

Nebraska Geographic

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Thankful for Nebraska

I have traveled to most of the states in this country and have experienced much in my worldwide travels thanks to my service in the U.S. Army, and before and since then as a civilian. I've tasted some of the world's strangest and most interesting foods, interacted with colorful cultures that I still don't fully understand but have deep respect for, and seen faraway places that I'd previously only read about in books and seen on TV. There is so much more to see, and I know that I will never see it all. Thankfully, I can say the same thing about my home state of Nebraska.

We aren't the biggest state, not the smallest, either; and we don't claim catchy monikers like Big Sky Country, Sportsman's Paradise, the Sunshine State, Land of Enchantment, or the Last Frontier. But us Nebraskans can honestly claim that our state has all of that – and a whole lot more.

We have the Sandhills, two time zones, thousands of miles of rivers, the only publicly-accessible chalk mine in the United States (near Scotia and North Loup), the largest handplanted forest in the Western Hemisphere (near Halsey and Thedford), the largest railroad classification yard on the planet (Bailey Yard in North Platte, the Golden Spike Tower provides an aerial view), the world's best zoo (Omaha Zoo), the Archway (Kearney), the spring sandhill crane migration (the largest gathering of cranes on earth, Platte River) the Pine Ridge, the Loess Hills, the Bohemian Alps, Chimney Rock, the Wildcat Hills, Ionia Volcano (near Newcastle), the smallest incorporated community on the planet (Monowi in Boyd County), Carhenge (Alliance), the only Chokecherry Jamboree (Sargent), the Greeley Irish Festival (in Greeley), the Loup County World's Fair (Taylor), Nebraska's Great Lakes region (Calamus, Sherman, Davis Creek, and Ericson lakes), the Rainwater Basin, the Bartak Crater (near Merna), Toadstool Geologic Park (in Sioux County), Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park (in Antelope County), the largest common snapping turtle alive on earth (Big Snap Daddy lives at Schramm Park State Recreation Area and Education Center near Gretna), National Museum of Roller Skating (Lincoln), the world's longest main street (O Street in Lincoln), world's largest covered porch swing (Hebron), world's largest plow (Gothenburg), America's largest indoor rainforest (Omaha Zoo), world's largest ball of stamps (the 600-pounder at Boy's Town near Omaha is plastered with nearly 5 million stamps), world's largest shamrock (O'Neill), world's largest

maze (a corn maze near Denton), world's largest time capsule (Seward, scheduled to be opened in 2025), world's largest covered wagon (sort of, near Milford), Berrypepper Days (Creighton), Annevar (an annual celebration in Ravenna), Scratchtoberfest (Ord), Fort Cody Trading Post (North Platte), Harold Warp's Pioneer Village (Minden), Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed (Sioux County), Bigfoot Crossroads of America Museum and Research Center (Hastings), Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and Lounge (Paxton), the Taylor Villagers (Taylor), the International Quilt Museum (Lincoln), Fred's Flying Circus (Grand Island), Museum of the Fur Trade (Chadron), one-time smallest courthouse in America (now a museum in Arthur), (Pilgrim Holiness Church (also in Arthur and made of straw bales), Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum (Ashland), Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park (Valley County), the Potter Sundry (birthplace of the Tin-Roof Sundae in Potter), Standing Bear Bridge (Niobrara), Kolach Days (Verdigre), Kool-Aid Days (Hastings), Klown Doll Museum (Plainview), world's largest pair of overalls (Nebraska State Fairgrounds, Grand Island), world's largest collection of marbles (Lee's Legendary Marbles and Collectibles in York), the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge in Omaha, and the Mignery Sculpture Garden (Bartlett).

Whew! So much to see and do here, and yes, lots to be thankful for. I know I left out so many unique Nebraska wonders. Feel free to share your favorites with me at 100ThingsSandhills@gmail.com. Happy Thanksgiving.

Safe travels – and watch for deer!