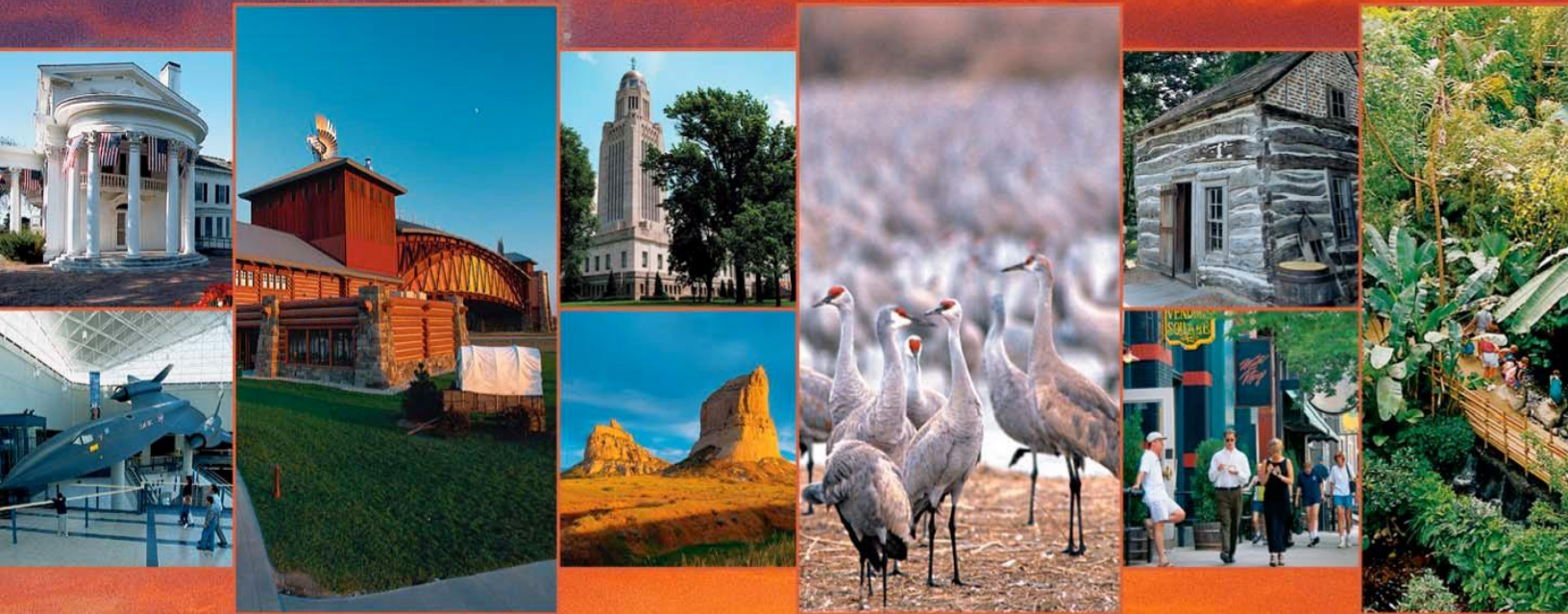


NEBRASKA

Group Travel Planner



Tour 7

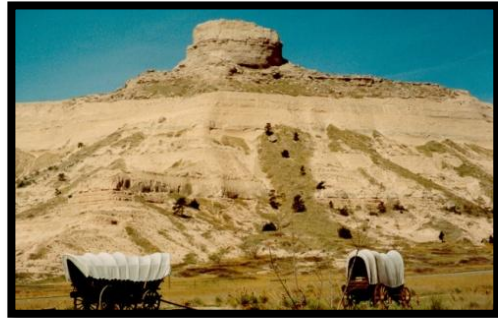
Day Tours from Scottsbluff/Gering and Western Nebraska

2009

Tour 7: Day Tours from Scottsbluff/Gering

Tour 7 Day Tours from Scottsbluff/Gering and Western Nebraska

Welcome to Scottsbluff/Gering, also known as the “Twin Cities.” West of Gering is [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#), 308-436-4340, a prominent landmark used by American Indians and pioneers along the Oregon and Mormon Trails. A drive (or hike along the 1.6 mile Saddle Rock Trail) to the top of the monument allows a tremendous view of the entire North Platte River Valley. Wagon ruts are still visible at the base of the monument, and a gift shop and museum are located in the visitor center where the importance of the trails and the area’s colorful history are featured.



Explore the history of farm and ranch equipment with vintage horse-drawn and steam-powered engines in the [Farm and Ranch Museum](#), 2930 M St., 308-436-1989. If your group tour comes during the third weekend in September, make plans to watch live demonstrations of various farming equipment during the annual Harvest Festival.

Enjoy pine-covered canyons and rugged rock buttes at the **Wildcat Hills Nature Center**, 308-436-3777, a short drive south of Gering. Nestled within the [Wildcat Hills](#), the nature center is located in one of the most beautiful regions of Nebraska. An abundance of native wildlife can be enjoyed from the information center’s deck or along the more than three miles of hiking trails throughout the park.

Two museums in Gering that are worth visiting are the [Wyo-braska Museum of Natural History](#), 850 U St., 308-436-7104, which houses more than 300 mounted zoological specimens from around the world; and the [North Platte Valley Museum](#), 308-436-5411, which chronicles the history of the area through a variety of impressive displays, including a sod house, one-room schoolhouse, and agricultural equipment from bygone days.

The main lines of the western migratory trails converged at **Robidoux Pass**. Today, you can visit the reconstructed [Robidoux Trading Post](#) in beautiful **Carter Canyon**, south of Gering. Don’t miss the blacksmith shop monument and pioneer graves near the trading post. Contact the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau for tour information: 308-436-6886. The trading post is located on a dirt road, and no services are available along the road or at the site.

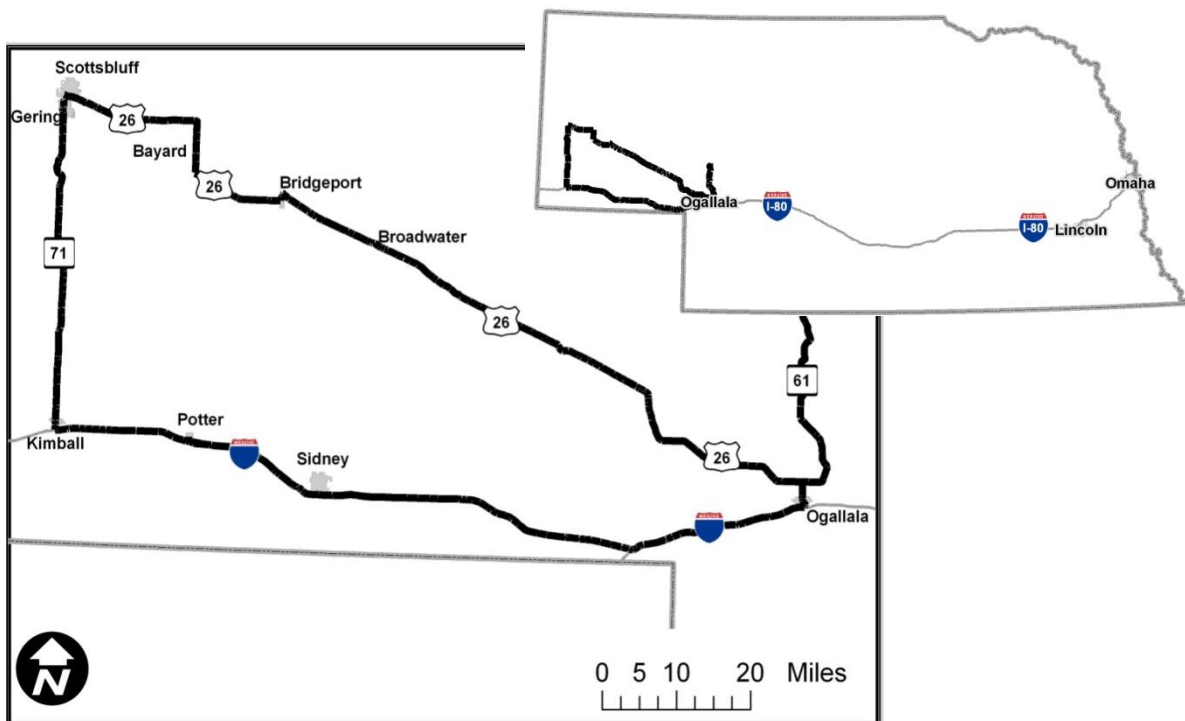
Tour 7: Day Tours from Scottsbluff/Gering

Across the North Platte River, Scottsbluff boasts a very impressive arts center—the [West Nebraska Arts Center](#), 106 E. 18th St., 308-632-2226. It features a variety of artistic activities, including a gallery and gift shop that sells locally made gifts.

The [Riverside Zoo](#), 1600 S. Beltline Highway West, 308-630-6236, is an impressive facility that features more than 300 animals representing 97 animal species from around the world. Excellent picnic facilities and walking paths are available. Enjoy a panoramic view of Scotts Bluff National Monument as you sip a refreshing glass of wine at the [Prairie Vine Vineyard and Winery](#), 308-623-2955.

The **Fillingham Exotic Animal Farm**, 308-623-1164, in Morrill, west of Scottsbluff on Highway 26, offers guided tours of exotic animals throughout the 275-acre farm. Some of the rare animals include a Z-donk, a zebus and an onyx. Reservations for guided tours are required.

Tour A: Westward Trails



As you approach Kimball you'll notice a "[Wind Farm](#)," 308-474-4759, on the horizon where seven large wind turbines convert the ever-present Nebraska wind into energy. Each turbine stands nearly 350 feet tall, with the blades and turbine weighing more than 40 tons. You must make prior arrangements for on-site access.

Kimball is best known as "Missile Center USA" because more than 200 Minutemen missiles were housed in the immediate area during the Cold War. Today a 100-foot disarmed missile stands in **Gotte Park**, 308-235-3782, as a monument to the Cold

Tour 7: Day Tours from Scottsbluff/Gering

War. The park offers picnic and restroom facilities. Downtown Kimball has several fine specialty stores for shoppers.

Come fill your bags to the brim with nuts, candy, spices, gourmet chocolates, homemade jellies, preserves and hundreds of other tantalizingly delicious goodies at **Carol's Nut List**, 600 E. Third Ave., 308-235-4826.

What covers more than 20,000 square feet, has a 47-ton garage door, a 120-foot long access hallway, and once accommodated a 67-foot-long, 278,000-pound missile? Why, Kimball's only underground house of course! Built in a renovated former **Atlas E Missile site**, 308-235-2708, this home and its tenants will truly amaze you with the story of why they live underground and how they make this massive space livable.

The small town of Potter boasts an old-fashioned soda fountain that serves homemade food and ice cream desserts in a restored downtown drugstore. The **Potter Sundry**, 308-879-4548, is famous for its Tin Roof Sundaes. Potter's active historical foundation has helped to renovate and restore a number of downtown buildings. A former hardware store has been renovated into an enjoyable flea market called **A Collective Gathering**, 326 Chestnut St., 308-879-4311, where you're bound to find those special gifts or bargains. **Chestnut Street Memory Station**, 947 Sherman St., 308-879-4466, is a renovated gas station that specializes in antiques, collectibles and jukeboxes. You might even find a vintage jukebox to play those old Elvis records at your next party. A reading garden offers solace and a nice place to enjoy the day. Restroom facilities are available at the senior center.

Sidney is home to [Cabela's](#)—the world's largest outdoor outfitter, 115 Cabela Dr., 308-254-7889. This Nebraska-based international mail-order business started as a home-based business selling fishing lures through the mail. Today Cabela's has a mailing list of more than three million people from around the globe, and visitors to Sidney can shop in the giant retail store located along Interstate 80. Bargain hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will have a great time at Cabela's. The store's centerpiece is a giant man-made mountain featuring dozens of mounted animals climbing to its peak. Dining and restroom facilities are available.

Discover Sidney's colorful military past at **Fort Sidney Museum and Post Commander's Home**, 1153 6th Ave., 308-254-2150. Fort Sidney was originally constructed to protect Union Pacific Railroad workers from Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who were opposed to the railroad running through their territory.

No stop in Sidney is complete without spending some quality shopping time at [Cabin Country Designs](#), 664 Glover Rd., 308-254-4511. Wooden carvings, beautiful pieces of art, high-quality wooden furniture, crafts, antique painted windows, and more gift ideas than you can shake a stick at are at your fingertips. Even better is that there's no sticker shock—big city quality and value, but small town prices!

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Spend time getting better acquainted with your green thumb at [Ricky and Lucy's Country Greenhouse](#), 11732 Road 32, 308-254-2204. All perennials, annual plants, herbs, and vegetables are organically grown at the greenhouse, which means a happier you and a healthier environment. Learn the art of processing fresh herbs and spices before heading out to the orchards to pick your own fruit and vegetables. Nothing tastes better than when you pick it yourself!



Once a bustling cowboy town with a very colorful reputation, Ogallala now is a family-friendly town that embraces its colorful western past. Be sure to make time to visit [Front Street](#), 519 E. 1st St., 308-284-6000, to watch **The Crystal Palace Revue and Shoot Out**—Nebraska's longest-running summer theatre. Belly up to the bar for a sarsaparilla or other beverage to wet your whistle while you watch showgirls and desperados perform. Plan a visit to the [Petrified Wood Gallery](#), 525 E. 1st St., 308-284-9996, after the show. This natural history gallery specializes in ancient woods, fossils and American Indian artifacts. The Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office, 204 East A St, 308-284-4066, can arrange a visit to legendary **Boot Hill** and the stately **Mansion on the Hill**.

Ogallala is home to "Big Mac" or [Lake McConaughy](#)—the largest inland lake in the region, 308-284-8800. The lake is a water lover's paradise and offers white sand beaches, excellent fishing and relaxing lounges on a boat in the middle of the water. The **Lake McConaughy Visitor/Water Interpretive Center**, 308-284-8800, is Nebraska's first water museum and interprets the significance of water to the state's past, present and future. With advance notice, the Ogallala/Keith County Tourism Office can arrange a beach party, boat rides and a tour of **Kingsley Dam**. From late December to early March, the [Bald Eagle Viewing Center](#), 308-284-2332, is open below the dam, and is one of the best locations in the region to view these magnificent birds.

View one of the largest, privately held lilac collections in the country—**The Lilacs of Meadowlark Hill**, 308-284-2524. The best time to visit is May during "Lilac Time," when the air is heavy with the perfume wafting from these beautiful flowers.

Explore the land of grapes and honey at [South Fork Vineyard](#), 845 Road East D, 308-248-6394, near Ogallala. Not only can your group tour stroll through the vineyards while sipping a delicious glass (or two) of Nebraska wine, they can take home a variety of honeybee products. Pure Nebraska honey, flavored honey cream, honey sticks, natural soaps and lotions, beeswax candles, and savory honey spread are just some of the many bee products available at the vineyard. Afterward, spend a pleasant time picking your own grapes.

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Take in colorful history and stories, breathtaking scenery, small town charm, and wine...oh my, lots and lots of wine. [The Wines of the Historic Trails](#) takes your group tour along the modern day routes of the Oregon, Mormon, and California trails via the Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway. Eat, drink, and be merry as you explore a variety of Nebraska wines at four wineries along the trail: **South Fork Vineyard and Honey Hut, 17 Ranch Winery, Last Chance Winery, and Prairie Vine Winery.**

Take a step back in time at a working cattle ranch located in the heart of the Nebraska Sandhills, north of Ogallala. The historical [Haythorn Ranch Tours and Figure Traditions Event Center](#), 308-355-4000, maintains a herd of more than 500 ranch-bred horses that are used in day-to-day ranching activities. It is the largest breeder of quarter horses in the U.S. and the second largest in the world. Call for reservations for large and small group tour packages.

[Ash Hollow State Historical Park](#), 308-778-5651, is located on the west side of **Lake McConaughy** near Lewellen. The park boasts an unusual collection of prehistoric and pioneer history. Fossils from prehistoric animals were discovered in the area and many are displayed at the interpretive center. Ancient Indian tribes and early pioneers used the area as a staging or camping area. Nearby Windlass Hill is the site where pioneers had to lower wagon trains using a windlass—a device for hoisting or hauling. Today a hike up to Windlass Hill offers a spectacular view of deep wagon ruts still visible after 150 years. A visitor/interpretive center has displays of prehistoric rhinoceros, mammoths, mastodons and early pioneer history.

Grab your overalls and spend the day being Old McDonald on the farm at [17 Ranch](#), 5052 Rd. 197, 308-778-5543, in Lewellen. Immerse your group tour in the day-to-day operations of a working cattle ranch, from feeding and caring for livestock to tagging calves. Make sure to ask for a personalized ranch vacation for your group tour. Afterward, head to the [17 Ranch Winery](#), 304 Main St., 308-778-5542, in downtown Lewellen to wet your whistle with delicious Nebraska wine and talk about your day down on the farm.

Come and see the birds with [Bentley Birding Tours](#), 308-772-3926, near Oshkosh in scenic western Nebraska. Experience the peacefulness of Blue Creek, the Sandhills, and the North Platte River as your group tour searches for that rare bird species, or just a great day communing with nature.

Speaking of birds, make sure to plan a scenic drive half an hour north of Oshkosh to [Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge](#), which has the third most documented number of bird species in the country. Peak songbird migration occurs mid-May and the fall peak season is in September. A photo blind for observing sharp-tailed grouse on their dancing ground is available on a reservation basis throughout April.

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Pick up a knick-knack or groovy souvenir at a unique store along Highway 26 between Ogallala and Scottsbluff. **Tumbleweed Treasures**, Highway 26 and Guthrie St., 308-489-5420, in the hamlet of Broadwater is well worth the stop. The store is regularly open weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day. However, you can make prior arrangements with the owners to visit the store during other times.

Highways 92 and 26 follow the Oregon, Mormon and Pony Express Trails, and were the first stretches of highway designated as an official Nebraska Scenic Byway—the **Western Trails Scenic and Historic Byway**. Along the way your group will begin to notice unusual rock formations along the horizon. When pioneers crossed Nebraska, there was little more than flat prairie stretching before them for weeks on end. You can imagine their excitement when they started to see a noticeable change in the landscape. The first two formations you’ll come across are [Courthouse and Jail Rocks](#), 308-586-2581 (Chimney Rock Visitors Center), located on Highway 88 south of Highways 92 and 26. They were so named because of their similarity to courthouses and jail buildings back east. Note: No staff or tourist facilities are available at the site.

No trip to Bridgeport is complete without sampling some of the best pastries and desserts in western Nebraska. The **Sweet Things Bakery**, 308-262-1024, in downtown Bridgeport is bound to satisfy even the most discriminating palates with its mouthwatering sweets.

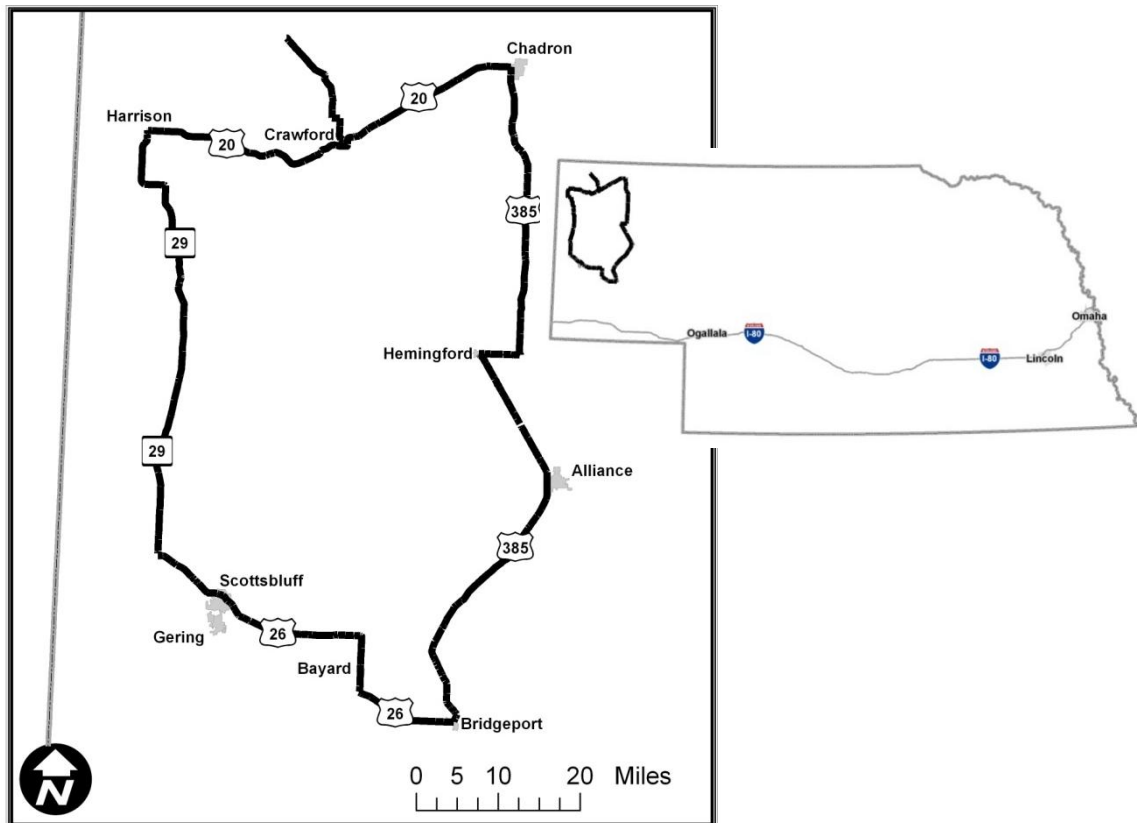


“Towering to the heavens” is how one pioneer described Chimney Rock near Bayard—the most recognized landmark along the Oregon Trail. At the base of the spire, the [Chimney Rock National Historic Site Visitors Center](#), 308-586-2581, offers visitors fascinating stories from pioneer diaries about their trek westward. An audio-visual presentation and an impressive gift shop are on site.

To experience what it was like as a pioneer, nothing compares to the [Oregon Trail Wagon Train](#), 308-586-1850, one mile from Chimney Rock. Put on your best western duds and step back in time to the 1850s as your group boards a Conestoga wagon train for a bumpy ride alongside actual wagon ruts. Your group will enjoy campfire songs, stories and the most mouth-watering meal prepared over an open fire. It’s the perfect way to end your day as an illuminated Chimney Rock lights up the night. Reservations required.

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Tour B: Prehistoric Venture



[Agate Fossil Beds National Monument](#), 301 River Road, 308-668-2211, south of Harrison, is a fossil lover's paradise. Fossilized mammals from 19 million years ago are easily visible in the walls and canyons of the 3,000-acre national monument. There are miles of easy-to-navigate hiking trails throughout the property and the visitor center interprets the history and significance of the area. Agate Fossil Beds tells the story of "Captain" James Cook—a former professional hunter, guide, Army scout and owner of the nearby Agate Springs Ranch. For 50 years, the ranch was a haven for American Indians, such as Chief Red Cloud. Cook welcomed and fed his guests, and in return they repaid his generosity by presenting him with gifts throughout the years. In time, these gifts became a sizable and important collection of American Indian artifacts, which are now permanently displayed in the visitor center. This is truly a unique collection and a must-see exhibit!

Grab a quick snack or something to drink in Harrison, also known as "Nebraska's Top Town." With an elevation of 4,878 feet above sea level, it enjoys the highest elevation of any Nebraska community. Make sure you have your camera ready; Harrison is surrounded by some of the most scenic countryside in the state.

Take the **Bridges to Buttes Scenic Byway** to Crawford, home of Nebraska's largest state park—[Fort Robinson State Park](#), 308-665-2900. It was at Fort Robinson

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where the great Lakota warrior Crazy Horse surrendered in 1877. A stone marker shows the spot where he was mortally wounded. Fort Robinson also was the site of the famous Cheyenne Outbreak and home to the “Buffalo Soldiers,” an African-American garrison in a segregated army. Many activities are available at “Fort Rob,” including buffalo stew cookouts, theatrical presentations at the Post Playhouse (group rates available), historic tours and museums, and Jeep rides through the majestic, pine-covered buttes. The [Trailside Museum of Natural History](#), 308-66-2929, houses a mammoth skeleton that stands 10 feet tall and an art gallery of American Indian and western art.

Enjoy an exclusive three-day guided trail ride through the Land of Crazy Horse and northwest Nebraska’s ruggedly beautiful high country. [High Country Ranch Ride](#), 617 West Ash Creek Rd., 308-665-1580, will give your group tour a chance to live like a true Old West cowboy. Homespun entertainment, great food cooked outside, and some of the most stunning scenery in the world—what more can you ask for? Saddle up, your horse awaits!

Enjoy a mouth-watering meal at the **Ranch House**, 445 Second St., 308-665-1231. Afterwards, spend time browsing the extensive upstairs art and antique gallery. So come on in, and let them rustle you up something tasty and delicious at this National Register of Historic Places landmark.

The [Ponderosa Ranch](#), 524 Saw Log Rd., 308-665-3983, lets your group tour members become cowboys and cowgirls for a day, a week, and anytime in between. Spend time working alongside actual cowboys at a working ranch. Brandings, vaccinating calves, gathering strays, fixing fences, and trimming horse hooves are just some of the many daily ranch hand activities that your tour will experience. The best part is ending the day with a delicious cowboy-sized meal served family style. They’ll throw in free the scenic beauty, colorful sunsets and sunrises, and a peaceful retreat where you can completely enjoy your surroundings.

[Toadstool Geologic Park](#), 308-432-0300, northwest of Crawford, resembles the famous South Dakota Badlands and is one of the most dramatic landscapes in Nebraska. Over the centuries, the clay and sandstone in the area have been eroded by wind and rain to form toadstool-shaped formations. The park also contains valuable fossil deposits and the longest known mammal trackway of the Oligocene epoch—more than one mile. A one-mile loop trail from the campground highlights many fine examples of eroded clay/sandstone formations. A reconstructed sod house gives a glimpse into the past when prairie homesteaders used the only abundant building material available—sod.

Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Site, 308-432-0300, is located a short drive northwest of Crawford. More than 10,000 years ago, a great catastrophe killed hundreds of bison, the largest mammals on the Great Plains. More than 600 bison skeletons have been

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unearthed here and the mystery of how and why they died in one place at one time is still under investigation. Feel free to make your own suggestions!

Along the way to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, make sure you stop at [High Plains Homestead](#), 308-665-2592, to enjoy some of the best pie in the world at the **Drifter Cookshack**. While there, spend some time visiting the recreated Old West village on the property, which features a working blacksmith shop, antique store and the Dirty Creek Saloon, where you can enjoy a cool, refreshing beverage. Make sure to stop by the old-fashioned general store to pick up that special gift or rustic souvenir. Note: All but three miles to Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed, Toadstool Geologic Park and High

Plains Homestead are on a well-maintained gravel road (Highway 2/71). No travel on the gravel roads should be attempted during or after rain.

Nestled between the picturesque **Pine Ridge**, 308-432-4401, to the south and the immense and wide-open High Plains country to the north and west, Chadron enjoys one of the most scenic locations of any Nebraska town. This community of more than 5,000 people and the surrounding area boast excellent attractions and tourism services to keep your group happy and wanting to come back for more! Established in 1926, [Chadron State Park](#), 308-432-6167, is Nebraska's first state park and full of outstanding group activities, such as paddleboats, black powder demonstrations, hiking and sightseeing. The park is nestled within towering pine trees and rugged buttes, affording group tours with ample photo opportunities. Services can be provided to groups for meals and meetings. Advance notice is required for groups.

The [Museum of the Fur Trade](#), 6321 Highway 20, 308-432-3843, is located just outside Chadron. This one-of-a-kind facility displays artifacts from the lucrative fur-trading industry that was once a thriving business in northwest Nebraska in the early 1800s. The Bordeaux Trading Post, built in 1837, stands on the museum grounds and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Attractions in Chadron include the [Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center](#), 1000 Main St., 308-432-6401, located on the campus of Chadron State College. The center is dedicated to the study of Nebraska and High Plains culture, literature and history. The Heritage Room hosts a collection of Sandoz's books and poems. The [Dawes County Historical Museum](#), 341 Country Club Road, 308-432-4999, shares the story of the area throughout several buildings of the museum complex, such as an original log house and barn, schoolhouse and railroad caboos.

Come to Alliance for the next best thing to Stonehenge. [Carhenge](#), 308-762-1520, is one of Nebraska's crackerjack attractions and has stirred much controversy since its

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creation in 1987. An exact replica of the world-famous Stonehenge in England, Carhenge uses old cars in place of stones. The project was the brainchild of architect Jim Reinders. He and his family gathered for a family reunion in Alliance and wanted to come up with a project to dedicate to Reinder's father. Jim spent many years in Europe and studied Stonehenge at great length. In 1987, he returned to his family farm and constructed Carhenge. At first it met with mixed reactions from local residents; however, Carhenge has now become a national sensation and a unique Nebraska attraction.

Alliance has one of the state's best historical museums—the [Knight Museum of High Plains Heritage](#), 908 Yellowstone Ave., 308-762-2384. A variety of displays interpret the history of the city and the importance that the railroad played in its growth.



The [Carnegie Arts Center](#), 204 W. 4th St., 308-762-4571, features local and regional artists, gifts and a sculpture garden. **Sallows Conservatory and Arboretum**, 308-762-2384, features tropical and sub-tropical plants, and walking paths wind through the flower displays of the Sunken Gardens. Downtown Alliance offers a variety of shopping and dining opportunities. Step back in time to a slower, more relaxed pace at [Dobby's Frontier Town](#), 320 E. 25th St., 308-762-4321. This recreation of a turn-of-the-century western town boasts a homesteader's cabin, mercantile, bootlegger's cabin, post office, jail, baled straw house, and much, much more.

Sweet Sage Spice and Gourmet Shoppe, 806 Box Butte Ave., 308-487-5599, in Hemingford, 20 miles northwest of Alliance on Highway 2, is an old-fashioned variety store with a full line of antiques, collectibles, candles and art from local artists.

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