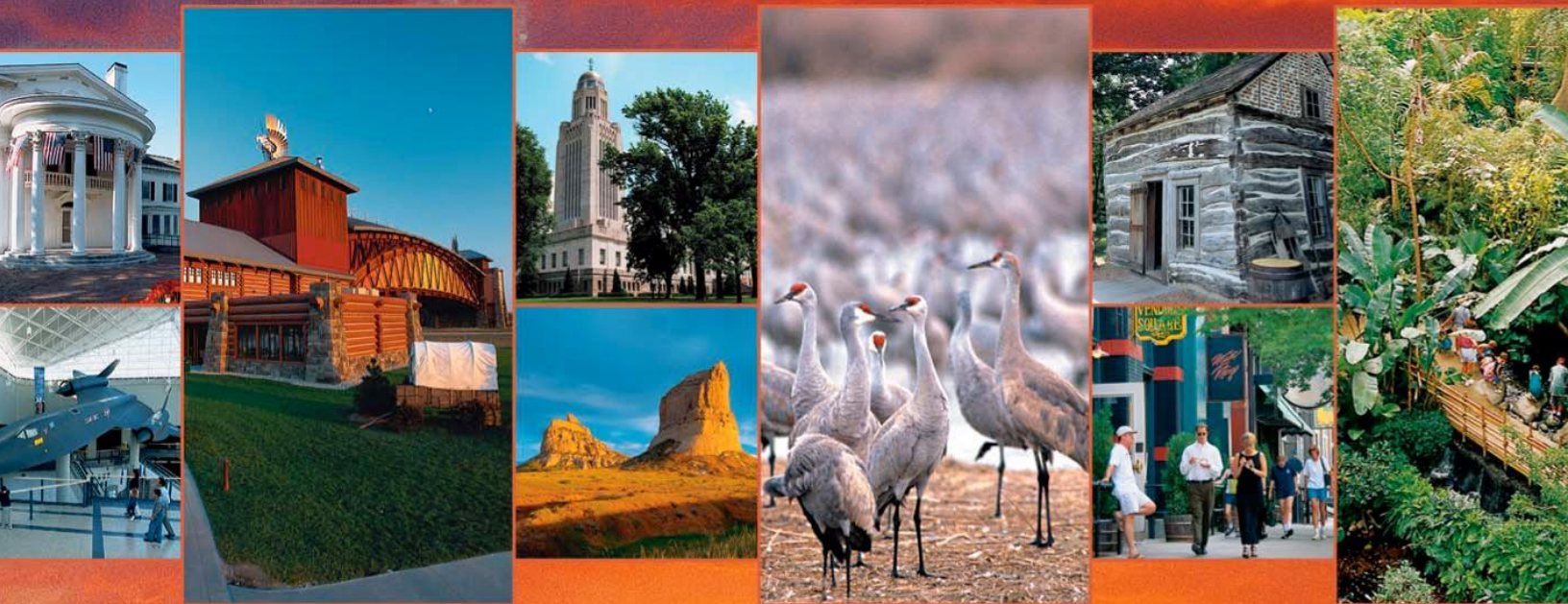


NEBRASKA

Group Travel Planner

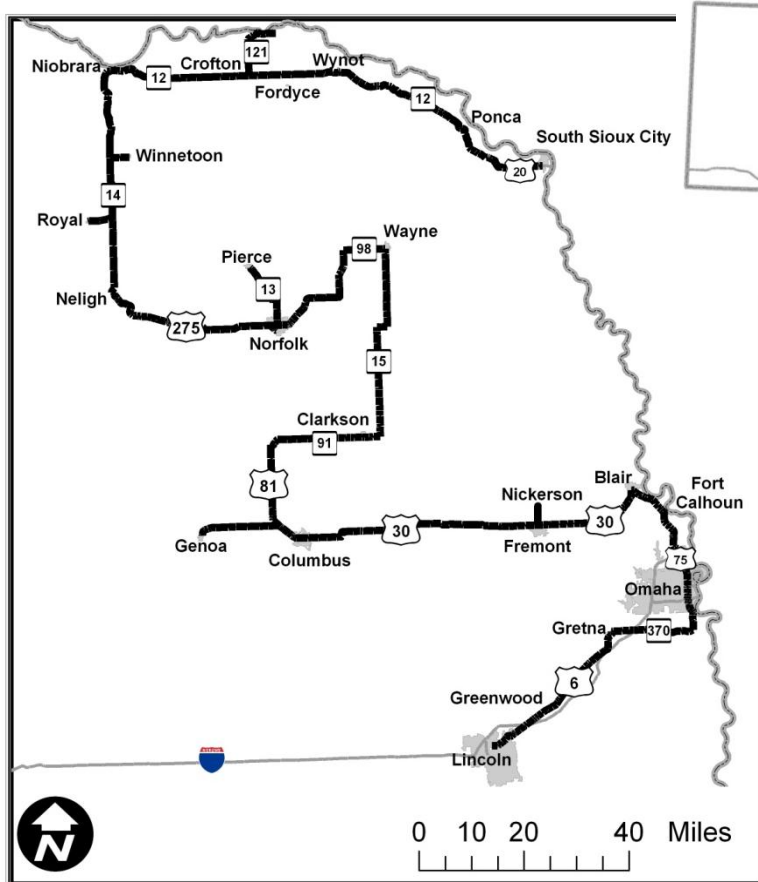


Tour 17
Northern Exposure
A Tour of Northeastern Nebraska

2009

Tour 17: Northern Exposure

Tour 17 Northern Exposure A Tour of Northeastern Nebraska



Day 1

South Sioux City offers a variety of restaurants, lodging and shopping opportunities for your group tour.

The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska will delight and inspire you as they give you a view into their culture, way-of-life, art, and history. The [Winnebago Cultural Center and Museum](#), 402-878-2272, tells the story of the

Winnebago Tribe and its rich cultural and historical heritage.

One of the goals of the Winnebago Tribe is to restore bison to the area. Visitors can quietly admire these majestic animals from a pull-off along the main highway. It truly is an amazing sight, 402-878-4075.

Afterward, spend quality time shopping in the Winnebago Village Center for hand-crafted American Indian products at the [Woodland Trails Art Center](#), 503 Ho-Chunk Plaza, 402-878-2400. This multi-attraction destination centered on the arts and fine crafts features a gallery for traveling exhibits. Separate studios give Woodland Trails' artists and craftspeople a setting to demonstrate and educate others about their works, such as pottery, painting, drawing, quilting, and beading lessons. An impressive show by the Many Moccasins Dance Troupe and a delicious fry bread lunch or dinner at the arts center can round out your group tour's fun.

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Next to the arts center is [AllNative.com](#), 503 Ho-Chunk Plaza, 402-878-2400, which specializes in American Indian-made and native-themed products, such as jewelry, home décor, clothing, books, and videos. In the center of Winnebago Village Center is the [Honoring-the-Clans Sculpture Garden and Cultural Plaza](#), 402-846-5353. Twelve statues, each representing one of the Winnebago Tribe's clans, are arranged in a large circle.

Located a short drive north of Ponca on Highway 12, [Ponca State Park](#), 402-755-2284, features one of Nebraska's most comprehensive outdoor/environmental education programs, including history, biology, ecology, astronomy, geology and archaeology of the area. With more than 20 miles of recreational trails, the park provides plenty of opportunities for your group to commune with nature. During the fall months, hayrack rides are available for groups of 15 or more. As part of the park's annual Hallowfest on the second weekend in October haunted hayrack rides are a spooky way to experience the park. Buffalo burgers, Lewis and Clark stew and fish fries are held in the summer and fall months. During spring, the park comes alive with the sounds of migratory and native songbirds.



The [Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center](#), 402-755-2284, boasts a large interpretive display and exhibit area, a field laboratory and plenty of meeting rooms. Make sure you drive to the tri-state overlook along the Missouri River for a phenomenal view of the river and surrounding countryside.

The [Towers of Time](#), 402-755-2284, exhibit features relief carvings of the flora and fauna of three time periods in northeast Nebraska. A waterfall, pond, fountain and walking path complement the towers. Check it out after dark when the entire exhibit is beautifully lit.

Horseback riding, watching nature, kayaking, and bird watching are some of the endless possibilities your group tour can experience at [Turkey Creek Ranch](#), 402-355-2614, near Newcastle in scenic northeastern Nebraska.

Located 2 miles east of Wynot off Highway 12, [St. James Marketplace](#), 89039 570 Ave., 402-357-3330, is located in a historical schoolhouse. Today it's home to a wonderful farmer's market, craft fair and tearoom that is ideal for an afternoon snack. A variety of historical exhibits also are on display. If your tour comes through in late September, plan to stay for the Heritage Fest. Inquire from the ladies at the marketplace about taking a side trip on **Rattlesnake Road**—one of the most breathtaking backcountry roads in the region. The **Wiseman Monument** along the road recounts a chilling pioneer murder story. Note: The monument and scenic drive are via dirt roads, and no services are available.

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Grape growing and wine production facilities are sprouting up all over Nebraska. [Nissen Brothers Vineyards](#), 88560 566 Ave., 402-254-3426, near Bow Valley is a seven-acre family owned vineyard. Spend time with the owners learning about the process of growing grapes for wine. Directions: 3 miles north of Hartington on Highway 57 and 886 Road, then 2½ miles east to 566 Ave., then south ½ mile.

[Prairie Blossom Trails](#), 55582 887 Road, 402-357-3702, near Fordyce is one of the few places in the country that graze Scottish Highland cattle. On your tour of the farm, you can get a firsthand view of these unique looking creatures, walk trails made by pioneer wagons of the past, or simply take in the breathtaking pasture landscape or sunset. Make sure you pick up some of the Scottish Highland beef. It's some of the best beef you'll ever eat! Group tours are offered between May 1 and October 31. Directions: (A) 3 miles south of Highways 81 and 12 junction, turn east on 887 Road, ¾ of a mile and south 1/3 of a mile; (B) 5 miles north to 887 Road from Pleasant Valley Store at Highways 81 and 84 junction.

Spend some time with certified organic farmers at [Marv and Ed's Farm](#), 55996 Highway 12, 402-357-2150 near Fordyce. You won't find any additives or preservatives here! These lifelong farmers raise a variety of organic vegetables and grains, such as corn, oats with sweet clover, alfalfa, turnips, soybeans and hay. You also can spend some time watching the many critters they raise—dairy cows and calves, herds of cattle, hens, turkeys, geese, hogs, Angora goats, and Guinea fowl. Tours are provided from May 1 to October 1. Directions: (A) 4 miles east and south of intersection of Highways 81 and 12; (B) north of Hartington, 3 miles west and south from intersection of Highways 12 and 57.

The [Corps of Discovery Welcome Center](#), 402-667-6557, in South Yankton is located at the intersection of two historic transportation routes—the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Pan-American Highway (Highway 81). The visitor center boasts a gorgeous view of the Missouri River and the surrounding countryside from the scenic overlook. Other features of the center include interpretive panels that recount the story of Lewis and Clark, an art gallery, and a gift shop full of Nebraska-made products. With advance scheduling, tours from the visitor center to area attractions can be arranged.

The historic [Argo Hotel](#), 211 W. Kansas St., 402-388-2400, in Crofton is a great place for your group to spend an afternoon relaxing on the spacious front porch. This beautiful hotel has been restored into a bed and breakfast, while the restaurant is able to accommodate group tours for full meals or afternoon teas. Spend time downstairs singing along with the player piano in the restored speakeasy tavern. And don't forget to ask your host about the Argo Hotel ghost! Make plans to spend time at the [Jolene Steffen Studio](#), 55472 888th Road, 402-357-3740, near Constance, east of Crofton. Her art reflects the things that mean the most to her—wide-open sky, rolling hills, beautiful wildflowers, garden flowers, children, animals, creeks, and pastoral northeast Nebraska scenes. The vividness and quality of Jolene's works truly will amaze you! Plus, they are affordable to practically

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everyone, with most prices ranging from \$30 to more than \$500 for the larger pieces.

One of Nebraska's largest lakes, **Lewis and Clark Lake**, is located in the **Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area**, 402-388-4169, 7 miles north of Crofton on Highway 121. This is a prime area for bird watching, especially for bald eagles. Winter is a great time to visit when frigid temperatures freeze the lake and provide great opportunities for ice fishing, skating, and snowmobiling. The Corps of Engineers operates a power generation plant at **Gavins Point Dam**, 402-667-7873, and the **Lewis and Clark Visitor Center**, 10 miles north on Highway 12, 402-667-2546. Tours of the power plant are given Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Listed on the Nebraska Survey of Historic Places, [Bow View Farm](#), 88664 550 Ave., 402-388-4798, offers your tour a glimpse into the rural way of life. A historical walking tour of the farm's buildings and a low impact birding hike along Bluebird Trail are two activities awaiting your group tour. An on-farm store is located in a historic 1916 barn where you can purchase home-raised black oil sunflower birdseed, wild birdseed, birdfeeders, postcards, and other items. 1 mile west of Crofton on Highway 12 and 3¼ miles south on 550 Ave.

See if Lady Luck is smiling on you at the **Ohiya Casino**, 52946 Highway 12, 402-857-3860, on the Santee Reservation. Located a few miles east of Niobrara, this 12,000-square-foot casino is owned and operated by the Santee Tribe. You can purchase authentic American Indian jewelry, blankets and other crafts. Adjacent to the casino is the **Ohiya Casino Café**, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A weekend buffet and Sunday brunch are offered during the spring, summer and fall months. So, get out your bucks and start having fun! As you travel across the reservation, you will go through the **Nebraska Everglades** where the highway is lined on both sides by marshes and water.

Located at the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri rivers, Niobrara had to be moved twice to higher ground due to flooding. Luckily your group tour doesn't have to worry about high water as they explore what Niobrara has to offer. The [Kreycik Riverview Elk Ranch](#), 88971 517 Ave., 402-857-3850, southwest of Niobrara State Park, is a fun place to encounter wildlife close up. Load your group into a covered wagon for an enjoyable ride around the picturesque ranch to see majestic elk and bison herds. You'll never forget the experience of hand feeding buffalo as they clamor to the wagon for corn! It's truly an experience! The gift shop sells a variety of buffalo-related products, clothing, and food, such as tasty buffalo jerky (if you like it a little spicy, try the jalapeño flavor).

[Niobrara State Park](#), 89261 522 Ave., 402-857-3373, offers your group tour a wide variety of outdoor experiences, such as picnicking, swimming, boating, hiking on 14 miles of trails, fishing, horseback trail riding, and wildlife watching. The **J. Alan Cramer Interpretive Center**, 402-857-3373, offers an exceptional view of the park and highlights the history and people of the area. If you visit between Memorial and

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Labor Days, make sure to attend the buffalo cookout. With prior arrangements, your tour can experience the history and natural wonders of the Missouri River on the [Upper Missouri River Float Trip](#), which follows the same path as Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.



The **Ponca Earthlodge** and **Ponca Tribal Museum**, 2543 Park Ave., 402-857-3519, display the rich culture and heritage of the Ponca Tribe and their influence on this region of Nebraska. The museum displays artifacts from Ponca history, American Indian artwork, tribal archive photographs and a gift shop that specializes in American Indian artwork. Located in the Powwow area, the **Ponca Native Garden** contains many varieties of plants that were used by the ancestral Ponca, such as maize, squash, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers, strawberries, sage, and watermelon. An outer area of the garden includes plants that were beneficial to the Ponca Tribe and wildlife, such as buffalo berries, sweet potatoes, ground cherries, and wild plums.

With less than 60 residents, Winnetoon, 402-847-3368, is a sleepy Nebraska town, but a great stop for any group tour! Your first stop should be the post office/general store/antique store, then stroll along the boardwalk to explore the many other buildings of this unique cowboy town. If you time it right, you might catch the “**Cowboy Chainsaw Carver**” at work as he uses his chain saw to turn an ordinary block of wood into a work of art.

Scientists claim that [Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park](#), 402-893-2000, near Royal is one of the richest fossil finds of its kind in the northern hemisphere. Millions of years ago, a giant volcano in Idaho spewed volcanic ash into the area for several months, suffocating thousands of camels, horses and other prehistoric mammals. The ash encased the animals intact, and today visitors can go to the “Rhino Barn” to watch staff diligently uncover whole skeletons. An addition to the building is planned to open in spring 2009. There also is a visitor center/gift shop at the facility.

Home to one of the few remaining water-powered mills in the state, [Neligh Mills State Historical Site](#), 402-887-4303, in Neligh takes groups back to a time when the mill was the center of commerce for many towns. The mill’s colorful history is displayed throughout the facility. The Neligh Chamber of Commerce, 202 W. 4th St., 402-887-4195, can recommend several local spots for lunch. The [Pierson Wildlife Museum Learning Center](#), 205 E. Fifth St., 402-887-4212, features one of the largest private wild game collections in the U.S., all in one exhibit that includes 100 full mounts and 50 head mounts from around the world.

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Day 2

Norfolk, northeast Nebraska's largest city, offers a fine selection of overnight and dining facilities that cater to the group tour market. While in town be sure to visit the [Elkhorn Valley Historical Museum](#), 515 Queen City Blvd., 402-371-3886. Here you'll see a great collection of historic artifacts relating to the area, including one of the few remaining antique square turn tractors that can make a full square turn so as not to waste field space to turn around. Memorabilia on Norfolk's two famous sons—*Tonight Show* host Johnny Carson and Thural Ravenscroft, the voice of Kellogg's™ "Tony the Tiger" are on display.

A must see is the **Johnny Carson Exhibit**. Norfolk was the boyhood home of Johnny Carson from age eight through high school. Mr. Carson donated a large collection of personal items to the museum, including videotapes, early boyhood photos and vintage photos of his stage and radio days, as well as many personal items. A display of Carson's special awards—six Emmy Awards, Kennedy Center Honors Medallion, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Television Hall of Fame, and many more are on display. A "Best Of" home theater showing favorite *Tonight Show* episodes and monologues chosen by Johnny himself for the museum are part of this impressive collection. A full-sized, life-like Carson mannequin delivers the monologues when visitors step close to the exhibit. In the immortal words of Ed McMahon, "Heeeeeeeere's Johnny!"



Also be sure to check out the **Willetta Lueschen Bird Library** at the museum. With prior arrangements, museum staff can take your group to the nearby cave for a "cool" break. Located close to the museum is the [Norfolk Arts Center](#), 305 N. 5th St., 402-371-7199. This beautiful facility features an ever-changing traveling exhibit gallery, as well as showcases the works of local and regional artists.

While in Norfolk, take a short trip south of town to Madison for a delightful tour of the [Madison County Museum](#), 210 W. 3rd St., 402-454-2827.

Wine making in Nebraska? You betcha! Located northeast of Pierce is Nebraska's first vineyard—[Cuthills Vineyards](#), 54663 853 Road, 402-329-6774. Walking tours of the vineyards are available, and depending on what time of year your group stops, you may be able to witness the winemaking progress. Fun things to do at the winery include sampling wines, relaxing on the spacious patio overlooking the vineyards, and eating a delicious catered meal in the historic barn.

Home of the popular Wayne Chicken Show each July, Wayne boasts a historic downtown district. The **Wayne State College Arboretum**, 1111 Main St., 402-375-

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7384, has an herb garden, nature center, trails, and hundreds of varieties of plant life. [Garden Perennials](#), 402-375-3615, is three acres of gardens and thousands of perennial flowers. Group tours of both facilities are available upon request.

Clarkson enjoys two major claims to fame—its rich Czech heritage and the renowned [Bluebird Nursery](#), 519 Cherry St., 402-892-3457. The Clarkson Chamber of Commerce can arrange a Czech breakfast for your group (make sure you eat a kolach, a delicious Czech pastry) and arrange a tour of the outstanding nursery. The Bluebird Nursery is one of the largest in the Midwest, and they ship seeds and plants around the globe. As you tour the community, you'll notice the influence that the nursery has had on it. Clarkson is one of Nebraska's more colorful communities and boasts some of the best-kept gardens and green spaces in the state.

The [Genoa Indian School Museum](#), 209 E. Webster Ave., 402-993-6636, in Genoa is the site of the former Indian Industrial School where American Indian youth were housed and educated for assimilation into white society. The students who attended the school were from ten states and more than 20 tribes. Tours of the Manual Training Building are available throughout the year by appointment. The [Genoa Historical Museum](#), 402 Willard Ave., 402-993-2330, boasts a nice collection of tribal and Mormon Trail exhibits. An original diary from Mormon Trail pioneer Henry Hudson is on exhibit. Original Mormon Trail wagon ruts are visible south of town.

It's time to get wet—and get tanked! Try something totally different at [Broken Arrow Wilderness](#), 1025 N. Fourth St., 308-536-2441, near Fullerton. Spend the afternoon floating down the Cedar River in a horse tank—yep, a horse tank. This is one of Nebraska's most interesting recreational pastimes, and one that no one on your group tour will soon forget. It's safe. It's fun. So let's get tanked! (If tubing is more your style, you can do that, too.)

Columbus offers a wide variety of tours to fit the tastes of any group, from history buffs to modern technology enthusiasts. A 1904 steam locomotive, Quicentenary Belltower, and the [Andrew Jackson Higgins Memorial](#), 2001 A.J. Higgins Road, 402-564-2769, are a few reasons to tour Freedom Park. The center point of the park



is a life-size replica of the Higgins landing craft that he designed and built to help win WWII. The craft's ramp is down to let visitors walk inside, while sand samples collected from invasion beaches across the globe are mixed with the sand that surrounds the craft. Equally impressive is the bronze eagle with a seven-foot wingspan that sits atop a steel structure made from material from the 2001 World Trade Center

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disaster. The [Platte County Historical Society Museum](#), 2916 16th St., 402-564-4553, features an 1857 log cabin complete with period furnishings.

Columbus boasts one of the best restaurants in Nebraska, [Dusters and the Gottberg Brew Pub](#), 2804 13th St., 402-564-8338. Even though the menu is full of delicious dishes, and you can't go wrong with anything you chose, try the Chicken Kiev. You won't regret it! Columbus is known as the most industrialized city per capita in Nebraska, and the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 764 33rd Ave., 402-564-2769, can arrange industrial tours for your group. The attractive **St. Michael's Catholic Church**, 309 3rd St., 402-428-2675, in nearby Tarnov is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Day 3

Fremont has a great selection of antique shops in its historic downtown district, and a lovely county museum—the [Louis E. May Museum](#)—is housed in a stately mansion, 1643 N. Nye Ave., 402-721-4515. After spending time shopping and visiting the museum, climb aboard the [Fremont & Elkhorn Valley Railroad](#), 1835 N. Somers Ave., 402-727-0615, for a picturesque 16-mile ride through northeast Nebraska in a diesel powered train. The tour includes a half-hour stop in Nickerson. Between May and October, you can depart on an exciting two-hour journey. Caboose and climate-controlled group coach charters are available year-round. The [Fremont Dinner Train](#), 650 North H St., 402-727-4245, can provide a full dining and riding experience for your group. Special events include murder mysteries, USO shows, dinner theatre, winetasting and seasonal shows.

Good times will be had by all as your tour speeds down the Platte River, the wind blowing through their hair. Admire eagles as they soar overhead looking for food or a comfy branch to watch you tear down the river. Wildlife, great scenery, relaxation and a rip roarin' good time are at [Bryson's Airboat Tours](#), 402-968-8534. Spend some quality time surrounded by the arts at **Gallery 92 West**, 92 W. 6th St., 402-721-7779. Enjoy a good time at [John C. Fremont Days](#), 402-727-9428, each July.

The [Apple Barn at Fontenelle Orchard](#), 402-727-5272, in Nickerson features fresh, tree-ripe fruit that you can pick yourself. Tours of the orchard are available upon request.

Nebraska and Iowa share [DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge](#), 402-533-4455. Located near Blair, Neb., the refuge is a great place to view Missouri River wildlife. Also located in the refuge's visitor center is a premier archaeological display of artifacts from the Steamboat **Bertrand**, which sank in the Missouri River in 1865. More than one million artifacts were recovered from the wreckage, and many are in remarkable condition to this day.

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Enjoy the view along the **Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway** as you make your way to Fort Calhoun and [Fort Atkinson State Historical Park](#), 402-468-5611. It is one of the first established and largest parks in the Great Plains region, and offers visitors many fun-filled living history demonstrations. Lewis and Clark had their first meeting with American Indians at Council Bluff during their exploration up the Missouri River. Taste Nebraska wines and experience a little history and art in the 1904 brick building that houses [Too Far North](#), 111 N. 14th St., 402-468-9463. Wine is available by the ounce, glass or bottle, as are custom-made labels for all occasions.

Nebraska's largest city, Omaha has a tremendous selection of group tour attractions, shopping experiences, historical and cultural sites, and overnight facilities. [Henry Doorly Zoo](#), 3701 S. 10th St., 402-733-8401, offers a number of impressive attractions, such as the **world's largest indoor rainforest**, the **largest aquarium between Chicago and San Francisco**, the **Desert Dome** (including a sand waterfall), **Kingdoms of the Night** beneath the Desert Dome, and **Hubbard Gorilla Valley**. The zoo boasts an outstanding big cat collection, open-air aviary, and the **Lozier IMAX® Theater**. **Orangutan Forest** boasts an impressive outdoor area and a renovated indoor area. Two 65-foot tall, solid concrete Banyan trees, each weighing more than 222,750 pounds with over 15 branches each, are entangled with thousands of feet of man-made vine to create a one-of-a-kind habitat designed especially for these intelligent animals. Your group can enjoy a tram ride around the zoo as well as catered meals and refreshment breaks at the **Tree Tops Restaurant** or concession stands throughout the zoo.

Other attractions in the Omaha area are equally exciting. The historic [Old Market District](#), 402-346-4445, is an eclectic shopping and dining district located near downtown Omaha that features dozens of boutiques, lodging properties, nightclubs, bars, cafes and upscale restaurants. The [Durham Western Heritage Museum](#), 801 S. 10th St., 402-444-5071, is located in a restored Art Deco train station and showcases the history of Omaha and the Union Pacific Railroad. [Joslyn Castle](#), 3902 Davenport St., 402-595-2199, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the state's first historic landmark arboretum. Built in 1903, this Scottish, four-story, 35-room house takes visitors back in time to the turn-of-the-century with its superb craftsmanship and decorative opulence.

The [Hot Shops Art Center](#), 1301 Nicholas St., 402-342-6452, just north of the Old Market, is 92,000-square-feet of art studios, showrooms and gallery space. The center is a first of its kind in Omaha and includes four Hot Shops (Bruning Sculpture, Loken Forge, Crystal Forge and Wilson Custom Tile), 44 art studios, three art galleries, exhibition spaces and a café/coffee shop. Hot Shops Art Center will satisfy the creativity of the hidden artist in everyone on your tour! Located in the heart of historic North Omaha, [Loves Jazz & Arts Center](#), 2510 N. 24th St., 402-502-5291, showcases the wonderful history and culture that African Americans have achieved in the arts, music and humanities. Exciting exhibits, workshops, performances, educational programs and other activities highlight and explore the African American experience.

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The [Joslyn Art Museum](#), 2200 Dodge St., 402-342-3300, is a world-class museum of exquisite works of art from antiquity to the present, and features European, American, Western American, Native American and Asian art. The museum is especially noted for its collection of American West art. It also is world renown for its collection by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, whose watercolors and prints document his journey in 1832-1834 to the Missouri River frontier. [El Museo Latino](#), 4701 S. 25th St., 402-731-1137, highlights the important contribution that the Hispanic population has had on the history, culture and development of Omaha. Bilingual guided tours are available to groups of 10 or more.

The 100-acre [Lauritzen Gardens](#), 100 Bancroft St., 402-346-4002, includes an arboretum, bird sanctuary, rose garden, children's garden, herb garden, spring flower walk, Victorian garden, festival garden, and woodland trail. The 5,000-square-foot floral display hall in the visitor and education center offers year-round, ever-changing floral displays. A café and a gift shop also are available. The preserve at the [Neale Woods Nature Center](#), 14323 Edith Marie Ave., 402-731-3140, includes 550 acres of forests, hilltop prairies and riverside woodlands along the Missouri River. Scheduled nature programs are offered, as well as stargazing at the **Millard Observatory**, 402-453-5615. The visitor center features exhibits, animal displays and a gift shop.

Cruise up the scenic Missouri River on the [River City Star Riverboat](#), 402-342-7827, and afterward enjoy live jazz at **Rick's Café Boatyard**, 605 N. 6th St., 402-345-4545, located on **Lewis and Clark Landing**. The **Heartland of America Park** boasts an enjoyable gondola ride around the lake and a 300-foot water fountain, complete with a colorful evening light show. The **Mormon Trail Center at Winter Quarters**, 3215 State



St., 402-453-9372, in north Omaha chronicles the hardships faced by the Mormon Pioneers who camped in the area during the harsh winter of 1846-47. The interpretive center offers films and state-of-the-art exhibits about the Mormons and their trek west. **Florence Mill**, 9102 N. 30th St., 402-551-1233, was founded in 1846 as the **Mormon Winter Quarters gristmill**. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Save America's Treasures lists, the mill and grain elevator (1915) served farmers during Nebraska's territorial days through the 1980s. Today it is home to the **Winter Quarters Mill Museum** and **Loft Gallery**. [Historic Florence](#) was built on the ruins of Winter Quarters, and today the mill, bank and depot are open during summer months and by appointment.

If art and culture are your favorite pastimes, Omaha boasts a number of exceptional galleries and theatres, such as the [Omaha Community Playhouse](#), 6915 Cass St., 402-553-0800, (the largest community theatre in the country) and the [Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts](#), 724 S. 12th St., 402-341-7130, in the Old Market.

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Catch a world-class performance at the [Holland Performing Arts Center](#), 1314 Douglas-on-the-Mall, 402-345-0202.

For those in the group who feel no vacation is complete without some hard-core shopping, Omaha features a great selection of shops and retail outlets to suit anyone's taste and budget. The city is home to great shopping malls, such as [Village Pointe](#), 168th and Dodge Sts., 402-505-9773, an outdoor mall in west Omaha that recreates a small-town shopping district. Other equally impressive shopping opportunities are [Nebraska Furniture Mart](#) (the nation's largest furniture store under one roof), 700 S. 72nd St., 402-255-6327, and [Borsheim's](#) (the largest jewelry store under one roof), 120 Regency Parkway, 402-391-0400.

West Omaha is home to the world-famous [Father Flanagan's Boys Town](#) (renamed Girls and Boys Town), 137th and Dodge Sts., 402-498-1140. Boys Town, an actual working town, is an inspirational stop for any group tour. With prior arrangements step-on guides are available, often a boy or girl who lives at Boys Town. You can see the Oscar that Spencer Tracy won 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 group tour opportunity is "Dinner with Father Flanagan" where your group tour enjoys a traditional family style dinner while portraying the life of one of the children who called Boys Town home. Afterward, they can go to the Wall of History to see the outcome of their child. A visit by Father Flanagan also is included. Self-guided tour information and on-site café are available.

Bellevue, Nebraska's third largest city is south of Omaha on Highway 75. The **Lewis and Clark Children's Interpretive Art Wall** is located in Haworth Park, 402-332-5999, along the Missouri River in Bellevue. The many stories of the Lewis and Clark expedition are told in art through the eyes of children from across the country.

South of Omaha, [Fontenelle Forest Nature Center](#), 1111 N. Bellevue Blvd., 402-731-3140, shows evidence of diverse American Indian cultures with 70 known sites of Indian lodges and mounds from the Nebraska Phase culture of 1100-1400 A.D. The forest also boasts more than 1,400 acres of woods, wetlands and waterways with deep ravines, loess ridges, more than 40 varieties of trees, and more than 200 species of birds along 17 miles of walking paths. The **Katherine and Fred Buffett Forest Learning Center** is a beautiful facility that features permanent historical and children's exhibit galleries, including new exhibits of the historic Lewis and Clark Trail. The National Park Service declared Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue an official site on the National Historic Lewis & Clark Trail.

Shop! Shop! Shop! The **Nebraska Crossing Outlet Mall**, 402-332-4940, in Gretna will let you cure that shopping bug with a variety of shopping opportunities at discount prices, such as Mikasa, Carter's Osh Gosh, Bon Worth, Casual Corner, and more. The [Aksarben Aquarium](#), 402-332-3901, located in [Schramm Park State Recreation Area](#), 402-234-6855, displays more than 60 of Nebraska's freshwater fish species. The 12,000-square-foot [Aksarben Aquarium Outdoor Education](#)

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[Center](#) includes the aquarium, a terrarium, an auditorium, and display area. [Vala's Pumpkin Patch](#), 402-332-4200, hosts a five-week Fall Festival, complete with hayrack rides, haunted house, lost pumpkin mine, storybook farm, and various other activities. Spend time choosing the perfect pumpkin for your pumpkin pie, or perhaps one to leave for the Great Pumpkin on Halloween night.

Fresh lobster in Nebraska? Darn tootin'! Stop by the [Lobster Inn Restaurant](#) at [Linoma Beach Resort](#), 402-332-4500, on Highway 6 near Gretna for the biggest, freshest lobster tails in Nebraska! A 110-foot inland lighthouse sits on the Platte River and overlooks a 40-acre lake with a public beach. The [Holy Family Shrine](#), 402-332-4565, is a respite for the weary traveler. This impressive glass chapel is open to all people. Directions: Interstate 80, Exit 432, south on Highway 31, west on Pflug Road.

Day 4



Located equidistant between Omaha and Lincoln on Highway 6, Ashland boasts a charming downtown district full of cool, funky shops and restaurants that serve good, stick-to-your-ribs kinda food! It's also the gateway to three top-notch attractions: [Strategic Air and Space](#)

[Museum](#), 28210 W. Park Highway, 402-944-3100, [Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari](#), 402-944-9453, and [Eugene T. Mahoney State Park](#), 402-944-2523. The Strategic Air and Space Museum highlights the history and heritage of the Strategic Air Command. You can view the original bombers and planes that helped safeguard our nation's freedom. Excellent interactive displays, along with dining facilities and a gift shop, are available at the museum.

The Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Conservation Park and Safari is a drive-through exhibit where your group can view native prairie animals, such as bison, elk, wolves, and cranes. Your group can drive through the safari or with prior arrangements board a tram for a guided tour. A gift shop and café are available. Eugene T. Mahoney State Park is one of Nebraska's most popular state parks, offering a variety of outdoor activities.

If the cowboy experience is more your group's taste, then include a stop at the [Double D Ranch](#), 567 County Road C, 402-944-2207. Delicious chuckwagon dinners, yodeling, and toe tappin' cowboys are just some of the many fun experiences you'll have. So don your best cowboy hat, sing along, and eat some of the most scrumptious food this side of the Mississippi!

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If a glass of fine Nebraska wine and a relaxing setting are more what your group is looking for, come on by for a sample at **Four Winds Vineyard**, 1033 County Road 5, 402-944-9463. Afterward, head over to [Willow Point Gallery and Museum](#), 1431 Silver St., 402-944-3613, to view an indoor wonderland of nearly 30 wildlife species placed in replicas of their natural surroundings. Acclaimed artist Gene Roncka's five foot paintings include Lewis and Clark displays.

The [Round the Bend Steakhouse and Saloon](#), 30801 E. Park Highway, 402-944-9974, in nearby South Bend is the home of a very quirky annual event. Each June, visitors and locals clamor to South Bend for the annual Testicle Festival—a fun-filled festival that celebrates the Rocky Mountain oyster. But if you're not ready to sample this local delicacy, you'll still find some of the most delicious food this side of the Missouri River. The restaurant is large enough to handle most group tour sizes. Come and have a ball!

Reflect upon the past at the **WWII Library and Museum**, 402-944-4238, in Greenwood. The museum displays memorabilia used by American, German and Japanese service men during WWII, along with 2,000 books and 2,200 hours of documentary tapes on the war. During the summer months, take a ride in a WWII Jeep.

Lincoln is Nebraska's state capital and second largest city. As you travel along the interstate north of the city, look south to see the impressive [State Capitol](#) building, 1445 K St., 402-471-0448, looming on the horizon. A guided tour of the building is a must while in the Star City. It is Nebraska's pride and joy and features many outstanding works of art that depict the political and cultural development of the state. It also is known for being the nation's only one-house legislative body—the Nebraska Unicameral. After exploring the State Capitol building, make sure to visit the **Nebraska Governor's Mansion**, 1425 H St., 402-471-3466, across the street. Guided tours are available Thursday afternoons. Reservations are required for groups of more than 10.

You can wile away your evenings enjoying Lincoln's exciting [Haymarket District](#), 402-435-7496. 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 farmer's market district. Today it is home to the state's largest farmers market held on Saturday mornings from May-October. Your group can prearrange a group meal at one of the Haymarket's many great restaurants, or you can encourage your group to find their own favorite spot. Lincoln also boasts many fine lodging properties that cater to the group tour market.

If you're looking for Nebraska-made products, look no further than [From Nebraska](#), 140 N. 8th St., 402-476-2455, in the Haymarket. You're sure to find something special to take home to remember your trip. Licorice lovers will want to spend time sampling some of the world's best licorice at [Licorice International](#), 803 Q St., Suite

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300, 402-542-6742. This store offers licorice from across the globe, including France, Germany, the U.S., Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, and the U.K.

Many other exciting attractions are located throughout Lincoln. The [Sheldon Museum of Art](#), 402-472-2461, is an excellent modern art gallery that houses 20th century American art. Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the building was designed by internationally famous architect Philip Johnson. The [Lincoln Children's Zoo](#), 402-475-6741, is in a lovely park-like setting where you can experience a close encounter with more than 300 animals and a variety of beautiful flowers. The [National Museum of Roller Skating](#), 4730 South St., 402-483-7551, is the only one of its kind in the country and features many rare examples of skates. Admire the larger than life sculpture, "**Torn Notebook**," a piece of art created in steel and aluminum that was commissioned by the Sheldon Museum of Art from world-renowned artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Located on the University of Nebraska Main Campus, the [Great Plains Art Museum](#), 1115 Q St., 402-472-6220, features changing exhibits and collections of western art. The [Hyde Memorial Observatory](#), 3701 S. 70th St., 402-441-7895, lets your group tour explore the nighttime sky. Asian culture and history come alive through beautiful exhibitions of Asian art and artifacts at the [Lentz Center for Asian Culture](#), 1155 Q St., 402-472-5841, in downtown Lincoln. The [University of Nebraska State Museum of Natural History](#), 402-471-4754, features a world-class collection of fossil elephants, American Indian art, folk art, dinosaurs, wildlife dioramas, a hands-on discovery center and planetarium. Other exhibits chronicle life on the Great Plains for more than 12,000 years, such as the "American Indian Gallery," "The First Nebraskans," "Nebraska Joins the Union," and "Building the State." People on your tour can laugh out loud, cry, and be thoroughly entertained at one of the [Lied Center for Performing Arts](#), 301 N. 12th St., 402-472-4700, many fun-filled and high quality presentations.

The [International Quilt Study Center](#), 402-472-6549, on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus, 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. The [American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Museum](#), 631 D St., 402-474-3363, preserves the history and culture of Germans who first immigrated to Russia, and then to America. The Heritage Center includes a summer kitchen, chapel, general store, blacksmith, railroad caboose, and residences that were turned into exhibits.

The [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), 11700 SW 100th St., 402-797-2301, south of Lincoln, includes more than 600 acres of rare, native tall grass prairie, springs, wetlands, ponds and other natural environments. It offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tall grass prairie. The center boasts more than 350 species of plants and more than 170 bird species. [Prime Country Vineyard](#), 402-826-3567, sits on 480 acres of beautiful rolling hills

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southwest of Lincoln in Denton. Enjoy wiling away the time sipping a variety of delicious wines in the tasting room. Get “lost” in a labyrinth carved into more than 22 acres of corn with more than 3 miles of twists and turns at [The MaiZE at Benson Farms](#), 6000 S.W. 140th St., 402-795-3276. Bring a flashlight and try it in the dark!

A short drive north of Lincoln takes you to [James Arthur Vineyards](#), 2001 W. Raymond Road, 402-783-5255, in Raymond. The winery features a winetasting room, gift shop and peaceful hiking trails. While you’re in Raymond experience everyday life at a certified organic farm at [Branched Oak Farm](#), 17015 NW 70th St., 402-783-2124. An on-farm store sells food and products grown directly on the farm.