

RAILS, TRAILS AND WESTERN TALES

A NEBRASKA/WYOMING EXPERIENCE

Arrival Day: Denver

Relax, enjoy a delicious dinner, meet your group and ready ready for your Nebraska and Wyoming Experience.

Day 1: North Platte

Depart Denver in the morning and enter Central Time Zone on the way to North Platte. Upon arrival in Nebraska, we “**Ride with the Wild Bunch**” and meet Colonel William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody and his wife to hear about their lives and interesting adventures. Afterward, we hop aboard a horse drawn wagon to **Lincoln County Historical Museum** for a deliciously prepared Dutch oven lunch. A tour of the museum, including an authentic recreated Old West town and artifacts highlighting the story of the famous World War II North Platte Canteen also are on the menu. Next, we head to **Dusty Trails** for a truly Nebraskan activity, a leisurely float trip down the North Platte River in a horse watering tank.

North Platte definitely is a railroad town as we will see when we step aboard Union Pacific’s steam locomotive at **Cody Park Railroad Museum**. While there, we also view UP’s #6922, the largest diesel locomotive ever made, take a peek inside the historic Hershey Depot, and climb aboard a mail car and caboose to view historic railroad memorabilia. Afterward, we head to the West Central Research & Extension Office for “**Here’s the Beef**.” Educators and a chef from a local restaurant are on hand to explain the steps needed to raise and process beef from pasture to the table followed by a delicious Nebraska beef dinner. Finally, we round out the day with “**Wine with the Stars**” where we sip local wines at **Feather River Vineyard** under the wide-open Nebraska skies. A local astronomer will be onsite with telescopes to highlight the night sky’s many celestial bodies.

Overnight: North Platte

Day 2: North Platte, Paxton, Ogallala, Sidney

We start the day off right with a special treat of an ice cream donut sandwich, waffle sundae, or other tasty concoction at **Double Dips Ice Creamery** located in North Platte’s historic Canteen District before heading to **Golden Spike Tower & Visitor Center** for a bird’s eye view of the world’s largest railroad classification yard from the 7th floor open air observation deck or the 8th floor enclosed deck. Before we depart North Platte, we make a quick stop at **Fort Cody Trading Post**, one of Nebraska’s most eclectic gift and souvenir shops. Do not miss the working 20,000-piece miniature replica of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show and tour Old West exhibits in the newly renovated museum. Now it is time to re-enter Mountain Time Zone as we head to lunch at **Ole’s Big Game Steakhouse** in Paxton for a delicious Nebraska steak amidst more than 200 big game trophies and mementos from Ole’s worldwide safaris.

After lunch we make our way to Ogallala, once known as the “town too tough for Texans.” Our first stop is **Petrified Wood Gallery** where we explore Native American artifacts and delicate works of art and carvings formed from pieces of ancient, petrified wood from around the world. Across the street is **Front Street and Cowboy Museum**, a recreation of an 1880’s Old West main street where we explore the history of this important stop on the cattle trails. From June to mid-August, do not miss the **Crystal Palace Revue**, a rootin’ tootin’ western shootout, complete with cowboys and showgirls. We continue onto Sidney where our first stop is **Camp Lookout**, the oldest building in town. Initially built as housing for soldiers in 1867 to protect railroad workers on the Union Pacific railroad from attacks by the Sioux and Cheyenne, today re-enactors entertain us with stories of the building and its many colorful inhabitants. We continue our Old West experience with grave dousing at **Sidney’s Boot Hill Cemetery** either before or after dinner.

Overnight: Sidney

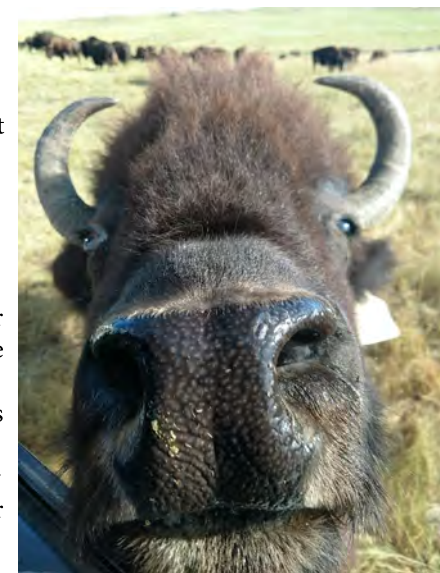


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Day 3: Bayard, Gering, Kimball

After breakfast, we head north along portions of two Nebraska scenic byways, Gold Rush Scenic Byway and Western Trails Scenic & Historic Byway for an optional photo opportunity at **Courthouse and Jail Rocks** south of Bridgeport. The Oregon-California Trail, the Mormon Trail, the Pony Express Trail, and the Sidney-Deadwood Trail all ran near the rocks, which served as landmarks for many pioneers traveling west in the 19th century. The most well-known and recognized landmark however was Chimney Rock, and early pioneers viewed this towering feature for days on the open horizon alerting them to the forthcoming change in landscape. The renovated visitor center at **Chimney Rock National Historic Site** highlights the fascinating stories from these pioneers and others as they continued their westward migration. Upon arrival in Gering, we notice a great monolith on the horizon. This natural rock formation is **Scotts Bluff National Monument** and was another prominent landmark for American Indians, fur traders, and Oregon and Mormon trail pioneers who used it as a guide westward. At 800 feet above the North Platte River, a drive to the summit gives a tremendous view of the entire valley and the wagon ruts still visible at the base. A gift shop and museum in the recently renovated visitor center show the historical importance of the trail and the area's colorful history.



After lunch we head south to Kimball along the Fossil Freeway to **Panorama Point**, Nebraska's highest point. Located near the tri-state corner where Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming meet. It might not seem like we are at a state's highest point; however, at 5,424 feet above sea level, it is higher than the highest points of 30 other states. Before departing, we can make a quick stop at the Tri-State Corner to stand in three states at the same time for a photo opportunity. As we head back to Gering, we make a fun stop at **Rocky Hollow Buffalo Company** north of Kimball. This working ranch raises grass fed buffalo and we have the unique opportunity to view these majestic animals up-close and learn how they have thrived for thousands of years in western Nebraska's High Plains region. Two or three lucky members of the group might even be asked to go into the pasture to bring the herd closer to everyone.



Upon returning to Gering, we can make a quick comfort break at the hotel before heading to dinner at **Legacy of the Plains**. Here we learn more about the lives and stories of the people who explored and settled the High Plains of Nebraska. The museum focuses on the archeology of Native American and Westward Expansions, the lives of pioneering settlers, the establishment of irrigation, the development of rural communities, the diversity of culture on the High Plains, and the innovative technologies and cultural practices of raising animals and crops in the semi-arid environment. Dinner will be an authentic **Chuckwagon dinner** where we also can experience the awe of western Nebraska's nighttime skies.

Overnight: Gering

Day 4: Gering/Fort Laramie/Casper

Before we depart western Nebraska to continue our tour into eastern Wyoming, we enjoy a delicious breakfast in Gering's newest boutique hotel, **Hotel 21**. After breakfast we make our way to Torrington, WY where we start the day with a tour of the **Homesteader Museum**. Housed in a historic Union Pacific Depot, they boast Goshen County's first automobile, an original homestead shack and a one room schoolhouse--along with many other treasures. While in Torrington we also learn about **Torrington's Livestock Market**, the largest livestock market in Wyoming and the region. A mid-morning snack from **The Bread Doctor**, the baker, Ezdan Fluckiger is family practice physician, who opened the bakery so his daughter that was born with Down Syndrome had an opportunity to



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succeed in life, makes incredible artisan baked goods. We then head to the **Fort Laramie National Historic Site**. This “grand old post” witnessed the entire sweeping saga of America’s western expansion and Indian resistance to encroachment on their territories.

Lunch today will be at Wyoming’s oldest bar, **Miners and Stockmans** in Hartville. Opened in 1862, the bar back is still the original, hand carved one by brew masters in Germany. This was a popular spot for bank robbers, cattle rustlers, outlaws, miners and more. Option: Take a private tour of the Sunrise Mine, one of the earliest mining sites in North America dating back to Paleoindians and later a iron ore mine. Next, we get to actually walk in the footsteps of the early pioneers as we head over to some of the best preserved **Ruts of the Oregon Trail**, where the view of Laramie Peak, the first mountain range the pioneers would encounter, is the same as it was all those years ago. Then over to visit Register Cliff where the early emigrants left their names to inform those coming after them they had made it that far. Now we get to enjoy the drive west, often paralleling the trails as we get prepared to experience a bit of the pioneer life with a Historic Covered Wagon Trek on the actual trails and a Dutch oven cookout with **Historic Trails West** next to the North Platte River.

Overnight: Casper

Day 5: Casper/Rawlins/Saratoga

After breakfast we continue to immerse ourselves in the stories of the western migration while we explore the **National Historic Trails Interpretive Center**. As we continue to make our way West, our next stop will be at **Independence Rock**, known as the “registry of the desert” and a significant point on the Oregon Trail, as the pioneers knew they had to make it to this point before Independence Day in order to get to Oregon before the weather turned. Just down the road we stop at **Martin’s Cove**, a significant spot in the history of a group on the Mormon Trail and an onsite visitor center shares the story of the Martin handcart company.

Lunch will be in Rawlins at Buck’s Sports Grill with exactly the burgers, sandwiches, and salads you’d expect at a good diner. Following lunch, we visit the **Carbon County Museum**, which preserves 30,000 artifacts and the rich history and heritage of the Carbon County communities. Next we get locked up at the **Wyoming Frontier Prison** which was built around the turn of the century and housed prisoners until the new state prison was completed in 1981.

Now sit back and enjoy the scenery of the Wyoming plains as we make our way to Saratoga and the **Saratoga Hot Springs Resort and Spa**, a fountain of health. After check-in, enjoy drinks at the onsite **Snowy Mountain Brewery**, before enjoying a magnificent 3-course chef created meal. Soak up the rest of the evening stargazing from the resort’s outdoor mineral pools.

Overnight: Saratoga

Day 6: Encampment/Centennial/Laramie

After breakfast we drive through downtown for a tour along Saratoga’s bridge street where Saratoga holds on to its old western charm and heritage. We will pass by **The Wolf Hotel** which was built in 1893 and still welcomes guests while holding on to its western charm. As we make our way to the towns of Riverside and Encampment, a 20-mile journey, look for Bald Eagles, Deer, Pronghorn, Moose and other wildlife that make their home in the North Platte Valley. We then step back into the past at the **Grand Encampment Museum**, which preserves history with more than a dozen historical buildings filled with artifacts of the Encampment Valley



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representing the area's agricultural, mining and timber history. Now it's time to enjoy lunch at the **Bear Trap Café**.

After lunch sit back and enjoy the beautiful drive over one of Wyoming's most magnificent drives, the **Snowy Range Scenic Byway** as we head to Centennial. The first stop will be to visit the **Deerwood Ranch Wildhorse Ecosanctuary**, the very first Wild Horse Eco Sanctuary on private land in the entire United States. Here, these beautiful animals are able to live out their lives and be cared for in a setting that is as close to possible as their natural environment... only better! Dinner tonight will be another great chef created meal at the base of the Snowy Range Mountains at the **Albany Lodge**.

Overnight: Laramie

Day 7: Laramie/Cheyenne

After breakfast we head to visit the **Wyoming Territorial Prison State Historic Site**. Having just celebrated its 150th anniversary, this is the only prison to have incarcerated Butch Cassidy along with many other great figures from the west. Now that we have worked up an appetite, we head to downtown Laramie to check out the local restaurants and shops of Wyoming's only college town!

After lunch we continue heading east along 1-80 stopping at the **Lincoln Monument**, which recognizes the highest point on the historic **Lincoln Highway**. We then make a quick stop at the **Ames Monument**, a large pyramid designed by Henry Hobson Richardson and dedicated to brothers Oakes Ames and Oliver Ames, Jr., Union Pacific Railroad financiers. It marked the highest point on the First transcontinental railroad, at 8,247 feet. The views along this stretch of both the Lincoln Highway and railroad lines are much the same as they were when those locomotives and motorists came out this way.

Now get ready to spend an evening taking in the "Old West"! We arrive in Cheyenne just in time to get ready for the "**Hell on Wheels**" **Rodeo and Chuck Wagon Dinner**. Wear your boots because you'll meet the cowboys...and their horses at the "Behind the Chutes" tour.

Overnight: Cheyenne

Day 8- Cheyenne

Following breakfast, we start our morning at the heart of Cheyenne's history, the **Cheyenne Depot Museum** in the Union Pacific Railroad Train Depot. The depot is a national landmark built in 1886 and the last remaining grand railroad station on the transcontinental route. We then head up Capitol Avenue to visit the **Wyoming State Capitol, including the Historic Supreme Court Chambers**, where the Wyoming State Constitution was signed in 1890 making Wyoming the first state to guarantee women the right to vote, along with all other rights granted to men at the time. Just around the corner is the **Wyoming State Museum** which was established in 1895. The museum's functions are guided by state statute to collect, preserve, and interpret a diverse range of objects, including history, art, anthropology, and natural history. These collections represent Wyoming's heritage, from prehistory to the present day.

After a busy morning we head to lunch at the **Terry Bison Ranch Senator's Steak House** where you can grab a salad, sandwich or bison burger and pile of fries. Then we are on our



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way to “feed the bison” while enjoying a leisurely train ride through the prairie into the herd!

After the train ride we enjoy one last stop on our western adventure at **The Old West Museum** located on the grounds of the largest outdoor rodeo in the world, Cheyenne Frontier Days “The Daddy of Them All”.

Dinner tonight will be at **The Metropolitan** located in downtown Cheyenne, with their classic menu, elevated service, and polished casual atmosphere. Enjoy innovative twists on comfortable classics, exceptional wines, and creative cocktails. Then let's grab our boots and head out to a local country favorite, the **Outlaw Saloon** where we will celebrate our last night together dancing the night away to live music.

Overnight: Cheyenne



Day 9: Depart for Denver for return flight.

To begin your groups western tales experience, reach out to:

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