



MARCH 14-19, 2027

Legacy Journey to

Nebraska's Platte River

Watch Nebraskan prairies come alive with the sights and sounds of the Central Flyway. See the spectacle of over 1 million sandhill cranes courting, preening and roosting during their annual migration, when about 88% of the world's population gather on the Platte River. Its wetlands spill over with the cranes, along with bald eagles and millions of ducks and geese. Take in awe-inspiring panoramic views in the Sandhills, the most intact temperate grassland left on Earth. This journey promises to be a springtime adventure you will never forget. You have to see it to believe it!



Photos: Sandhill cranes along the Platte River, NE © Chris Helzer;
Watching sandhill cranes from a blind, Platte River, NE © Chris Helzer

Legacy Journey Highlights

- Witness the spectacle of sandhill crane migration when numbers peak in the hundreds of thousands.
- Take a tour of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, frequently ranked as one of the world's best zoos.
- Venture out on an overland tour of the Switzer Ranch to learn how ranching operations blend with wildlife management.



Itinerary Overview

DAY 1

Sunday, March 14

Welcome to Nebraska! Please plan to arrive in Omaha by 5:00 PM CDT. Those arriving early will have a chance to visit the local Lauritzen Gardens or the famous Joslyn Art Museum, depending on the weather and your interests. Tonight, enjoy a welcome dinner as you get to know your fellow travelers, TNC hosts, and expert naturalist guides before getting a good night's rest before our first full day of adventure tomorrow.

PLEASE NOTE: Sunday, March 14, 2027, is the first day of Daylight Saving Time. Don't forget to set your clocks ahead!

Overnight at Courtyard Marriott Omaha Downtown, Omaha

DAY 2

Monday, March 15

This morning, experience Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, a world-famous institution with a strong conservation mission. From here, head west, passing through agricultural lands dotted by woodlands associated with the scenic North Loup River.

Welcome to the matchless Sandhills region of Nebraska! Simple and comfortable, enjoy some rural American hospitality at the local Cobblestone Inn & Suites and catered dinner.

Overnight at Cobblestone Inn, Ord

DAY 3

Tuesday, March 16

After breakfast this morning, depart for Switzer Ranch near Burwell, a 12,000-acre diversified cattle ranch that has been in the Switzer family since 1904. On the way, we will pass the shores of Calamus Reservoir, keeping an eye out for Bald Eagles and other birds and wildlife. After a warm welcome at the ranch, board 4-wheel drive vehicles for an overland ranch tour to give you a feel for how ranch operations blend with wildlife management. Mule Deer, Trumpeter Swans, Wild Turkey, and Red-tailed Hawks (the Harlan's form is common here) are just some of the species we may find during our exploration.

Over a catered lunch in the ranch house, connect with Sarah (Switzer) Sortum as she shares her expertise on conservation within the Nebraska Sandhills region. Sarah grew up on the ranch and returned in 2006 with her husband, Mark, to raise their children. She has worked closely with The Nature Conservancy and the local Gracie Creek Landowners Trust on varied projects designed to protect Greater Prairie-Chickens and the endangered blowout penstemon, using grazing as a conservation tool. Then, it's on to Grand Island where we settle into accommodations for the next three nights.

Overnight at Candlewood Suites, Grand Island

Welcome to Nebraska!

Located between Grand Island and Kearney, Nebraska, The Nature Conservancy's Platte River Prairies are a chain of grasslands and wetlands managed for biological diversity. The Conservancy owns ten tracts of land totaling 4,981 acres along the Platte River and has four easements on 2,816 more. About 1,500 acres of cropland have been restored to high-diversity prairie in an effort to enlarge and reconnect fragments of native prairie - and are now managed with a combination of prescribed fire and grazing.

The stretch of the Platte River known as the Big Bend Reach is the most important migratory bird area along the United States portion of the Central Flyway of North America. The Platte and its adjacent wet meadows in the Big Bend region provide habitat for millions of migratory birds including some 500,000 Sandhill cranes and millions of ducks and geese. It is an important stopover location for migrating whooping cranes during the spring and fall migration. The area is also very important for threatened and endangered species such as the bald eagle, interior least tern, piping plover and many grassland bird species.

Photo: Northern bobwhite, Platte River, NE © Chris Helzer



Itinerary Overview (cont.)

DAY 4

Wednesday, March 17

This morning, head to the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, one of Grand Island's top attractions, to explore and learn about the rich history of community in this region. This living history museum features collections and materials on over 200 acres and within 100 different structures—there are also interior galleries that have rotating exhibits, such as artwork about the Sandhills and their cranes, as well voices and experiences from inhabitants of the Platte River Valley, old and new.

In the afternoon, move to the TNC preserve to experience three different crane viewing blinds. Enjoy an early catered dinner at the Derr House and a presentation about TNC's Sandhill Crane conservation efforts. Afterwards, walk to the private blinds tucked on the edge of the Platte River. We'll be in place before birds start to come in to roost and will watch as huge numbers pack into the river's sand islands. Sunset colors illuminate the beauty of this epic wildlife spectacle.

Overnight at Candlewood Suites, Grand Island

DAY 5

Thursday, March 18

In the early morning hours, we experience our first "Crane Rise" from a private viewing from blinds at TNC's Platte River Prairies. Pre-dawn crane music turns into a crescendo of wake-up calls as the cranes awaken and leave their riverine roost sites. Witness the "gray sandbar islands" of the Platte River turn into clouds of Sandhill Cranes leaving their roost sites. The sight and sounds on any morning are something to behold. Then, return to the cozy ambiance of Derr House; over a catered brunch, learn about the biology and conservation of Sandhill Cranes and other species along Nebraska's Platte River system.

This afternoon, we head to the Crane Trust for some birding and to visit their wonderful visitor center for some gift shopping. Inside, view their interactive Flyway Map and migratory species display. The gift shop boasts magnificent photographs and art in the gallery. A dormant pollinator garden is out the back doors and there is a small research herd of American Bison, as well as a 35-foot observation tower.

Overnight at Candlewood Suites, Grand Island

DAY 6

Friday, March 19

Bid farewell to Nebraska!

After breakfast, we'll pack up our luggage and depart on the 2.5 hour drive back to Omaha, with comfort stops along the way. Please book your return flights home no earlier than 2:00 p.m.

Conservation Highlight: Cropland Irrigation

Because of its significant upland and wetland habitat for migratory water birds and native resident plants and animals, The Nature Conservancy selected Platte River prairies as a priority conservation site.

Sandhill cranes rely on healthy, open freshwater wetlands for most of their lives. Since Nebraska irrigates more cropland than any other U.S. state, TNC is working with local farmers, the University of Nebraska and additional partners to explore irrigation practices that support profitable crop yields while securing clean and abundant water flows into the Platte River.

Since 2015, participating farmers have reduced pumping by about 20%, saving more than a billion gallons of water with no loss in productivity—a promising outcome for wildlife and local livelihoods.

Photo: Sandhill crane feather, NE © Russ Schnitzer



Trip Cost

Double Occupancy: \$4,790/person

Single Occupancy: \$5,290/person

This trip must have a minimum of 8 travelers, with a maximum of 12.

This cost includes:

- Accommodations
- Group airport transfers
- All ground transportation
- All meals beginning with a welcome dinner on Day 1 and ending with breakfast on Day 6
- Park, preserve, and other activity fees
- Miscellaneous program expenses
- Professional guide services
- 2 TNC hosts

This cost excludes:

- Travel to and from trip start and end location
- Travel insurance
- Incidentals
- Alcohol
- Trip leader gratuities



Photos (from top to bottom): Sandhill cranes at sunset, Platte River, NE © Russ Schnitzer; Exploring Switzer Ranch, NE © Chris Helzer; Sandhill cranes at Audubon Rowe Sanctuary, NE © Daniel Ruf/TNC Photo Contest 2009; Wetland seeds floating on the water's surface in a restored wetland, Platte River, NE © Chris Helzer



Payment & Cancellation Terms

To make trip payments or cancel your registration, please contact Naturalist Journeys at 866-900-1146 or travel@naturalistjourneys.com.

Deposit:

- A deposit of \$750 per person is due at the time of registration.
 - Cancellation 121+ days prior to trip start: Deposit is refundable, less a \$250 per person cancellation fee (and 3% payment handling fee, if applicable).

Full Trip Payment:

- Full trip payment is due 120 days prior to trip start.
 - Cancellation 0-120 days prior to trip start: Full trip cost is non-refundable.

Contact Information

As you plan for your journey with The Nature Conservancy and Naturalist Journeys, please feel free to reach out with any questions.

TNC Legacy Journeys Team

legacyjourneys@tnc.org

317-829-1873

Naturalist Journeys Team

travel@naturalistjourneys.com

866-900-1146

TNC Travel Values

● Access

Travel with renowned Conservancy experts and local partners for an exclusive, on-the-ground experience. You won't just see amazing places, you'll see how you are helping save them.

● Impact

Witness how your commitment to our planet and your passion for conservation are making a difference in the wild places and communities you are impacting.

● Knowledge

Learn how we are applying the latest cutting-edge science to affect global change and drive conservation.

● Inspiration

Immerse yourself in local cultures and awe-inspiring landscapes to foster your own connection to our world.

● Globally Minded

Elevate your understanding of our work by observing first-hand how TNC and our partners act locally and how we turn local results into global impact by scaling solutions that work.

Photo: Davis Mountain Preserve, TX © Jerod Foster



TNC Traveler Expectations

Group travel with The Nature Conservancy provides our donors with the opportunity to experience, alongside fellow supporters, the places TNC is working collaboratively to advance our conservation mission. Within these curated trips is the chance to engage with a community of active individuals and conservation staff who enjoy teaching and learning about the important conservation work we do and exploring the outdoors.

In order to ensure an enjoyable trip environment that supports learning and enrichment, we need your partnership. We ask that all participants review TNC's Code of Conduct prior to joining a trip. We also encourage you to carefully review all trip information to make an informed decision as to whether travel with TNC and a specific trip's characteristics and activities are right for you. Following the Code is an expectation and responsibility for everyone in the larger TNC community, including our staff, partners, vendors and supporters. To that end, by registering for a TNC trip, you agree to uphold the Code.

While the entire Code of Conduct is important, the tenets that are especially relevant to TNC group travel are:

- respect for each other,
- respect for the world around us, and
- acting with integrity.

The following traveler expectations are intended to provide guidance for how those tenets translate to group travel but are by no means an exhaustive list. By participating in a TNC trip, you make a commitment to act in accordance with the TNC Code of Conduct to your fellow travelers, as well as to TNC staff, partners, community members and vendors. Any violation of or disregard for the Code of Conduct may result in removal from a trip and/or denial of future TNC travel participation.

TNC Traveler Expectations (cont.)

● **Respect all people, places and perspectives.**

Each participant on a trip is an integral part of the travel experience. Demonstrating respect and consideration is imperative not only for nature, local communities and cultures in the places we visit, but also for fellow travelers, staff, partners, community members and vendors. Everyone will bring different goals, backgrounds, experiences and abilities, and it is important that the group respect each individual's perspectives and needs throughout the trip. Sometimes trip participants become lifelong friends, and we encourage the camaraderie and community built through these shared experiences!

● **Harassment in all its forms, including discrimination and microaggressions, is not tolerated.**

There is no place on any TNC travel experience for disrespect to or bullying or intimidation of fellow travelers, TNC staff, partners, community members or vendors. All travelers agree to support an environment free from any behavior that could make an individual feel unsafe or diminish their dignity. If you experience or observe this type of behavior on a trip, please report it to your trip host or guide.

Examples of behavior that will not be tolerated include, but are not limited, to:

- Racial discrimination in any form (jokes, comments and/or actions)
- Verbal abuse of any traveler, staff, partner, community member or vendor
- Actions or statements that exclude or divide people because of their differences or differing perspectives
- Jokes about gender or sexual orientation or that include sexual innuendo
- Discriminatory actions or statements based on gender or sexual orientation
- Unwelcome physical contact or physical intimidation of a sexual nature

● **Act in accordance with the applicable law of the location(s) of the trip.**

Your trip location(s) may have different laws from your home location. You are expected to be aware of and adhere to the trip destination's laws throughout the experience, even when locations change throughout a trip.

● **Employ an attitude of flexibility.**

At times, there may be changes in the itinerary when deemed necessary or advisable for the comfort and well-being of trip members. We appreciate your understanding, flexibility and adaptability in order to make the trip safe and enjoyable for you and everyone else.

TNC and its tour operators reserve the right to deny registration or remove a tour participant from a trip should such person's behavior, health or mental condition impact the safe and equitable operation of the trip.

Thank you for your attention and understanding, and please let a TNC travel representative know if you have any questions in advance of registering at legacyjourneys@tnc.org.

