

### ROAD TRIPS – MULTI-DAY ITINERARIES

- [Lakes and Prairies of Southwestern Nebraska](#)
- [Plains & Cranes](#)
- [Northern Exposure](#)
  
- [Journeys Across Western Nebraska](#)
- [From Cosmopolitan to Cowboys: Omaha to Ogallala](#)

Go from a spellbinding Broadway show at the Orpheum Theater and a delicious dinner at the French Café one day to a mouthwatering steak dinner and a rootin' tootin' Old West cowboy show at Front Street the next. Eat, drink, and be merry as you follow the path of the American West across Nebraska along the Platte River.

#### Day 1

[Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo](#) offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the world's largest indoor rainforest, the Desert Dome (including a sand waterfall), Kingdoms of the Night, Hubbard Gorilla Valley, Orangutan Forest, an impressive aquarium, an outstanding big cat collection, an open-air aviary, and a Lozier IMAX Theater. Enjoy a ride high above the zoo on the Skyfari. The historic [Old Market District](#) is an eclectic shopping and dining district that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafés, and upscale restaurants.

The arts are alive all through Omaha. [The Durham Museum](#) is located in a restored art deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad.

[Hot Shops Art Center](#) is a 92,000-square-foot facility that houses 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces, and a café/coffee shop.

[Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#) showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music, and humanities through exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, and educational programs.

The [Joslyn Art Museum](#) is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present and features European, American, Western American, American Indian, and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art and its collection of watercolors and prints by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer.

[El Museo Latino](#) highlights the important contribution that the Hispanic population has had on the history, culture, and development of Omaha. The 100-acre

[Lauritzen Gardens](#) includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose and herb gardens, spring flower walk, Victorian and festival gardens, and a woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot visitor center offers year-round floral displays.

Relax on a cruise going up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#). The Mormon Trail Center at Historic Winter Quarters chronicles the hardships the Mormon pioneers who camped in the area faced during the winter of 1846–47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. Florence Mill was founded in 1846 as the Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill. The former mill and grain elevator are home to the Winter Quarters Mill Museum and Loft Gallery.

West Omaha is home to Father Flanagan's world-famous [Boys Town](#). Take a tour of the place that Spencer Tracey made famous for portraying Father Flanagan. Stroll through the garden inspired by the Bible and see the world's largest ball of stamps in the gift shop. A fun activity is Dinner With Father Flanagan, where you can enjoy a traditional family-style dinner while portraying one of the children who lived at Boys Town. Afterward, see the outcome of your child's life at the Wall of History.

The [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#) in Bellevue shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways, deep ravines, and loess ridges and 17 miles of walking paths. Delicious chuck wagon dinners, year-round events, and picking your own fruit are some of the fun activities you'll find at the [Bellevue Berry Farm and Pumpkin Patch](#) in Papillion.

### Day 2

The 12,000-square-foot Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education Center includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and a display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#) hosts a five-week Fall Festival complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. The

[Holy Family Shrine](#)

is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to all people.

Ashland has a charming downtown district of cool, funky shops and restaurants. It's also the gateway to three stellar attractions: [Strategic Air & Space Museum](#), [Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park and Wildlife Safari](#), and

[Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#)

. View an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species mounted in replicas of their natural surroundings at

[Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#)

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In addition to a beautiful view of the surrounding countryside, the [Soaring Wings Winery](#) offers wine tastings, tours, and a gift shop. Experience an eclectic two-acre sculpture garden at [Carl Weiss Sculpture Studio](#)

. The formal and informal gardens are dotted with sculptures and works of art by local and regional artists. Meander quietly along the walking paths at

[Springcreek Gardens & Nursery](#)

, where a new plant or surprise is around every corner at this full-service nursery and landscape design center.

The [Louisville Art Gallery](#) in Louisville features more than 3,500-square-feet of exhibition space for sculptures, paintings, ceramics, pottery, and fine art photography. The Gallery Shop is home to [Art Chicks – Where Girlfriends Gather](#), where singing, dancing, and frivolity are encouraged. You might find yourself wearing a feather boa and brandishing a magic wand to explore the gallery's two shops and garden. Select a whimsical art piece and then indulge in a gourmet lunch.

Freshen your house from a selection of more than 70 delicious candle scents at [Cryin' Creek Candles](#). Spend a leisurely afternoon trying new wines in a French Country House setting at [Slattery Vintage Estates](#) in Nehawka. Afterwards, take your glass outside to enjoy bird-watching in a relaxing courtyard.

Take a guided tour of Lincoln's impressive [State Capitol](#) building, home of the nation's only one-house legislative body. It's Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art depicting the state's political and cultural development. Walk through the adjacent Nebraska Governor's Mansion. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. While away some time in Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#).

This historic downtown district offers a wide variety of galleries, restaurants, antique stores, shops, bars, and coffee houses in turn-of-the-century buildings in what was once Lincoln's warehouse and farmers' market district. The state's largest farmers' market is held there Saturday mornings from May through October. Search for Nebraska-made products at [From Nebraska](#).

The University of Nebraska's two campuses house a number of quality museums. Designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson, the [Sheldon Museum of Art](#) is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. The [Great Plains Art Museum](#) features changing exhibits and collections of Western art. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#) features a world-class collection of fossils, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaur exhibits, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center, and a planetarium. The [International Quilt Study Center](#) features 950 quilts from the Ardis and Robert James Collection. It also is home to more than 1,600 quilts from the Robert Cargo Collection of African American Quilts, the Jonathan Holstein Collection, and the Sara Miller Collection of Amish Crib Quilts.

Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#). The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#) preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia and then to

America. The Heritage Center's exhibits include a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad cabooses, and residences. The

[Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#)

south of Lincoln includes more than 350 plant species and 170 bird species on more than 600 acres of rare, native tallgrass prairie, springs, wetlands, and ponds.

Enjoy a relaxing time sipping a variety of delicious wines at [Prime Country Vineyard](#) southwest of Lincoln in Denton. A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to

[James Arthur Vineyards](#)

in Raymond. The winery features a wine tasting room, gift shop, and peaceful hiking trails.

Experience life at a certified organic farm at

[Branched Oak Farm](#)

. An on-farm store sells food and products grown on the farm.

### Day 3

York is best known for [Chances "R" Restaurant and Lounge](#). The "R," as it is known locally, offers huge portions at reasonable rates and good food made from scratch. If you happen to be in York on a Sunday morning, the "R" offers an outstanding Sunday brunch. Visit Lee's Legendary Marbles and Collectables, where more than a half-million marbles are on display, including some very rare ones. Browse the shelves of

[Four Winds Indian Books](#)

, the world's largest American Indian bookstore, where you can learn everything about American Indian arts and crafts, languages, culture, history, lifestyle, tribes, cooking, and clothing.

Aurora's [Edgerton Explorit Center](#) is dedicated to Aurora native Harold "Doc" Edgerton, the inventor of the strobe light. Visit Grand Island and experience pioneer life at the

[Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer](#)

, one of the top ten living history museums in the country. Walk through an 1890s railroad town, push a handcart on the Mormon Trail, learn about Great Plains American Indians, or explore the birth cottage of Oscar-winning actor Henry Fonda. A variety of special events are offered at the museum throughout the year. Grand Island abounds with art galleries, specialty stores, and other shops, such as

[Prairie Winds Art Center](#)

, The Warehouse Gallery, The Gallery, Heart of the Country, and

[Bartenbach's Galleries](#)

The [Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History](#) has one of the best natural history collections in the region, including the *people of the Plains*

exhibit from prehistoric times to historic trails and pioneer towns.

*Kool-Aid: Discover the Dream*

is an interactive exhibit that tells the story of the birth of one of America's favorite soft drinks. Lifelike murals and replicas, a fiber-optic river of Kool-Aid, interactive kiosks, and the original Kool-Aid Man costume tell the story. The J.M. McDonald Planetarium will schedule special

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show times for groups, and the museum's IMAX Theatre has been upgraded to the Lied Super Screen Theater. Go back to the days of Kool-Aid moustaches and release your inner child at [Kool-Aid Days](#) in August.

### Day 4

Minden is home to the world-famous [Harold Warp Pioneer Village](#). Twenty-six buildings—including a sod house, one-room school, Pony Express station, and an 1884 church—make up the village. It houses the oldest existing Buick and 350 other antique cars, 20 historic aircraft, 100 vintage tractors, guns, motorcycles, snowmobiles, boats, buggies, trains, and trolleys. The historic crafts of spinning, weaving, and broom-making are demonstrated year-round. Visit the historic [Minden Opera House](#), which has been restored into a beautiful multipurpose facility that attracts live performances from around the country. Officially known as the Christmas City, Minden knows how to celebrate the holiday when the downtown district is ablaze with more than 12,000 lights for the impressive Light of the World Christmas pageant.

Stop at Kearney's [Great Platte River Road Archway](#), the only tourist attraction in the nation located over a federal interstate highway. The Arch commemorates westward expansion of America, including the West's original American Indian habitants; the Mormon, Oregon, and California Trails; the early pioneers; the modern railroad; and the Lincoln Highway. Explore the history of transportation and communication along the famous Platte River Road through great interactive exhibits.

Housed in a historic 1911 Renaissance revival post office, the [Museum of Nebraska Art](#) features works of art that highlight Nebraska and the Great Plains in 11 exceptional galleries. The museum's permanent collection includes more than 5,000 works by artists of regional, national, and international importance. Stroll outdoors through the Cliff Hillegass Sculpture Garden.

[Thunderhead Brewing Company](#) offers award-winning beer and delicious pizza baked in a stone oven. Tours of the brewery can be requested. As you explore Kearney, look for [Cranes on Parade](#), 6-foot fiberglass cranes that are works of art.

The [Heartland Museum of Military Vehicles](#) in Lexington is an impressive collection of military equipment and machinery. Lexington also is home to [Mac's Creek Vineyards and Winery](#), where you can sample excellent Nebraska-produced wines and tour the vineyards and production facilities. One of the few Pony Express stations still intact in Nebraska is located in Gothenburg's city park. Original items are on display, and you can send postcards postmarked with the original Pony Express stamp to friends and family back home.

[Buffalo Bill State Historical Park](#) in North Platte. Tour his house and the beautifully maintained barn. During the third week of June, the entire community dons their Western duds for

NEBRASKAland Days, 12 days of Old West fun and entertainment! Enjoy a spectacular view of Union Pacific Railroad's Bailey Yard, the world's largest railroad classification yard, from atop the eight-story [Golden Spike Tower and Visitor Center](#). The 95-foot-tall tower and visitor center feature an enclosed 360-degree view of the action below, historical and regional railroad memorabilia, and a gift shop.

[Fort Cody Trading Post](#) is one of the state's largest and engagingly eclectic gift shops. Antiques, leather goods, jewelry, Western gifts, novelties, books, clothing, gag gifts, and a variety of other fun gifts and souvenirs can be picked up at Fort Cody. If it's fun, it's at Fort Cody! Walk through the Old West Museum in the back of the store to view a miniature version of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show via a hand-carved, 20,000-piece animated display.

The Artists Co-op Art and Gift Gallery is a showcase of original work of west-central Nebraska artists. Five gallery rooms and an outdoor sculpture garden provide great opportunities to view the works of art at your leisure. Workshops are hosted by artist members and nationally acclaimed professional artists. Bring back some Old West charm at [Rustic Traditions](#), which has a showroom full of furniture, lamps, pottery, glass, mirrors, and other pieces created in a Western flair. Enjoy a delicious dinner, lunch, or wine tasting while surrounded by rows of grapevines at [Feather River Vineyards](#).

### Day 5

[Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge](#) in Paxton is one of Nebraska's most famous watering holes. It's well-known for its impressive collection of mounted animals, quality food, and exceptional hospitality. Stop by [5 Trails Winery](#) for a glass of fine Nebraska red, white, or dessert wine.

Ogallala embraces its colorful Western past at [Front Street](#), where you can catch the Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot-Out—Nebraska's longest-running summer theatre. Visit the [Petrified Wood Gallery](#)

, a natural history gallery that specializes in ancient woods, fossils, and American Indian artifacts. Ogallala is home to

[Lake McConaughy](#)

, the state's largest lake and a water lover's paradise that offers white-sand beaches, excellent fishing, and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the lake. The Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center is the state's first water museum and interprets water's significance to the state's past, present, and future. From late December to early March, the

[Bald Eagle Viewing Center](#)

below the dam is one of the best locations to view bald eagles.

Explore the land of grapes and honey at [South Fork Vineyard](#) near Ogallala. Stroll through the vineyards while sipping a delicious glass (or two) of Nebraska wine, and take home a variety of honeybee products, such as pure Nebraska honey, flavored honey cream, honey sticks, natural soaps and lotions, beeswax candles, and savory honey spread.

## **Route Directions**

### **Day 1**

Spend the day in Omaha

### **Day 2**

From Omaha, 22 miles west on I-80, west on NE-370 to Gretna

11 miles west on US-6 to Ashland

20 miles east on US-6, east on I-80, east on NE-370, south on NE-50 to Springfield

7 miles south on NE-50 to Louisville

11 miles south on NE-50 to Weeping Water

13 miles south on 144th Street, east on US-34 to Nehawka

38 miles west on US-34 to Lincoln

### **Day 3**

From Lincoln, 54 miles west on I-80 to York

23 miles west on US-34 to Aurora

22 miles west on US-34 to Grand Island

26 miles south on US-281 to Hastings

### **Day 4**

From Hastings, 33 miles west on US-6 to Minden

23 miles west on US-6, north on NE-44 to Kearney

40 miles west on I-80 to Lexington

30 miles west on I-80 to Gothenburg

37 miles west on I-80 to North Platte

### **Day 5**

From North Platte, 34 miles west on I-80 to Paxton

21 miles west on I-80 to Ogallala