.

The fish measured over 31 inches long with an estimated weight of 10 pounds, almost twice what the Louisiana state record is for jackfish. After photos, we returned it to the lake because a big pike is one of the species sought after by anglers in this part of the country.

I'm thankful to the local Chamber of Commerce for arranging such a trip for me to catch this big pike and when I see my buddies back at home, I can show them the picture of what a jackfish on steroids looks like.

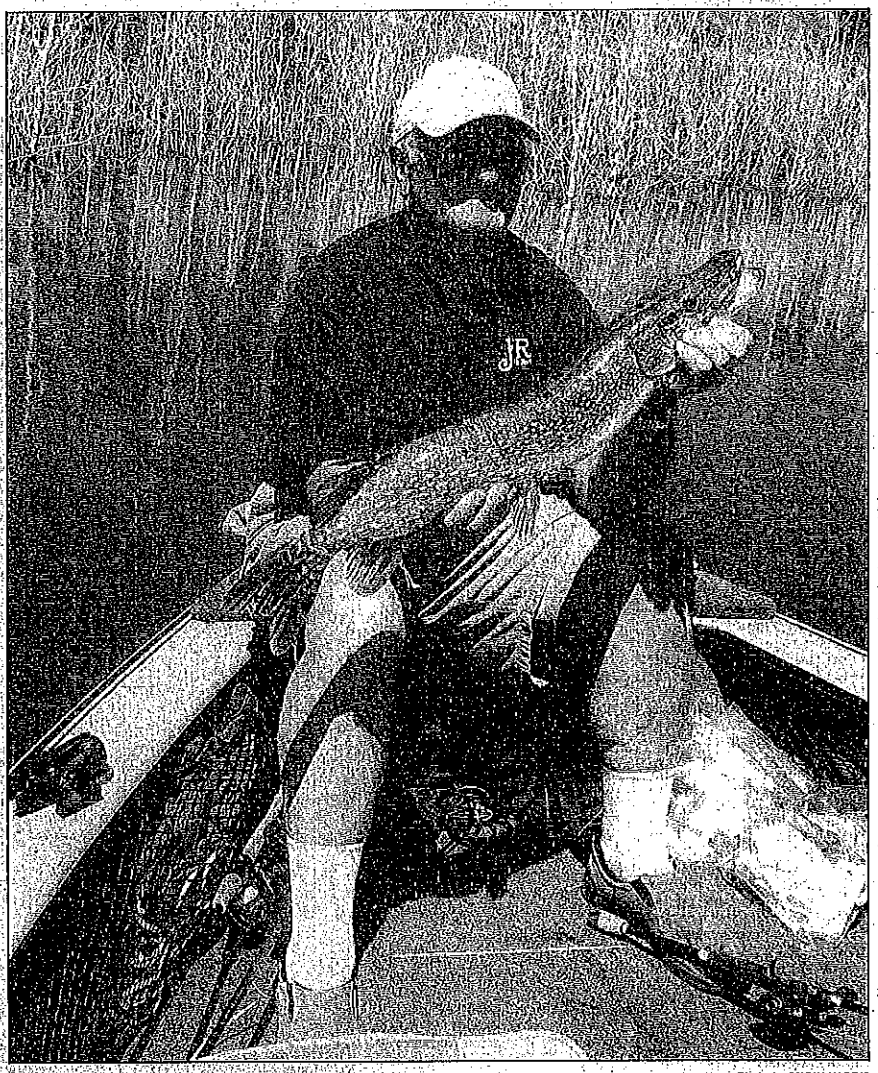


Photo by GLYNN HARRIS

Lake McConaughy (Nebraska) guide Jerry Steinke holds the 10-pound northern pike caught by writer Glynn Harris.

FISHING REPORT

BLACK BAYOU: Bass are in the grass and are fair on topwaters and floating worms. Crappie are slow to fair with some caught on jigs and shiners. Bream are on the beds and hitting worms and crickets. For latest information, contact the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

LAKE BRUIN: The bass have moved deeper with some caught at night. During days, a June bug finesse worm fished around deep piers is picking up a few fish. Bream are moving off the beds. Catfishing is good in 6-9 foot water on night crawlers. Hybrid stripers are being caught around the lighted piers at night on crank baits. Crappie are fair on shiners or jigs fished around deep piers. For latest information, call Colby or Seth at 318-768-0075.

CANEY LAKE: Bass are schooling and hitting shad imitation topwater lures when they're up top chasing shad. A few heavier fish have been caught at night fishing dark spinners or big plastic worms. Chinquapins are hanging around the 8 foot flats and will hit cold worms. Crappie are slow with a few caught suspended around deep tops. A good may catfish are being caught on noodles baited with cut bait or chunks of wieners. For more information, call Brown's Landing at 318-259-6649 or the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

CHENIERE LAKE: Bass are best early mornings on topwater lures with Wobble-heads taking a few around the grass. Crappie are scattered and slow. Some bream are still on the beds while some are scattered and can be caught around shady trees. Call the Honey Hole at 323-8707 for more information.

LAKE CLAIBORNE: Bass fishing is improving with topwater lures and crank baits taking fish early and late. Plastic worms are picking up a few later in the day. Stripers are schooling early mornings and late afternoons and hitting shad imitations while some are caught trolling white bucktails in the middle of the lake. Crappie are fair around submerged tops in 15-20 foot water. Bream are slow. Blue and channel catfish are biting cold worms, blood and cheese baits on trotlines. For latest information, call Tim Lofton at Kel's Cove at 927-2264.

LAKE D'ARBONNE: Bass fishing has been better at night on dark spinners and plastic worms. During the days, Carolina rigs and Brush Hogs are picking up some fish on the channel edges. Some are schooling and hitting topwater lures. Crappie are in the sloughs with best catches made fishing jigs and shiners 7-10 feet deep over tops in 15-20 foot water. Bream and catfish continue to bite cold worms and crickets off the banks. For latest information, call Anderson's Sport Center at 318-368-9669 or the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

OUACHITA RIVER: The river is falling. Spinners and crank baits are picking up a few bass. Crappie are in the river lakes with some caught spider rigging jigs or shiners. Bream are fair around the beds. For current information, call the Honey Hole at 323-8707.

LAKE POVERTY POINT: A good many catfish are being caught tight-lining cold worms around the "jungle" and wind breaks. Bass are fair with some to 6 pounds caught on plastic worms and lizards. Bream are fair; crappie are slow. For latest reports, call Poverty Point Marina at 318-878-0101.

LAKE ST. JOHN: Bass are good early and late on topwater lures with jigs and soft plastics fishing around the outer trees working later in the day. Bream are fair, catfish are best at night fishing night crawlers on yo-yos. Crappie are slow. Some hybrid stripers are being caught at night around lighted piers. Call Ken Mahoney at (318-757-0013) for latest reports and fishing conditions.

LAKE YUCATAN: The water is rising and fishing is slow. For latest information, call James Lachney at 318-467-2259.

Veteran outdoor writer Glynn Harris of the Ruston Daily Leader can be reached at hominy@suddenlink.net.

The Belleville News
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Travel Writer Smith visits Smith Falls State Park

Trent Hills Independent

On my recent visit to northern Nebraska, I visited Smith Falls State Park, located near Valentine, and straddling the Niobrara River. It's a stunning cascade of water that plunges about 70 feet into the Niobrara River Valley. It's the state's highest waterfall, and it's located within a 250-acre park that's intended to protect this biologically unique and diverse area.

To reach this park, I participated in about a three-hour float trip on the Niobrara River, departing from Valentine. I was led by Doug Graham, of Graham Canoe Outfitters, www.grahamoutfitters.com, (http://www.grahamoutfitters.com,) for he did the paddling while his guests, including me, simply sat in the rubberized raft and enjoyed the rather gentle ride and the stunning scenery. After all, there were no treacherous rapids along this section of the Niobrara National Scenic River, and the towering sandstone cliffs and spectacular canyons encountered along the route guaranteed us many wonderful photo ops.

We floated through a section of the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge,

which is frequented, annually, by well over 200 species of birds. Some of these are migratory or seasonal residents, while others stay year-round, including the sharp-tailed grouse and the prairie chicken. The Refuge is also home to such wildlife as deer, coyote, bobcat, bison, and elk, and ranchers' cattle can also be seen grazing along the riverbanks; there are a lot more cattle than people in Nebraska.

As we floated along, Doug told us about the Ogallala Aquifer, a vast reservoir of underground water that's located just beneath the Great Plains. We learned that it's actually exposed in some places along the Niobrara River, so we could often see the groundwater seeping through the valley walls and into the river itself. Doug emphasized the importance of preserving this water by keeping the area as natural and chemical-free as possible. Therefore, he's personally opposed to the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, for he's concerned about possible future contamination. Although much of this region, part of Nebraska's immense Sandhills area, consists primarily of a com-

bination of wind-kissed grasslands, sand, and wide open spaces, we did see some patches of aspen, birch, and ponderosa pine along the way. The majority of the area, however, appeared to be rather barren, more like a giant sandbox, littered with a covering of prairie grass, and the spectacular, hilly terrain witnessed along the river didn't seem to coincide with the preconceived notion that this was the flat plains of the Midwest.

We also passed by several waterfalls along our route and met several canoeists and kayakers. After all, Backpacker magazine has rated the Niobrara as "one of the top ten canoeing rivers in the U.S." and it's also one of "National Geographic's top 100 adventures."

We eventually ended our trip at Smith Falls State Park, where we had a picnic lunch. I then decided to walk to my namesake falls, so I crossed a pedestrian bridge, walked into a small, secluded canyon via a boardwalk (there to help prevent erosion), and then on to my desired destination: Smith Falls.

Stairs led me from my lookout point down to the very base of the falls so that I could then look almost straight up at the cascading water.

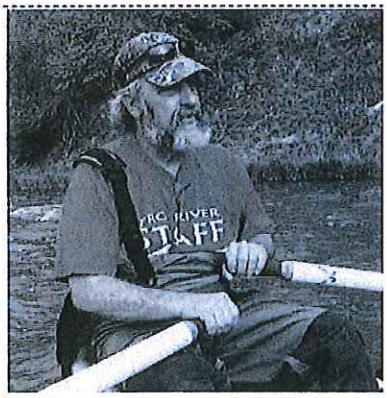
I soon found out that Smith Falls, regrettably, was not named after this travel writer. Indeed, it was apparently named after Frederic Smith, who filed a homestead patent on this piece of land back in 1896. It's now a state park,



Smith Falls, as seen from the boardwalk.



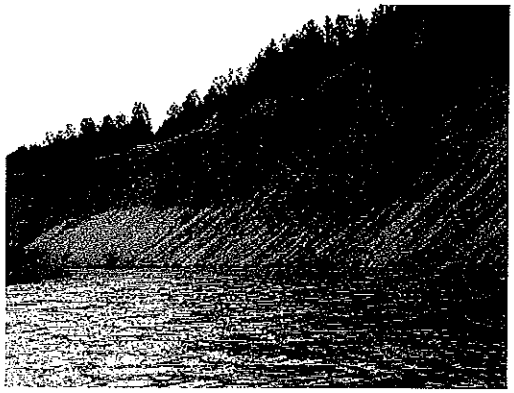
The view of Smith Falls from the base.



Doug Graham, of Graham Canoe Outfitters, led us on the float trip.

offering shower facilities, washrooms, picnic sites, and primitive camping. I also found a very nice self-guided nature trail there, the Jim MacAllister Nature Trail, named after the former Games and Parks Commissioner Regional Manager who was instrumental in the acquisition and planning of this park; this trail allows the visitor to explore the diversity of the area on about a two-kilometrelong footpath.

This particular portion of the Niobrara River Valley is known as the "biological crossroads of the Great Plains," where eastern and western species of plants and animals overlap, and it's definitely a unique destination.



A view of the towering sand cliffs along our route on the Niobrara River.

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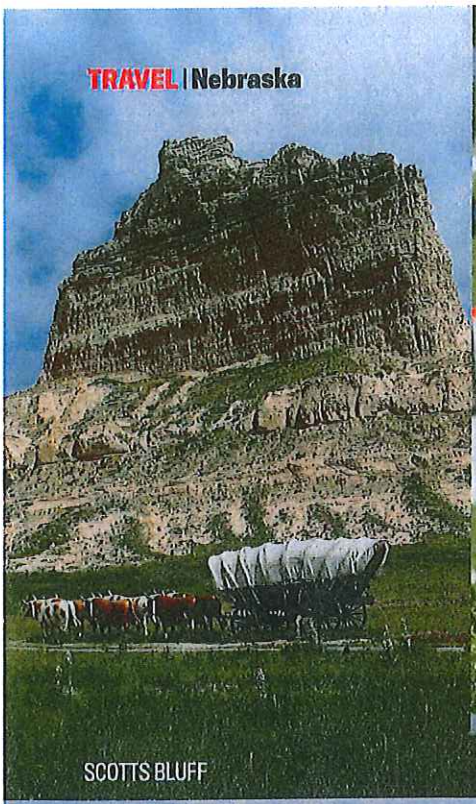

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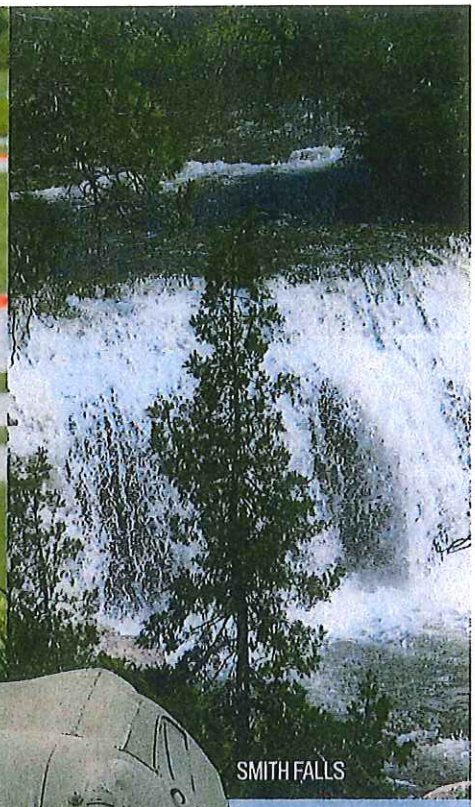
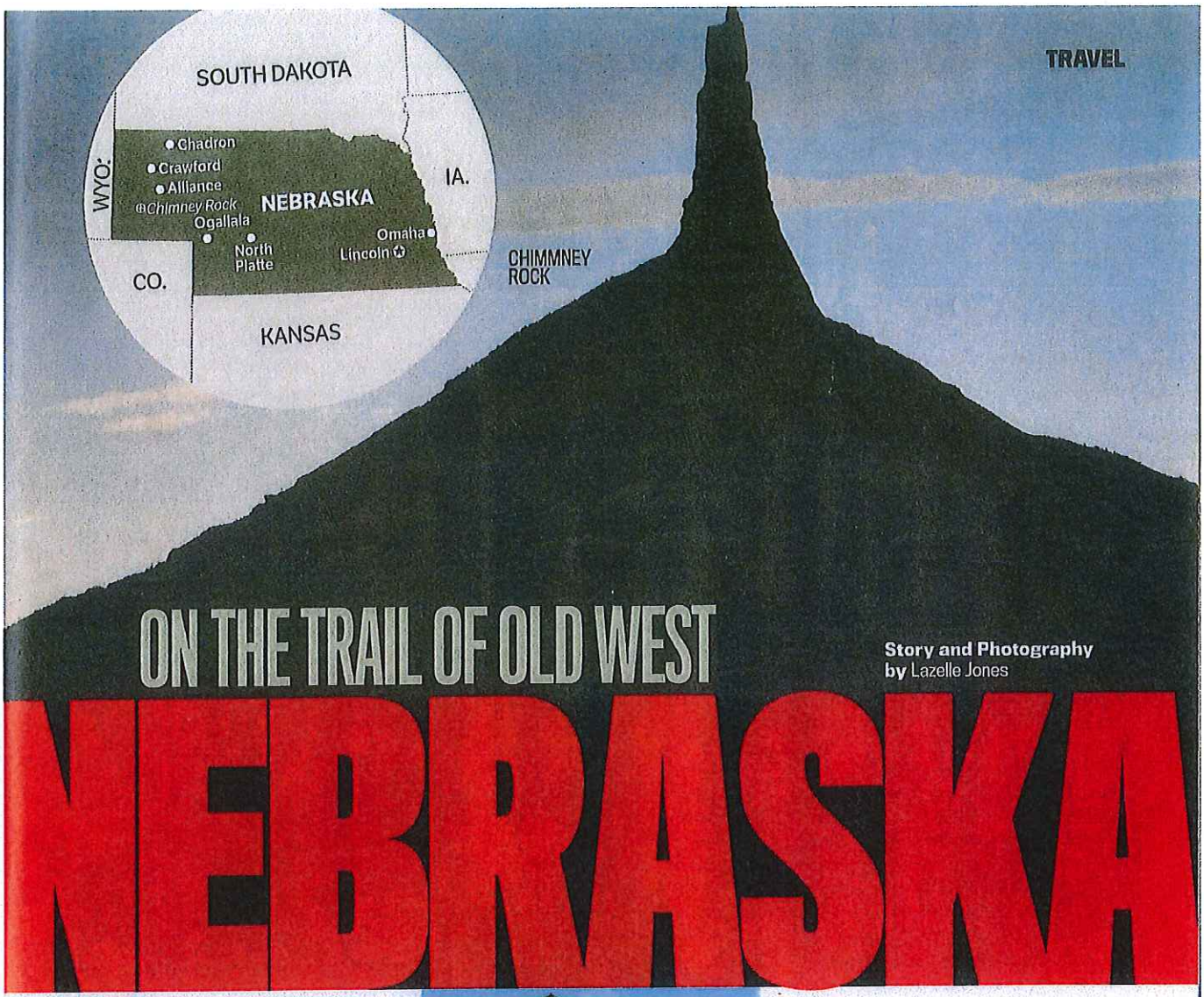


SMITH FALLS

STONE COLD Just outside the town of Alliance is Carhenge, Jim Reinders' brainchild is as close a replica of Stonehenge as old vehicles can come, and features a '62 Caddy as a heel stone.

CARHENGE

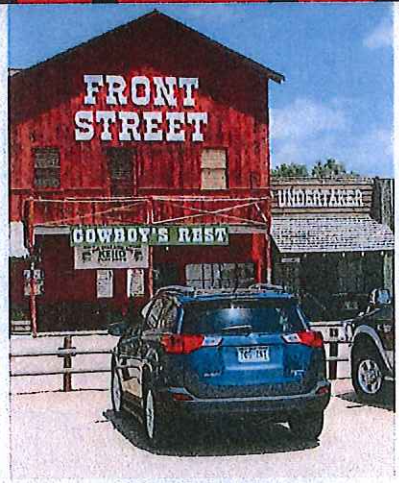


ON THE TRAIL OF OLD WEST NEBRASKA

Story and Photography by Lazelle Jones

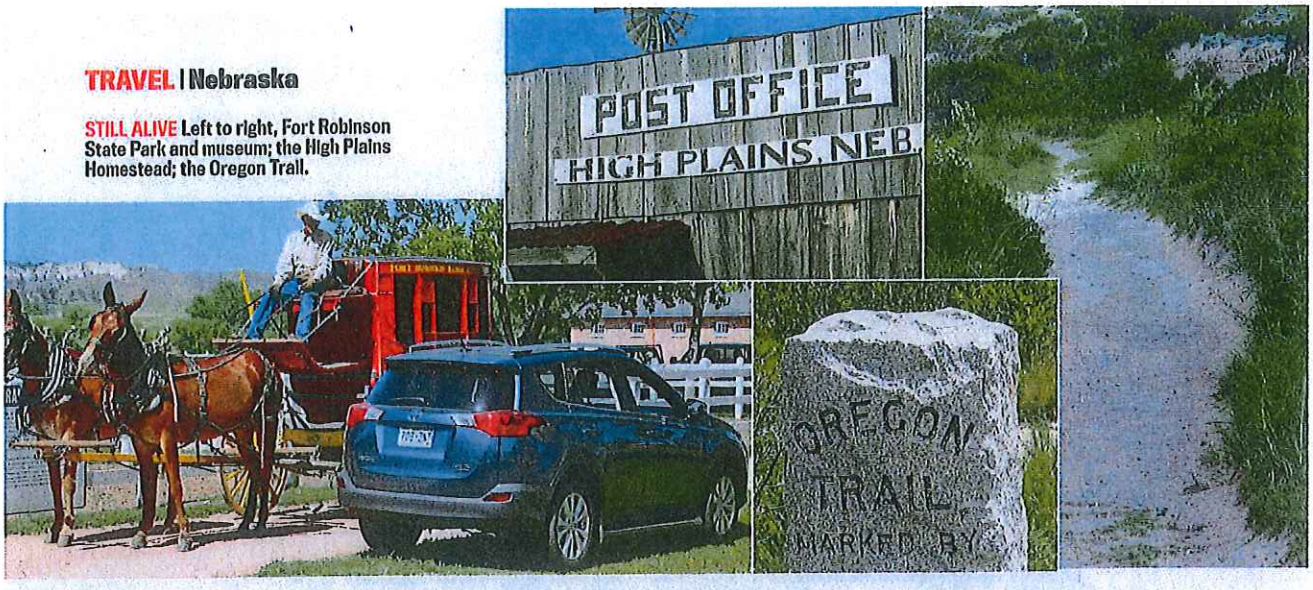
Whenever Nebraska is mentioned, typically what comes to mind is Corn Huskers football, beef cattle, and the fact that within the state lies America's "breadbasket." All are correct. However—and this is a big however—there are nooks and crannies in western Nebraska that typically fall under the radar when it comes to understanding the history of the Old West and who we are as Americans. From North Platte to Ogallala, from Scottsbluff to Alliance, along with Crawford and Chadron in the northwest corner of the state are towns that for the most part go undiscovered, where the legacy of the Old West is as rich as the soil is black and fertile. Here, friendly, down-to-earth folks live; to-die-for food is served in abundance; lodging spans the comfort zone from rustic to pure luxury; and the fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreation make western Nebraska a destination to be discovered.

A midsize SUV Toyota RAV4 AWD, powered by a 3.0-liter V-6 coupled to a six-speed automatic transmission served as transportation for this journey into history. The RAV4 yields uncompromised luxury and comfort for this vehicle class, and over the 1700 miles to be covered, its excellent fuel economy (29.5 mpg) makes it a perfect fit for anyone's budget. Had we wanted, we could've towed a 1500-pound camping trailer and enjoyed the many pristine campgrounds that lace Western Nebraska. We programmed our GPS and took off for adventure.



A good place to begin is in North Platte at Buffalo Bill Cody's Scout's Rest Ranch. This is the headquarters of Cody's Wild West Show, which was the genesis of today's modern rodeo. Built in the 1880s, Buffalo Bill's home is furnished with his belongings, and the house looks as though the legendary showman has just stepped out for a sarsaparilla. The walls are covered with original photos that chronicle his early days as a scout with the U.S. Army, the Indian Wars (1876-1890), his family and personal life, and the Wild West Shows he took around the world.

Another important stop in North Platte is the World War II Service Men's canteen located inside the North Platte depot. Started by local women two weeks after the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the canteen hosted 6 million troops transported by railroad across the United States during the war. Stopping here while the locomotive was being filled with water and coal, the servicemen were



STILL ALIVE Left to right, Fort Robinson State Park and museum; the High Plains Homestead; the Oregon Trail.

treated to cake, coffee, milk, and sandwiches. The canteen handled troops from a dozen trains a day and was open seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, until the spring of 1946. All of western Nebraska participated in this effort, with families donating part of their monthly sugar ration for the pastries.

North Platte also hosts the Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center. Every Union Pacific railcar crossing the U.S. today is separated one at a time and sent to where it needs to go. It's done using elevated rail beds (one end is higher or lower than the other end) and gravity is the source of locomotion with computers keeping track of every railcar. Railcars and diesel locomotives also are serviced and reconditioned here. An elevator takes visitors several hundred feet up to the museum's observation tower for a bird's-eye view of the operation. You can see a presentation of the history of the railroad during the last 150 years, including the "orphan trains" that routinely emptied Eastern cities of children living on the streets and gave them out for adoption to families across America who needed labor. Brothers and sister and even twins were often split up, never to find out what happened to their siblings.

Ogallala, a town minutes west of North Platte on Highway 30 (the old Lincoln Highway), was one of the first towns at the end of the trail where Texas longhorns were driven north and shipped back east before the railroad reached Abilene, Texas, and Dodge City, Kansas. Front Street downtown offers a representation of this rich saga. Across the street is the Petrified Wood Gallery (you must check this out), and minutes from the gallery is "boot hill" cemetery.

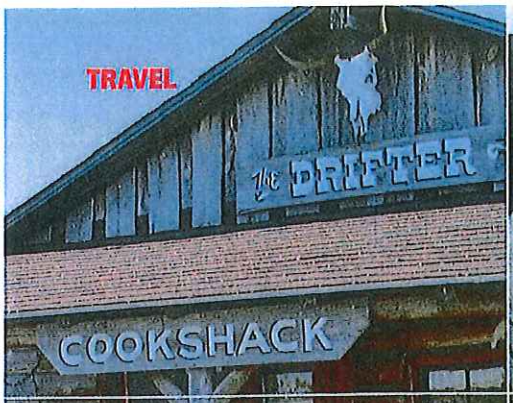
On Highway 26 northwest of Ogallala are three geologic formations seen by the half-million pioneers who followed the Platte River on their way up the Oregon Trail between 1842 and 1869, when the transcontinental railroad was completed. These rock formations rise hundreds of feet into Nebraska's pastel-blue sky and include Courthouse and Jailhouse Rocks, Chimney Rock, and Scotts Bluff. The pioneers could see these rock formations for days before actually reaching them, giving many the idea that this was the beginning of the Rocky Mountains. Today, it takes just minutes to get from one to the other.

There is speculation as to how and why England's Stonehenge was built. Some think it's a solar calendar, while others argue it's something else. A mile outside the town of Alliance, there's a similar-looking formation called Carhenge. Like Stonehenge, it's built in a circular configuration, but rather than stones, full-size 1940s, '50s, and '60s trucks and cars protrude from the ground straight up or at angles. Other vehicles serve as bridges connecting those sticking out of the ground, while others are cantilevered off the ends of those poking at the sky. It's a strange, surreal creation in the middle of nowhere. All the cars are painted gray for a stone-like effect.

In the very northwest corner of the state, near the town of Crawford, several destinations call for a stay of at least a couple of days.



WALK IN THE WILD At Smith Falls, Nebraska's newest state park, signs on the Jim MacAllister Nature Trail alert hikers to the diverse ecological systems unique to the valley.











NEBRASKA FACTS Statehood: **1867** • Population: **1.8 Million** • Capital: **Lincoln**

WELCOME WAGONS Above, far left: The Drifter Cookshack is the heart of High Plains Homestead and offers cowboy-size meals. Above, right: The World War II Service Men's Canteen provided hospitality to six million troops who passed through North Platte.

One is Fort Robinson, where Sioux Chief Crazy Horse was killed after he surrendered to the U.S. Army. Today the original fort is a state park offering overnight lodging and a bunch of fun things to do. You can stay in the old officer's quarters or in the enlisted barracks. The lodge dining room menu features home-raised buffalo. Horseback riding and stagecoach rides are offered. The fort's museum provides a no holds barred presentation of the Indian Wars, giving both sides of what took place in the West up until the 1890s when Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull were murdered.

The High Plains Homestead, a guest ranch near Crawford, has private cabins and an old saloon, and some of the best ranch fixin's anywhere. Mike and Linda Kesselring brought in old buildings from old towns, ranches, and homesteads that had been left to the elements, restored them, and recreated an Old West town. Drive out for dinner or stay a couple of nights.

On Highway 20 is the Museum of the Fur Trade. This is the epicenter for research on the history of the fur trappers and traders out West from the mid-1700s until the 1840s. It has the largest collection of antique rifles anywhere, along with thousands of square feet of exhibits that tell the fur trade story.

Further east in Chadron is the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, where a museum and permanent exhibition is devoted to this Nebraska author. She wrote extensively and intimately about her Swiss immigrant family and their 1890s pioneer experiences. Sandoz describes the struggles of everyday life on the prairie where, on a scale of 1 to 10, pleasures were often lower than a zero.

Her stories capture the pervasive loneliness on what was an empty plain, the effects the never-ending wind had on an individual's sanity, and how the absolutely treeless landscape affected the human spirit. My, how things have changed! TT



NORTH PLATTE AREA
North Platte Lincoln County Convention and Visitors Bureau
308/532-4729; *visitnorthplatte.com*

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park
308/535-8035; *outdoornebraska.ne.gov*

Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center
308/532-9920; goldenspiketower.com

Lincoln County Historical Museum (World War II Canteen);
308/534-5640 *lincolncountymuseum.org*

OGALLALA
Keith County Chamber of Commerce
308/284-4066; *visitogallala.com*
ogallalafrontstreet.com

Petrified Wood Gallery
308/284-9996; *petrifiedwoodgallery.com*

CHADRON AREA
Chamber of Commerce; 308/432-4401
chadron.com; discoverdawescounty.com

CRAWFORD AREA
Crawford Chamber of Commerce
308/665-1817; *crawfordnebraska.us*

Fort Robinson State Park
308/665-2900; *stateparks.com/fort_robinson.html*

High Plains Homestead
308/665-2592; *highplainshomestead.com*

Fort Robinson Museum; *nebraskahistory.org*

Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center
308/432-6401; *sandozcenter.com*

Museum of the Fur Trade
308/432-3843; *furtrade.org*

ALLIANCE AREA
Alliance Visitors Bureau
308/762-1520; *visitalliance.com*

PIONEER LANDMARKS
Chimney Rock National Historic Site
308/586-2581; *nebraskahistory.org/sites/rock*

Scotts Bluff National Monument
308/436-9700; *nps.gov/scbl/index.htm*

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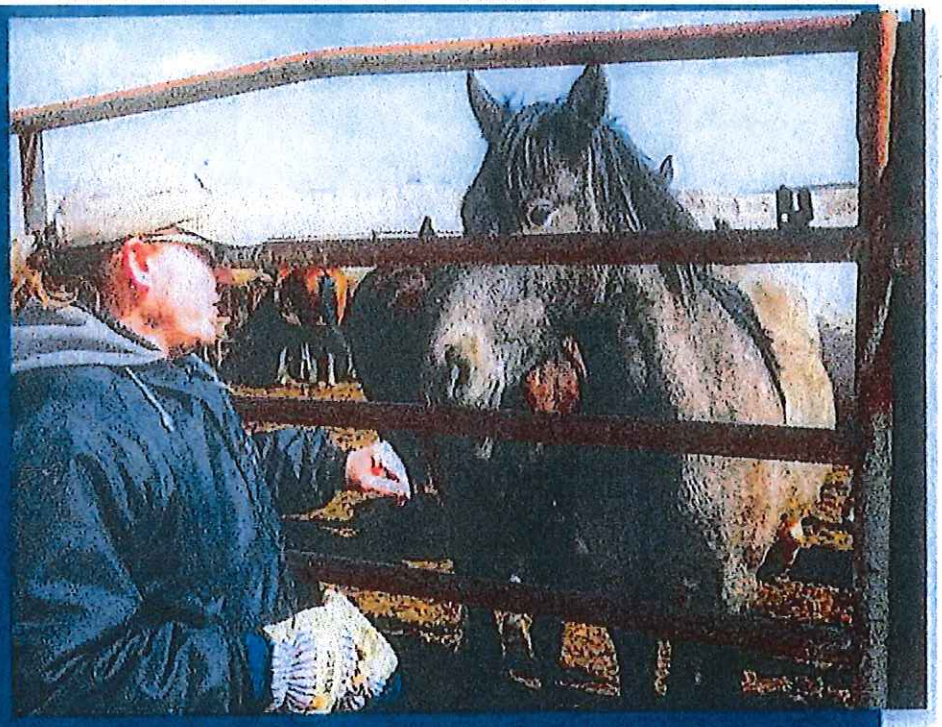

Have you ever thought about adopting a wild horse or burro? The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has several adoption centers scattered across the country where you can do just that. The centers, such as the one in Elm Creek, Nebraska, hold wild horses and burros gathered from Western states and prepare them for adoption. The animals are taken from the range because as they reproduce, their numbers increase and the ability of the land to sustain them decreases.

There is little cost for the actual procedure, but the BLM wants the adopted animals to be well cared for; therefore, there are qualifications for adoption. Visit the BLM website (www.blm.gov/adoptahorse) for more information and to see a photo gallery of animals available for Internet adoption. — *James Richardson* ◆

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The Cost of Full-time RVing

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PAGE 82

Historic Highways and Byways

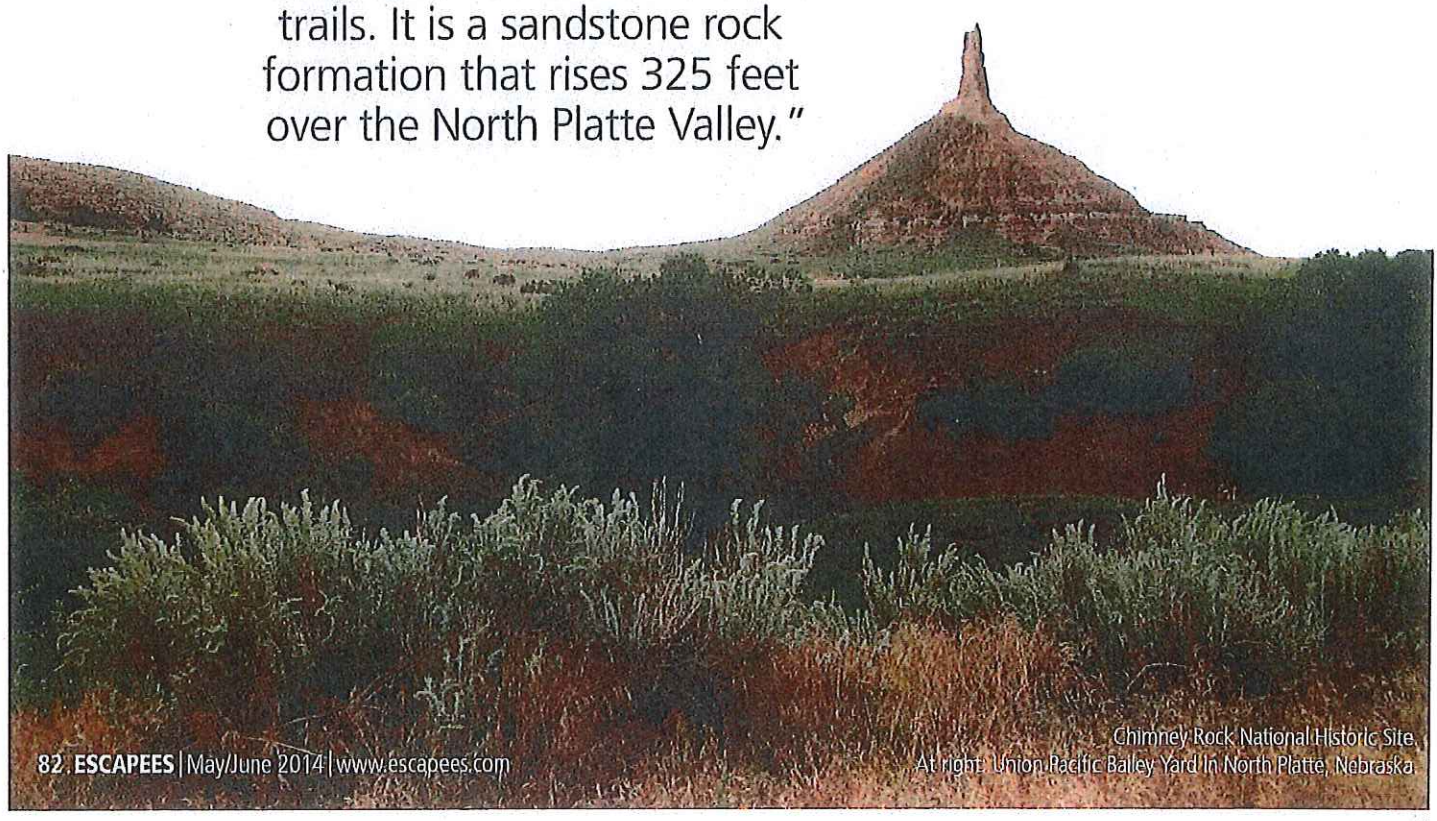
Western Nebraska

Western Nebraska is the location of the first transcontinental railroad and the first transcontinental automobile highway, known as the Lincoln Highway, and also the route of the Oregon Trail, the California and Mormon Trails and the path of the Pony Express riders.

WESTERN NEBRASKA

Article and photos by James Richardson #116232

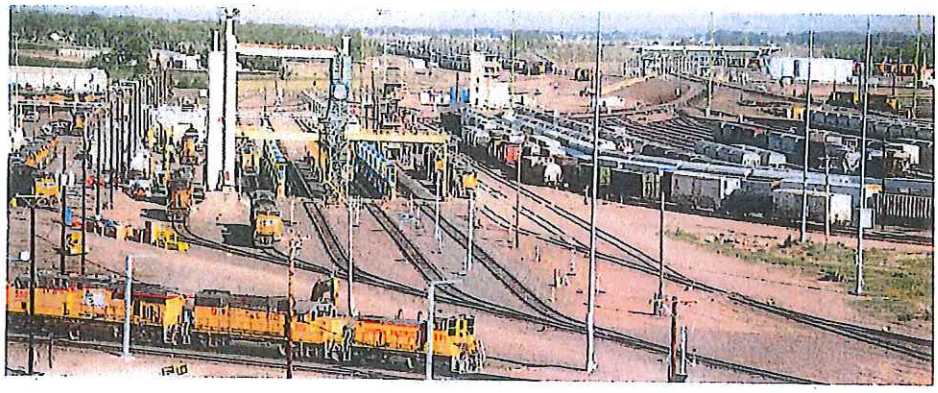
"Chimney Rock is the most recognized feature on the old trails. It is a sandstone rock formation that rises 325 feet over the North Platte Valley."



Chimney Rock National Historic Site. At right: Union Pacific Bailey Yard in North Platte, Nebraska.

"This yard is located at the intersection of key east-west and north-south corridors, making it a critical part of Union Pacific's rail network."

Why? The route followed the North Platte River through the prairies, sand hills and the grasslands of Nebraska enroute to the new lands to the west. This route skirted the higher mountains of the Rockies toward the south. Taking these trails and visiting Western Nebraska is a good way to experience the paths of the early settlers who sought a way westward. And the sights along the way are pretty amazing, also.



Union Pacific Bailey Yard

North Platte, Nebraska, at the juncture of the North and South Platte Rivers, has the Union Pacific Bailey Yard. Being the largest railroad classification yard in the world, it covers nearly 3,000 acres, and it covers a total length of eight miles. A classification yard is a location where railroad cars are separated, transferred and added to make trains. This yard is located at the intersection of key east-west and north-south corridors, making it a critical part of Union Pacific's rail network. Bailey Yard has 17 receiving and 16 departure tracks and handles 14,000 rail cars every 24 hours and averages nearly 140 trains daily. A visitor center, the eight-story Golden Spike Tower (not associated with the Golden Spike National Historic Site in Promontory Summit, Utah), overlooks the Bailey Yard. From there, visitors can observe the yard and watch the nonstop action on the tracks below.

Buffalo Bill Cody's Ranch

Besides the Bailey Yard, North Platte is also the site of Buffalo Bill Cody's Ranch, called Scout's Rest. It sits on 25 acres of its original 4,000 and is now a historical park consisting of his Victorian home and his barn, which is filled with his showman memorabilia. Buffalo Bill was a colorful character. He was at times a scout for the U.S. Army, a pony express rider, a buffalo hunter and, of course, a wild west showman. This home in North Platte was built for rest and relaxation and because it was near the railroad for transporting his horses and other show equipment.

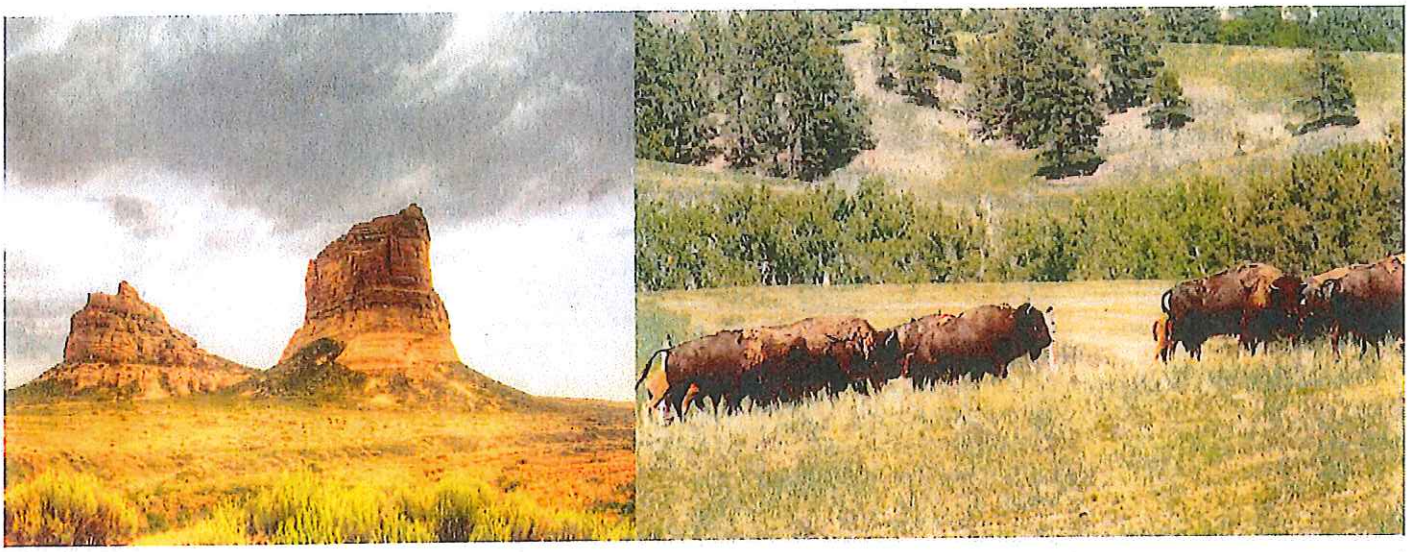
The Lincoln Highway

US 30 and Interstate 80 follow the Platte River across much of Nebraska. And US 30 was the original Lincoln Highway, and it celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2013. The Lincoln Highway was the United States' first transcontinental automobile highway. It was formally dedicated October 31, 1913, and spanned coast-to-coast from Times Square in New York City to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. The first officially recorded length of the entire Lincoln Highway in 1913 was 3,389 miles. Through the years, the road was improved and numerous realignments were made, and by 1924 the highway had been shortened to 3,142 miles. The Lincoln Highway traced historic routes followed by Native Americans and parts of the California, Mormon and the Oregon Trails. When these pioneer trails cut north near Ogallala, the Lincoln Highway continued westward toward Wyoming.

Continued ›››



"...Chimney Rock, Castle and Jailhouse Rocks near Bridgeport, and Scotts Bluff...These were significant landmarks for the wagon trains with their settlers heading westward."



Ogallala

Ogallala was a frontier town that was mentioned in the Larry McMurtry book and TV mini-series, *Lonesome Dove*. Historically, it was the terminus for cattle drives traveling from Texas to the Union Pacific railhead located there. A restored section of the historic town, called Front Street, is a reminder of the frontier days. It has several stores and the Front Street Steakhouse and Crystal Palace Saloon. A museum of relevant artifacts is also there, and during the summer months a stage show provides entertainment.

Petrified Wood Gallery

Across the street is an unusual art shop, called the Petrified Wood Gallery. Two brothers have been creating works of art for many years from petrified wood. The brothers, Howard and Harvey Kenfield, began collecting artifacts and wood in the 1950s. The Petrified Wood Gallery is a showcase of natural history that specializes in ancient woods and fossils from around the world plus Native American arrowheads and artifacts, many from within 25 miles of Ogallala.

Ash Hollow State Historic Park and Windlass Hill

US 26 intersects with US 30 out of Ogallala. On US 26, the Ash Hollow State Historic Park and Windlass Hill were part of the original Oregon, Mormon and California Trails. Even wagon tracks are still visible. Fresh spring water made the location a major stopover along the trail. There is a parking area and a hiking trail to the top of Windlass Hill where the wagon tracks are visible.

Farther to the west, near the Nebraska/Wyoming border, the terrain changes from grasslands to buttes and rock formations. Some of the most significant of those landforms are Chimney Rock, Castle and Jailhouse Rocks near Bridgeport, and Scotts Bluff National Monument near Scottsbluff. These were significant landmarks for the wagon trains with their settlers heading westward.

Chimney Rock

Chimney Rock is the most recognized feature on the old trails. It is a sandstone rock formation that rises 325 feet over the North Platte Valley. Just outside of the town of Scottsbluff along US 26 is Scotts Bluff National Monument, another impressive geologic land feature that stands 4,659 feet above sea level, or 800 feet above the North Platte River. The Summit Road to the top of Scotts Bluff National Monument is thought to be the oldest existing concrete road in Nebraska.

Fort Robinson

In the northwest part of the state, west of the town of Crawford, is Fort Robinson, one of Nebraska's premier state parks and its largest. It has three campgrounds, a park lodge with a restaurant that was formerly the enlisted mens' barracks and many opportunities for outdoor recreation. The current fort sits on 22,000 acres of beautiful Pine Ridge scenery with some of its original buildings and provides a backdrop for a multitude of activities like horseback riding, visiting the park's museums, touring the fort's historic buildings and taking jeep rides to observe big horn sheep and the park's own buffalo and longhorn herds. Or it is a good place to just hang out.

Images left to right: Courthouse and Jailhouse Rocks. Buffalo herd at Fort Robinson State Park. Toadstool Park.

"Toadstool Park...is in a region of badlands formed on the edge of the Pine Ridge Escarpment near Crawford. The landscapes offer stunning vistas of rugged badlands."



Fort Robinson, an active military post from 1874 until 1948, was established to protect the Red Cloud Agency, which assisted the Indians of the area. As expected, there is considerable Native American history associated with Fort Robinson. Camping reservations are suggested here and can be made online at **OutdoorNebraska.org** or at **www.reserveamerica.com**.

Toadstool Park and Hudson-Meng Museum

Other attractions in the Fort Robinson area are the U.S. Forest Service's Toadstool Park and the Hudson-Meng Museum. Toadstool Park, approximately 20 miles from the fort, is in a region of badlands formed on the edge of the Pine Ridge Escarpment near Crawford. The landscapes offer stunning vistas of rugged badlands. Approximately 20 miles away, visitors can see the Hudson-Meng Museum and Archaeology Research Center, which has the world's largest covered bison kill site and archeological dig. There is a museum attached. Get directions to these sites at Fort Robinson, as a GPS can be fooled.

The western part of Nebraska is full of surprises. From its historical routes, like the Oregon Trail and the Lincoln Highway, to its monumental land features, like Scotts Bluff National Monument, it is a destination worthy of a visit.

For more information:

Nebraska Tourism Commission
www.visitnebraska.com

North Platte Lincoln County CVB
www.visitnorthplatte.com

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park
2921 Scouts Rest Road
North Platte, NE 69101-8444
308-535-8035

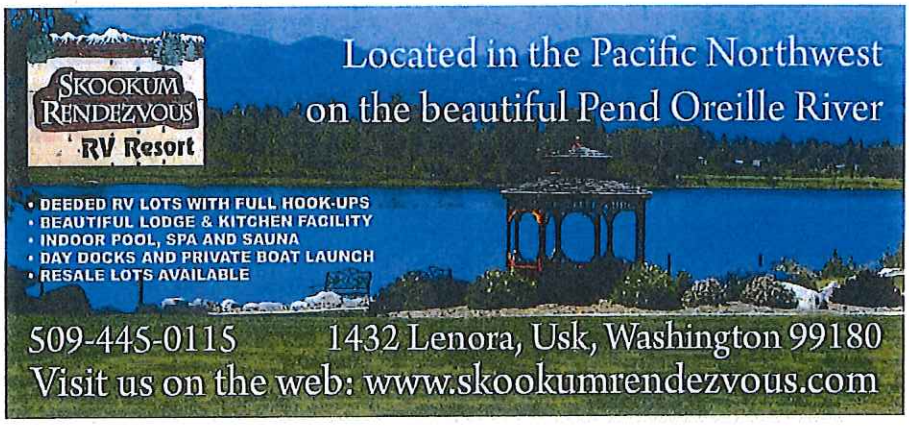
Ogallala/Keith County Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 628, 418 N. Spruce
Ogallala, NE 69153
308-284-4066
www.visitogallala.com

Fort Robinson State Park
PO Box 392, Crawford, NE 69339-0392
308-665-2900
www.stateparks.com/fort_robinson.html

Scotts Bluff National Monument
PO Box 27, Gering, NE 69341-00257
308-436-9700
www.nps.gov/scbl/index.htm



James Richardson has lived in the Memphis, Tennessee, area most of his life, but he has also been a frequent traveler. Throughout his travels, he has written about and photographed some of the most beautiful places in the country. His interest is in historical and scenic destinations and all areas of outdoor recreation. James says, "Being in the outdoors has increased my appreciation for the RV lifestyle."



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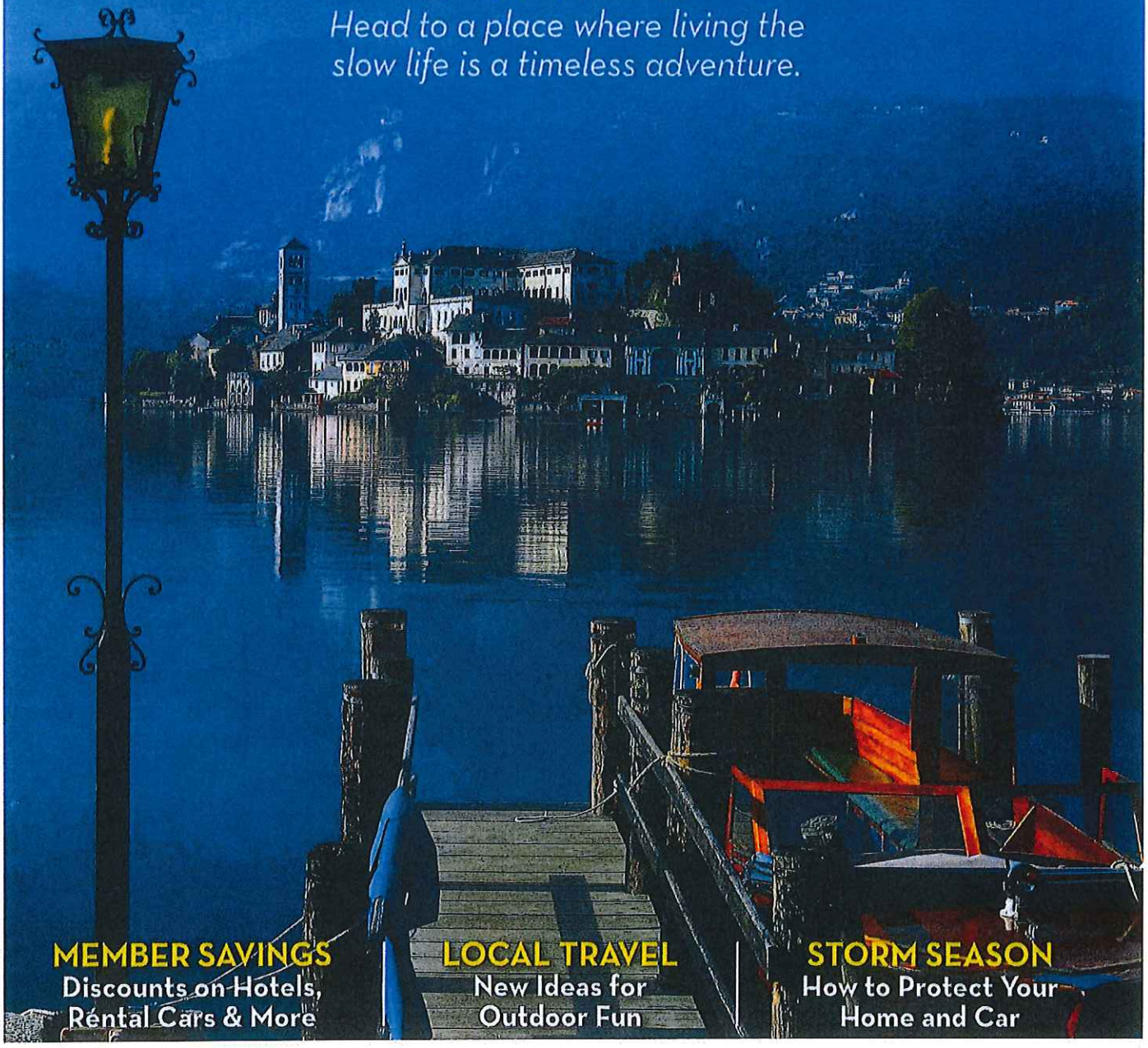

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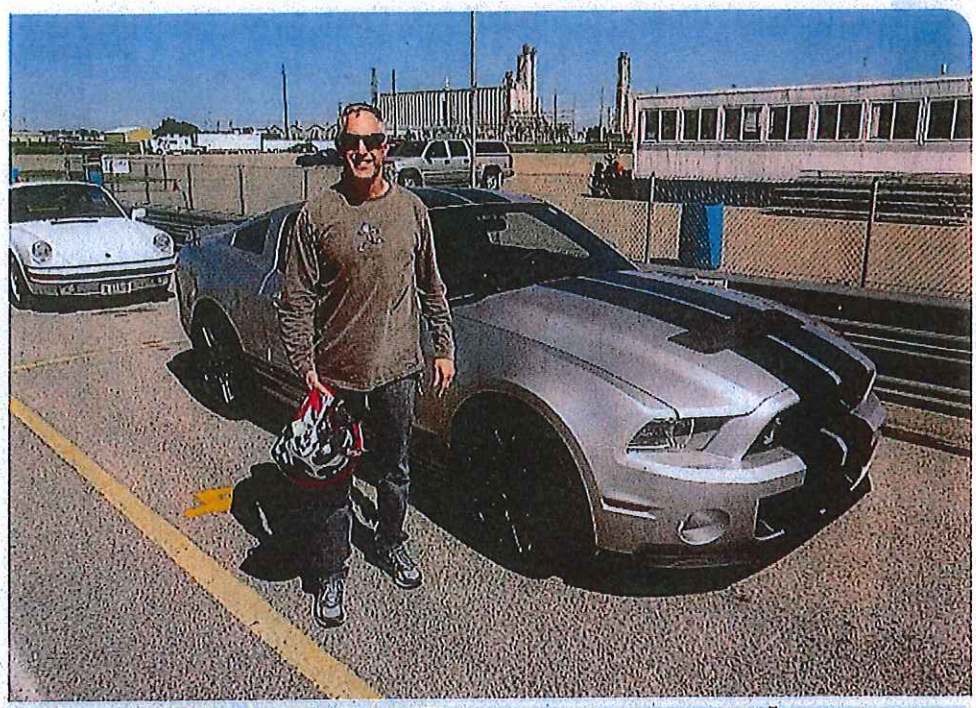



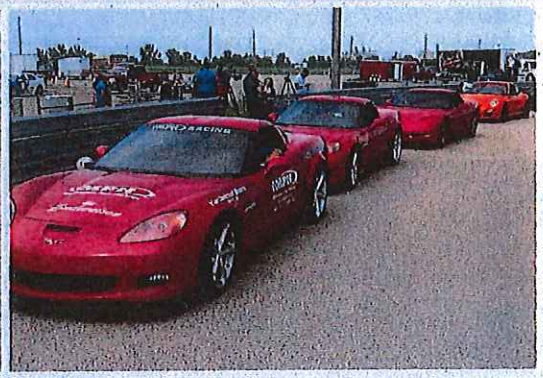

Need for Speed

Put Dad in the driver's seat this Father's Day.

Car aficionados can burn some rubber at the daylong GS 101 Full Throttle Driving School at **Motorsport Park Hastings** (*pictured*). This fast-paced intro to racecourse driving starts with classroom training—on track and driving etiquette, flag signals, braking and accelerating, and passing techniques. Next, students head for the track for one-on-one driving instruction.

After receiving a Full Throttle License, participants finish the day with solo time on the 2.15-mile circuit. There are up to 14 turns, and beginners can usually accelerate up to 110 mph on the straightaways. Participants must bring their own vehicle.

"Our ultimate goal is to teach people how to drive safely on the track with others, and when they're done they feel like they're ready for NASCAR," says the school's managing partner, George Anderson. "Once they've completed our course, they can participate in our numerous events, such as Fast Fridays." *racemph.com*

To find nearby restaurants and lodgings, access the AAA TourBook online at AAA.com/TourBook.

Wildflower Wows

The prairie comes alive during ***Nebraska Wildflower Week****, May 30–June 8. Here are a few spots to find beautiful blooms:*

- On the unplowed grasslands of the Sandhills and Panhandle, from North Platte to Valentine on Highway 83 and west to Chadron on Highway 20, wild phlox, narrowleaf penstemon and prairie larkspur put on a show.
- Roadside flowers bloom near Agate Fossil Beds National Monument. The Fossil Hills Trail identifies flora such as golden pea, star lily and locoweed.



- From Grand Island to Alliance on Highway 2, cowboy's delight, wild begonia (*above*) and prairie spiderwort brighten the landscape.
- Atop Scotts Bluff National Monument, lavender-leaf sundrops, silvery lupine and slender wild parsley strut their color.

Visit *arboretum.unl.edu/wildflower-week* for more.

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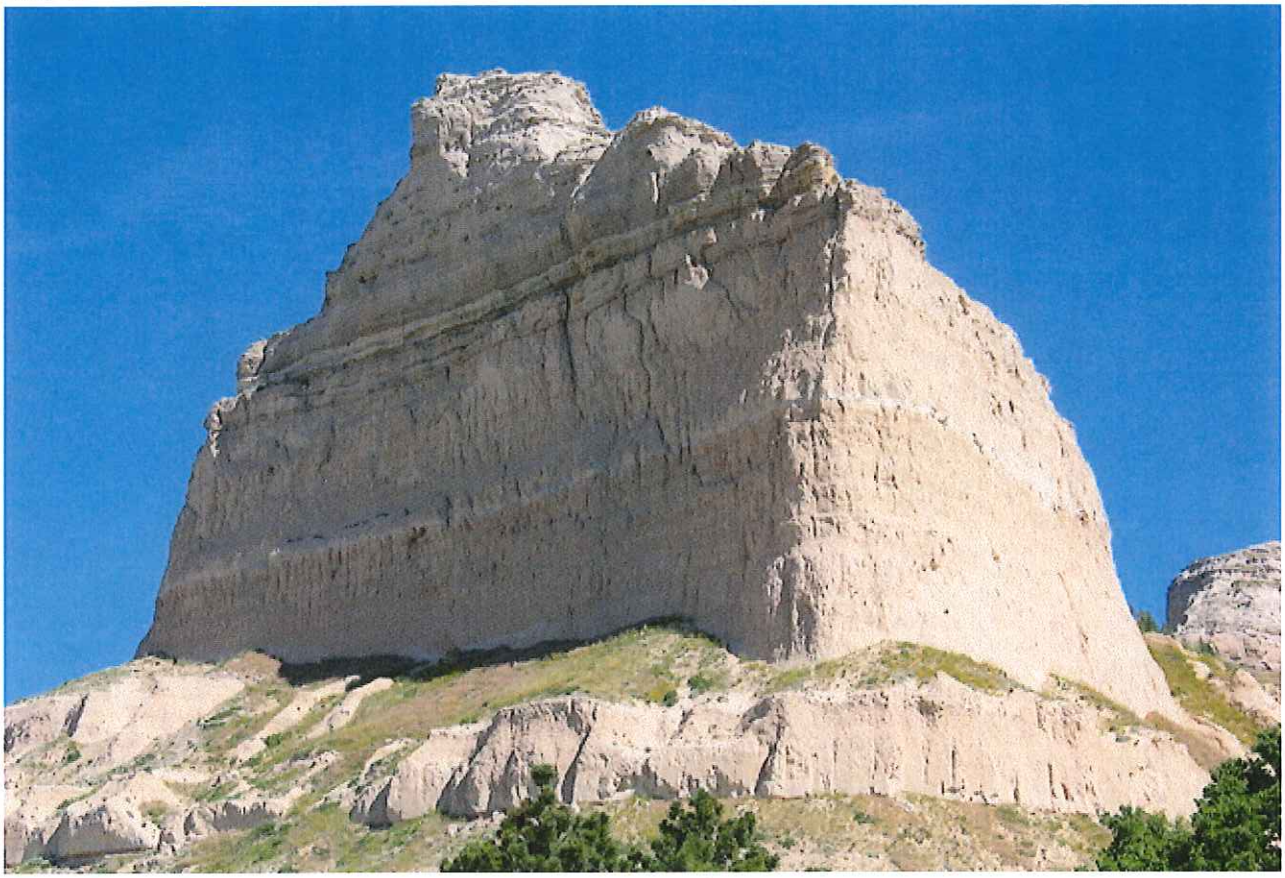

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Along the Oregon Trail: Scotts Bluff, Nebraska

Nebraska covers the first third of the Oregon Trail, which got a lot of traffic in the 19th century when Conestoga wagons full of hopeful Easterners left places like Omaha and Lincoln in pursuit of a golden dream that took them straight across the state. One big landmark they passed was Scotts Bluff, a huge rocky mound on Nebraska's western edge. Scotts Bluff – named after a fur trapper who died nearby – is a stunning reminder of how a great inland sea once deposited mountains of sediment that were then covered by a rain of volcanic ash before everything hardened into place, only to be battered by fast moving rivers and winds that sculpted the landscape. At Scotts Bluff, with many miles to go on this 2,000 mile journey, some weary travelers "saw the elephant" and turned tail. Now, a well-appointed interpretive center provides some insight into the history made at Scotts Bluff, not only by the forces of nature but by the force of belief in America's Manifest Destiny that drove so many to seek a new life west of the Rockies. You can hike around the Scotts Bluff National Monument, now managed by the National Park Service, where historical re-enactors will sometimes offer you fresh-made hardtack, prepared in the welcome shade of their wagons. Biting into these tough biscuits, similar to those carried along the trail by many of those headed west, you'll get a taste of just how hard life was for the brave men and women who dared this overland journey.

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Summer Pleasures & Treasures! Jumpstart the New Season with These Sweet Quotes, Inspiring Photos, Travel Ideas, & More

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By **LAURA MANSKE** @lauramanske



Summer—the word itself could be a stand-alone poem, so evocative is its many happy associations: soft breezes, barbecues, bonfires, beaches, baseball, sailboats, bikinis, and rubber raft floats. It is time for late nights, wishing under a sky full of stars, and chasing fireflies. Enjoy lazy-day picnics on lush green grass. Gardens abloom with color and fragrance. Ice cream scoops. Cold lemonade. Juicy watermelon slices. Squish your toes in sand. Splash in a sparkling lake. Snooze in a hammock. Sit by a dock—and simply watch the tide come in and go out again.

Summer Solstice starts June 21st. To celebrate and kick-off this kick-back season, here are delicious summer quotes and photos to inspire. Let your favorite games begin...

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Please click the pink gallery launch button (at top right or below).

What do you most appreciate about summer? Where have you enjoyed traveling? Where do you want to go? Please tell us in the comments below—we'd love to know!

Frequent globetrotter Laura Manske has visited most U.S. states, explored 70+ countries, and cruised 60+ ships. She loves to wander the world, unearthing travel joy, beauty, adventure, and humor through her camera lens and articles. Now, she's sharing pictures and memories of her favorite spots on Parade.com.

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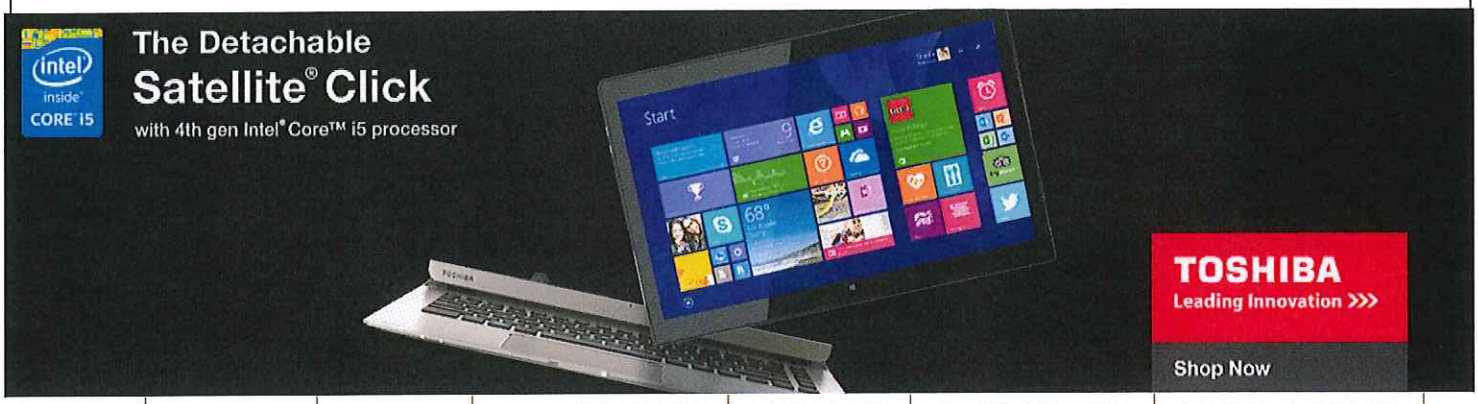

Nebraska: Then and Now

by Eleanor Hendricks McDaniel on May 31, 2014



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"Westward Ho!" was the cry heard in 19th century Nebraska. Trails leading west began in or traversed the state. But, for many, a little house on the prairie was their dream. Ironically, modern-day Nebraskans are also living their dream. Visitors to the Cornhusker State should take in both the past and the present.

The Homestead Act of 1862 dangled Nebraska in front of land-hungry men and women. The United States government gifted 160 acres of free land in 30 states to claimants who were willing to develop it. More than any other state, people claimed 45% of Nebraska.

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To travel back to that time, trek along the Homestead National Monument in Beatrice, a 200-acre prairie of restored tall grass and 19th century structures. Start at the Visitors Center to view an introductory film and exhibits of pioneer life. Then exit for a better understanding of that era in the Palmer-Epert cabin and the old Freeman School.

Not all homesteaders stopped in Nebraska, but thousands of wagon trains rolled through it. Important along their route were rustic stations where supplies could be bought and sold. The crude "road ranch" served as a Pony Express relay change, a rest stop for stages and freight wagons and passengers along the Oregon Trail.

Rock Creek Station, located in Beatrice, made a name for itself when, in June 1861, an event occurred that gave rise to a legend. The station master, James Butler Hickok, had an altercation with the owner, David McCanles. Hickok shot and killed McCanles and two other men. McCanles' son escaped, but was considered too young to testify at the trial. As it turned out, Hickok was acquitted on a self-defense plea. Afterward, he was dubbed "Wild Bill Hickok," and went on to become a gunfighter, a lawman, a gambler and an actor. But he died by the gun when he was assassinated in 1876 in a saloon in Deadwood, South Dakota.

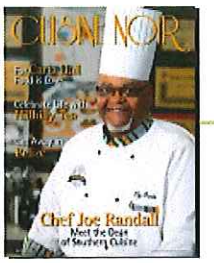
Visit Rock Creek Station Historical Park and walk the deep furrows left by the many wagon wheels. Explore the reconstructed buildings, examine the covered wagon and feel the wind as it waves the tall grass.

The past and present meet at Nebraska City's Lied Lodge and Arbor Day Farm, a unique property that sits on 260 acres of natural and cultivated land with woods, orchards, domestic crops and vineyards. The lodge offers all the same amenities as most upscale resorts: great dining, spacious guestrooms, golf, an indoor pool, a spa and sauna, an exercise room and a conference center. What makes it unique is its devotion to nature, especially trees.

The farm once belonged to J. Sterling Morton, who, because of his love of trees, founded Arbor Day in 1872. The luxurious lodge has adopted a tree theme with tree trunks being a major feature in the décor – even serving as columns in the guestrooms. Several other structures on Arbor Day Farm are dedicated to trees and nature. Woodland Pavilion displays the importance of trees with interactive exhibits, as well as an entertaining film, "Trees in the Movies." Other activities include woodland trails, tree houses and riding tours through the orchards and vineyards. Stop by the Apple House and Pie Garden Café to taste wine, apple cider, apple pie or apple slushies and sit down for a quick bite and/or purchase Arbor Day Farm products.

Learn more about J. Sterling Morton and his impressive accomplishments at his former estate located in the adjacent Arbor Lodge State Historical Park. See where his four-room cabin expanded into this elegant mansion (which is also said to be haunted by his wife, Caroline). Other than the fact that he was a zealot for planting trees, you'll also discover that his son, Joy, founded the Morton Salt Company.

Although Morton Salt comes out of Chicago, the city of Lincoln (Nebraska's state capital) once was the hub of commercial rail transportation. That area has been transformed into the Historic Haymarket Landmark District. Former warehouses are now part of a revitalized center for shops, restaurants, condos, offices, entertainment and sports. One of the new venues, The Yard, is an open-air plaza which features festivals, farmer markets, giant-screen



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movies and concerts.

You'll never forget seeing Lincoln if you get onboard the Group Therapy Bike Tour. The vehicle is powered by each passenger who's pedaling while eating, drinking and being merry. Choose from a lineup of tours that feature stops at pizza parlors, pubs, coffee shops, art galleries, the University of Nebraska or just a good ol' time.

Lincoln is a Place for all Tastes

The Museum of Speed focuses on American racecars and racecar engines. But the massive collection also includes children's cars, tiny toy cars, LP album covers with racing themes, pedal airplanes, taxicab memorabilia and automobile-shaped cookie jars.

Architecture enthusiasts will love visiting the Nebraska State Capitol, known as "The Tower of the Plains." Crowning the tower is a bronze statue of a farmer sowing grain that represents Nebraska's agriculture prosperity. The interior is ablaze with colorful mosaics and murals on the floors, walls and ceiling.

The Children's Zoo will delight families. Exhibits are at kids' eye level, and they are invited to get up close and personally touch gentle creatures.

The outdoor sculpture garden at the University of Nebraska showcases 38 pieces by renowned contemporary sculptors, such as Claus Oldenburg, Jun Kaneko, Gaston Lachaise and Jacques Lipschitz.

And for foodies, Lincoln's dining scene is exciting and diverse. Issara's offers a fusion of Thai and other Asian cuisines. Owner Malinee Kiatathikom strives to present patrons with innovative dishes of fresh seafood, beef, pork and duck. The menu is as sleek and modern as the décor. Chef George Kazas grew up eating traditional Greek food at home and in his father's restaurant. He's brought his ethnic culinary skills to his own taverna (Greek for "café"), the Parthenon. Diners nosh on a full menu of authentic Greek dishes, such as Lamb Souvlaki, Moussaka, Avgolemono, gyros and more. Billy's Restaurant celebrates the state's past. Housed in the charming 1887 Nobles-Dawes home, chef Nader Farahbod has named his establishment after a famous Nebraska politician, William Jennings Bryan. Coincidentally, Lincoln's politicos have elected to frequent Billy's regularly. Farahbod has made American staples and international favorites his own. Chow down on Moroccan Chicken, Havarti Bleu Burger or the dish called "New York" - a 12-oz. cut of Nebraska beef, accompanied by sautéed jumbo shrimp. To satisfy a sweet tooth, head to Historic Haymarket's Licorice International where you'll find licorice goodies imported from Australia, New Zealand, Europe, in addition to carrying American-made licorice.

There's much more to see and do in Southeastern Nebraska. For more information, go to VisitNebraska.gov.

Photo Gallery

View the embedded image gallery online at:
http://www.cuisinenoirmag.com/travel/nebraska-then-and-now#sigProGalleria67fc549669

Life, Food and Travel with Zahrah Farmer | Wine and Romance in Carmel and

June 2014

Lincoln venues and activities put a colorful spin on events

Lovable Lincoln

by Maria Lenhart

From textiles to race cars, venues in Lincoln, Nebraska, can add a childlike air of excitement to any meeting or event.

Whether it's a backdrop of exquisite quilts from around the world or a gleaming collection of sleek and sexy racing cars, the settings for events in Lincoln are anything but dull. Groups can mingle with Humboldt penguins, dine among art treasures in a landmark Phillip Johnson-designed atrium, explore a rare stretch of tall grass prairie or be kids in a candy store as they sample licorice varieties from around the world.

Adding to the excitement is a downtown renaissance that is bringing in new hotels, restaurants, condos, shopping options and venues such as the spectacular Pinnacle Bank Arena. A lot of these enhancements are taking place in the city's former railyard known as the West Haymarket, which also includes a spacious brick plaza for festivals and other events.

"The West Haymarket is having a great positive impact on the city, making it a place where young people graduating from the University of Nebraska want to stay and contribute their talents," says Jeff Maul, executive director of the Lincoln CVB. "As a bonus, this also makes us even more attractive for meetings."

Here is a sampling of some of the great venue and activity choices Lincoln has to offer.

PINNACLE BANK ARENA

The Pinnacle Bank Arena, the cornerstone of Lincoln's $344 million West Haymarket Redevelopment Project, opened last September, giving the city a new venue not only for concerts and sports events, but everything from general assemblies to corporate events. Its largest upcoming convention gathering will be the Women of Faith Revival Tour in October, attracting over 10,000 delegates to a two-day event.

"The Pinnacle Arena is opening up a lot of new possibilities for us with conventions, particularly in the religious market which is a very strong one for us," Maul says. "For instance, the Women of Faith had told us they were interested if we had the space—now they can meet here."

More Coverage

- Latest & Greatest - Lincoln
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The 15,147-seat arena is a flexible space where seats can be retracted to create large open floor space for trade shows and banquets. Spaces for receptions include the Capitol Terrace, which can accommodate outdoor events such as tailgating parties, and the Stadium Terrace Club Lounge, which includes screens to display sponsor information and seating areas both within the lounge and overlooking the arena floor.

LINCOLN CHILDREN'S ZOO

Far from kid's stuff, the Lincoln Children's Zoo is one of the city's most engaging areas for receptions and other events. The 10-acre zoo is home to such rare and intriguing species as Humboldt penguins, Amur leopards, tree kangaroos, pygmy marmosets, red pandas, meerkats and more.

"We do a lot of corporate events here, and adults are just as enchanted as the children are," says John Chapo, president and CEO of the zoo. "You can do lunch and a zoo tour. Or have a reception where we can arrange for experiences with the animals. We can bring out a bobcat, a penguin or a reindeer. We've even had a giant sloth to greet guests."

The zoo is also the scene of scheduled evening events for adults, including Blues and Brews, which will be held July 13. The event will feature live blues music and the chance to sample a wide variety of local craft beers.

PageBreak

SHELDON MUSEUM OF ART

A stunning landmark building designed by Philip Johnson on the University of Nebraska campus, the Sheldon Museum of Art features changing exhibitions and an important permanent collection of American art with works by Georgia O'Keeffe, Mary Cassatt, Edward Hopper, Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollock and others.

The Great Hall, a grand two-story entrance to the museum, accommodates receptions for up to 300 people and banquets for up to 150. Outdoor events can take place in the Sculpture Garden, a sunken garden on the south side of the museum with works by major artists such as Claes Oldenburg, Richard Serra and William Zorach,

For concerts, seminars and events that require audiovisual, the museum also offers the 299-seat Ethel S. Abbott Auditorium, which also can include a concert grand piano. There is also a meeting room accommodating groups of 30 or less.

INTERNATIONAL QUILT STUDY CENTER & MUSEUM

A dazzling array of colorful textiles from around the world is the highlight of this museum on the University of Nebraska campus. Three galleries showcase changing exhibitions drawn from a collection of more than 3,500 quilts, spanning cultures from colonial America to contemporary central and Southeast Asia.

Additional displays feature sewing and quilting tools, doll quilts and a discovery cart with hands-on displays of quilting techniques. A virtual gallery allows visitors to design a quilt, browse the digital collection and record their own quilt stories.
"Many people are surprised to find how widespread quilt making is in cultures around the world," says Laura Chapman, museum spokeswoman.

The LEED-certified museum accommodates receptions for 200 people in a soaring space adjacent to the galleries with circular windows overlooking a garden planted in quilt designs. A seminar room with audiovisual equipment accommodates up to 100 people for meetings and luncheons.

Road trips for motorheads

BY ROBIN SOSLOW, FOR THE EXPRESS-NEWS : JUNE 13, 2014 : Updated: June 13, 2014 9:53pm

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When Kentucky's **National Corvette Museum** collapsed into a sinkhole earlier this year, grown men cried. But there are plenty of places to delight every motorhead and rev the engines of those new to the fold. Here's a sampling, from a great daytrip to treasure troves worth the journey.



Photo By Trent Sherrill 1 of 24

This red beauty is a 1948 Tucker No. 1050, on display at Dick's Classic Garage in San Marcos.



MORE INFORMATION

http://www.dicksclassicgarage.com
http://www.ccckearney.com
http://www.automuseum.org
http://volocars.com
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Dick's Classic Garage, San Marcos

For my family, Dick's Classic Garage is hallowed ground, with its beautifully preserved vehicles and memorabilia (including toy cars!) about 40 minutes northeast of San Antonio in San Marcos. Shiny rides in a rainbow of colors from sea-foam green to chile-pepper red thrill enthusiasts and trigger a river of nostalgic stories among elder family members. Well-researched text near the vehicles gives viewers the context of the times.

Highlights include a colossal Tucker 48, named for its production year, with triple-headlights and rear engine; the visionary maker folded after stock fraud allegations, later proved to be baseless. A 1916 Hudson Boat Tail Speedster, 1924 Bentley 3.0L Red Label, 1954 Packard Caribbean Convertible and 1956 Ford V-8 Country Squire station wagon also number among the approximately 80-car collection, part of the nonprofit **Central Texas Museum of Automotive History**.

Info: 120 Stagecoach Trail, San Marcos, 512-878-2406, dicksclassicgarage.com. Monday-Saturdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sundays noon-5 p.m. Admission $10; seniors, students, military, law enforcement, teachers $8, ages 6-12 $5, 5 and younger free.

The Classic Car Collection, Kearney, Nebraska

Just off the Lincoln Highway — America's first transcontinental automobile route, running 3,400 miles from New York City to San Francisco — 200 mint-condition cars gleam in a former factory that's larger than a football field. Opened just two years, this central Nebraska wonderland has been drawing raves from car enthusiasts worldwide. Most of the beautifully restored cars were donated by Nebraskans Bernie and Janice Taulborg; others are lent by regional owners.

What a range: **Evel Knievel**'s custom Cadillac pick-up truck, which transported the daredevil's motorcycle; a snazzy 1909 Metz Roadster; a head-turning 1956 Thunderbird Convertible. Mature dads step back into schoolboy dreams as they behold a 1963 Ford Fairlane, 1965 Corvette Stingray, 1979 Trans Am Bandit Clone and, on a revolving platform, a red 1991 Ferrari Testarossa. Delights include sleek rarities with sliding pocket doors to a 1938 Rolls Royce Wraith limo built for the 17th Earl of Derby. Classy sedans, vintage gems and muscle cars are parked against terrific backdrops from a 1950s gas station to a drive-in theater.

Volunteer car buffs stand ready to share tidbits, and iPads are used to provide photos and details about the vehicles. Plan on a leisurely visit; this place works its magic on even the auto-averse.

Info: 3600 E. Hwy. 30, Kearney, Nebraska, 308-234-1964 ccckearney.com. Mondays-Saturdays 9 a.m.-7 p.m., Sundays noon-7 p.m. Admission $8; seniors $7; students $6 5 and younger free.

National Automobile Museum, Reno, Nevada

Some 200 vehicles, most from the collection of gaming entrepreneur **Bill Harrah**, appear in re-created street-scene settings. Celebrity autos include **Lana Turner**'s 1941 Chrysler Newport Dual **Cowl Phaeton** and **Elvis Presley**'s 1973 Cadillac Eldorado Custom Coupe. Then there are cars that starred in movies: the 1892 Philion Road Carriage from "The Magnificent Ambersons," the 1949 **Mercury Series** 9CM coupe driven by **James Dean** in "Rebel Without a Cause" and the 1960 Flying Caduceus Experimental Streamliner from "The World's Fastest Indian." The Streamliner was the first turbo jet car to run on the Bonneville Salt Flats. Take the free audio tour, which is offered in English and Spanish.

Info: 10 S. Lake St., Reno, Nevada, 775-333-9300, automuseum.org. Mondays-Saturdays 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Admission $10; seniors $8;, ages 6 to 18; $4; 5 and younger free.

Volo Auto Museum, Volo, Illinois

An hour north of Chicago, Volo Auto Museum presents a showroom of star cars such as TV and movie Batmobiles, the "Miami Vice" Ferrari and the DeLorean from "Back to the Future." Other eye-candy includes a guitar-shaped motorized tribute to **Chuck Berry** and a gold Cadillac on which a likeness of **Marilyn Monroe** stretches seductively across the hood. How about the fastest piano on wheels — an ode to **Jerry Lee Lewis**? Or a Ford pickup aptly named Truckasaurus?

Info: 27582 Volo Village Road, Volo, Illinois, 815-385-3644. **http://volo** cars.com. Daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission $13.95; seniors, veterans, military $11.95; ages 5-12 $8.95; military in uniform and 4 and younger free.

Lane Motor Museum, Nashville

Amphibious cars that could speed on land and water fascinated my dad and me. And we're not alone: last fall, billionaire Elon Musk bid nearly a million dollars for the Lotus Esprit submarine car driven by **James Bond** in 1977's "The Spy Who Loved Me." Imagine our delight at finding the 1964 Amphicar at Lane Motor Museum. Designed by **Hans Trippel**, its unibody steel two-door cabriolet body has electrically welded joints and is powered by an 1147cc rear-mounted engine.

Other international marvels here include the propeller-driven 1919 Leyat Helico, designed by Marcel Leyat who built an airplane in 1909. Leyat believed that since these cars needed no transmission, rear axle or clutch, they'd get better fuel economy. Leyat's exquisite engineering reflects keen insight about aerodynamics. Resembling an airplane, the streamlined body and aluminum components reduced weight and drag. It made a splash at the 1921 Paris Auto Show.

When sales of larger models dropped, BMW acquired a license from ISO, an Italian refrigerator company, to make an affordable "bubble car." The magenta-and-yellow 1958 **BMW Isetta 300** looks more fashionable than ever. Nearby, the Tatra T-603 MKII Saloon's 1964 has a handy feature: The front seat folds back to make a bed. Before museum owner **Jeff Lane** acquired it, ownership was limited to **Communist Party** officials and presidents in Eastern Europe and Cuba.

After gawking at the super-light race cars and the MG that Lane restored as a preteen, check out the children's play area and flip through "The Boy Mechanic," a 1925 publication featuring detailed drawings of hundreds of things children can build.

Info: 702 Murfreesboro Pike, Nashville, Tennessee, 615-742-7445, lanemo tormuseum.org. Thursdays-Mondays 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Tuesdays-Wednesdays. Admission $9; seniors $6; ages 6-17 $3; 5 and younger free.

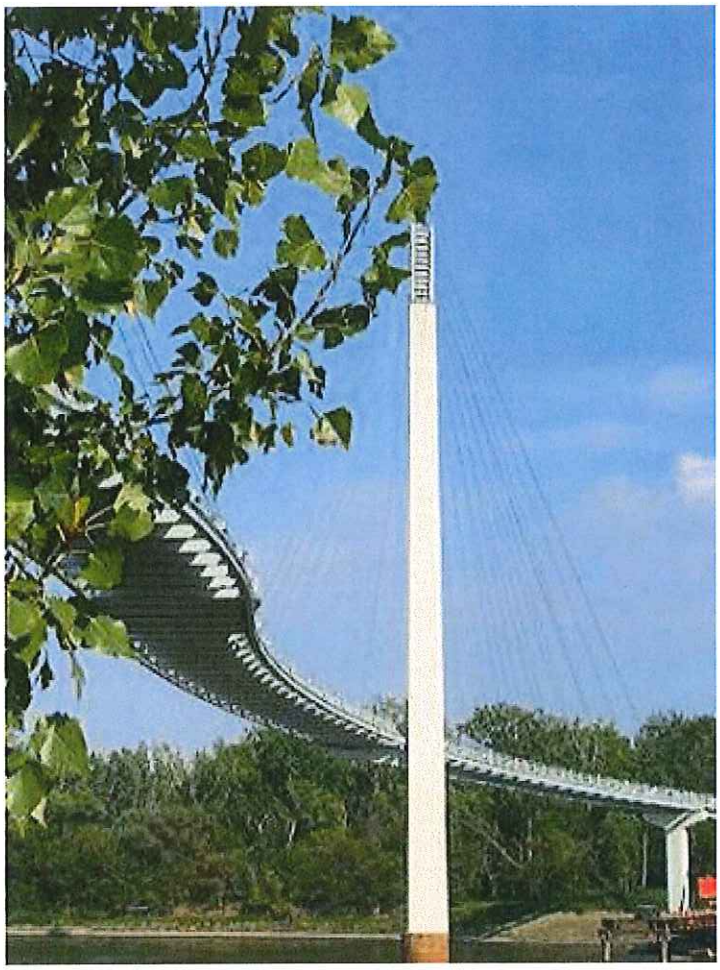
Robin Soslow *writes in Florida and Texas between trips covering art, culture, food and nature on foot and bicycle. Reach Robin at rsoslow@gmail.com*

Midwest Living

Published on *Midwest Living* (http://www.midwestliving.com)

Top 10 Things for Active Travelers to Do in Omaha

Jog across a pedestrian bridge, float down the Elkhorn River, hike or bike along trails—the Omaha area offers plenty of recreational choices for active travelers.
Writer: Amy Lynch

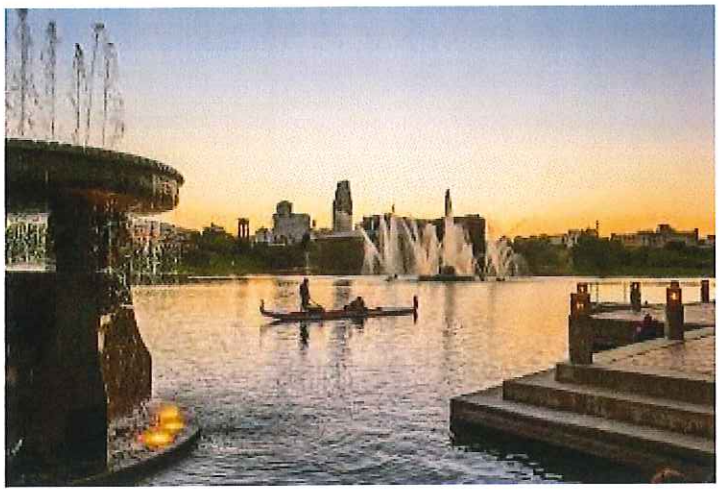


Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. Photo courtesy of Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau.

1) Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge Named for a former Nebraska senator, this curved cable bridge connects Omaha and Council Bluffs, Iowa. Walkers, runners and bikers get stunning views of the downtown skyline and the Missouri River that flows 60 feet beneath (bring your camera for a photo op). If the 3,000 feet across aren't enough for you, the bridge also links to 150 miles of trails on dry land. (402) 444-5900; visithomaha.com [1]

2) Heartland of America Park The walking path, pretty lagoon, and World War II and Heartland Memorial monuments at this city park are fine to visit any time of year, but the showstopper is the fountain, which puts on flashy water and light shows several times a day between May and October. Gondola rides around the 15-acre lake are an added draw during summer visits. (402) 444-5900; cityofomaha.org/parks [2]

3) Tank down the Elkhorn You've been tubing, kayaking and canoeing, but chances are you've never been "tanking." These round floats are 8 feet in diameter and equipped with small tables for leisurely journeys down the Elkhorn River —no paddling required. Each tank accommodates up to four people; trips last four to five hours. Available Memorial Day through Labor Day; reservations required. (402) 709-8693; tankdown.com [3]



Heartland of America Park. Photo courtesy of Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau.



Zorinsky Lake. Photo courtesy of Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau.

4) Zorinsky Lake Park This West Omaha green space has tree-lined, paved walking-biking trails, playgrounds, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and a lake begging for boating and fishing. Admission's free to this year-round park. In the summer, splash in teh aquatic center's spray features, water slide and large public pool. (402) 444-5900; cityofomaha.org/parks [4]

5) Blue Planet Natural Grill This sleek cafe in a strip mall has made a name for itself by serving delicious, healthy, organic food. The menu includes standard vegetarian fare such as tofu, granola and salads, but there's also a selection of burgers, pasta bowls and whole-wheat pizzas. We like the Hawaiian ahi tuna wrap—grilled-to-order with pineapple, avocado and carrot. (402) 218-4555; blueplanetnaturalgrill.com [5]

6) Schramm Park State Recreation Area Come to enjoy the Platte River views and 3-mile nature trail at this day-use park 30 miles southwest of downtown. The Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium pays tribute to the site's life as an 1880s fish hatchery with short films, a terrarium, and 12 viewing tanks stocked with native and introduced species of fish. (402) 332-3901; outdoornebraska.ne.gov/parks [6]

7) Tomato Tomato This year-round indoor farmers market shows off Omaha's best seasonal produce, along with wine, honey, herbs, cheese, meats and baked goods. Stock up on fresh, healthy ingredients for a picnic at a local park, or hit the on-site deli (open 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.) for soups, salads and sandwiches. (402) 933-0893; tomatotomato.org [7]

8) Eugene T. Mahoney State Park Just southwest of Omaha in Ashland, these 690 acres of fun outdoor recreation are open all year. In summer, swim, golf, play tennis, fish, hike or boat. In winter, check out the cross-country skiing trails and toboggan runs, or whirl around the ice skating rink. Camping facilities and a motel-style lodge provide overnight options. (402) 944-2523; outdoornebraska.gov/parks/ [8]

9) Blatt Beer and Table After a full day of activity, this congenial sports bar is a great spot to kick back with some tasty eats and an icy craft beer. The prime downtown location also makes it ideal for a pregame meal if you're heading to nearby TD Ameritrade Park for some baseball. The food is mostly pub grub, with a few healthful options such as char-grilled chicken. (402) 718-8822; blattbeer.com [9]

10) Holiday Inn Downtown Omaha An enviable location near TD Ameritrade Ballpark and other downtown attractions makes the Holiday Inn a great spot for travelers. A complimentary shuttle zips guests to the Old Market Entertainment District. The 10,000-square-foot water park promises fun with a three-story body slide, whirlpool and activity pool. From $89. (402) 341-0124; ihg.com/holidayinn/hotels/us/en/omaha/ [10]

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Midwest Living

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Top 10 Things to Do on a Budget in Omaha

With cheap eats, a free art museum, spacious parks and vibrant historical areas, Omaha makes a fun and affordable Midwest weekend getaway.
Writer: Amy Lynch



Joslyn Art Museum. Photo courtesy of the Omaha Convention & Visitors Bureau.

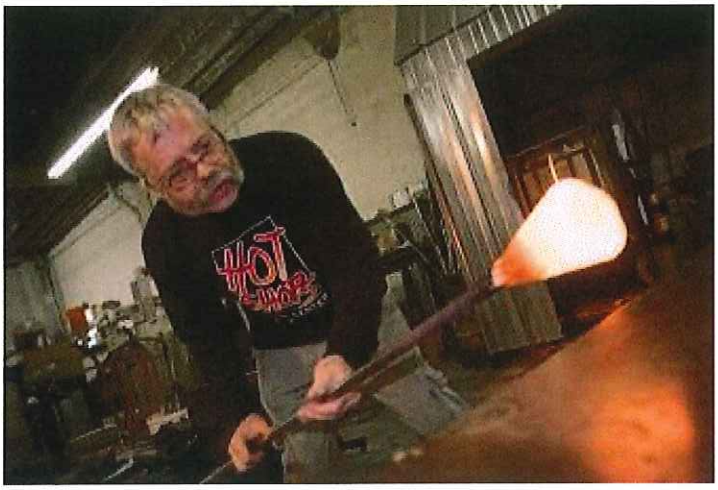


Mormon Trail Center. Photo courtesy of the Omaha Convention & Visitors Bureau.

1) The Old Market Set aside a few hours to check out this arts and entertainment destination, with cobblestone streets and dozens of vibrant shops, studios and restaurants. If you time your trip for the first Friday of the month, wander in and out of neighborhood art galleries and catch a free ride on Ollie the Trolley. Street musicians, sidewalk artists and horse-drawn carriage rides round out the scene. oldmarket.com [1]

2) Joslyn Art Museum Nebraska's premiere art museum wows with gorgeous Art Deco architecture and an exterior of 38 kinds of marble from around the world. Inside, the 11,000-piece permanent collection includes Greek pottery, Impressionist master works, 20th-century paintings and modern art. Scavenger hunt-style activities and tips fill backpacks for kid fun, and the outdoor sculpture gardens are a don't-miss. Best of all, general admission is free. (402) 342-3300; joslyn.org [2]

3) Lewis and Clark Landing and Riverfront Park This free 23-acre riverfront park marks the landing site of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the early 1800s. Check out interpretive exhibits honoring the famous explorers; attend outdoor concerts and festivals; or access the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, the longest pedestrian bridge between two states. (402) 444-4653; cityofomaha.org/parks [3]



Hot Shops Art Center. Photo courtesy of the Omaha Convention & Visitors Bureau.



The Old Market. Photo courtesy of the Omaha Convention & Visitors Bureau.

4) Hot Shops Art Center Once a mattress factory, the brick building that anchors the NoDo (North Downtown) district is now home to more than 50 studios, showrooms and galleries. The center has several "hot shops" with high-temp furnaces, ovens, kilns and a foundry that artists use to turn out ceramics, glass and ironwork. Visitors can watch blacksmithing, glassblowing, bronze casting and other creative pursuits, then find—or make—one-of-a-kind souvenirs to take home. (402) 342-6452; hotshopsartcenter.com [4]

5) Petrow's Restaurant For more than 50 years, this Omaha diner has been the place to go for old-fashioned ice cream sodas, shakes and malts. You may not need to eat for the rest of the day after a breakfast of chicken-fried steak and eggs, fluffy waffles or three-egg omelets. For lunch and dinner, the hot beef sandwich and the onion rings get rave reviews. (402) 551-0552; petrows.com [5]

7) St. Cecilia Cathedral Gawk at its architecture, stained-glass windows and the stunning Martin Pasi Opus 14 pipe organ during guided tours of this Spanish Renaissance-style cathedral. Free, though donations are appreciated. Built in 1905 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, St. Cecilia hosts a glorious flower festival each January that fills the church with fresh blooms and fragrance. (402) 551-2313.

8) Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters Learn about the difficulties Mormons encountered during their westward migration in the mid-1800s. Exhibits include a full-size log cabin, a covered wagon, artifacts and a handcart you can try to pull. (402) 453-9372; lds.org/locations/mormon-trail-center-at-historic-winter-quarters [6]

9) Pana 88 This funky Pan-Asian eatery isn't exactly fast food, although the cafeteria-style service is quick, and virtually nothing on the menu is more than $10. Choose from a range of rice dishes, noodle creations, soups and salads with bold Korean, Chinese, Japanese and Thai flavors. (402) 934-7262; pana88.com [7]

10) Regency Lodge This pseudo rustic hotel offers clean, comfortable rooms and suites (some with woodsy-theme decor) on the western edge of Omaha close to shopping and major attractions. Rates include a hot breakfast buffet, free Wi-Fi, in-room fridges and microwaves, and access to an indoor pool and sauna. From $79. (402) 397-8000; regencylodge.com [8]

Midwest Living

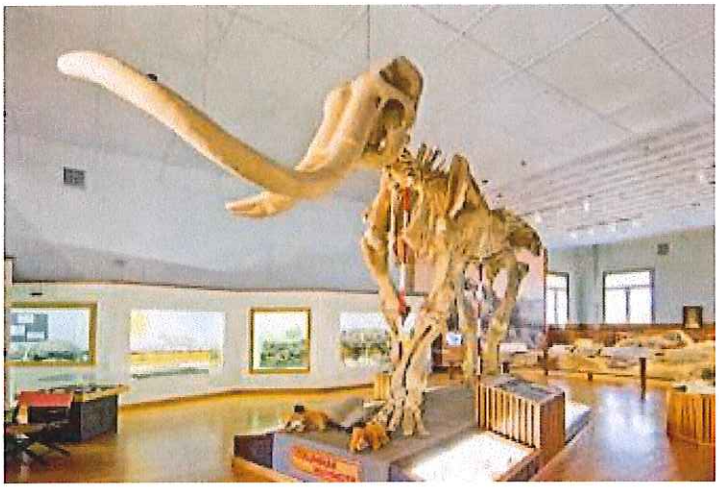
Published on *Midwest Living* (http://www.midwestliving.com)

Two-Day Getaway in Nebraska's Panhandle

Stand where mammoths once stood, and follow the path of pioneers around Fort Robinson State Park.



Pine Ridge in Fort Robinson State Park. Photo courtesy of Nebraska Tourism



Trailside Museum of Natural History. Photo courtesy of Nebraska Tourism

Day 1

West of Crawford, **Fort Robinson State Park** provides a wide range of family activities on more than 22,000 acres. Get an overview of the site's history—from the time of Crazy Horse to World War II—on horse-drawn wagon tours.

The **Trailside Museum of Natural History** showcases a pair of mammoth skeletons found with their tusks eternally locked in battle.

Fort Robinson Restaurant serves bison burgers.

Narrated **jeep rides** explore the buttes of **Pine Ridge** before a hike to **Cheyenne Buttes**, the site of a massacre of Cheyenne.

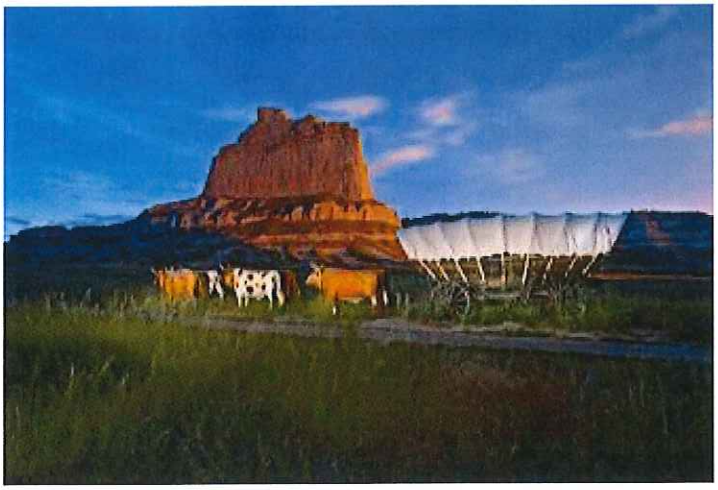
Kids love the **Chuckwagon Buffalo Stew Cookout** with campfire sing-alongs.

The **Post Playhouse** puts on live musicals, and weekly summertime rodeos show off the locals' skills.

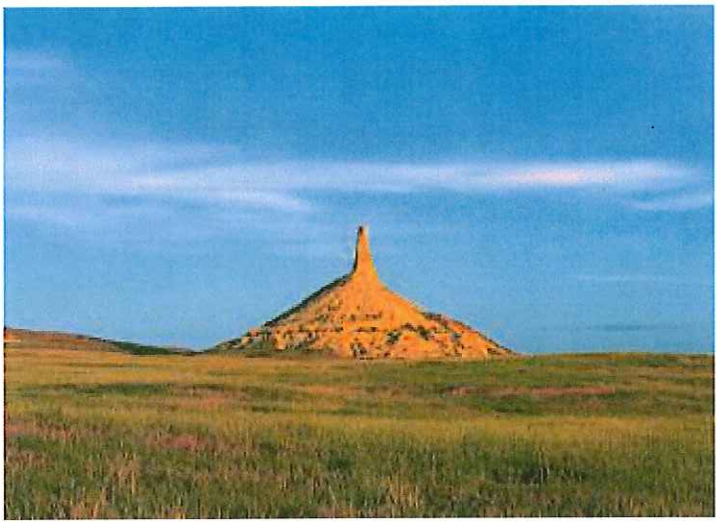
The fort's old cavalry barracks have been converted into motel-style rooms, and officers' quarters now pull duty as rental cabins (from $50). Campers can choose from tent or RV sites (from $20).

Day 2

At **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument** (about an hour southwest of



Scotts Bluff National Monument. Photo courtesy of Nebraska Tourism



Chimney Rock National Historic Site. Photo courtesy of Nebraska Tourism



Lake McConaughy. Photo courtesy of Nebraska Tourism

travelers.

the fort), explore exhibits of past and present wildlife and learn about the area's Native American history.

Chadron State Park and the **Nebraska National Forest** appear on the horizon near Chadron like an expatriate mountain scene.

On the site of an 1837 trading post, the **Museum of the Fur Trade's** outstanding collection of artifacts makes it worth a stop.

Carhenge in Alliance rises as a ghostly assemblage of gray steel, its 38 automobiles mimicking the rocks of Stonehenge.

Nestled in a badlands landscape, the **Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Research and Visitor Center** lets guests get an up-close view of a massive spread of bison fossils in the spot where they fell.

The campy, quirky **Drifter Cookshack at High Plains Homestead** near Crawford serves cowboy-style meals. Try the BBQ pork ribs with cowboy beans and a baked potato; it comes with a moist towel for wiping up barbecue-sauced fingers.

More information: (308) 665-2900; outdoornebraska.ne.gov/parks [1]

Day trip

Drive or take a free shuttle to the top of **Scotts Bluff National Monument**, a landmark to prairie-weary wagon trains.

Grab a simple, tasty lunch at **Emporium Coffeehouse and Cafe** in Scottsbluff (90 minutes south of Fort Robinson).

Twenty-three miles down State-92, Nebraska's most famous physical feature fills the sky at **Chimney Rock National Historic Site**, where visitors can read diary entries made by Oregon trail

More information: (800) 788-9475; visitscottsbluff.com [2]

Bring the kids

Lake McConaughy Pack your swimsuit for a trip to Nebraska's largest reservoir, located near Ogallala. Plenty of campgrounds, wildlife areas and an estimated 100 miles of beach make this a no-brainer for families. (800) 658-4390; lakemcconaughy.com [3]

In town, Bittersweet Bakery sells huge chocolate chip cookies, rich brownies and chocolate mousse tortes. (308) 284-6800; bittersweetbakeryandcakery.com [4]

Tags: Nebraska [5]
Two-day Itineraries [6]

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Midwest Living

Published on *Midwest Living* (http://www.midwestliving.com)

Two-Day Getaway to Lincoln

Husker football, college museums and a booming Haymarket district entertain visitors in the state capital.



Nebraska State Capitol

Day 1

The butter croissant, cream puff and cranberry lemon zest scone star at **Le Quartier**.

Most of the classes on beading, wire wrapping and pencil drawing at **Lux Center for the Arts** have a family focus.

In downtown's **Haymarket District**, dozens of restaurants scatter among boutiques, bookstores and coffeehouses.

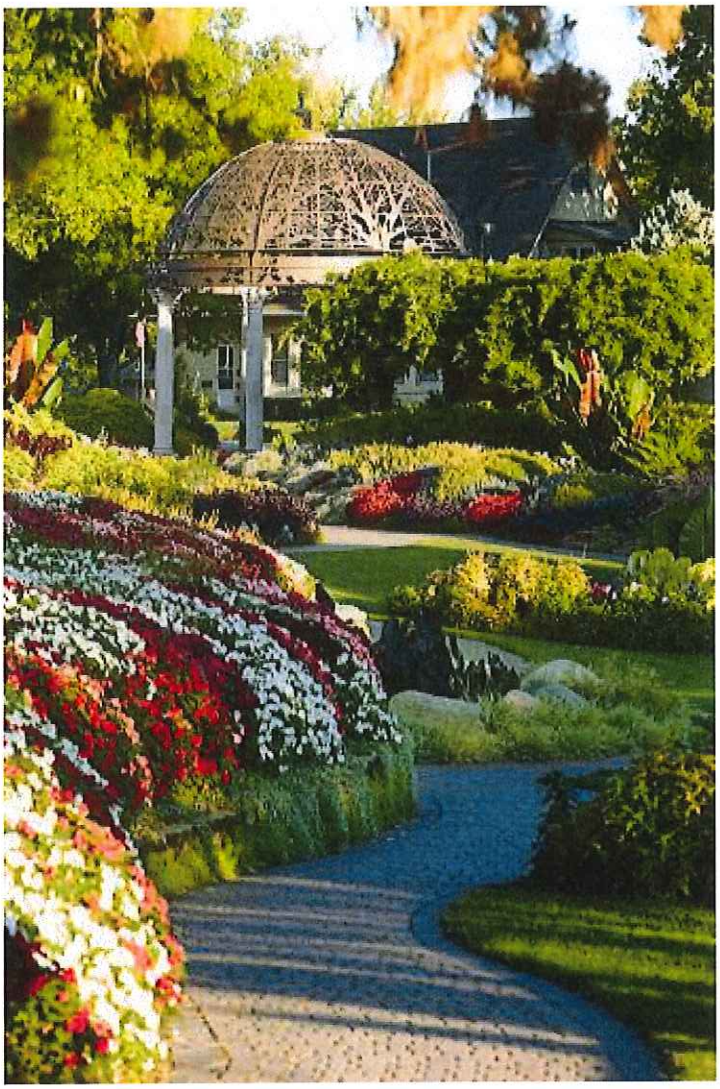
At **Bread and Cup**, one of the city's leading chefs creates dishes such as a curried apple tuna salad, which is best followed by chocolate-banana bread pudding and coffee from a French press.

Guided tours of the **state capitol** highlight its distinctive tower design and murals celebrating Nebraska heroes.

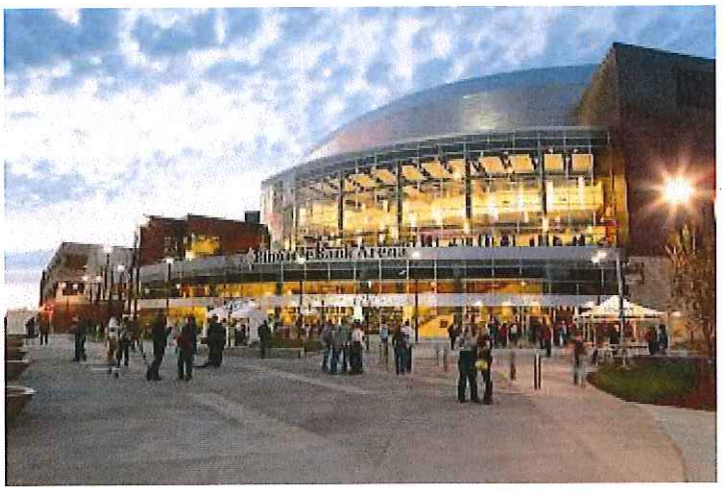
Parthenon Greek Grill and Taverna urges guests to take the time to appreciate the braised lamb shank or Mediterranean shrimp pasta; if you can't decide what to order, try a combination platter.

For modern amenities near the arena and Haymarket, you won't go wrong staying at either the **Courtyard by Marriott** (from $129) or **the Hilton Garden Inn** (from $149).

Day 2



Sunken Gardens of Lincoln



Pinnacle Bank Arena

Crepes and coffee roasted in-house start the day at **Cultiva Coffee** near the capitol.

Annuals bloom in the themed display at the **Sunken Gardens of Lincoln**; past designs have included peacocks, solar flares and Van Gogh's *The Starry Night.*

An anchor in the Haymarket District, **Lazlo's Brewery and Grill** serves excellent beer-cheese soup as well as year-round and seasonal craft beers from its own **Empyrean Brewing Co.**

Just down the block, free samples of licorice somewhat ease the difficult decision of which flavor to buy at **Licorice International**, where candy is serious business.

Each year, the **Sheldon Museum of Art** (on the University of Nebraska campus) holds about 20 exhibitions focusing on American art.

Visitors fly through black holes and swim with whales in a 360-degree virtual environment in the Fulldome Experience at the university's **Mueller Planetarium**.

If you're hungry for an exotic meal, try curried specialities at Lincoln landmark **The Oven** or Thai creations at **The Blue Orchid**.

More information: (800) 423-8212; lincoln.org [1]

One big party

Pinnacle Bank Arena opened last year, transforming the skyline and providing a new home for Cornhusker basketball. Throughout the year, the arena hosts big-hitters like Bon Jovi, Elton John and the Eagles. Just outside, a new entertainment district has sprung to life. (402) 904-4444; pinnaclebankarena.com [2]

Icon



Memorial Stadium, home of Husker football



Lincoln Children's Zoo. Photo courtesy of Nebraska Tourism

Husker football Tickets to football games at Memorial Stadium are tough to get (sold out since 1962). But visitors can see where the magic happens during a self-guided tour (on nongame days) that includes a display of the Huskers' three Heisman trophies and an enormous weight room. (402) 472-3333; huskers.com [3]

Inside scoop

Lincoln Secret Suppers A new dining concept reflects Lincoln's increasingly adventurous culinary options. Guests buy tickets to these suppers without knowing where, with whom or what they'll eat. But they can be sure it'll be a high-end meal from a local chef and mixologist team. Part of the fun is meeting new people around the 48-foot-long table. (402) 937-1116; lincolnsecretsupper.com [4]

By the numbers

Eight lemurs, four river otters and many more creatures draw visitors to the Lincoln Children's Zoo. After seeing the animals, walk through the botanical gardens and take a ride aboard the iconic Iron Horse, the original train used in building the zoo 50 years ago. (402) 475-6741; lincolnzoo.org [5]

Tags: Nebraska [6]
Lincoln [7]
Two-day Itineraries [8]

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[1] http://lincoln.org
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Midwest Living

Published on *Midwest Living* (http://www.midwestliving.com)

Omaha Trip Guide

Nebraska's biggest city touts storied steaks, great music and impressive museums.



Durham Museum.

What to do

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts Exhibition artists showcase work in an Old Market warehouse. Free. (402) 341-7130; bemiscenter.org [1]

Durham Museum A gorgeous train station houses the impressive Durham Museum as well as a soda fountain. (402) 444-5071; durhammuseum.org [2]

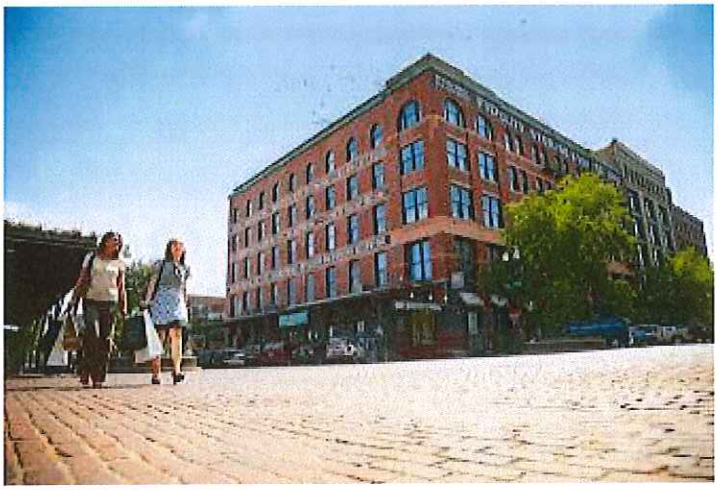
El Museo Latino Engaging art exhibits draw people to the 24th Street Latino district, where restaurants serve authentic Mexican dishes. (402) 731-1137; elmuseolatino.org [3]

Joslyn Art Museum One of the nation's finest examples of Art Deco architecture houses a huge collection, including a great Western art display. (402) 342-3300; joslyn.org [4]

Lauritzen Gardens Two miles of paths wind through formal gardens, a garden with model railroads and an arboretum along the Missouri River Valley south of downtown. (402) 346-4002; lauritzengardens.org [5]

Old Market The 12-square-block revived warehouse district is a model for successful urban renewal. Covered sidewalks add historical charm to shops, galleries, restaurants and a popular brewpub. oldmarket.com [6]

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium Look for the spectacular



Old Market

Desert Dome along Interstate-80. Other highlights include more than 1,200 species, an aquarium, an Imax theater and the Skyfari, an open-air chairlift that takes you from one end of the zoo to the other. (402) 733-8401; omahazoo.com [7]

TD Ameritrade Park Omaha The NCAA Men's College World Series in June draws fans to this new open-air stadium along the Missouri River. Game tickets go fast; plan ahead. (402) 554-4404; cwsomaha.com [8]



Hiro 88

Where to eat

Dario's Brasserie Think *Cheers* with a French accent. The friendly waitstaff serves Trappist monk ales, quiches, crepes and mussels. (402) 933-0799; dariosbrasserie.com [9]

The Flatiron Cafe An upscale downtown favorite with innovative American cuisine, such as morel-crusted beef tenderloin. (402) 344-3040; theflatironcafe.com [10]

Gorat's Steakhouse Hometown billionaire Warren Buffett favors this classic spot that serves tender steaks and seafood in an old-school, family-friendly setting. (402) 551-3733; goratsomaha.com [11]

Grey Plume An ever-evolving organic menu celebrates ingredients from Nebraska farms, such as a bison burger oozing with juicy flavor. Recycled wood floors and tabletops add warmth to the contemporary setting. (402) 763-4447; thegreyplume.com [12]

HIRO 88 Patrons come to this hip Old Market restaurant for the sushi, but the Japanese and Chinese entrees are delicious as well. Try the mild peanut butter chicken. (402) 933-5168; hiro88.com [13]



Hotel Deco XV.

Johnny's Cafe The Kawa family ages its own beef. Omaha's iconic steak house has been located in South Omaha since 1922. (402) 731-4774; johnnyscafe.com [14]

McFoster's Natural Kind Cafe A quirky spot with a juice bar whips up tasty vegan and vegetarian fare, along with Earth-friendly meat entrees. Hummus, loaded salads and free-range chicken dishes delight. (402) 345-7477; mcfosters.com [15]

M's Pub Dishes such as an Armenian lavosh bread with Thai chicken keep the largely American menu interesting at this Old Market spot. (402) 342-2550; mspubomaha.com [16]

Taste Mod decor, an extensive wine list and a small-plate menu warrant a special trip to this hidden gem. (402) 884-3175; tastedining.com [17]

Zio's Pizzeria There are three around town, but the Zio's Old Market location is convenient for downtown visitors. Mix and match 40 toppings to create a slice of pizza perfection. (402) 344-2222; ziospizzeria.com [18]

Where to stay

Element Omaha Midtown Crossing Opened in November 2010, the Westin hotel is sleek, family-friendly, affordable, and not far from the zoo and shopping. From $109. (402) 614-8080; elementomaha.com [19]

Hotel Deco XV The 89 rooms in this restored 1930s building blend Art Deco elements with sleek neoclassical touches in a silver, black and white palette. Located across from the Orpheum Theater, Hotel Deco XV has a retro-hip vibe. From $200. (866) 475-3326; hoteldecoomaha.com [20]

Magnolia Near the Old Market, the historical hotel's lobby bar offers free milk and cookies at night. From $119. (888) 915-1110; magnoliahotelomaha.com [21]

Regency Lodge A woodsy decorating theme, complete with great lobby fireplace, makes a nice alternative to the chains. Breakfast included. From $89. (402) 397-8000; regencylodge.com [22]

More information: Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau (866) 937-6624; visitomaha.com [23]

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Midwest Living

Published on *Midwest Living* (http://www.midwestliving.com)

Overnight Getaway in Nebraska City

Family activities and fall color star in the hometown of Arbor Day founder J. Sterling Morton (population: 7,200). The best time to visit is during the fall apple harvest and specifically, if you don't mind crowds, during the annual Applejack Festival in September.



Mansion at Arbor Lodge State Historical Park. Photo by Tina King.



Lied Lodge and Conference Center. Photo by Jay Wilde.

It's (mostly) all about the trees in Nebraska City, also known as the Home of Arbor Day. Visitors who appreciate the simple beauty of historic bur oaks and apple orchards will find a peaceful retreat among the Arbor Day Foundation's acreage and attractions. The city also features a small but vibrant downtown with antiques stores and boutiques.

Day One

At **Arbor Day Farm,** historic barns, a cafe, a market and the family-friendly Tree Adventure (with a soaring tree house) offer plenty to explore. In the fall, visitors can pick and buy bags of apples and enjoy a 20-acre corn maze. In any season, be sure to get a slice of the deep-dish apple pie with your lunch at **Pie Garden Cafe**.

For the afternoon, head to nearby **Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum** for a tour of the 52-room mansion that once belonged to Arbor Day founder J. Sterling Morton. The house had just four rooms when it was built in 1855, but it was expanded and later finished by Morton's son Joy, founder of the Morton Salt Company. The interior features Victorian- and Empire-style furnishings and a Tiffany glass skylight. The 72-acre estate includes a formal rose garden. Living-history demonstrations are held in September and October.

Spend the night at **Lied Lodge and**



Tree Adventure. Photo by Jay Wilde.

Conference Center. The Frank Lloyd Wright-style hotel, with a stunning lobby, offers an on-site arboretum and Olympic-size swimming pool. Known for its buffets, the **Timber Dining Room** is the town's best restaurant; have dinner there.

Day Two

Visit **Kimmel Orchard and Vineyard,** best known for apple picking and cider doughnuts. The store includes a wine bar for tasting the private label selections and an array of ciders, pies, salsas and other food products.

You'll find a great chicken salad sandwich for lunch at **The Pantry of Chris' Cuisine.** This small diner-style restaurant is in the middle of the Nebraska City's Central Avenue, a perfect location to fuel up for antique and boutique shopping at local stores, such as **The Keeping Room's** two floors of home decor and gift items.

If you're traveling with kids, make a short stop at the **Nebraska City Museum of Firefighting and Education Center,** where children can play dress up on a 1966 American LaFrance engine.

To round out your day, head to the tiny village of Brownville (population: 145) about 30 miles southeast of Nebraska City, where you can visit **Whiskey Run Creek Vineyard and Winery** or learn about Missouri River history on a dinner cruise aboard the ***Spirit of Brownville*** **Cruise Boat** (summer weekends only).

For more information: Nebraska City Tourism and Commerce (800) 514-9113; nebraskacity.com [1]

Tags: Nebraska City [2]
Nebraska [3]
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Midwest Living

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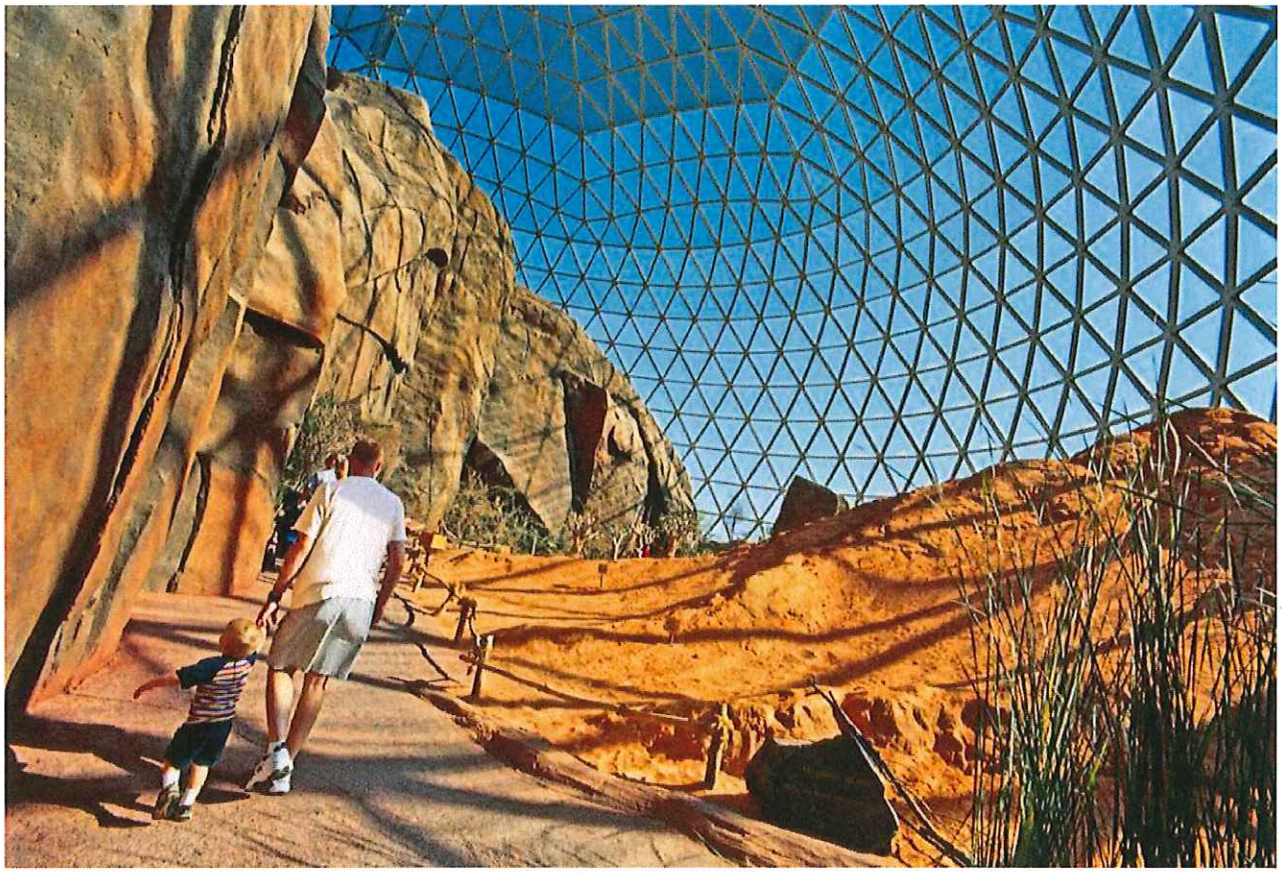
Top 10 Things to Do with Kids in Omaha

By Amy Lynch | 5/7/2014

1) Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium It's easy to see why this zoo consistently receives high marks. First, it's huge. Second, its design lets you commune with gorillas, sharks, snakes, butterflies and all sorts of other creatures. It's also home to the largest indoor desert habitat in the world, capped off with a stunning three-story dome. You don't have to stay away in the winter either: 7 acres of indoor exhibits, the newly renovated Scott Aquarium and an Imax theater are good reasons to visit year-round. (402) 733-8400; omahazoo.com [1]



2) Omaha Children's Museum Beyond the bright, candy-color entrance, exhibits and pretend-play areas focus mainly on art and science, but as one of the largest children's museums in the Midwest, it also includes a pint-size fire station, grocery store and auto center. The main attraction is feeding balls into the Super Gravitron Machine, but the bubble station and the interactive Fantastic Future Me display get plenty of action as well. (402) 342-6164; ocm.org [2]

3) Hollywood Candy Just browsing this Old Market retro candy store is enough to send you into sugar shock. The vibe is Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory meets mercantile. Old-

fashioned favorites you probably haven't seen since childhood stock aisles, along with homemade chocolates and sweet-treat memorabilia. Check out the extensive Pez collection. (402) 346-9746; hollywoodcandy.com [3]

4) Boys Town The Rev. Edward Joseph Flanagan established an Omaha home for wayward boys in 1917 to encourage and guide them to lead productive lives. Through the 1920s and 1930s, his project grew into a village, encompassing a school, administration buildings and even its own government. The Boys Town campus has since been declared a National Historic Landmark District; today, the Hall of History, a visitors center and the Father Flanagan House offer an inspiring look at the difference one person can make in the lives of so many. (Guests of a certain age may remember the Spencer Tracy movie by the same name.) (402) 498-1300; boystown.org [4]



5) Spaghetti Works An Omaha dining destination for more than 30 years, this family-friendly spot cooks up all-you-can-eat pastas and familiar Italian fare in a nostalgic Old Market warehouse atmosphere. The salad bar is in the back of an old Model-T truck, quite possibly enticing the kids to eat some veggies. To wash it down, Italian sodas come in 20 different flavors. When the weather's nice, grab a seat on the shady terrace that was once a loading dock. (402) 422-0770; omaha.spagworks.com [5]

6) Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park and Wildlife Safari Here's where the wild things are; at least, those of the North American variety. The 4-mile drive provides peeks at elk, deer, wolves, bears and bison (try to go in the morning when the animals are most active). A hiking trail gives visitors a chance to stretch their legs and observe other animals. Fun fact:

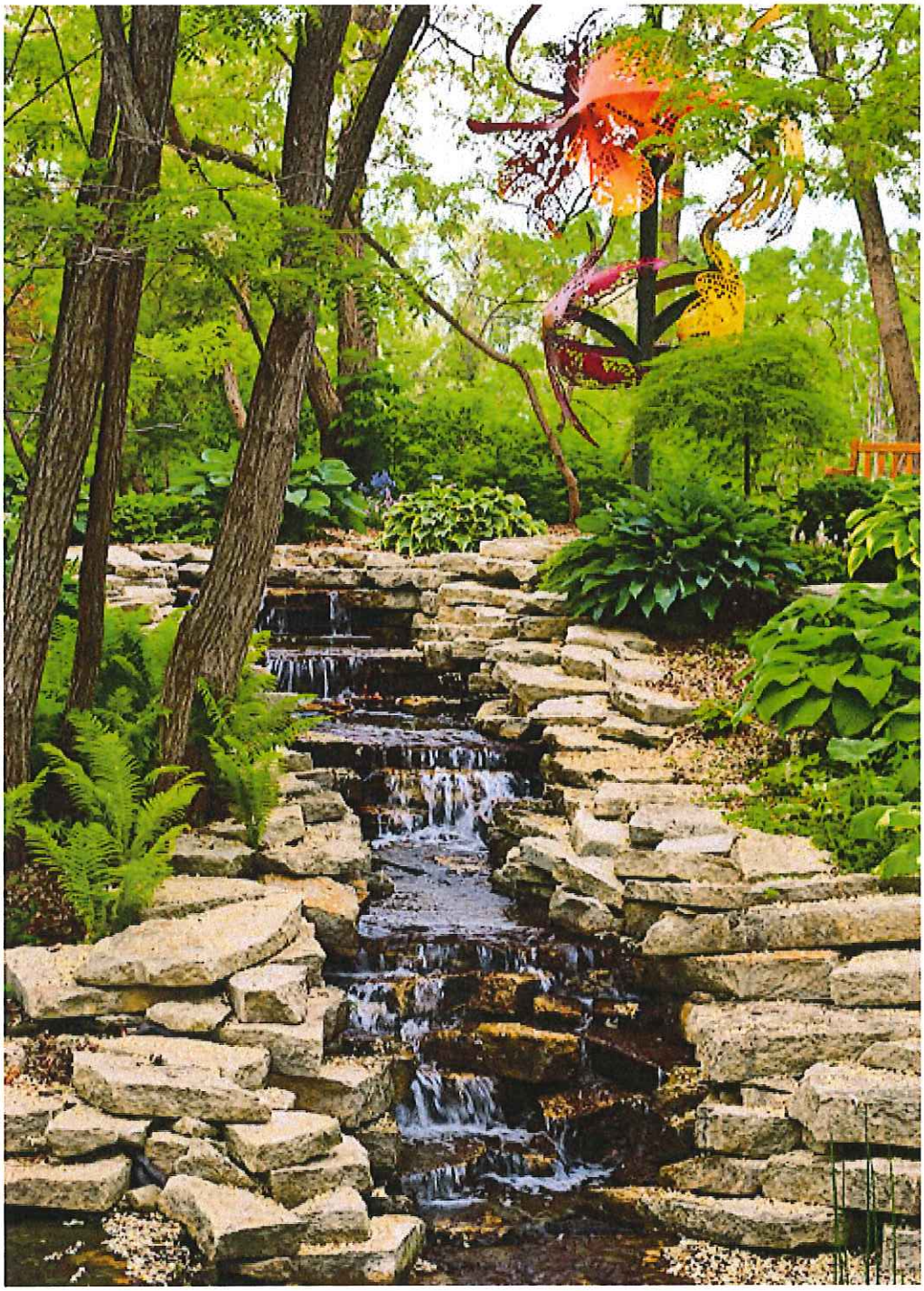
The new Crane Meadows viewing tower is the former Rosenblatt Media Tower used during the College World Series and Omaha Storm Chasers baseball games. Open seasonally. (402) 944-9453; wildlifesafaripark.com [6]

7) Durham Museum Get on board for railroad fun at this hands-on museum in Omaha's Art Deco Union Station. Soaring 65-foot ceilings enclose restored train cars you can climb in and out of, life-size passenger sculptures and other exhibits. Stop by the straight-out-of-the-1930s soda fountain for an old-fashioned shake, malt or phosphate. (402) 444-5071; durhammuseum.org [7]



8) Eugene T. Mahoney State Park With an aquatic center, miniature golf, paddle boats, toboggan runs, hiking trails, an ice rink and other outdoor recreation, Nebraska's premiere park offers fresh-air fun to keep the whole family busy no matter what time of year you visit. If you want to spend the night, or a few days, rent a cabin or a room in the rustic motel-style lodge. (402) 944-2523; outdoornebraska.gov [8]

9) Lauritzen Gardens The formal English, Japanese and rose gardens appeal to grown-up green thumbs; a children's garden, hands-on activities and intricate model railroad garden (open May through October) hold kids' interest. You might even see wild turkeys strutting through the arboretum and bird sanctuary on these 100 acres in the middle of Omaha. (402) 346-4002; lauritzengardens.org [9]



10) Ramada Plaza Omaha Hotel and Convention Center This newly renovated Ramada caters to families with roomy suites and the connected 60,000-square-foot CoCo Key water park, with its three 40-foot waterslides, an adventure river and a giant indoor/outdoor Jacuzzi. The location is convenient to the Henry Doorly Zoo and other attractions. (402) 393-3950; ramadaplazaomaha.com [10]

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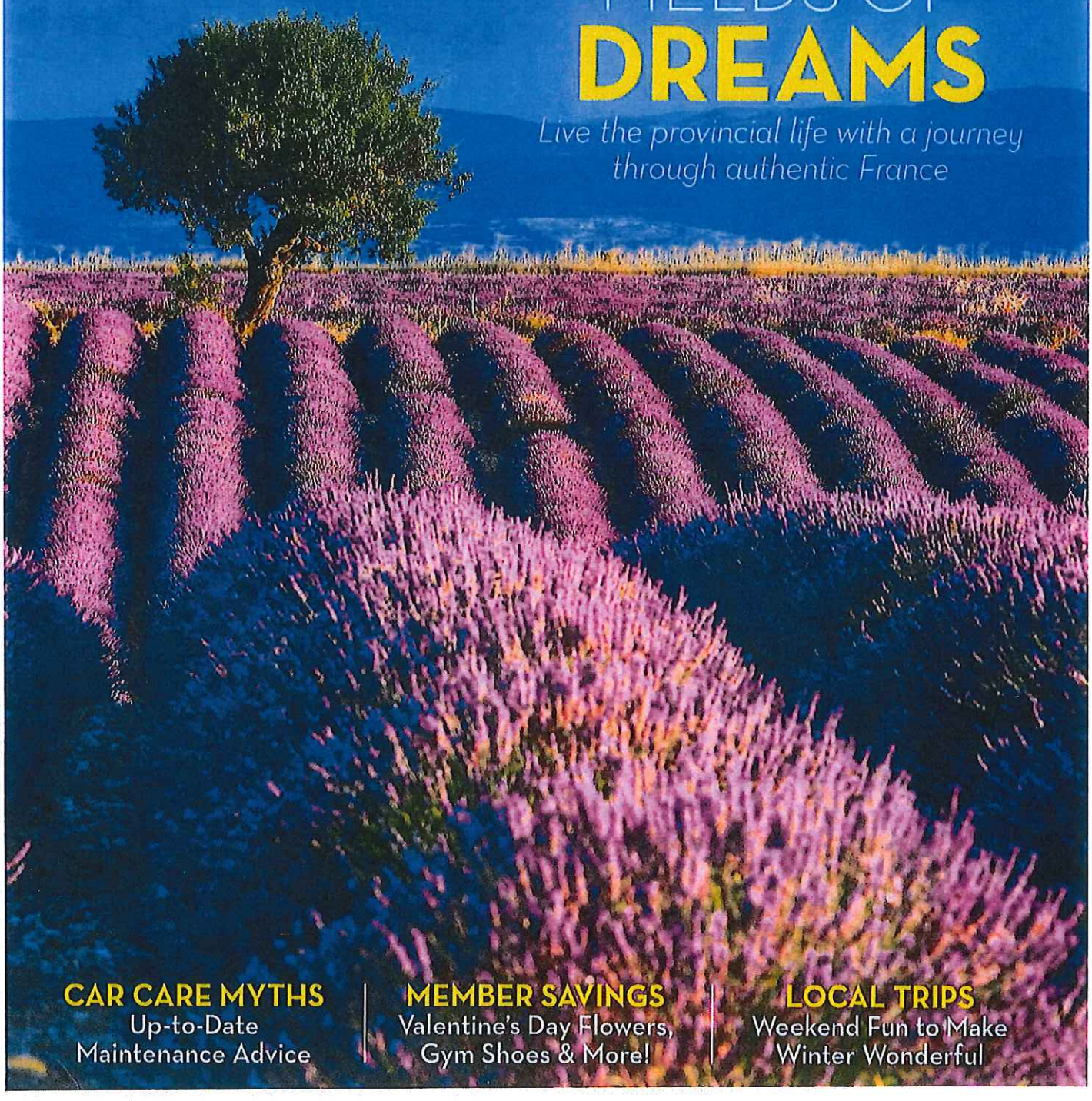
AAA LIVING

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014

FIELDS OF DREAMS

Live the provincial life with a journey through authentic France



CAR CARE MYTHS
Up-to-Date Maintenance Advice

MEMBER SAVINGS
Valentine's Day Flowers, Gym Shoes & More!

LOCAL TRIPS
Weekend Fun to Make Winter Wonderful

Winter Arts

Pack your calendar with events to make the snowy season sparkle.

Omaha:
Polar Obsession
Photographer and biologist Paul Nicklen takes you on a visual journey through Earth's polar regions during the first local event in the new National Geographic Live speaker series, Feb. 18 at the Holland Performing Arts Center. *omahaperformingarts.org*

Lincoln:
Bluegrass Beats
Banjo superstars Bela Fleck, a 15-time Grammy winner, and singer/musician Abigail Washburn (*below*) join the legendary Del McCoury Band, Feb. 13 at the Lied Center. *liedcenter.org*



Hastings:
The Listening Room
The Lark, a new downtown performance venue, kicks off The Listening Room acoustic concert series Jan. 10 with jazz artist Jackie Allen. Three more performances are scheduled through February. *thelisteningroom.org*



Flock to It

Your insider's guide to the awe-inspiring Sandhill crane migration.

As the sun peeks over the horizon on the Platte River, thousands of Sandhill cranes pop their heads out from under their wings. Their trills start softly and build to a roaring crescendo. Soon, throngs of the majestic birds lift off from the sandbars, darkening the early morning sky as they fly out to feed in the surrounding fields.

In late February and throughout March, the Platte River Valley becomes a bird watcher's heaven, as the world's largest gathering of Sandhill cranes rests here during its annual migration. Use our insider's guide to make the most of the experience:

BEST VIEWS

On your own: Cranes rest and feed in the fields between Kearney and Grand Island. Catch sight of them from designated viewing decks set up along the Platte River by the Central Platte Natural Resources District, or on the Hike-Bike Bridge in Fort Kearney State Recreation Area. Find routes and maps of viewing decks at *nebraskaflyway.com*.

Hint: To catch the most action, plan to arrive one hour before sunrise or one hour before sunset.

With a guide: Experts can help you get even closer to the spectacle. Rowe Sanctuary near Kearney offers two-hour, guided tours in the morning and evening. Tours are led by expert guides who provide information about the cranes and the crane migration. The Crane Trust Nature & Visitor Center, near Grand Island, offers guided blind tours and sunset tours on a footbridge that spans the river. *rowe.audubon.org, nebraskanature.org*

DO'S AND DON'TS

Do bring toe and hand warmers to slip into boots and mittens.

Don't make too much noise. To keep from disturbing the cranes, speak only in hushed tones while waiting in the blinds.

Do remember to go before you go; bathrooms aren't available at the blinds.

Don't try to approach the birds. When watching from the roadside, use your vehicle as a blind and stay inside it or next to it.

To find nearby restaurants and lodgings, access the AAA TourBook online at AAA.com/TourBook.

Reunions Magazine Workbook

Online

Reunions Workbook

Nebraska's Fort Robinson State Park: The Perfect Muster Station for Your Troops

Reunion Planner

Fort Robinson State Park, a former frontier military outpost in the northwestern corner of Nebraska, offers reunion groups an irresistible blend of history and recreation.

When it was built in 1909, Comanche Hall served as bachelor officers' quarters for U.S. Army personnel stationed at northwest Nebraska's Fort Robinson, then a military installation. Today the old fort is a popular state park, and the handsome brick building houses large groups of vacationers. On my recent visit, a banner on the balcony proclaimed "Paulsen Reunion."

Fort Robinson State Park offers not only colorful slices of frontier lore but a choice of overnight accommodations and plenty of activities to keep family, school and military reunion groups engaged. The former officers' and enlisted men's quarters are rustic and don't include hotel-style amenities like toiletries, hair dryers and daily maid service. But the price is right—averaging $20-$25 per person per night.



Texas Longhorns at Fort Robinson

Nebraska's largest state park, three miles from the town of Crawford, commands a majestic setting in Pine Ridge Country, a landscape of forested buttes and ridges, canyons and grassy hills, not far

http://reunionsworkbook.com/nebraskas-fort-robinson-state-park-the-perfect-muster-station-for-your-troops/?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=InSite_Reunion_July_2014&utm_medium=email

from the Wyoming and South Dakota state lines. Ponderosa pine is the dominant tree on the ridges. This is not the Nebraska of endless corn fields. Western Nebraska's Panhandle region identifies much more with the West than the Midwest. The region saw the final years of the Indian Wars, and several bands of Lakota lived there.

Lodging at Fort Robinson State Park is available from April 1 to Nov. 30, but there's more to do between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day, when the activity program is in full swing.

The Story of Fort Robinson



Fort Robinson Museum

The fort began in 1874 as Camp Robinson, a military outpost established to protect the administrative headquarters of the **Red Cloud Agency**, which distributed food and supplies to members of the Sioux and other tribes who had been resettled on reservations. The site was re-established as Fort Robinson in 1878 with the purpose of defending white settlers and area cattle ranchers against possible Indian troubles. It became a cavalry post in 1887 and included two regiments of the all-black **Buffalo Soldiers**.

A few 19th century buildings remain, but most are post-1900, when the fort changed from its role as a frontier outpost to being part of a global garrison protecting American interests in places like China,

the Philippines and Latin America. After the Quartermaster Remount Depot was established in 1919, the fort developed into the Army's largest training, care and breeding center for horses and mules. It was the training site of the 1936 Olympics equestrian team. During World War II, Fort Robinson served as a war dog training site and had a German POW camp.

Known for its lively social life in the 20th century, Fort Robinson was called the **"Country Club of the Army."** The calendar featured parties, polo matches, fox hunts, trail rides and steeplechases. The base had a swimming pool, baseball teams and concert bands.

Fort Robinson Activities



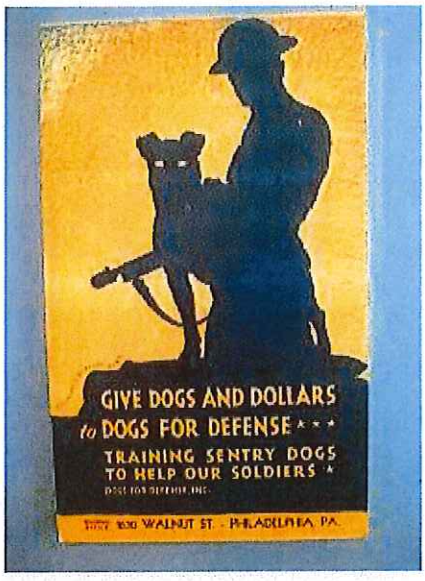
Stagecoach rides at Fort Robinson

Horses are still very much a part of life at Fort Robinson. Besides horseback trail rides, horse-drawn wagon and stagecoach rides are available. And there are stables for those who bring their own horses. **A free rodeo** put on by the wranglers and their kids is staged in the arena on Thursday nights in summer.

Spotting mountain sheep is the highlight of open-air jeep rides into the wilderness. Visitors to Fort Robinson also see grazing herds of buffalo and Texas Longhorn cattle.

http://reunionsworkbook.com/nebraskas-fort-robinson-state-park-the-perfect-muster-station-for-your-troops/?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=InSite_Reunion_July_2014&utm_medium=email

Other activities include hiking, mountain biking, fishing, tubing and kayaking. The Activities Building has a crafts studio, nature center and a store that sells ice cream and snacks. Also on the grounds are tennis courts, horseshoe pits and an indoor swimming pool. The nine-hole Legends Butte Golf Course is just a few miles away.



Fort Robinson Museum Exhibit

The **Post Playhouse**, the former quartermaster's depot, offers nighttime entertainment from late May to mid-August. This summer's playbill at the professional summer stock repertory theater features *Rodgers & Hammerstein's The Sound of Music, Guys & Dolls, 9 to 5, Schoolhouse Rock* and *My Way*, a tribute to Frank Sinatra.

The **Fort Robinson Museum** occupies the 1905 Post Commanders Headquarters, while the **Trailside Museum**, operated by the University of Nebraska, interprets area geology and natural history. Reconstructed wooden buildings on the Old Parade Grounds have exhibits on fort life and Indian War battles. Outside the guardhouse on Sept. 5, 1877, the great Lakota warrior Crazy Horse died from a bayonet wound. A plaque marks the spot.

Fort Robinson Accommodations

Reunions Workbook



Lodge at Fort Robinson State Park

The row of six Officers' Quarters duplex cabins on the Old Parade Ground are the oldest buildings at the fort, dating from 1874. Sleeping six to eight, the cabins are heated and air-conditioned. They come with a bathroom and a kitchen equipped with a stove, refrigerator, microwave, coffee maker, toaster, dishes and utensils. Each unit has a picnic table and grill. Prices start at $120 per night. Nearby are two campgrounds.

When the fort expanded in 1887, a New Parade Ground was built across the road. Rimming this grassy oval are more Officers Quarters accommodations. Comanche Hall, perfect for family reunions, has 14 baths and sleeps 60; it rents for $790 per night. As with other Officers' Quarters, there is a fully-equipped kitchen, and linens are supplied.

Also suitable for larger groups are the spacious 1909 Officers' Quarters called the Bricks, four red-brick Victorian buildings (each divided into duplex units) with a living room, dining room and kitchen, and multiple bedrooms and bathrooms. Built as comfortable, single-occupancy brick homes with bell systems to summon servants, they have large, white-pillared porches, beautiful staircases and fancy fireplaces (not operable). The homes housed employees of the USDA Beef Cattle Research Station after the military abandoned the fort in 1948. The property became a state park in 1955.

The Bricks units sleep 14-20 and start at $205 per night. The 1887 Officers Quarters, situated on the New Parade Ground between Comanche Hall and the Bricks, are called the "Adobes." They sleep 10 to 12 and include a living area as well as kitchen and bath ($205-$245 per night).

All Officers' Quarters have an assortment of sleeping arrangements consisting of queen bed and bunk bed sets.

http://reunionsworkbook.com/nebraskas-fort-robinson-state-park-the-perfect-muster-station-for-your-troops/?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=InSite_Reunion_July_2014&utm_medium=email

Reunions Workbook

Lodge Meals at Fort Robinson

The Lodge, built in 1909 as an enlisted men's barrack, is the focal point of the park. It offers 22 rooms with private bath ($50-$55 per night for two or three persons) and houses the **Fort Robinson Inn Restaurant**, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day. The restaurant's Western theme is carried out through the log tables and chairs, plus wall decorations like rifles, spears, saddles, chaps, portraits of Indians and photos of officers. There's even a buffalo head.

The "Lunch in the Barracks" menu features a buffalo cheeseburger, buffalo tacos and hot buffalo sandwich with mashed potatoes and brown gravy. Breakfast favorites include biscuits and gravy and, for the heartiest of appetites, the Wrangler's Sandwich—two plate-size pancakes stuffed with eggs and bacon, sausage or ham.

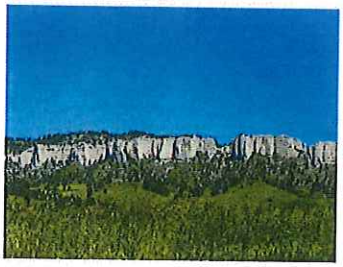
The restaurant also can cater group meals. Other meal options at Fort Robinson include chuck wagon buffalo stew cookouts and hayrack breakfast rides. The park also offers picnic shelters that can be reserved, and there are meeting facilities in several buildings.

Avid sightseers, especially those into fossils and geology, will want to make excursions to these nearby places: Toadstool Geologic Park, famous for its badlands formations; Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, which also has an impressive collection of Indian artifacts; and Hudson-Meng Education & Research Center, site of the largest extinct bison bone bed in the world. History buffs will enjoy the Museum of the Fur Trade in Chadron.

For reunion groups looking for Old West ambience at the far western edge of the Midwest, Fort Robinson State Park is the place to gather and enjoy the company of friends and family. But book early—those Officers' Quarters sell out long before the peak season begins.

For more information, call Fort Robinson State Park at 308-665-2900 or visit the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's website, outdoornebraska.org.

By Randy Mink



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The Fort Collins Coloradoan

Xplore



Bison roam 5,000-acre Perfect 10 Bison and Hutchinson Organic Ranch near Rose, Neb. The ranch in the Sandhills is home to some 800 free-roaming bison. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOB WILLIS

SANDHILLS OF NEBRASKA SURPRISINGLY FUN

Visit world's largest railyard, go boating in a livestock tank, a half-day away

By Bob Willis
For the Coloradoan

As a kid, along with a half-dozen cousins, my summers were spent on the family farm in Delaware.

One summer, my grandfather's large livestock tank sprung a leak and he rolled it up to the back of the farmhouse intending to patch the hole. He never got around to it. So, every Saturday night after it had filled with rainwater, the tank served as the outdoor bathtub that my cousins and I shared with those little larva mosquito wigglers.

It never occurred to me that livestock tanks also could be used to keep water out. On a recent trek through the Sandhills region of Nebraska, a few traveling partners and I visited the tiny community of Mullen, where we found the Glidden Canoe (and tank) Rental. Since there were no taverns in the vicinity, we decided to "get tanked" on the Niobrara River instead.



You can take a stock tank down the Niobrara River near Mullen, Neb., at Glidden Canoe (and tank) Rental.

Gingerly, we climbed into the 8-foot-diameter livestock watering tank armed with only paddles to fend off submerged logs and overhanging tree branches. Clearly, we had no keel to stabilize us so we tended to spin and whirl as if on a carnival ride.

As we bobbed and bounced and brushed against the brambly banks, I quickly noticed a lack of evidence that many had passed this way, except for one decrepit bridge we floated under. However, with further exploration, we found that quite a number of people have created a great deal of history in this part of Nebraska.

With the exception of the Santa Fe Trail, virtually all of the western immigrants following the Platte rivers came through here, along the Mormon Trail, the Oregon and California trails, and the short-lived Pony Express route. Even Lewis and Clark brushed Nebraska as they traversed the Missouri River along the eastern border of Nebraska. And the first transcontinental railroad passed through the heart of the state.

When the U.S. was made up of 48 contiguous states, the area around North Platte, Nebraska, was near the geographic center of the U.S. So, it's only appropriate that so much of our transportation history centers around this part of the country.

The Lincoln Highway (now U.S. 30) traverses the entire state. Historically, this was the nation's first coast-to-coast highway running from Times Square in New York City all the way to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. Last year, the highway celebrated its centennial.

North Platte is train town

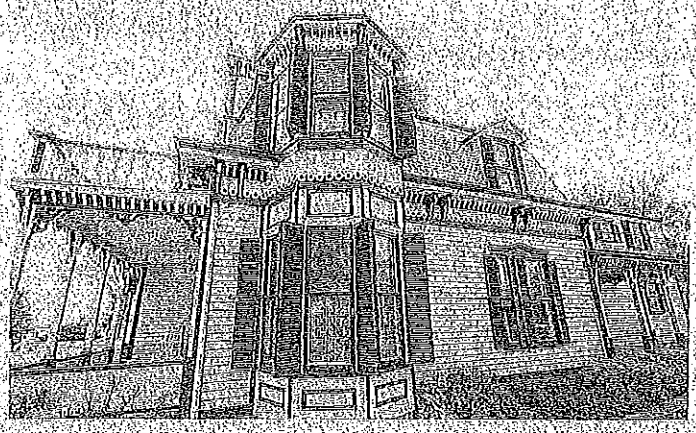
My recent journey began at North Platte, Nebraska, just a half-day's drive from Fort Collins, a straight shot east from Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Driving through North Platte, you notice some rather high bridges that have no water flowing beneath them ... but lots of trains.

If you want to know what's going on, take the family to the Union Pacific Railroad's Bailey Yard, the world's largest railroad classification yard where rail cars and locomotives are repaired and serviced and freight trains are assembled.

An average of 150 trains and 14,000 cars pass through here every day. The yard stretches nearly as far as the eye can see and is a constant show of movement almost appearing as a giant Christmas garden display. To view all the action, climb to the top of the Golden Spike Tower, an eight-story high overlook, museum and gift shop (info@goldenspiketower.com). This is definitely a

See SANDHILLS, Page C4



Scouts Rest in the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park in North Platte was Buffalo Bill Cody's home. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOB WILLIS

Sandhills

Continued from Page C1

train town.

Nearby, the North Platte Depot was a servicing point for the westbound steam locomotives transporting servicemen to their embarkation points during the early stages of World War II. While the engines were being watered, a process that usually took about 15 minutes, the soldiers and sailors had a few minutes to hop off and stretch their legs.

What began just 10 days after Pearl Harbor became one of the largest volunteer efforts of World War II, the creation of the North Platte Canteen (www.npcanteen.net/ichm.html) began as a simple offering of Christmas gifts to soldiers passing through the station. It became an immediate success since as many as 24 trains a day stopped at the depot.

In the canteen, the troops were treated to coffee, iced tea, milk, hard-boiled eggs, pickles, cookies, doughnuts, pies, fresh fruit, candy and even birthday cakes. The canteen operated in this small depot from December of 1941 until the war ended in August 1945 when the troops returned home.

Homeward bound, they found the same generosity they had received when they left. The canteen closed on April 1, 1946, having offered hospitality to 6 million troops.

The memorabilia is all there to see at the Lincoln in the vicinity. And since I always enjoy meeting craftspeople, I made two stops that impressed me greatly. In Cody, I met Kyle Rosfeld, owner of Sandhills Boot Company (www.sandhillsboot.com). He makes reasonably priced custom-fitted boots, vests, chaps and even colorful ladies purses from old boot tops.

My next stop was in nearby Thedford and the studio workshop of Kaycee Orr-Hoffman, a sixth-generation Coloradan from the Greeley area. I watched Kaycee work her magic on a piece of felt blank to create a handsome western hat. Again, her creations are custom-fitted to her customers' sizes and blocking. Visit www.BarNoneHats.com.

County Historical Museum and Western Heritage Village.

Buffalo Bill's Scouts Rest Ranch

Another must-see attraction in North Platte is Scouts Rest, the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park (www.ngpc.buffalo.bill@nebraska.gov). Originally, the ranch consisted of some 4,000 acres.

Cody's home was designed by his sister with one stipulation, that it contain a parlor and a bedroom with a bathroom. In 1886, the home was constructed for $3,900. Today, the original home and barn are well-furnished with lots of original pieces and fixtures. It's an interesting glimpse into the life and times of this famous western showman.

Within the state park, there's an adjacent recreation area with lots of hiking trails, picnic sites and camping pads. The ranch is close to downtown and convenient to everything in North Platte.

About 25 miles south of North Platte, you can enjoy a visit to the Dancing Leaf Cultural Learning Center (www.dancingleaf.com) in Wellfleet. This is a re-created American Indian earth lodge that includes a wealth of historic and geologic artifacts from the region. There's primitive camping available.

Western craftsmen

In addition to North Platte's attractions, I found lots of other interesting sites

The Hutchinson Perfect 10 Bison Ranch

When the first settlers reached North American shores, the best estimate indicates there were some 55 million bison roaming the continent. By the late 1890s, that number had been reduced to probably less than 1,000. Today, that number has risen to somewhere around 300,000.

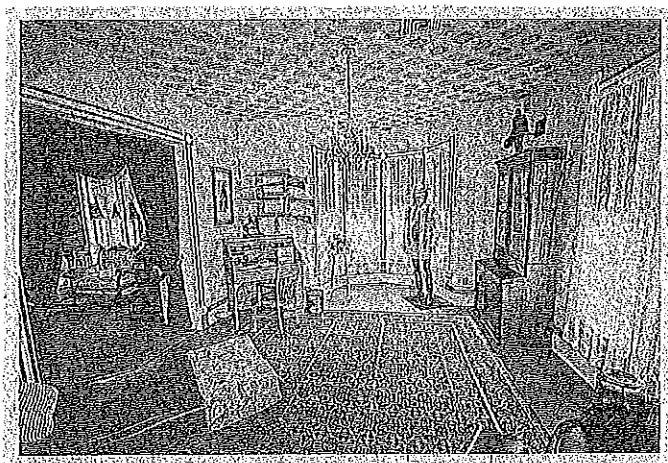
The Perfect 10 Bison and Hutchinson Organic Ranch near Rose, Nebraska, was a real highlight for me. Dave Hutchinson is a bison expert. The ranch includes 5,000 acres in the Sandhills and is home to some 800 free-roaming bison.

When you call ahead for arrangements, you can tour the bison, cattle and goat herds in horse-drawn wagons or off-road vehicles.

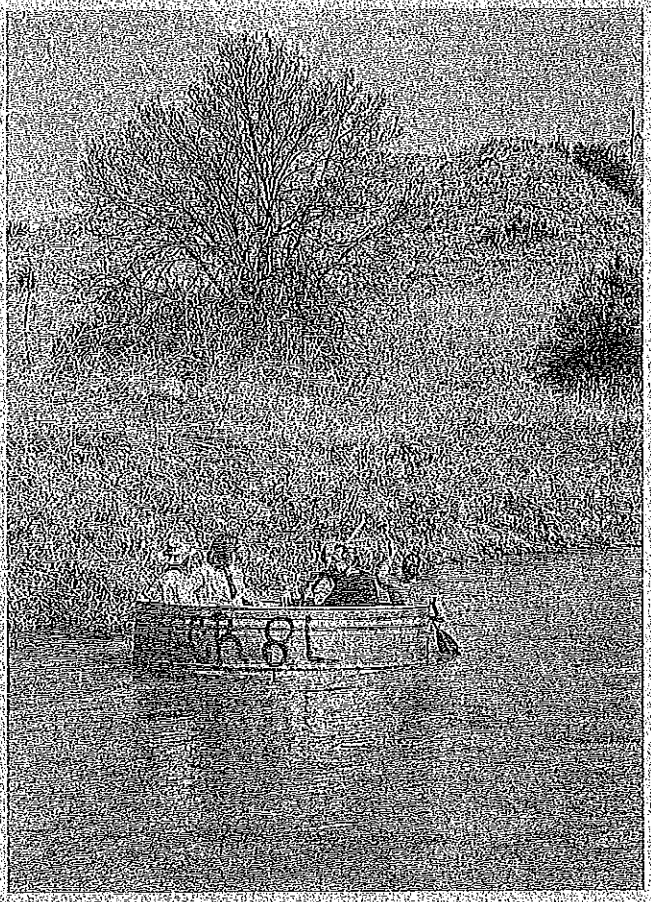
Be prepared to learn more than you can imagine about 100 percent grassfed, certified organic bison. And, if you really want to see the stars at night, plan to spend an extra day or so at their cozy B&B.

I found the North Platte region and the Nebraska Sandhills area interesting and reasonably priced. It's all within a half-day's drive and makes a great long weekend excursion for your family.

Bob Willis is a longtime travel and guidebook writer and photographer. His travels have taken him to every continent and nearly 100 countries. Bob, his wife Gloria and their border collie Becky love coming home to Fort Collins.



The original home and barn at Buffalo Bill Cody's Scouts Rest are well-furnished with lots of original pieces and fixtures. They offer a glimpse into the life of the famous western showman.



You can float a stock tank down the Niobrara River near Mullen, Neb., at Glidden Canoe (and tank) Rental.

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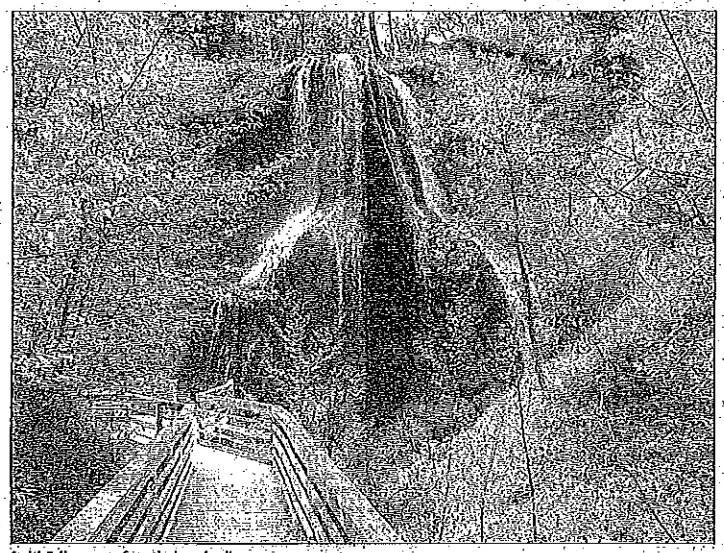
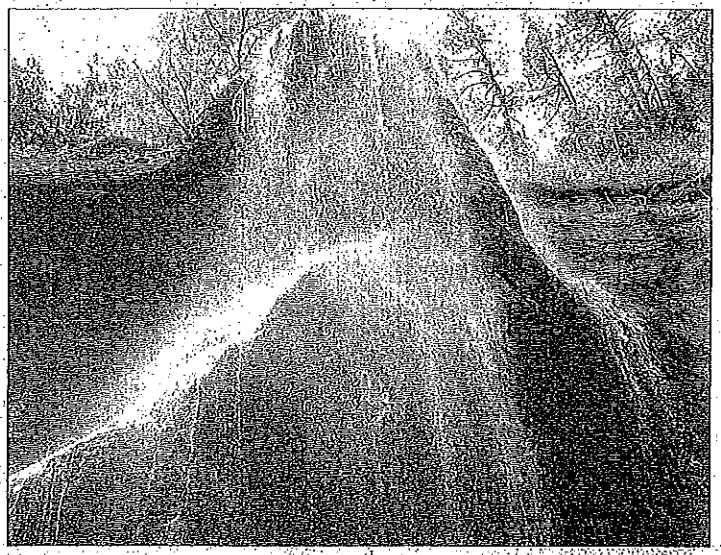
Travel Writer Smith visits Smith Falls State Park



Smith Falls, as seen from the boardwalk.



The view of Smith Falls from the base.

By John M. Smith

Lifestyles - On my recent visit to northern Nebraska, I visited Smith Falls State Park, located near Valentine, and straddling the Niobrara River. It's a stunning cascade of water that plunges about 70 feet into the Niobrara River Valley. It's the state's highest waterfall, and it's located within a 250-acre park that's intended to protect this biologically unique and diverse area.

To reach this park, I participated in about a three-hour float trip on the Niobrara River, departing from Valentine. I was led by Doug Graham, of Graham Canoe Outfitters, <www.grahamoutfitters.com>, for he did the paddling while his guests, including me, simply sat in the rubberized raft and enjoyed the rather gentle ride and the stunning scenery. After all, there were no treacherous rapids along this section of the Niobrara National Scenic River, and the towering sandstone cliffs and spectacular canyons encountered along the route guaranteed us many wonderful photo ops.

We floated through a section of the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, which is frequented, annually, by well over 200 species of birds. Some of these are migratory or seasonal residents, while others stay year-round, including the sharp-tailed grouse and the prairie chicken. The Refuge is also home to such wildlife as deer, coyote, bobcat, bison, and elk, and ranchers' cattle can also be seen grazing along the riverbanks; there are a lot more cattle than people in Nebraska.

As we floated along, Doug told us about the Ogallala Aquifer, a vast reservoir of underground water that's located just beneath the Great Plains. We learned that it's actually exposed in some places along the Niobrara River, so we could often see the groundwater seeping through the valley walls and into the river itself. Doug emphasized the importance of preserving this water by keeping the area as natural and chemical-free as possible. Therefore, he's personally opposed to the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, for he's concerned about possible future contamination.

Although much of this region, part of Nebraska's immense Sandhills area, consists primarily of a combination of wind-kissed grasslands, sand, and wide open spaces, we did see some patches of aspen, birch, and ponderosa pine along the way. The majority of the area, however, appeared to be rather barren, more like a giant sandbox, littered with a covering of prairie grass, and the spectacular, hilly terrain witnessed along the river didn't seem to coincide with the preconceived notion that this was the flat plains of the Midwest.

We also passed by several waterfalls along our route and met several canoeists and kayakers. After all, *Backpacker* magazine has rated the Niobrara as "one of the top ten canoeing rivers in the U.S." and it's also one of "National Geographic's top 100 adventures."

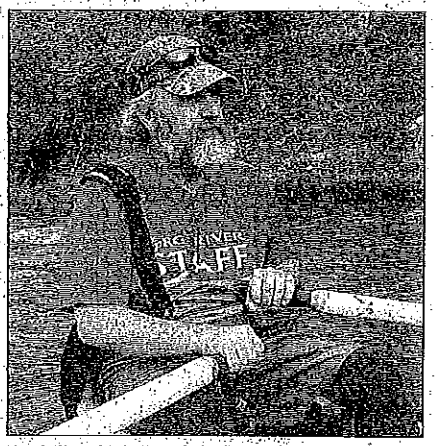
We eventually ended our trip at Smith Falls State Park, where we had a picnic lunch. I then decided to walk to my namesake falls, so I crossed a pedestrian bridge, walked into a small, secluded canyon via a boardwalk (there to help prevent erosion), and then on to my desired destination: Smith Falls. Stairs led me from my lookout point down to the very base of the falls so that I could then look almost straight up at the cascading water.

I soon found out that Smith Falls, regrettably, was not named after this travel writer. Indeed, it was apparently named after Frederic Smith, who filed a homestead patent on this piece of land back in 1896. It's now a state park, offering shower facilities, washrooms, picnic sites, and primitive camping. I also found a very nice self-guided nature trail there, the Jim MacAllister Nature Trail, named after the former Games and Parks Commissioner Regional Manager who was instrumental in the acquisition and planning of this park; this trail allows the visitor to explore the diversity of the area on about a two-kilometre-long footpath.

This particular portion of the Niobrara River Valley is known as the "biological crossroads of the Great Plains," where eastern and western species of plants and animals overlap, and it's definitely a unique destination.



A view of the towering sand cliffs along our route on the Niobrara River.



Doug Graham, of Graham Canoe Outfitters, led us on the float trip.

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LEISURE / TRAVEL / INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

For fossils and so much more: Agate Fossil Beds National Monument in Nebraska

July 6, 2014
12:22 PM MST



From fossils to a Native American collection, this National Monument offers so much.
Karin Leperi

The **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument**, located just 17 miles from the Wyoming border in the northwest corner of Nebraska, is one of the world's most complete repositories of ancient Miocene bones. Within the "The Great Bonebed of Agate," paleontologists located the remains of Miocene mammals from 19-21 million years ago, a time when the forests and jungles of an earlier era were being replaced by grasslands and a drier climate.

The area has been called "Nebraska's Serengeti Plain" because of an uncanny geological resemblance to Africa's Serengeti Plain. During the Miocene Epoch, the area was exposed to alternating wet and dry seasons, with periodic flooding. An ancient Agate stream existed, with a similarity to the sand rivers of East Africa.



Karin Leperi

The bonebed revealed the remains of three mammals that once called the Agate Fossil Bed area home. These are the small rhino *Menoceras*, the horse-headed sloth-footed *Moropus*, and the rarest: the fearsome *Dinohyus* – somewhat of a bastardly cross between an angry bison and a pig. Visitors to Agate Fossil Beds National Monument can marvel at a life-size visual interpretation of what mammals that used to roam the American Plains may have looked like.

But equally compelling is the Cook Collection of American Indian artifacts, a light and climate-controlled area that houses an intriguing collection of gifts given to the rancher and first American discoverer of the agate fossil bed, James H. Cook. (Cook and his son Harold would eventually welcome paleontologists from around the world to help uncover the secrets buried in the bonebed.)

The gifts to James Cook and his family came from members of the Oglala Lakota Sioux and Northern Cheyenne, including notable chiefs and warriors such as **Red Cloud**. Of special note is Red Cloud's shirt as well as pipebags from Red Cloud, his father, and his son. The museum houses one of Crazy Horse's whetstones along with gifted items of buckskin, beaded moccasins, and more.

For those with more time, try some of the hikes. Ranging from one-three miles, the hikes highlight the natural history and wildlife of the Niobrara River Valley.

Hours

Visitor Center and Museum

Memorial Day through Labor Day

Daily 8:00 am–6:00 pm

Off-Season

Nebraska: On The Trail Of Old West In A Toyota RAV4 AWD

By Lazelle Jones

Truck Trend, June 02, 2014 () () () () ()



(http://www.trucktrend.com/features/travel/1408_nebraska_on_the_trail_of_old_west_in_a_toyota_rav4_awd/photo_17.html)

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NEBRASKA FACTS: Statehood: 1867 • Population: 1.8 Million • Capital: Lincoln

Whenever Nebraska is mentioned, typically what comes to mind is Corn Huskers football, beef cattle, and the fact that within the state lies America's "breadbasket." All are correct. However -- and this is a big however -- there are nooks and crannies in western Nebraska that typically fall under the radar when it comes to understanding the history of the Old West and who we are as Americans. From North Platte to Ogallala, from Scottsbluff to Alliance, along with Crawford and Chadron in the northwest corner of the state are towns that for the most part go undiscovered, where the legacy of the Old West is as rich as the soil is black and fertile. Here, friendly, down-to-earth folks live; to-die-for food is served in abundance; lodging spans the comfort zone from rustic to pure luxury; and the fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreation make western Nebraska a destination to be discovered.

A midsize SUV Toyota RAV4 AWD, powered by a 3.0-liter V-6 coupled to a six-speed automatic transmission served as transportation for this journey into history. The RAV4 yields uncompromised luxury and comfort for this vehicle class, and over the 1700 miles to be covered, its excellent fuel economy (29.5 mpg) makes it a perfect fit for anyone's budget. Had we wanted, we could've towed a 1500-pound camping trailer and enjoyed the many pristine campgrounds that lace Western Nebraska. We programmed our GPS and took off for adventure.

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At Smith Falls, Nebraska's newest state park, signs on the Jim MacAllister Nature Trail alert hikers to the diverse ecological systems unique to the valley.



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Chimmney Rock



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Fort Robinson State Park and museum

A good place to begin is in North Platte at Buffalo Bill Cody's Scout's Rest Ranch. This is the headquarters of Cody's Wild West Show, which was the genesis of today's modern rodeo. Built in the 1880s, Buffalo Bill's home is furnished with his belongings, and the house looks as though the legendary showman has just stepped out for a sarsaparilla. The walls are covered with original photos that chronicle his early days as a scout with the U.S. Army, the Indian Wars (1876-1890), his family and personal life, and the Wild West Shows he took around the world.

Another important stop in North Platte is the World War II Service Men's canteen located inside the North Platte depot. Started by local women two weeks after the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the canteen hosted 6 million troops transported by railroad across the United States during the war. Stopping here while the locomotive was being filled with water and coal, the servicemen were treated to cake, coffee, milk, and sandwiches. The canteen handled troops from a dozen trains a day and was open seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, until the spring of 1946. All of western Nebraska participated in this effort, with families donating part of their monthly sugar ration for the pastries.

North Platte also hosts the Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center. Every Union Pacific railcar crossing the U.S. today is separated one at a time and sent to where it needs to go. It's done using elevated rail beds (one end is higher or lower than the other end) and gravity is the source of locomotion with computers keeping track of every railcar. Railcars and diesel locomotives also are serviced and reconditioned here. An elevator takes visitors several hundred feet up to the museum's observation tower for a bird's-eye view of the operation. You can see a presention of the history of the railroad during the last 150 years, including the "orphan trains" that routinely emptied Eastern cities of children living on the streets and gave them out for adoption to families across America who needed labor. Brothers and sister and even twins were often split up, never to find out what happened to their siblings.

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The World War II Service Men's Canteen provided hospitality to six million troops who pass



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The High Plains Homestead

Ogallala, a town minutes west of North Platte on Highway 30 (the old Lincoln Highway), was one of the first towns at the end of the trail where Texas longhorns were driven north and shipped back east before the railroad reached Abilene, Texas, and Dodge City, Kansas. Front Street downtown offers a representation of this rich saga. Across the street is the Petrified Wood Gallery (you must check this out), and minutes from the gallery is "boot hill" cemetery.

On Highway 26 northwest of Ogallala are three geologic formations seen by the half-million pioneers who followed the Platte River on their way up the Oregon Trail between 1842 and 1869, when the transcontinental railroad was completed. These rock formations rise hundreds of feet into Nebraska's pastel-blue sky and include Courthouse and Jailhouse Rocks, Chimney Rock, and Scotts Bluff. The pioneers could see these rock formations for days before actually reaching them, giving many the idea that this was the beginning of the Rocky Mountains. Today, it takes just minutes to get from one to the other.

There is speculation as to how and why England's Stonehenge was built. Some think it's a solar calendar, while others argue it's something else. A mile outside the town of Alliance, there's a similar-looking formation called Carhenge. Like Stonehenge, it's built in a circular configuration, but rather than stones, full-size 1940s, '50s, and '60s trucks and cars protrude from the ground straight up or at angles. Other vehicles serve as bridges connecting those sticking out of the ground, while others are cantilevered off the ends of those poking at the sky. It's a strange, surreal creation in the middle of nowhere. All the cars are painted gray for a stone-like effect.

In the very northwest corner of the state, near the town of Crawford, several destinations call for a stay of at least a couple of days. One is Fort Robinson, where Sioux Chief Crazy Horse was killed after he surrendered to the U.S. Army. Today the original fort is a state park offering overnight lodging and a bunch of fun things to do. You can stay in the old officer's quarters or in the enlisted barracks. The lodge dining room menu features home-raised buffalo. Horseback riding and stagecoach rides are offered. The fort's museum provides a no holds barred presentation of the Indian Wars, giving both sides of what took place in the West up until the 1890s when Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull were murdered.

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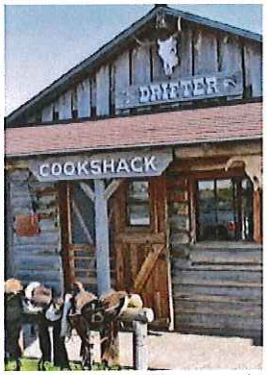
Smith Falls



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The Drifter Cookshack is the heart of High Plains Homestead and offers cowboy-size meals.



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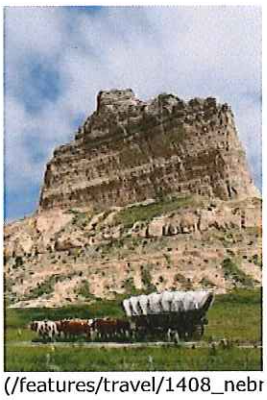
The Oregon Trail.



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Scotts Bluff

The High Plains Homestead, a guest ranch near Crawford, has private cabins and an old saloon, and some of the best ranch fixin's anywhere. Mike and Linda Kesselring brought in old buildings from old towns, ranches, and homesteads that had been left to the elements, restored them, and recreated an Old West town. Drive out for dinner or stay a couple of nights.

On Highway 20 is the Museum of the Fur Trade. This is the epicenter for research on the history of the fur trappers and traders out West from the mid-1700s until the 1840s. It has the largest collection of antique rifles anywhere, along with thousands of square feet of exhibits that tell the fur trade story.

Further east in Chadron is the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, where a museum and permanent exhibition is devoted to this Nebraska author. She wrote extensively and intimately about her Swiss immigrant family and their 1890s pioneer experiences. Sandoz describes the struggles of everyday life on the prairie where, on a scale of 1 to 10, pleasures were often lower than a zero.

Her stories capture the pervasive loneliness on what was an empty plain, the effects the never-ending wind had on an individual's sanity, and how the absolutely treeless landscape affected the human spirit. My, how things have changed!

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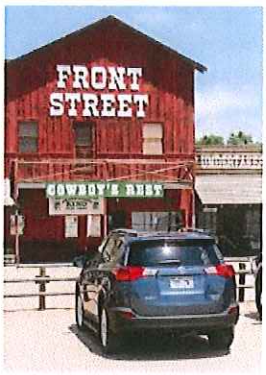

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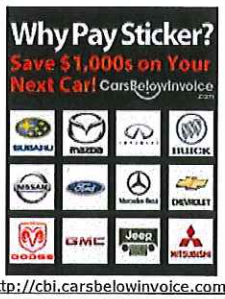

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North Platte Lincoln County Convention and Visitors Bureau
308/532-4729
visitnorthplatte.com ()

Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park
308/535-8035
outdoornebraska.ne.gov ()

Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center
308/532-9920
goldenspiketower.com ()

Lincoln County Historical Museum (World War II Canteen)
308/534-5640
lincolncountymuseum.org ()

OGALLALA

Keith County Chamber of Commerce
308/284-4066
visitogallala.com () ogallalafrontstreet.com ()

Petrified Wood Gallery
308/284-9996
petrifiedwoodgallery.com ()

CHADRON AREA

Chamber of Commerce
308/432-4401
chadron.com () discoverdawescounty.com ()

CRAWFORD AREA

Crawford Chamber of Commerce
308/665-1817
crawfordnebraska.us ()

Fort Robinson State Park
308/665-2900
stateparks.com/fort_robinson.html ()

High Plains Homestead
308/665-2592
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Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center
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Museum of the Fur Trade
308/432-3843
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ALLIANCE AREA

Alliance Visitors Bureau
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visitalliance.com ()

PIONEER LANDMARKS

Chimney Rock National Historic Site
308/586-2581
nebraskahistory.org/sites/rock ()

Scotts Bluff National Monument
308/436-9700
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