

# Spiritual Escapes



Nebraska has a long history of religious and spiritual devotion among its residents and has always enjoyed a sort of tolerance of different belief systems and rituals. This tour itinerary takes us on a journey to many of eastern Nebraska's religious and spiritual destinations in a fun and educational way meant to inspire and encourage reflection and peace. We explore the tenants and guiding principles found in many of today's religions, such as Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Reform Judaism, Islam, and Mormonism.

We visit a Seventh Day Adventist Church's impressive stained-glass collection, follow along the Stations of the Cross, go behind the scenes to view centuries old quilts, and try our hand at Greek dancing. We can place prayers in a reproduction of Jerusalem's Western Wall and learn how the Mennonite community carved out a living in Nebraska's Great Plains landscape. A relaxing airboat ride down the Platte River reminds us that we are all one with nature.

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## Day 1 Omaha

Breakfast this morning is at **Lithuanian Bakery & Café** in Omaha where we enjoy eclectic breads and tortes based on "Old Country" recipes while listening to the story of the family and how they immigrated to Nebraska. Now we head to see how Omaha's upper crust lived with a tour through the 35-room Scottish Baronial **Joslyn Castle**, stately home of George and Sarah Joslyn, located in Omaha's Gold Coast Historic District. We then head to southern Europe for traditional Greek lunch and entertainment, and lessons in Greek dancing at **St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church** before taking a tour of **St. Cecilia's Cathedral**. The Mother Church of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Omaha is a great example of the Spanish Renaissance Revival style of architecture. The church also is site of a still unsolved robbery; *The Virgin Immaculata* that was cut from its frame in 2007. Dinner tonight is in cozy Old-World comfort of an early California style monastery complete with friendly "monks" serving you at **Brother Sebastian's Steak House & Winery**. *Overnight: Omaha*

## Day 2 Omaha

We start today with fresh bagels, breads, and other baked goods at **Bagel Bin**, Omaha's only kosher bakery before heading to **Riekes Museum** to view in-depth photographs and exhibits depicting the history and culture of the Jewish people of Nebraska and Western Iowa. The museum includes re-creation of a neighborhood "shul" and timeline history of area synagogues. Our next stop takes us to Omaha's **Hindu Temple** for a private tour of this elaborate temple dedicated to the city's Hindu faith.

Now we head to west Omaha and **Father Flanagan's Boys Town** to learn how Father Flanagan worked to create a haven for wayward boys, and now girls, on the outskirts of Omaha. Lunch will be at the Visitors Center Café, which also is where new boys and girls become citizens of the Village of Boys Town. The **Tri-Faith Initiative** is a unique interfaith project that brings together three Abrahamic faith groups, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic onto one campus to promote faith, goodwill, and a better understanding of each other. We end our day in Germany at the **German American Society** to enjoy a traditional German dinner, culture, and entertainment. *Overnight: Omaha*



## Day 3 Bellevue, Gretna, Ashland, Greenwood, Lincoln



After breakfast, we visit **Offutt Air Force Base** in Bellevue, south of Omaha, to explore the home of the U.S. Strategic Command and 55<sup>th</sup> Wing. Groups can select from a variety of tour options on the installation. Now we head west to **Holy Family Shrine** near Gretna. This one-of-a-kind glass structure consists of a chapel and visitor center designed to help visitors strengthen their faith through prayer and reflection. The Way of the Cross leads visitors to the chapel and features a 40-foot-tall Crucifix.

One of the state's newest spiritual destinations is **Cloisters on the Platte**, a Jesuit retreat featuring the 2,500-foot-long Stations of the Cross, comprised of 14 sculpture stations representing Christ's trail through his burial. Lunch today will be a delicious meal while surrounded by wooded nature at **Carol Joy Holling Retreat & Conference Center** near Ashland followed by tasty treatises at **Bakers Candies**, home to Nebraska's famous chocolate meltaways, in Greenwood. The first stop in Lincoln before dinner is the **International Quilt Study Center** where we will discover the many stories and religious contexts woven into quilts at the world's largest publicly held quilt collection. The behind-the-scenes tour takes visitors face to face with quilts that are hundreds of years old. *Overnight: Lincoln*

**Day 4**  
**Lincoln, Henderson, York**

We start out the morning right at one of Lincoln's best locally owned coffee shops and roasters, **The Mill Coffee & Tea** before touring **Union College Seventh Day Adventist Church** and its impressive collection of stained-glass pieces. Afterward, we can make our own stained-glass piece of art at **Art Glass Creative Studio** before lunch. Next, we spend some silent moments meditating and increasing healing through a therapeutic singing bowl vibration demonstration at **Vibrational Sound Association**. Afterward, our path takes us west to York to experience life in the ancient world of Mesopotamia and the Roman Empire at **Clayton Museum of Ancient History**. Sacred texts from early printed Bibles and hand copied texts from St. John also are on display, and we can leave prayers in an accurate reproduction of the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

Our next destination is **Henderson Mennonite Heritage Park**, an 8 ½-acre historical site that recounts the story of the first 35 Mennonite families that settled this area in 1874. We can enjoy traditional Mennonite desserts while listening to interactive stories highlighting the Mennonite culture, their pacifism and conscientious objector status, and how men and women were treated within the group. Next, we head back to York for a catered dinner served in the lower level of the church followed by a musical treat as the 1914 George Kilgen tracker organ is played at **Wessels Living History Farm**. *Overnight: Lincoln*



**Day 5**  
**Lincoln, Seward, Schuyler, Fremont**

After breakfast we will explore this **Vietnamese Buddhist Temple** dedicated to sharing Buddhism around the world, Linh Quang Buddhist Center in Lincoln before heading to Seward to tour **Saint Gregory the Great Seminary**, a Roman Catholic college seminary where young men are prepared for the priesthood. Enjoy a delicious lunch at **Café on the Square** in Seward, a popular locally owned restaurant across from the county courthouse before heading to **The Center for Liturgical Art**. Located on the Concordia University campus, the center is dedicated to sharing the importance of ecclesiastical art and its impact on modern Christians.

Next, we head to Fremont and **Saint Benedict Center** where new interactive displays highlight the stunning hand-written *Saint John's Bible*, the work of Missionary Benedictines around the world, and their Benedictine way of life. The seven volumes of *The Saint John's Bible*, the first hand-written bible commissioned by a Benedictine monastery in 500 years will be on permanent display in the center's fine-art Heritage Edition. Our last visit today is at **River Life Airboat Tours** south of Fremont where we can skim across the shallow Platte River while communing with nature and taking in our scenic surroundings.