



Like No Other Place On Earth

BY JIM HOY ©

Beginning near the Nebraska border in Marshall and Washington Counties, the Flint Hills of Kansas extend South into Oklahoma, where they are called the Osage Hills. Not only is this area, sometimes, referred to as the Bluestem Grazing Region, renowned throughout cattle country for its ability to pack pounds on stocker cattle, it is also the last remnant of a tallgrass prairie that once ranged from Canada to Texas, from western Ohio to central Kansas. Only about five percent of the original 100,000,000 acres of this prairie survives, and almost all of that is in the Flint Hills.

In addition to flint the two other types of rock found in abundance here are shale and limestone.

Dozens of different grasses can be found in the Flint Hills, but the four major species are Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, and Switch Grass.

During the late spring and continuing through mid to late summer, these grasses, whose roots can extend fifteen feet into the ground, take energy from the sun and transform it into protein in the leaves. Not only that, but limestone is a soluble rock and those long roots growing down around that stone carry the mineral to their leaves in the form of calcium. Steers grazing on Flint Hills bluestem are thus taking in both protein and calcium.

Long before white settlers arrived in Kansas Territory in 1854, the native peoples here, and throughout the Great Plains, had burned the prairie. One of the reasons for this aboriginal burning was the same as the reason today's ranchers burn: bison were attracted to the fresh green grass of a newly burned prairie just as cattle are.

Artists and photographers have discovered the beauty of the Flint Hills. National Geographic photographer Jim Richardson, who published a pictorial feature in the magazine a few years back, compares the green of the Flint Hills to the emerald hues of Ireland.

We here in the Flint Hills do love grass, for we live in the largest expanse of tallgrass prairie existing anywhere in the world.



The Flint Hills of Kansas remain true to their unique and nationally important story as a well preserved and sustainable tallgrass prairie living landscape.



To learn more about the Flint Hills visit:
TravelKS.com/Flint-Hills

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