

JOURNEYS ACROSS WESTERN NEBRASKA



Western Nebraska is a vast region of great diversity. Wide open, windswept high plains in the south; green, rolling Sandhills in the center; and rugged buttes and bluffs in the north, this region will delight and inspire you. Four state scenic byways cross the region: Bridges to Buttes Byway, Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway, Western Trails Scenic & Historic Byway, and Gold Rush Scenic Byway.

DAY 1

Ogallala • Lewellen • Alliance

MORNING

Ogallala embraces its colorful western past at **Front Street and Cowboy Museum** (allow 1 hour) where you can catch The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out, Nebraska's longest-running summer theatre. Visit the **Petrified Wood and Art Gallery** (allow 45 minutes) a natural history gallery specializing in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts.

On the way out of Ogallala, stop by Lake McConaughy and the **Lake McConaughy Visitor and Water Interpretive Center** (allow 1 hour). The state's first water-related facility houses interactive educational exhibits highlighting the Platte River and High Plains Aquifer. Continue west on the Western Trails Scenic & Historic Byway to Lewellen and a tour of 17 Ranch Winery (allow 45 minutes).

AFTERNOON

While in town, enjoy a delicious homemade lunch at **The Most Unlikely Place** (allow 1 hour) while admiring pastels, watercolors, glass etchings and wood sculptures created by local artists. After lunch, settle back for a scenic ride through a portion of the Nebraska Sandhills to Alliance.

Explore the rich pioneer spirit of western Nebraska, the Sandhills, Ogallala Aquifer, Native American culture and more at the **Knight Museum and Sandhills Center** (allow 1 hour). **The Carnegie Arts Center** (allow 45 minutes) features works by local and regional artists, a gift shop and a sculpture garden. Dinner and this evening's lodging are in Alliance.

DAY 2

Chadron • Crawford • Agate Fossil Beds National Monument

MORNING

Nebraska attraction. **Carhenge** (allow 30 minutes) is an exact replica of England's world-famous Stonehenge, but using old cars instead of stones. Continue north along the Gold Rush Byway to Chadron to explore the **Museum of the Fur Trade** (allow 1 hour). This one-of-a-kind museum is dedicated to preserving the nation's lucrative fur-trading industry. Also on museum grounds is the Bordeaux Trading Post (built 1837) which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Continue west on Bridges to Buttes Byway to Crawford and discover a stark Badlands landscape at **Toadstool Geologic Park** (allow 1 hour). View examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations on an easy one-mile loop trail and a reconstructed sod house for a glimpse into the past when sod was the only available building material.

Enjoy guided interpretive tours and hands-on activities at **Hudson-Meng Research and Education Center** (allow 1 hour), site where 600 bison died 10,000 years ago. Observe active archaeological excavations in June.

AFTERNOON

Lunch is at **High Plains Homestead** (allow 1.5 hours), a recreated Old West village featuring a working blacksmith shop, antique store and the Dirty Creek Saloon. Visit the old-fashioned general store to pick up a special gift or rustic souvenir. Next stop is **Fort Robinson State Park** (allow 2 hours) for historic tours, Jeep and stagecoach rides through the majestic, pine-covered buttes, viewing pasture for bison and purebred Texas longhorn herds, and much more. View the dramatic "Clash of the Mammoths" exhibit at the park's **Trailside Museum of Natural History**.

Next stop is south of Harrison and the 3,000-acre **Agate Fossil Beds National Monument** (allow 1 hour). This fossil lover's paradise also includes an interpretive center and the impressive Cook Collection of artifacts from Red Cloud of the Oglala Lakota Sioux. Continue to Scottsbluff/Gering for dinner and your lodging for the evening.

DAY 3

Gering • Bayard • Sidney

MORNING

Start your morning in Gering and 800 feet above the North Platte River at **Scotts Bluff National Monument** (allow 1.5 hours). This prominent landmark was used by Native Americans, fur traders, and Oregon and Mormon trail pioneers as a guide westward. A drive to the summit gives you a tremendous view of the entire valley and the wagon ruts that are still visible at the base. A gift shop and museum show the historical importance of the trail and the area's colorful history.

Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines at the **Legacy of the Plains Museum** (allow 1 hour). Depart for Bayard to stand beneath Chimney Rock, the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. The **Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitors Center** (allow 1.5 hours) showcases fascinating stories from pioneers as they trekked westward.

AFTERNOON

Eat lunch in Bayard before continuing south on the Gold Rush Scenic Byway to Sidney and **Cabela's** (allow 1 hour) the world's largest outdoor outfitter. Don't miss its centerpiece: a man-made mountain featuring dozens of animals

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