

Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice.®

Nebraska Tourism Commission 2015 Annual Report | VisitNebraska.com



Nebraska Tourism Commission

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888-444-1867 or 402-471-3796 • VisitNebraska.com

Nebraska Tourism Commissioners

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VisitNebraska



NebraskaTourismIndustry



NebraskaTourism



visitnebraska



nebraskatourism



visit_nebraska

Accreditation

Promoting travel and tourism is an effective means to support economic development, in part, because the industry is linked to many other industries in the economy, generating additional demand in a wide range of services and professions. Therefore, in order to maintain an international standard of excellence and consistency of performance, including professionalism of best practices, the Nebraska Tourism Commission applied for and became an accredited DMO through the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) in 2013. DMAP's globally recognized accreditation serves as a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management. Nebraska was the first state to earn this designation and remains accredited in this program by completing an annual report.

Director's Report



Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice. has a dual meaning. It's a reference to the nice moments and the nice people that make the best vacations memorable and special. It's about the special moment that is talked about and cherished for years

and years to come. It's different for everyone – it could be tanking down the Middle Loop River with good friends, or enjoying a College World Series game with your child, or learning to water-ski while on a family camping trip at Lake McConaughy.

Time spent traveling is meaningful and priceless. However, for the state, tourism is a business. In fact, it's BIG BUSINESS. Tourism is Nebraska's third-largest revenue source. It supports existing companies and stimulates new business development. It is a source of immediate revenue to Nebraska's communities and provides more than 46,000 jobs statewide. It is the Nebraska Tourism Commission's job to create nationwide awareness about Nebraska's attractions and hidden gems. This was accomplished in 2015 through:

- Printed and distributed more than 200,000 Nebraska Travel Guides.
- Enhanced our website to make it more user friendly for 225,000+ users.
- Surpassed our social media goals by increasing our Facebook fans by 35% over the year before Twitter followers also grew for @NebraskaTourism from 8,000 to 9,671 followers. Pinterest, YouTube and Instagram also saw growth and increased engagement in 2015.

- Completed the most successful year, to date, for the Nebraska Passport Program.
- Hosted three media tours exposing national travel writers to many of the state's top attractions.
- Garnered major national press in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Des Moines Register*, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *AAA Journeys*, *Hemisphere's Magazine*, *MSN.com*, *USAToday.com*, *Meetings Focus* and many more.
- Reached millions of TV viewers across the country via paid commercial time and partnerships with national production companies for events such as the Big Ten Baseball Tournament, the College World Series and Husker sporting events broadcast on Big Ten Network (BTN), Husker Sports and other major networks.

In 2016, we look to the future, we see great opportunities for hoteliers, agri/eco-tourism, artisanal breweries, wineries, and farm-to-table dining. The Commission has developed additional resources to help those looking to start and/or develop businesses within the industry or to enhance existing attractions.

We are thankful for the leadership from the Nebraska Tourism Commissioners and our industry partners. We thank Governor Pete Ricketts and the Nebraska Legislature for their support and confidence in us.

We are honored to serve in this industry and represent our state. Together, we are better.



Kathy McKillip, Executive Director
Nebraska Tourism Commission • 402-471-1558

The mission of the Nebraska Tourism Commission is to expand Nebraska's dynamic and diverse travel industry, making it more viable by creating awareness and attracting increased visitors, which results in greater tourism revenue and economic gain throughout the state.



A Word From Our Commission Chair



WOW! What a wild ride of success and progress the Nebraska Tourism Commission has enjoyed and experienced since its inception three and a half years ago. A strategic plan was developed and all of the goals that were feasible were

accomplished, thus inspiring the commission to update and draft a new strategic plan. That plan will be shared with the industry in February of 2016. Great analysis and forethought has gone into it and I am certain that you all will enjoy assisting the state in accomplishing our new goals and objectives.

Significant accomplishments do not take place in a vacuum. The Commission's growing staff and agencies of record are made up of dynamic and accomplished professionals who work passionately and aggressively to accomplish much for Nebraska tourism and the state's economic development efforts.

The volunteer board of commissioners meet frequently, discussing many topics and sharing communications constantly as a significant part of the state's tourism team. However, the most significant members of the Nebraska tourism

team are all of us in this great industry. Hard workers and professionals ready to build tourism, provide high-quality guest experiences and work collaboratively to move tourism forward. From front desk team members to volunteer museum workers, we are all working jointly to show off Nebraska and how nice everyone – and every experience – is for our guests.

The Nebraska Tourism Commission is dedicated and committed to building a strong tourism industry, and this success will only come to fruition if we all work together moving our great state forward. Feel free to contact me anytime letting me know how we can work together to accomplish more for our great state. As native Nebraska Larry the Cable Guy would say let's "git-r-done"! May you all have a successful tourism year in 2016.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Chapo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

John Chapo
Nebraska Tourism Commission Chairman



The Nebraska Tourism Commission is dedicated and committed to building a strong tourism industry, and this success will only come to fruition if we all work together moving our great state forward.

–John Chapo, Nebraska Tourism Commission Chairman

Financial Report

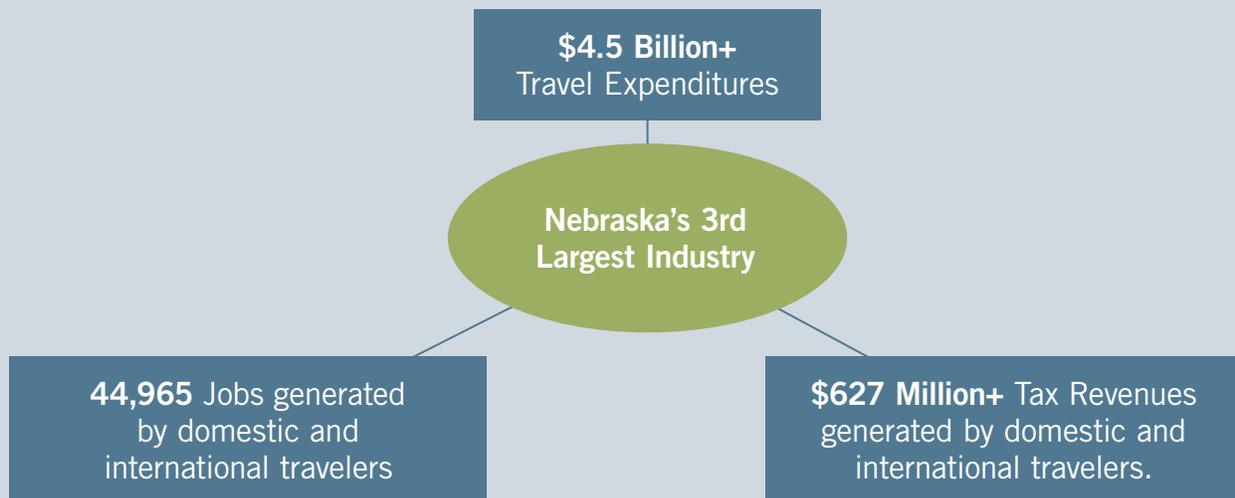
- The Nebraska Tourism Commission's budget is approximately \$6.6 million, of which \$250,000 is appropriated from the State's General Fund for state aid. In 2015, the Nebraska Tourism Commission was appropriated just about \$5.7 million in cash funds from the State Lodging Tax for operations including salaries and \$602,600 for State Aid.
- Overall through October, collected amounts totaled \$4,663,704.66. That is up \$379,899.05 compared to 2014 through October, an increase of 8.86%.
- State Lodging Tax collections show an upward trend in hotel stays and visitation, and continue to grow at an average of rate of 6.8% yearly since the Commission became an agency in 2012.
- Final 2015 lodging tax revenue collected in 2015 will be available at VisitNebraska.com in February 2016.
- The Nebraska Tourism Commission recently endorsed the Best Practices and Guiding Principles for allocations of Lodging Tax Dollars. These guiding principles for county officials, tourism representatives and others in the tourism industry address and encourage a cohesive approach to promoting the tourism industry. For a copy of Best Practices and Guiding Principles go to visitnebraska.com/media/industry.

Travel Marketing Tax Revenues

\$1 = \$99

For every \$1 the Nebraska Tourism Commission spends Nebraska receives approximately \$99 back in tax revenues.

Nebraska's Travel Industry Economic Impact



Advertising

In 2015, the Commission’s advertising efforts included billboards, video, TV, radio, print, digital, mass transit and other methods, targeted to potential visitors across the country.

In addition to special placements in the Huskers, Chicago Cubs, Kansas City Royals, and the Foster Farms Bowl game programs, the Commission also partnered with the Big Ten Network, Nebraska Educational Television and Husker Sports for special coverage and event sponsorships for Husker athletics, the Nebraska State High School Championships and more.

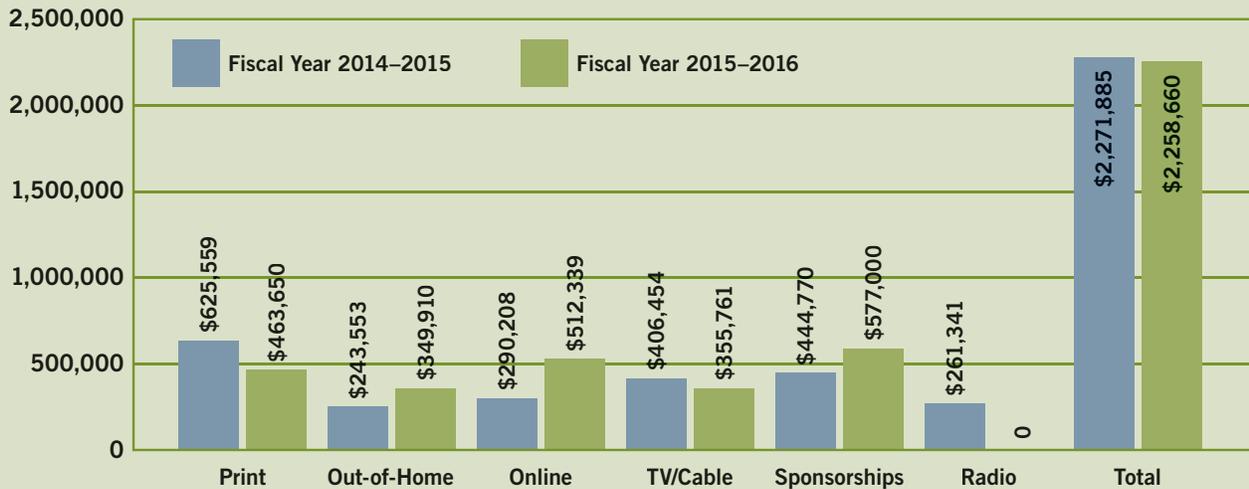
Brochures & Publications

The Nebraska Tourism Commission printed more than 200,000 Nebraska Travel Guides in 2015.

Top 10 States Requesting Nebraska Travel Guides in 2015

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Illinois | 6. Wisconsin |
| 2. Missouri | 7. Michigan |
| 3. Nebraska | 8. New York |
| 4. Texas | 9. Iowa |
| 5. Ohio | 10. Florida |

Media Spending

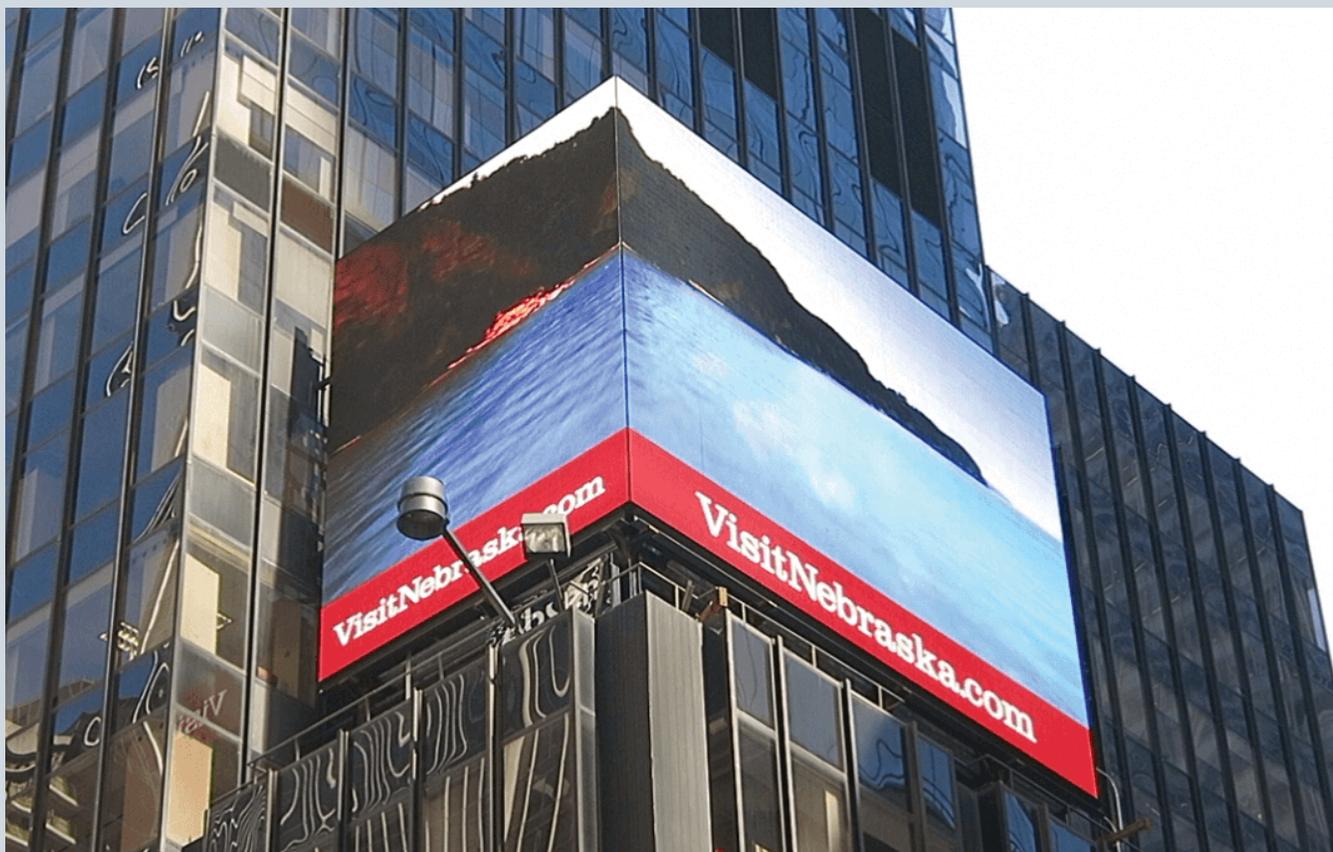


Crete Carrier Trucking National Partnership



Television
6,999,000 impressions

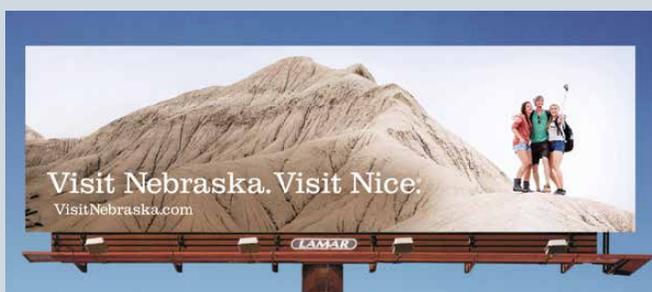
Advertising



Times Square
27,114,474 impressions



Transit
35,917,248 impressions



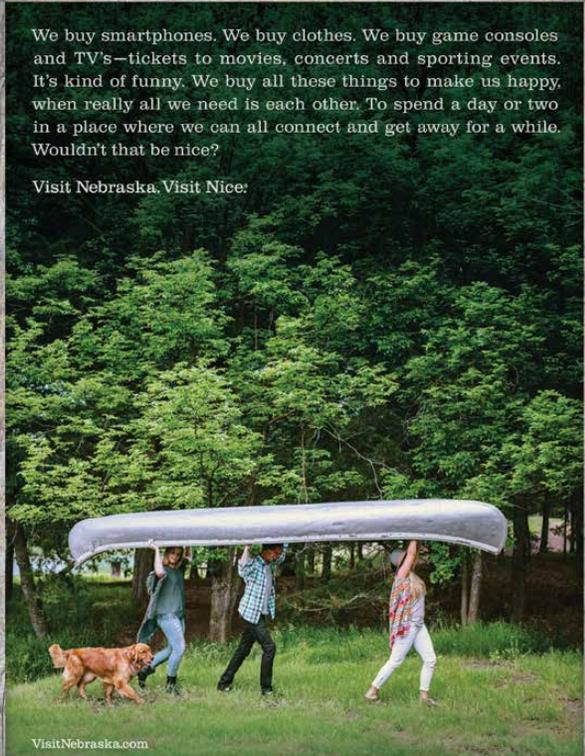
Billboards
24,763,530 impressions



Advertising

We buy smartphones. We buy clothes. We buy game consoles and TV's—tickets to movies, concerts and sporting events. It's kind of funny. We buy all these things to make us happy, when really all we need is each other. To spend a day or two in a place where we can all connect and get away for a while. Wouldn't that be nice?

Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice:

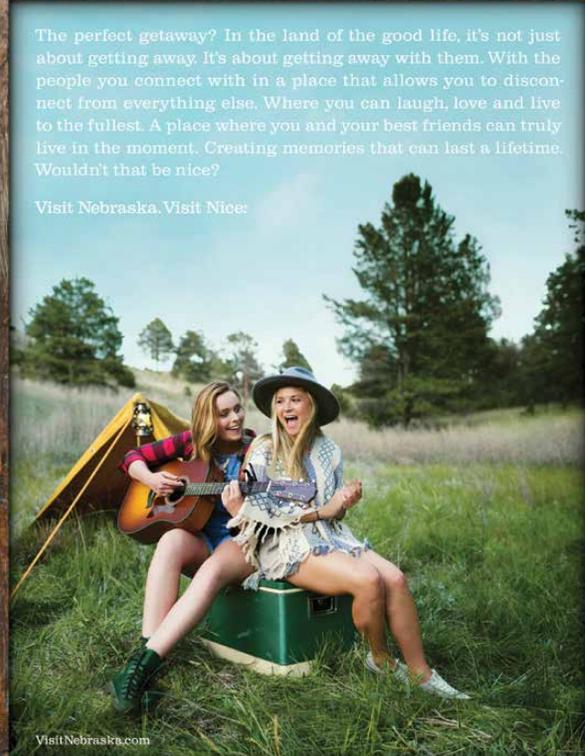


VisitNebraska.com

This advertisement features a rustic wooden frame. The top half contains white text on a dark background. Below the text, a photograph shows three people in a forest carrying a long, light-colored canoe on their shoulders. A golden retriever is walking in the foreground. The bottom left corner has the website URL.

The perfect getaway? In the land of the good life, it's not just about getting away. It's about getting away with them. With the people you connect with in a place that allows you to disconnect from everything else. Where you can laugh, love and live to the fullest. A place where you and your best friends can truly live in the moment. Creating memories that can last a lifetime. Wouldn't that be nice?

Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice:

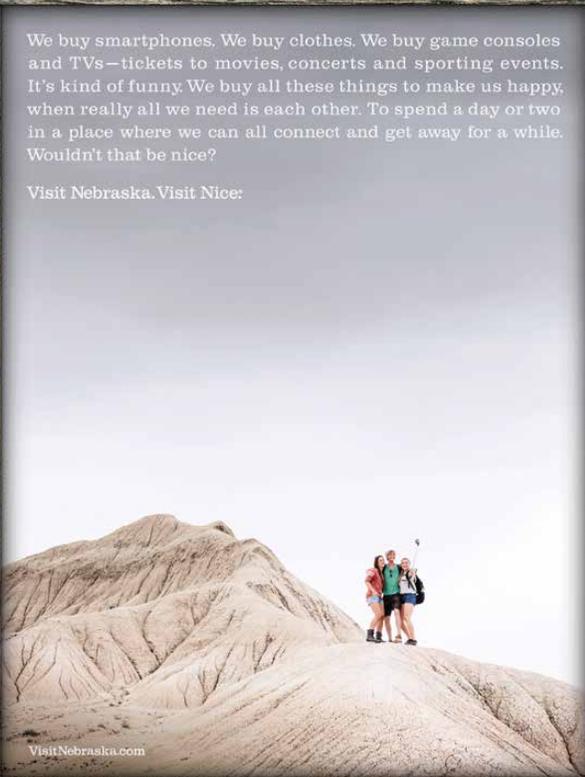


VisitNebraska.com

This advertisement features a rustic wooden frame. The top half contains white text on a light blue background. Below the text, a photograph shows two women sitting on a green cooler in a grassy field. One woman is playing an acoustic guitar. A yellow tent is visible in the background. The bottom left corner has the website URL.

We buy smartphones. We buy clothes. We buy game consoles and TV's—tickets to movies, concerts and sporting events. It's kind of funny. We buy all these things to make us happy, when really all we need is each other. To spend a day or two in a place where we can all connect and get away for a while. Wouldn't that be nice?

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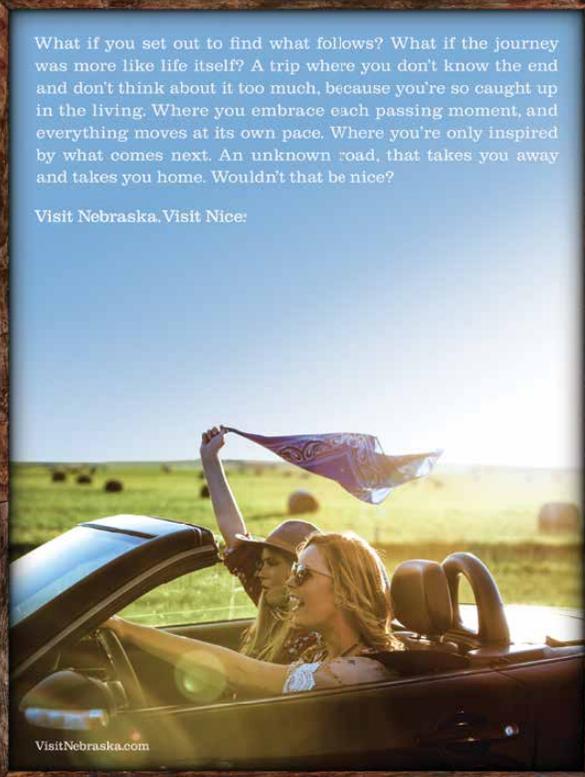


VisitNebraska.com

This advertisement features a rustic wooden frame. The top half contains white text on a light blue background. Below the text, a photograph shows a group of people standing on a large, eroded sand dune. The bottom left corner has the website URL.

What if you set out to find what follows? What if the journey was more like life itself? A trip where you don't know the end and don't think about it too much, because you're so caught up in the living. Where you embrace each passing moment, and everything moves at its own pace. Where you're only inspired by what comes next. An unknown road, that takes you away and takes you home. Wouldn't that be nice?

Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice:



VisitNebraska.com

This advertisement features a rustic wooden frame. The top half contains white text on a light blue background. Below the text, a photograph shows two women in a convertible car driving through a field. One woman is holding a purple flag. The bottom left corner has the website URL.

Print/Magazines
36,156,743 impressions
12,349 leads delivered

Visitor Communication

In 2015, nearly one million visitors stopped at visitor centers across the state. More than 40 seasonal travel counselors staffed 16 rest areas and visitor centers across the state.

Total Visitors



Corporate Partnerships

Several top Nebraska-based corporations partner with the Nebraska Tourism Commission to promote state tourism activities to their employees.



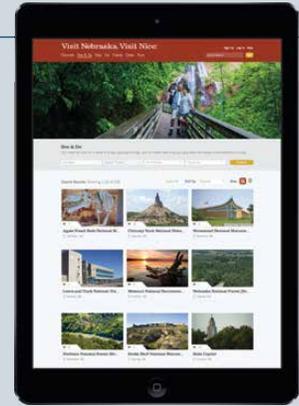
In mid-October the Nebraska Tourism Commission released a second phase of enhancements to the new website. The website VisitNebraska.com is the main source of information for visitor engagement and is the call to action for all Nebraska Tourism advertising. Website listings on VisitNebraska.com promote Nebraska's lodging facilities, restaurants, golf courses, attractions, events, festivals, cultural celebrations and outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Commission also provides opportunities for Nebraska Convention and Visitors Bureaus, communities, and attractions to boost and support businesses by building a database of direct leads. As a lead program advertiser, participants have their own opt-in box on the VisitNebraska.com page where visitors go to request a free Nebraska Travel Guide. When they choose to receive additional information by checking that location's box, their contact information is forwarded directly to local organizations, attractions and businesses for follow-up.

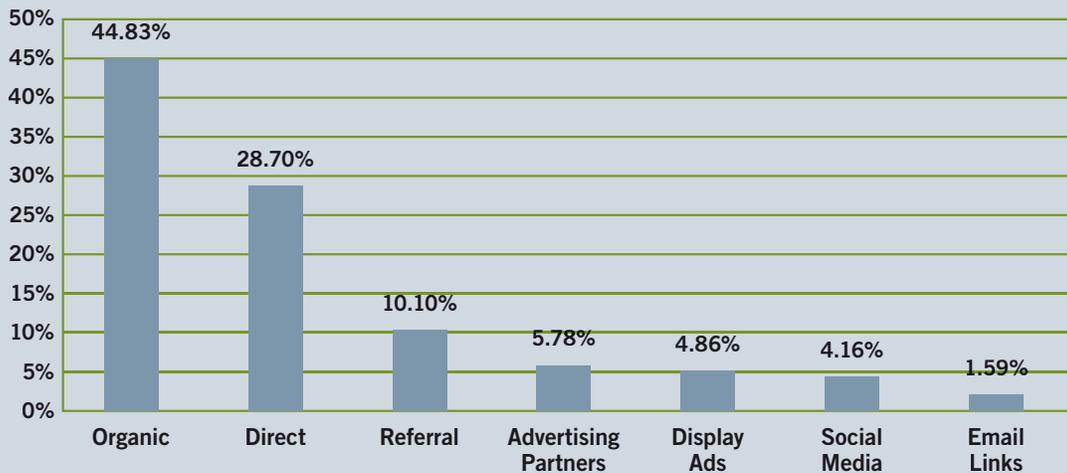
VisitNebraska.com 2015 Statistics

(January 1, 2015–
December 29, 2015):

- 232,072 users,
1,078,937 pageviews
- 80% New Visitors,
20% Return Visitors
- 93% of visitors are from the U.S. followed by Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and Brazil
- Top cities/markets outside Nebraska are Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Sioux Falls and Denver
- Average duration visitors spent on the site increased by 24%
- Average pages viewed per session increased by 11%



Website Traffic Sources



Social Media

Nebraska Tourism increased its presence on social media in 2015, using predominantly Facebook, YouTube and Instagram to share videos, event information and photos.

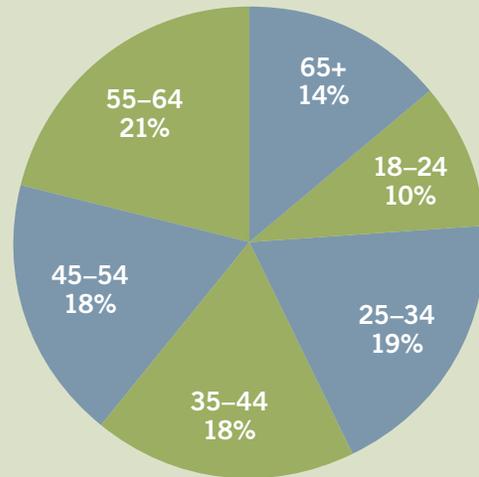
In 2015, Tourism used Facebook and YouTube to launch a series of videos aimed at communicating the “Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice.” campaign while also increasing engagement and followers. Twenty-one videos were released on Facebook and YouTube in 2015 with a total of 140,270 views.

Growth was consistent across all of Nebraska Tourism’s social media platforms. Nebraska Tourism’s Facebook fans increased by 35% over the year before. Twitter followers grew for @NebraskaTourism from 8,000 to 9,671 followers, which is a 21% increase. Instagram has surged into our third most popular social media channel with an increase of 2,262% over last year. Other channels used by Nebraska Tourism include Pinterest and Periscope.

Destination Nebraska E-newsletter

Every year Nebraska Tourism delivers 20 issues of our online newsletter Destination Nebraska to thousands of subscribers which promote events and attractions statewide.

VisitNebraska.com Visitor Age Demographics



35% increase
in followers



21% increase
in followers



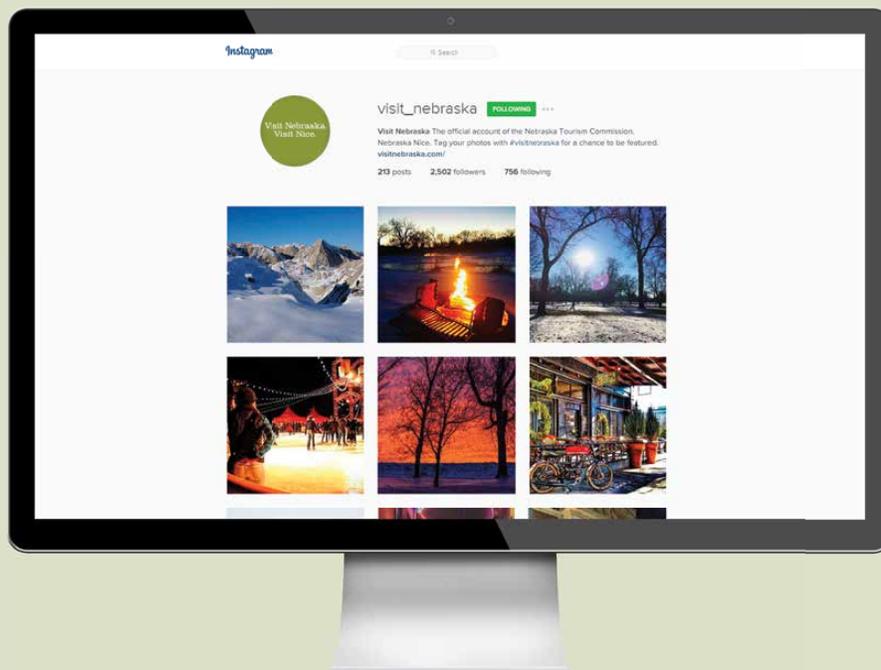
visitnebraska



140,270 views



2,262% increase
in followers



In 2015, the Nebraska Tourism Commission completed three national media tours to generate travel writer and media awareness by encouraging the nationally known writers to develop stories about Nebraska as a tourism destination.

- To date, more than 510,223,155 potential visitors have been exposed to this coverage.
- If this editorial coverage had been purchased as paid advertising it would have cost \$2,207,620.
- National and in-state tourism sponsors provided more than \$127,030 in goods and services including air transportation, lodging, meals and activities to support the media tour

program. To date, the 2015 media tours have a \$12.38 per dollar spent ROI.

- Fifty-nine journalists visits
- 175 articles published which have appeared in media outlets:

The New York Times, ForbesLife Magazine Online, Leisure Group Travel, Meetings Focus Magazine, the Des Moines Register, the Minneapolis Star Tribune, KC Magazine, Kayak Fish Magazine, the Virginia Sportsman, Motor Home Magazine, the Daily Journal, MSN.com, American Roads Online, City Style & Living Magazine, the Valdosta Daily Times, the News Herald and many more.

on location: midwest ♦

NEBRASKA'S

Trailblazing groups find historical attractions that chronicle America's march westward and life on the High Plains

PIONEER PAST

By Randy Mink

Exploring the wide-open spaces of Nebraska, travelers discover remnants of cowboys and fur trappers, sod houses and Pony Express stations. The prairies have stories to tell—stories of hardship, resilience and triumph—and tour groups can get wrapped up in all the lore at a wide choice of museums and historical sites. In a few spots your group can even witness the original rule made by the ironclad wheels of covered wagons venturing west on the Oregon Trail.

Crooked interpreters bring the old days back to life at Sturtevant Museum of the Prairie Pioneer in Grand Island, one of the Midwest's premier living history museums. Covering much of the 200-acre complex is the 1890s Railroad Town, a village of historical buildings alive in summer with people demonstrating trades and conducting business. You can tour homes, barns, a rural school and church, and Pawnee Indian earth lodge. See a multi-media presentation and exhibits in the Sturtevant building, designed by noted architect

December 2015 #1

LifeandTravel.com

~ OMAHA & LINCOLN NEBRASKA

Nebraska has a kind of quiet kind of confidence – constantly creating, evolving, and progressing with a community spirit that is inspiring – and the latest innovation is the food scene.

42 | SPRING 2015 | livesandliving.com



Candy Crush

If you're a licorice lover, there's no better way to celebrate than by spending National Licorice Day at the source: Licorice International in Lincoln, Nebraska

Excellent reason to rejoice this month. Since 2004, April 12 has been officially labeled as National Licorice Day. And the shop that launched the celebration, Licorice International in Lincoln, Nebraska's historic Haymarket District, will mark the occasion with two days of festivities. Just don't expect it to happen on the actual date this year, as the store is closed on Sundays, according to Elizabeth Erlandson, co-owner

with Ardith Steurtz of the booming candy business. So the duo will start the party on Friday, April 10, with an in-store performance by a local guitarist. Saturday's treats include a clown making balloon animals for kids who, with their parents, can sample their way through the spacious store's inventory, which spans nearly 200 licorice varieties from 12 to 14 different countries — the largest selection of its kind in the U.S. Look for traditional

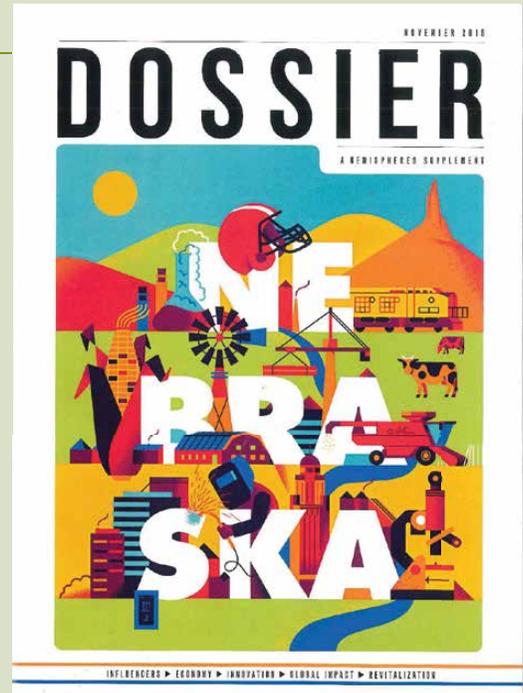
English licorice assortments in a variety of neon colors, caramel-filled Danish Weer Wölfen (werewolf) Drop and all-natural, gluten-free Scottie Dogs from California. Don't feel deprived, though, if you can't make it to Lincoln. The shop does half of its business online and includes free goodies in each shipment. "Our goal is to make you feel like a kid in a candy store," Erlandson says. For more, go to LicoriceInternational.com —NORMAN KOLPAS

FROM TOP: JEFF GOLDBERG/ACQUAVENTURE

United Airlines' Hemispheres Supplement

In November, the Tourism Commission assisted assigned writers and editors from *United Airlines Hemispheres Magazine* to create a 40 page supplement about Nebraska. The magazine and its supplement were placed in every United Airlines flight throughout the entire month of November. The estimated reach was 644,154 and over 11,000,000 passengers had access to the publication.

The supplement highlighted many wonderful things about Nebraska but also contained a special two page spread exclusively about tourism opportunities in the state. The value of that spread alone was \$103,950.



Press Releases, Media Appearances and Interviews



- The 31 press releases distributed by the Tourism Commission in 2015 resulted in more than 575 media mentions viewed by over 3,638,360 people.
- 37 radio interviews
- 19 television interviews
- 9 newspaper interviews
- 14 live speaking events statewide

Additional Partnerships with NTV in Kearney, KOLN/KGIN TV in Lincoln, and the *Omaha World Herald* also help promote tourism in Nebraska.

Nebraska Nice Radio Show

In a partnership with Sirius XM Channel 147, 52 weekly, one-hour radio shows are produced and aired on Saturdays at 11 a.m. CT. Shows to date have included Nebraskaland Days, Sandhills Scenic Byway, the Nebraska State Fair, and the College World Series.

Sirius XM Radio's 28 Million subscribers in the United States and 2.8 Million in Canada are very frequent travelers and take over six personal trips per year. Throughout the year, 91,593 people

in the 12 corn belt states tuned into Destination Radio each week.

The show is provided to industry stakeholders to promote their product at no cost, and spotlights a wide variety of attractions, events, and things to experience as a visitor in Nebraska.



Special Events and Media Partners

Nebraska Tourism partners with a number of local, regional, national and international organizations as well as sporting entities to share the message of Nebraska Nice with fans across a number of channels and platforms.



Big Ten Network Digital Advertising Recap

2nd Quarter Baseball				
	Guaranteed	Delivered	Over-Delivery	Clicks
Display	858,100	898,867	40,767	1,955
Video	60,000	63,206	3,206	2,146

3rd Quarter Football				
	Guaranteed	Delivered	Over-Delivery	Clicks
Display	625,000	687,667	62,667	1,043
Video	150,000	166,343	16,343	1,724



Big Ten Network Baseball Partnership
 1,737,000 audience delivered reach
 143% delivery



Big Ten Network Football Partnership
 5,262,000 audience delivered reach
 110% delivery

IMG Husker Sports Partnership
 1,120,487 event attendance exposure
 1,000,000 digital impressions
 205,000 print guide distribution



Communication Efforts, Outreach and Education

2015 Nebraska Tourism Conference



Nearly 200 people attended the 2015 Nebraska Tourism Conference, themed “The Power of Nice,” which was held in Columbus, October 20-22. Keynote speaker Shawn Achor talked about his *New York Times* bestselling book *The Happiness Advantage*. Achor is one of the world’s leading

experts on the connection between happiness and success and has worked with many Fortune 100 companies, the National Football League, the Pentagon and the U.S. Treasury. His research on happiness made the cover of *Harvard Business Review*, and his TED talk is one of the most popular of all time with over eight million views, while his PBS lecture has been seen by millions.

Nebraska State Fair

The Nebraska Tourism Commission resides annually within the Nebraska Building at the State Fair in Grand Island. Our theme, Wide Open Imagination Zone, provided an Information Zone where visitors stopped to plan their Nebraska vacation, an Activity Zone where Nebraska attractions and communities provided a sample of what they have to offer, and a Performance Zone which spotlighted Nebraska artists and performers.



2015 Agri/Eco-Tourism Workshop

Nebraska’s rural communities are full of tourism potential. Agri/Eco-Tourism provides the public with an opportunity to experience rural areas while generating income for the operators, which can help sustain the rural way of life and keep more producers in Nebraska. In February, the Nebraska Tourism Commission organized the 10th annual Nebraska Agri/Eco-Tourism workshop in Kearney with 142 attendees.

National Western Stock Show

Nebraska Tourism was once again a major sponsor of The 2015 National Western Stock Show. The stock show has proved to be a great place to promote Nebraska to our neighbors in Colorado and to the attendees who come from around the country.

The 2015 National Western Stock Show finished strong with the second-highest overall attendance in Stock Show history with 682,539 visitors. Twenty-eight industry volunteers and Nebraska Tourism Commission staff worked the 16-day show.



Webinars

In 2015 the Nebraska Tourism Commission hosted 16 live broadcast webinars at Nebraska Educational Television Network (NET) in Lincoln. These live events were designed for attractions, destinations, convention and visitor

bureaus and other industry partners. Topics were educational and informative in nature and included industry updates, conference updates, sports marketing, social media, digital marketing, co-op marketing and many others.

Supporting Industry Partners Through Grant Programs

In March of 2015, the Nebraska Tourism Commission awarded 26 tourism marketing grants totaling nearly \$200,000 for entities across the state. The Tourism Marketing Grant Program is a very competitive process and involves a selection committee of professional grant reviewers from both the private and public sectors, as well as private citizens.

In March and October of 2015, the Commission awarded nearly \$325,000 of Community Impact

Grant funds to tourism promotional groups to secure national-caliber events, and increasing national exposure through promotional efforts. The Commission's grant programs are very competitive and involve a selection committee of professional grant reviewers from both the private and public sectors, as well as private citizens. All the applications selected for funding under this program focus on one common goal, which is to gain national exposure for the state.

Below are just a few projects that were awarded marketing grants in 2015.



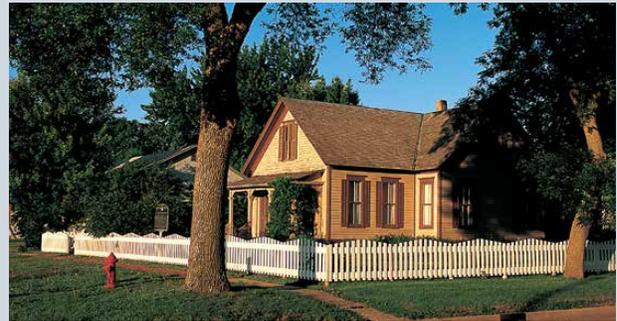
Boys Town Christmas



Grand Island Convention & Visitors Bureau



NEBRASKAland Days



Willa Cather Foundation



Rowses 1+1 Ranch

Tourism Commission Members



John Chapo (Commission Chairman)
Director,
Lincoln Children's Zoo
402-475-6741
jchapo@lincolnzoo.org
Representative from a tourism attraction
that records at least two thousand
out-of-state visitors per year
Executive, Marketing and Commission
Governing Principles Committee Member



Roger Dixon, (Commission Vice-Chair)
President/CEO of MECA,
Century Link Center
402-341-1500
rdixon@omahameca.com
Representative who resides in eastern
Nebraska and is employed by a business
that derives a majority of its revenue from
out-of-state visitors
Executive, Finance, Marketing and
Commission Governing Principles
Committee Member



Deb Loseke, (Commission Treasurer)
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Committee Member



Jeff Boeka, (Past Chair)
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Representative from a business that
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Best Practices and Guiding Principles
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For some? It takes a few days. For others? Only a few hours. But if you stay long enough. If you give yourself enough time. Everything slows down. Everything fits. The rolling acres of crops. The vast orchards. And the people who nurture and harvest its bounty. You eventually discover that this land does more than feed a nation. It feeds the soul. Finding a place where the good life is always in season. Wouldn't that be nice?

Visit Nebraska. Visit Nice.®



Nothing brings people together like the right food and the right drink. When we share a meal or a toast, we share more than what's on the table. We share time with each other. Meeting over food and drink helps us connect. It turns a stale period of time into an event. A celebration. We celebrate the smells and tastes. And if we really stop to think about it, what we are really doing is celebrating each other. Enjoying a place where we can get our fill of the good life. Wouldn't that be nice?

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