



HIGH PLAINS JOURNAL™

Take the

Lincoln Highway

and travel through history

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It was the route Tod and Buz traveled in a Chevy Corvette every week in early 1960s television to a jazzy Nelson Riddle score.

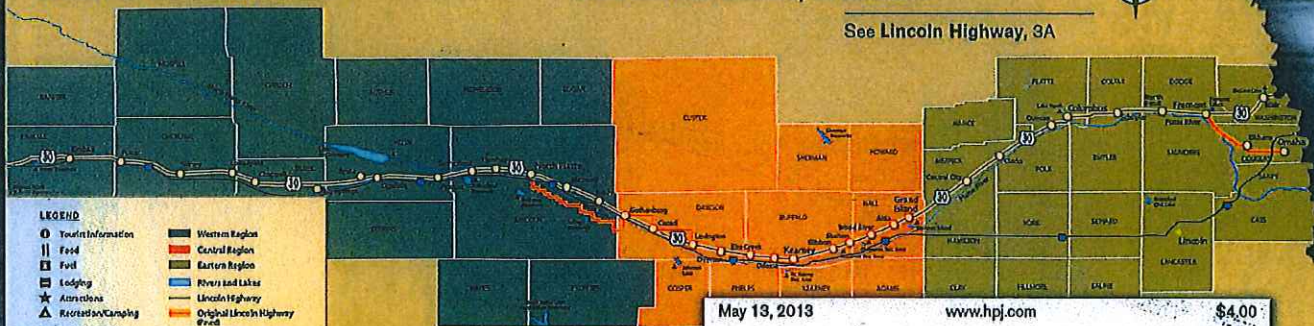
Sure, it had the moniker of The Mother Road, but for every mother, there also needs to be a father.

While Route 66 is the stuff of bigger legend, the Father Road, U.S. Highway 30, better known as the Lincoln Highway, is the stuff of true history. While Route 66 offered romance, the Lincoln Highway offered practicality.

It's within all that practicality that a modern nation was formed, linked from coast-to-coast by the automobile.



See Lincoln Highway, 3A



2013 Agritourism Issue

Journal story & photo by Larry Dreiling • Map courtesy of the Nebraska Tourism Commission • Cover artwork by Lance L. Zlesch

May 13, 2013

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Lincoln Highway

Continued from 1A

The first automobile road across the United States, the Lincoln Highway was also the first national memorial to President Abraham Lincoln, predating the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., by nearly a decade.

The Lincoln Highway was dedicated in 1913. The original route was 3,389 miles, extending from Times Square in New York City to Lincoln Park in San Francisco and passing through 13 states.

All of the states through which the Lincoln Highway passed, including Nebraska, are celebrating the Father Road's centennial this year. As Nebraska is at the center of the route, it's going all out for a celebration the weekend of June 30 through July 1.

There will be special tours throughout the week before the weekend celebration for visitors to catch a glimpse of some of the historic parts of the highway that are no longer in use because of highway relocation or replacement by Interstate 80.

The idea of the Lincoln Highway goes back to the construction of the first automobiles. Carl Fisher was a tireless pioneer and promoter of the automotive, auto racing, and real estate development industries.

Wealthy beyond his dreams, Fisher suggested the idea of a transcontinental highway at a dinner of auto industry friends in 1912. He proposed that the auto industry and private contributors should build a coast-to-coast rock highway to be completed in time for the opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco scheduled for May 1, 1915.

Fisher believed a continuous improved highway across the country would "stimulate...the building of enduring highways everywhere that will not only be a credit to the American people but that will also mean much to American agriculture and commerce."

Of course, it would also increase the interest of Americans in buying automobiles.

The Lincoln Highway was an outgrowth of a broader trend in the U.S. called the Good Roads Movement. It began informally in the late 1870s as an effort to encourage road building in rural areas, a movement that still holds strong in many rural parts of the nation.

In 1880, bicycle enthu-

siasts—riding clubs and manufacturers—formed the League of American Wheelmen to advocate improving the nation's roadways and support the growing use of bicycles. By the turn of the century, as the automobile developed, automobile interest groups took a dominant role in the road lobby.

Friends of Fisher, like President Woodrow Wilson, former President Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, and many others, pledged \$1 million. Fisher had estimated the road would cost about \$10 million.

The Lincoln Highway Association was formed July 1, 1913. Its mission was "to procure the establishment of a continuous improved highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific..." Henry Joy, president of Packard Motor Co., was named president of LHA.

LHA needed to determine the best route across the country. East of the Mississippi there was already a relatively dense road network. To determine the route west of the Mississippi, a "Trail Blazer" tour commissioned by LHA set out from Indianapolis in 17 cars and two trucks, heading to San Francisco.

The Trail Blazers arrived in San Francisco after 34 days. Not long afterward, on Sept. 14, the route across the country was announced. Less than half of it was improved roadway. The route was dedicated Oct. 31, 1913, with celebrations in hundreds of cities along the route.

The next job was to finance and build sections of the highway. Local and regional road associations with local government support provided by county bond issues undertook the construction of the roads.

Road building movement

By the mid-1920s there were about 250 national auto trails. Some were major routes like the Lincoln Highway, the Dixie Highway, and the Old Spanish Trail. Governments were participating in the road building movement and were beginning to take control of it. Federal and state officials formed the Joint Board on Interstate Highways, which proposed a numbered U.S. Highway system to supersede the trail designations. The Lincoln Highway Association supported this idea.

The federal numbering system was put into effect in 1926. Much of the Lincoln Highway was assigned U.S. 30. The last major promotional activity of LHA was in 1928, when Boy Scouts placed some 2,400

concrete markers at sites along the route to dedicate it officially to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. Some 4,000 metal signs were also erected in urban areas.

When the LHA ceased operating, there were still segments of the route that had not been paved. The final segment was completed in 1938.

Nationally, the Lincoln Highway followed much of the route of the Transcontinental Railroad, from New York City and avoiding the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and instead traversing Wyoming through on its way to San Francisco.

In Nebraska, the Lincoln Highway followed the present route of U.S. 30, which in turn closely parallels the Platte River from Fremont to North Platte. West of North Platte, it runs along the South Platte as far as the Colorado line and then continues west along Lodgepole Creek into Wyoming.

From Grand Island west to the Wyoming line, I-80 has replaced U.S. 30 as the principal route. U.S. 30 still serves local traffic. East of Grand Island, I-80 and U.S. 30 diverge. I-80 goes east to Lincoln, while U.S. 30 runs northeast to Columbus, Fremont, and Blair (north of Omaha).

There's plenty to discover in terms of the history of a highway, but just as important, there's plenty to discover in terms of how America changed with the growth of the use of automobiles.

Traveling along the Father Road

There are a few good places in the state to see the oldest parts of the Father Road. Over the years, the alignment of the Lincoln Highway was shifted slightly in different places.

To understand these shifts, it's best to head to the east side of Grand Island, Neb., as a first stop to capture that history.

Carl Fisher's idea that the auto industry could pay for the Lincoln Highway was not realistic. The Lincoln Highway Association did not have the funds to pay for large sections of the road. However, beginning in 1914, the LHA did sponsor "Seedling Mile" projects intended to "demonstrate the desirability of this permanent type of road construction" and develop public enthusiasm for government construction.

The first Seedling Mile was built in 1914, but in 1921, after several years of construction, the LHA attempted to standardize construction methods with specifications provided by a committee of highway experts.

A Seedling Mile in

Grand Island was completed in November 1915. It was the second example of a concrete roadway in the U.S. The realignment of the highway in 1931 allowed this section to be preserved. It is the only original concrete Seedling Mile that remains intact.

To find this Seedling Mile, stop at the intersection of today's U.S. 30, Stuhr Road, and Seedling Mile Road, about where you'd find the historic Shady Bend Italian Restaurant. The Mile runs behind the equally historic Kensinger Service Station, on the north side of U.S. 30. This was the start of the concrete paving, which ran east down today's Seedling Mile Road to Seedling Mile School.

There's a good-sized parking lot with a Nebraska State Historical Society marker next to the Mile.

Drive west to Shelton to see two blocks of original bricks that were part of the first alignment of the Lincoln Highway through town. Also, there is an original billboard (repainted) advertising Bromo-Seltzer on the corner of one of the buildings. The Lincoln Highway Visitor Center displays Lincoln Highway memorabilia.

The Lincoln Highway passed through Shelton on a section of roadway paved with bricks. Two blocks survive as part of C Street in the old downtown. In 1931, Lincoln Highway was realigned, following the present route of U.S. 30.

Memorabilia in the Lincoln Highway Visitor Center, which is located in the historic Melsner Bank building, include examples of original road signage of different types as well as souvenirs that took advantage of the Lincoln Highway name—things like Burma Shave containers, postcards, ashtrays, and cigar boxes.

The Automobile Club of Southern California placed signs along the Lincoln Highway in the 1920s. The Shelton Historical Society is collecting signs posted along the highway in Nebraska. Examples are on display at the Lincoln Highway Visitors Center.

Then head west to Gothenburg, on the route of the Pony Express. The town was laid out on Union Pacific land in 1882. The Lincoln Highway in this part of the state was rerouted through downtown Gothenburg. However, a "berm" survives from the original alignment, which was south of Gothenburg.

"This berm was constructed in 1913. That's just a little over 50 years after the Pony Express," said Anne Anderson, executive director of the Gothenburg Com-

munity Development Office. "We were already thinking about cars traversing the United States, when once it was just horses carrying the mail. Even in 1913, people were saying, 'Let's take our cars and go.'"

The Pony Express Station, a log building, was constructed in 1854 at a site along the Oregon Trail a few miles west of Gothenburg. Originally, it was used as a fur trading post and ranch building. Then, in 1860 and 1861, it was a Pony Express Station. From 1861 to 1931, it was an Overland Trail Stage depot and then a bunkhouse and storage building on the Upper 96 ranch. In 1931, it was moved to its present site in a downtown park to preserve it.

Perhaps the central focus of any trip along the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska ought to be Kearney, home of several crane sanctuaries along the Platte River, and the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument.

The Platte River, which joins the Missouri between Omaha and Nebraska City, was one of the most important corridors for the settlement of the American West. In the 1840s, the first wave of migration, settlers going to Oregon Country, followed it. Beginning in 1847, Mormons heading to Utah did the same and so did prospectors heading to California in 1849 and thousands more going to the gold and silver mines of Colorado in 1859.

The First Transcontinental Railroad built between 1863 and 1869 passed through the Platte Valley. Between 1841 and 1866, 350,000 people traveled west along the Great Platte River Road.

The Archway commemorates the importance of the Platte River Valley in the settlement of the West. The Archway itself is a unique piece of architecture. Spanning Interstate 80, and resembling a covered bridge between two towers, its sides change color depending upon the light.

Inside the monument are 15 exhibits, called "vignettes," that tell the story of 150 years of transportation along the Great Platte River Road, beginning with Fort Kearney in 1848 and ending with an early 1960s roadside café. In each vignette a story is told using artwork supplemented by written text and audio recordings.

For more information on how to plan a summer trip along Nebraska's Lincoln Highway, visit www.lincolnhighwaynebraskabay.com. Larry Dreiling can be reached by phone at 785-628-1117, or by email at ldreiling@aol.com.



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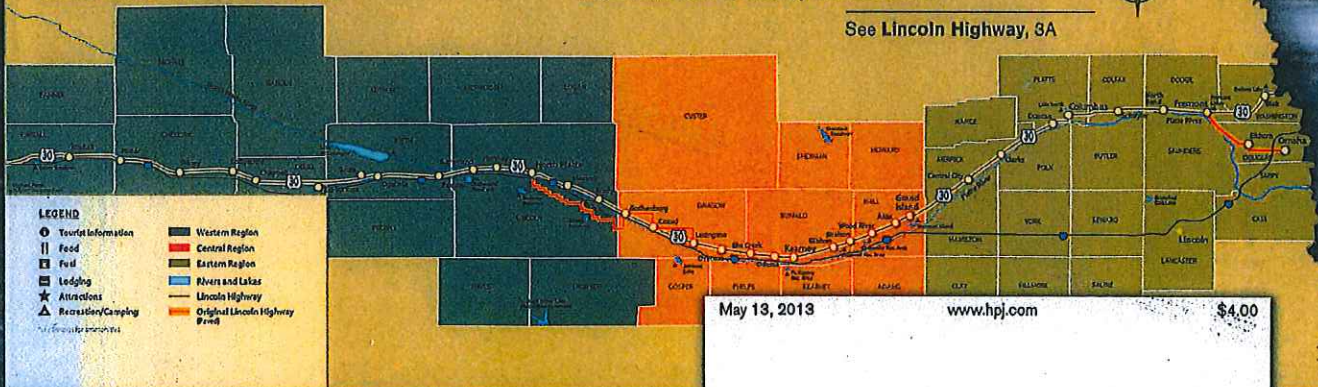
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Crane Watch Festival is March 21 to 30, 2014

By Larry Dreiling

It may be nearly a year away, but the Kearney, Neb., area is already in the planning stages for its third annual Crane Watch Festival. Kearney touts itself as the "Sandhill Crane Capital of the World."

The Central Platte River Valley—roughly a 90-mile stretch from Lexington to Chapman—is an important resting area for millions of ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, and other species during their annual migrations. The region is the pinch-point of the Central Flyway, which is one of four North American flyways followed by waterfowl and shorebirds on their annual trek from northern breeding grounds to wintering habitats and back again. The others are the Mississippi and the Atlantic and Pacific Flyways.

The Central Flyway is associated with the Great Plains, lying generally between the Rocky Mountains on the west and the Missouri and Mississippi River Valleys on the east. Flyways consist of migration routes, which are lanes of travel for particular species.

In a flyway, the routes of different species overlap geographically and chronologically. Species using the Central Flyway include, in addition to sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, tundra swans, Canadian geese, greater white-fronted geese, and canvasback ducks. Bald eagles, whooping cranes, herons, and other species also migrate through the Platte River area but over shorter distances.

In March, 80 percent of the world's half-million sandhill cranes roost on islands in the braided channel of the Central Platte, coming from Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico. The cranes use the sandbars in the river for nighttime refuge and disperse to nearby fields to feed during the day. They leave the river after sunrise and return at dusk.

During the month a sandhill crane stays along the Central Platte, it will deposit up to a pound of fat, which provides the energy necessary to complete the migration and initiate nesting. About 90 percent of their diet consists of corn while the remaining 10 percent is made up of invertebrates such as earthworms, snails, and insect larvae. It has been estimated that the cranes consume nearly 1,600 tons of grain during their stay that would have been volunteer corn the following spring.

Before there was corn, cranes ate starchy tubers from a variety of aquatic plants such as nut-sedge, a species once abundant in the widespread wetlands bordering the Platte before European settlement. Now about 75 percent of these wetlands have been converted to croplands.

The cranes still forage in the remaining wetlands, which are part of the Rainwater Basins. These are made up of playa lakes formed in shallow depressions that are common throughout the High Plains. More than 60,000 of these playas occur in parts of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas, and Nebraska.

The Central Platte Valley is

abuzz with tourists from all over the world each March to see the morning skies darken as the crane awake from their refuge on the sandbars and swarm out to meet the day and fill their bellies full of spent grain in order to ready themselves for their springtime journey northward.

Area hotels fill and restaurants open long before sunrise during the time the cranes refuge as crane enthusiasts flock to see these wonderful creatures as they take wing each morning.

The City of Kearney invites these enthusiasts to town to enjoy the community through barbecues, pancake feeds, art exhibitions, nature workshops, a carnival, fun events for kids and much more.

For more information, visit cranewatchfestival.com.

Rowe Sanctuary and the Crane Trust are the best places for visitors to view the cranes while they are on the river, in the early morning, as they leave the river, and dusk, as they return for the night. Both places have observation blinds (as well as more Spartan photographic blinds).

Away from the river, the cranes are everywhere in fields. It is common for people to stop on the roadside and watch the cranes. Fort Kearney State Historical Park has several blinds that can be set up in nearby fields, so that viewers can be closer to the cranes as they are feeding.

Rowe Sanctuary near Kearney and the Crane Trust property near Grand Island are two of the best places for visitors to view sandhill cranes during their annual spring migration—one of the top ten animal migration spectacles in the world, according to ethologist Jane Goodall, who, while she's more famous for her work with gorillas, comes to the area nearly every year to study the cranes.

Rowe Sanctuary is owned and managed by the National Audubon Society. The property includes 1,300 acres of river habitat and adjacent wetlands, as well as woodlands and mixed-grass prairie. During the spring migration, Rowe harbors more than 70,000 cranes nightly. Access to a blind at Rowe Sanctuary is by reservation. Contact <http://rove.audubon.org> for more information.

The Crane Trust is a private, nonprofit organization established in 1978 as a result of a court agreement between the Missouri Basin Power Project, which was proposing to construct a dam on a tributary of the Platte, on the one hand, and the State of Nebraska and the National Wildlife Federation, who jointly objected to the project because of likely impacts to wildlife and irrigation downstream, on the other.

The Crane Trust was established to administer an endowment funded by a payment from the Missouri Basin Power Project. Income from the endowment is used to acquire land and conservation easements in the Big Bend region of the Platte. It is also used to fund habitat management and restoration.



A flock of sandhill cranes leap into the sky from their nighttime refuge at the Iain Nicholson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon, Neb. Here, hundreds of thousands of sandhill cranes come together each March to feed off grain from nearby farms on their way north to summer habitats. The crane influx brings thousands of tourists to the Central Platte Valley each year. (Journal photo by Larry Dreiling.)

Contact www.nebraskanature.org for information on tours and for group blind reservations.

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The Toronto Sun Online



Bird watching: 500,000 sandhill cranes in Nebraska during spring migration

 torontosun.com/2014/02/25/bird-watching-500000-sandhill-cranes-in-nebraska-during-spring-migration

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

Jane Goodall doesn't take a 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.

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 2 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 of sandhill cranes 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 culture and hospitality between dawn and dusk.

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 Robert 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, which ran through the state, the hand-pulled wagons used on the Mormon Trail to the Lincoln Highway tourist camps which popped up in the state at the dawn of automobile travel.

NEED TO KNOW

Major airlines fly to Omaha. Kearney (pronounced "car-knee") is a three-hour drive west.

The Barrie Examiner Online

Bird watching: 500,000 sandhill cranes in Nebraska | Barrie Examiner

thebarrieexaminer.com/2014/02/25/bird-watching-500000-sandhill-cranes-in-nebraska-during-spring-migration

Nebraska

Bird watching: 500,000 sandhill cranes in Nebraska during spring migration 0

WAYNE NEWTON, Special to QMI Agency

Wednesday, February 26, 2014 12:00:00 EST AM



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High Plains Journal Online

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<http://www.hpj.com/archives/2013/may13/may13/Cranewatch.cfm>

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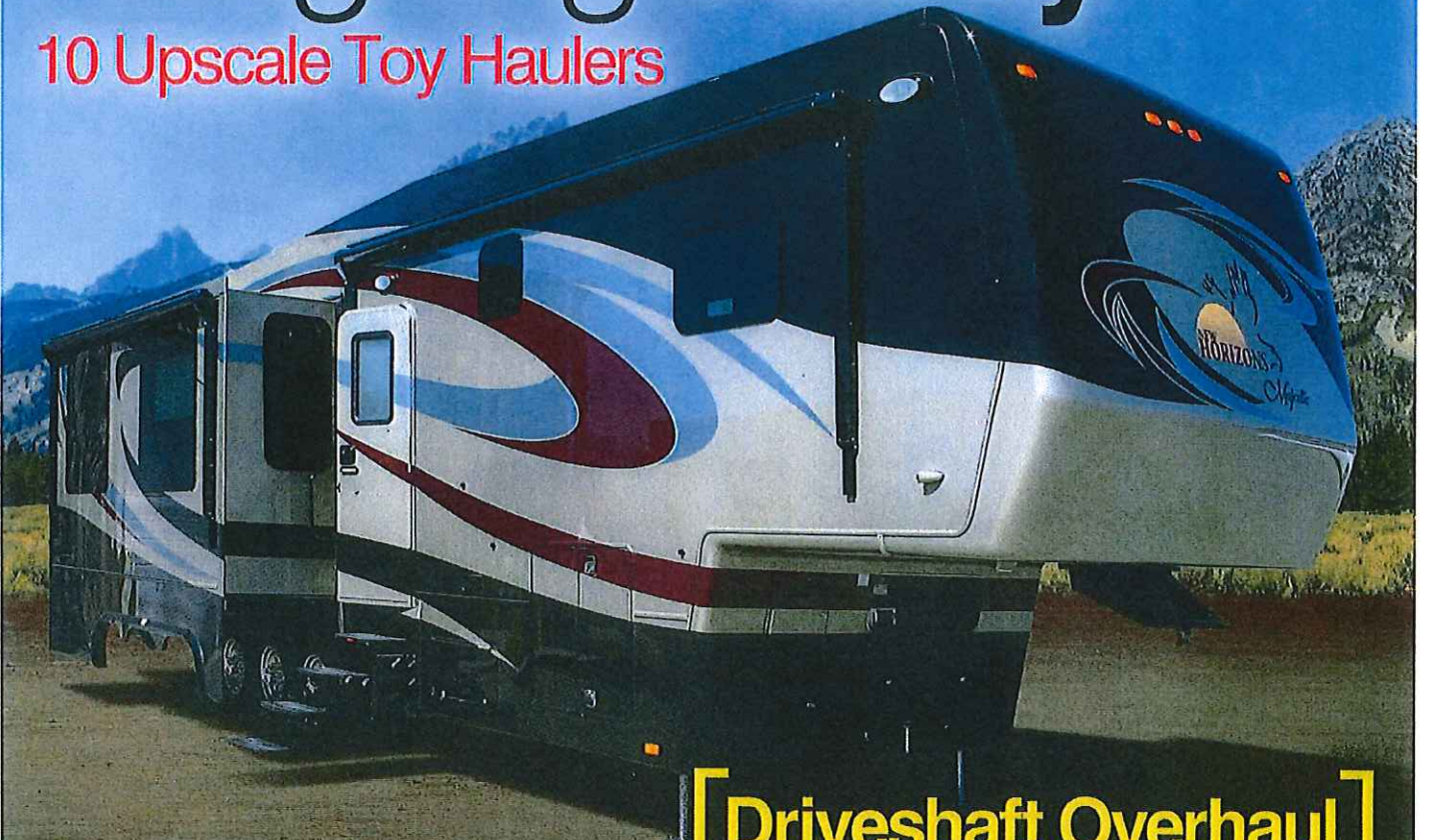
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10 Upscale Toy Haulers



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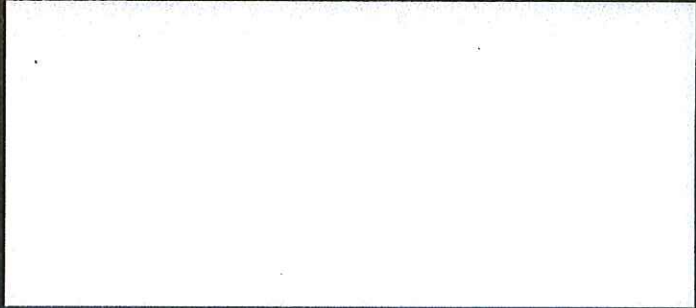
Touring Gold Country

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Settlers heading West on the Oregon, California and Mormon trails used the monument as a significant landmark.



Scotts Bluff National Monument

The prominent rock formation in Nebraska is a landmark that has served people for hundreds of years

article and photo by James Richardson

It towers 800 feet above the North Platte River and 4,659 feet above sea level. It has served as a landmark for people from early Native Americans to settlers heading west on the Oregon, California and Mormon trails, and even Pony Express riders. Now it is a landmark to modern travelers.

The 3,000-acre Scotts Bluff National Monument in northwest Nebraska is rich in geological and paleontological history, as well as human history. Its interpretive center tells the story of westward expansion and protects this significant geological formation.

Just outside the town of Scottsbluff and its twin city Gering along U.S. Route 26 is the impressive geologic land feature. Incidentally, the town "Scottsbluff" is written on maps as one word — a typo when the town was chartered. It was intended to be two words — Scotts Bluff.

Established in 1919, this National Park Service site became a location for the 1930s-era Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Nearly every structure at the Scotts Bluff National Monument was built by the CCC — the Summit Road and its three tunnels, Saddle Rock Trail and the visitor center. The Summit Road, which winds its way to the top, is thought to be the oldest existing concrete road in Nebraska. Vehicle width and length restrictions are in effect for the Summit Road. Those longer than 25 feet and/or higher than 11 feet 7 inches are prohibited. All trailers are prohibited. That necessitates leaving the RV parked at the visitor center and taking the Summit Shuttle, or hiking.

Hiking the 1.6-mile Saddle Rock Trail to the summit might prove to be a strenuous workout, even for the strong hearted. From the visitor center to the summit there is an

elevation change of 435 feet. Well, there is always the free shuttle.

At the summit, hike the half-mile North Overlook Trail to see the badlands area, the city of Scottsbluff and the North Platte River Valley, or the ¼-mile South Overlook Trail to view the Oregon Trail and Mitchell Pass.

Down below, travelers can view the covered wagons and walk the Oregon Trail Pathway to see remnants of the trails. In the summer months, visitors can experience the living-history program offered.

The only downside to the Scotts Bluff National Monument is that there are no campgrounds or food services within the park. But there are campgrounds in nearby Scottsbluff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Scotts Bluff National Monument
308-436-9700
www.nps.gov/scbl

Riverside Campground
(open May 1 to September 30)
308-632-6342, www.scottsbluff.org/departments/parks_and_recreation