

**Nebraska Geographic**  
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## **Resolve to Travel More in 2025**

As 2025 rapidly approaches – what’s it gonna be for your New Year’s resolution? Save money? Lose weight/get in shape? Spend more time with family? Reduce stress? Drink more water?

Those resolutions can be daunting. But I want to suggest one resolution that is easy to keep and can also help you achieve those other ones – resolve to travel Nebraska more in 2025.

Exploring our spacious state can be much more economical than jet setting to far off exotic locales. All of us Nebraskans live within only a short distance of quality attractions and events, and if needed, we can be on the other end of the state the same day.

Nebraska’s world class museums come to mind for me – Museum of the Fur Trade at Chadron, the International Quilt Study Center in Lincoln, The Archway at Kearney, Stuhr Museum in Grand Island, Museum of the High Plains in McCook, The Durham Museum in Omaha, the University of Nebraska State Museum (Morrill Hall) in Lincoln, Bone Creek Museum of Agricultural Art in David City, Elkhorn Valley Museum in Norfolk, Knight Museum and Sandhills Center in Alliance, Kregel Windmill Museum in Nebraska City, Lincoln County Historical Museum in North Platte, Museum of Nebraska Art in Kearney, Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum at Ashland, Wessels Living History Farm near York – to name only a few.

OK, we’ve established that lots of economical travel options exist across our state. Now, to burn some calories to meet that resolution. Nebraska is home to the Cowboy Trail. This recreational trail is the longest rails to trail conversion in the United States. The 321-mile trail stretches from Norfolk to Chadron. Then portion from Norfolk to Valentine is surfaced with crushed limestone. Most of the remaining portion has yet to be surfaced, except for several miles tended to by devoted volunteers in the Rushville area.

Hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding are allowed. One of the Cowboy Trail’s scenic highlights is the bridge that towers 148 feet over the Niobrara River a few miles east of Valentine. Another favorite trail of mine is the Bison Trail that stretches for three miles between Toadstool Geological Park and Hudson Meng Education and Research Center in Sioux County. Toadstool is the home of the

Nebraska Badlands, sometimes called “Nebraska’s Little Badlands. It is often described as a moonscape. Hudson-Meng is the site where hundreds of fossilized bison skeletons remain where they were found while still being investigated by researchers.

At Chadron State Park, more than 33 miles of trails wind through scenic hills and pines. Not far away at Fort Robinson State Park, there is an unbelievable 130 miles of trails winding through the Pine Ridge escarpment for visitors to explore and challenge themselves with. In southeast Nebraska, 22 trail miles await explorers who visit Indian Cave State Park. In the northeast part of the state, another 22 miles of trails offer serenity and exercise to visitors of Ponca State Park. Fort Kearny State Historical Park offers one of Nebraska’s most unique trails. Departing the park, the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail leads to Bassway Strip Wildlife Management Area. It also leads more than 13 miles to Cottonmill Park in Kearney. Yes, the park spells Kearny without the second letter “e” toward the end. Along the trail, hikers and bicyclists cross the Platte River on what was once part of the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad. Tens of thousands of sandhill cranes will descend on the area come March and April.

There are 120 miles of trails in Omaha, more than 180 miles of public trails in Lincoln, and thousands more miles on trails short and long across Nebraska. Bring your family along, relax and take in the fresh air and scenic views, and you’ve tackled all of those aforementioned resolutions (make sure to bring a bottle of water, too). If your resolutions include cleaning out the closets, painting, or organizing the garage, I’m afraid I can’t help you there. Merry Christmas and happy New Year.

Safe travels – and watch for deer!

*Nebraska Geographic was scheduled to run for one year, and so it ends with this column. I want to thank the readers of The Ord Quiz newspaper for reading the column, and for emailing praise, criticism, and ideas to me. Thanks also to publisher Lacy Griffith for bringing Nebraska Geographic to life in a publication with a stellar and storied reputation. -Alan J. Bartels*

