

# OREGORIDATES

MISSOURI - KANSAS - NEBRASKA - WYOMING - IDAHO - WASHINGTON - OREGON

# **OREGON TRAIL AND THE WILD WEST**



## INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI AND KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

Day 1

Founded in 1827, **Independence** was the westernmost point that steamboats could navigate, becoming the most popular starting point for those making the westward journey along the **Oregon Trail**. A few miles from downtown Kansas City, **Independence Square** was the official beginning of the trail. Today, you can ride through the historic district in an authentic covered wagon following the original tracks, or swales, made by early settlers. Before departing on the trail, delve into its history at the **National Frontier Trails Museum**. Another fun stop is the Jackson County jail, now the **1858 Jail Museum**, on Main Street; it once held Frank James, brother of the notorious outlaw Jesse James.

Accommodation: Kansas City, Kansas or Independence, Missouri

#### INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI TO OMAHA, NEBRASKA

• • • • • • • • 3 hours/195 miles
Day 2

Begin your journey at Independence Square to follow the 2,170-mile journey taken in the mid-1800s by almost a half-million people who had a dream to "Go West!" The wagon trains covered 10 to 15 miles per day, taking six months to complete the trek. Tracing their journey, discover forts, historic sites, museums and attractions commemorating one of the largest human migrations in history. At Minor Park in Kansas City, look across the Big Blue River and see the deep depressions in the hillside; known as **Red Bridge Crossing**, this was the first river crossing on the trail. North of Kansas City is Fort Leavenworth, a critical post that housed soldiers whose duty was to protect the travelers. Entering Nebraska, proceed to Omaha, once the state capital. Explore its cobblestone streets, boutiques and galleries of the Old Market neighborhood. Dine at one of the many local restaurants.





Accommodation: Omaha, Nebraska



• • • • • • • • • • 4 hours/280 miles

#### Day 3

Head west to Lincoln, Nebraska's state capital and home to the **Nebraska History Museum**, where you'll look at artifacts and learn about the state and its people. Continue west along the **Platte River** to **Fort Kearny State Historical Park**, where the fort was built to protect Oregon Trail travelers. While in **Kearney**, stop at the **Archway** monument that spans Interstate 80 and is home to displays and films about pioneer days on the **Great Platte River Road**. North Platte is home to **Buffalo Bill Ranch** 

**State Historical Park** that includes the **Empire mansion**, the 1886 home of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, and memorabilia from his wild west show. At the **Cody Park Wild West Memorial**, you will find a life-size bronze statue that commemorates his life.

Accommodation: North Platte, Nebraska





#### NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA TO SCOTTSBLUFF, NEBRASKA

••••••••• 3 hours/178 miles

Day 4

The **Platte River** splits in two with the **North Platte River** being the route for the Oregon Trail. The first pioneers crossed the **South Platte**; you can still see the wagon ruts up the steep **California Hill** near **Brule**, where the wagon trains left the river. At **Ash Hollow State Historical Park**, the wagon trains descended **Windlass Hill** to the North Platte. The hill is so steep that ropes or chains locked the wheels of the wagons as they slid to the bottom of the hill, leaving deep scars. Near **Bridgeport**, the impressive **Chimney Rock** and **Courthouse Rock** formations rise like massive monuments from the **Great Plains**. The rocks were some of the first landmarks guiding the wagon trains westward. At **Chimney Rock National Historic Site and Visitor Center**, you're permitted to take home a piece of the rock. The final stop today is **Scottsbluff**, home of **Scotts Bluff National Monument** that towers 800 feet above the Great Plains. Drive to the top of the bluff for spectacular vistas of the Great Plains below and **Laramie Peak** and **Chimney Rock** in the distance.







#### SCOTTSBLUFF, NEBRASKA TO CASPER, WYOMING

• • • • • • 2 hours and 45 minutes/176 miles

Day 5

Enter **Wyoming**, continuing along the North Platte River to **Fort Laramie National Historic Site**. Just outside of town, tour buildings at the original fort site, a landmark in American history. One of the first camps after leaving Fort Laramie was **Register Cliff**. Travelers inscribed their names and the date into the cliffs to document their passage to family and friends following later. A little farther west is **Guernsey Ruts**, now the **Oregon Trail Ruts State Historic Site**, where you'll see some of the best examples of wagon train tracks on the trail. Almost every traveler took this route, and the sheer volume of wagons passing over the soft sandstone created ruts that are 5 feet deep. Continue west to **Casper**, a central hub to the western migration along the **Oregon, California** and **Mormon trails**.

Accommodation: Casper, Wyoming

### **CASPER, WYOMING**

#### Day 6

Enjoy a relaxing day in Casper, a thriving hub during the lawless days of the wild west. Start your day viewing exhibits at the **National Historical Trails Interpretive Center** to learn about the trails, western history and Wyoming. The center also offers gorgeous views of Casper from its vantage point above town. Trace stories of these early pioneers through interactive exhibits and recreations of life on the trail. You can even take a virtual reality experience on a wagon trying to cross the North Platte River. At **Fort Casper**, the original settlement of the town, tour the reconstructed outpost and museum. Stroll downtown Casper to discover its historic places, finishing with dinner at the Branding Iron.

Accommodation: Casper, Wyoming



#### CASPER, WYOMING TO ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING

• • • • • • • • • 3 hours and 30 minutes/224 miles

Day 7

Travel southwest from Casper to Independence Rock State Historic Site, so named because Oregon Trail travelers needed to be there before July 4 – the USA's Independence Day – to ensure they could complete their journey before winter set in. Known as one of the "registers of the desert," it bears witness to the travelers who passed by long ago and carved their signatures into the granite outcrop. Continue southwest and check out the deserted buildings in **South Pass City**, once a busy gold mining town. South of town is the area known as **South Pass**, one of the most important places on the trail. It's the only place where wagon trains could safely cross the **Rocky Mountains** and the **Continental Divide of the Americas**. South of **Rock Springs** is the **Pilot Butte Wild Horse Scenic Loop that is a 90-minute drive with** many of the scenic overlooks. The open landscape is home to over 1,500 wild horses that are descendants of those introduced in the 1800s by ranchers.

Accommodation: Rock Springs, Wyoming

#### ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING TO YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING

Head northwest to **Names Hill State Historic Site** at the crossing of the Green River, another "register of the desert" that features inscriptions from the early pioneers. Leaving this site, take a detour from the Oregon Trail to explore legendary **Yellowstone National Park**. Travel north to **Jackson Hole** and stop for lunch at the historic town square with its four arches made of elk antlers, a must-do photo opportunity. Bordering the town, see elk herds at the **National Elk Refuge**, where the antlers were collected. Visit the **Million Dollar Cowboy Bar** for lunch – order the elk burger – and sit on barstools made from authentic western saddles. Traveling north from Jackson Hole, take the scenic drive through **Grand Teton National Park**, past breathtaking **Jenny Lake** and **Jackson Lake** with the granite peaks of the **Tetons** in the background. **Yellowstone** spans three states – Wyoming, Montana and Idaho – and is the USA's oldest national park. Established in 1872, it offers one of the most diverse landscapes in the USA.





# YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING

Day 9

Start your Yellowstone adventure early. Home to over 500 geysers and 290 waterfalls, its wildlife includes buffalo, moose, grizzly bears and wolves. The **Grand Loop** drive takes you to the park's major sites. The third-largest hot spring in the world, **Grand Prismatic Spring** is also one of the most photographed because of its unusually bright colors. The famous **Old Faithful** geyser continues to erupt about every 90 minutes. Both **Inspiration Point** and **Artist Point**, which overlooks the **Grand Canyon** 

of the Yellowstone and the Lower Falls, offer impressive views and are accessible by car. Hayden Valley is where you will see most of the park's wildlife. Plan to be there early morning or early evening when the animals are most active.

Accommodation: Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming





## YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, IDAHO TO POCATELLO, IDAHO

• • • • • • 2 hours and 45 minutes/159 miles

Day 10

Leave Yellowstone through its west entrance, then head south into **Idaho** to **Idaho Falls**. Explore the **Idaho Falls Greenbelt Trail** along the banks of the Snake River. Eat lunch by the river at one of the many restaurants on the trail. Follow the **Snake River** southwest to **Fort Hall National Historic Landmark**, the site of a fort that was one of the most important places

along the trail. You can see a replica of the fort in **Pocatello**. Tonight, go inside buildings from **Old Town Pocatello**'s storied past. Visit boutiques and galleries, then enjoy dinner at one of the local restaurants.

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Accommodation: Pocatello, Idaho



# POCATELLO, IDAHO TO BOISE, IDAHO

• • • • • • • • • 3 hours and 30 minutes/234 miles

Day 11

Follow the Oregon Trail west through **Magic Valley**, **Thousand Springs**, **Salmon Valley** and **Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument**. The trail traversed the fossil beds, and wagon ruts from the settlers are still visible. One of the trail's most dangerous places was **Three Island Crossing** near **Glenns Ferry**. Fortunately, local American Indians helped guide the travelers through the shallow water between islands. After crossing the Snake River, continue to **Boise**, the state capital. To hear stories about notorious criminals in the wild west, a visit to the **Old Idaho Penitentiary** is a must. Go to **Main and Grove streets** in the **Old Town** district, where there are stores, restaurants and breweries in addition to markers commemorating the trail's original route.

Accommodation: Boise, Idaho



#### BOISE, IDAHO TO Fort Walla Walla, Washington

• • • • • • • • • • • • 4 hours/252 miles

#### Day 12

Northwest of Boise is the original site of Fort Boise, destroyed by floods, where only a marker survives today. A replica of the original fort is in the nearby town of Parma. A visit to the fort and its museum transports you back to those early days on the trail. Head northwest to **Baker City** and admire the homes and buildings in its historic district. Before leaving town, take a picnic lunch to enjoy at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, where exhibits tell more about the trail. Set atop Flagstaff Hill, the center offers magnificent views of the surrounding Baker Valley, including Virtue Flat and its trail ruts. Go hiking to see the wagon ruts up close. To the early pioneers, the Blue Mountains in the distance promised the end of the journey in the Willamette Valley. Continue northwest into Washington to Walla Walla, the site of Fort Nez Perce, which later became Fort Walla Walla. Visit establishments on historic Main Street and sample wine from one of the almost 100 local wineries.

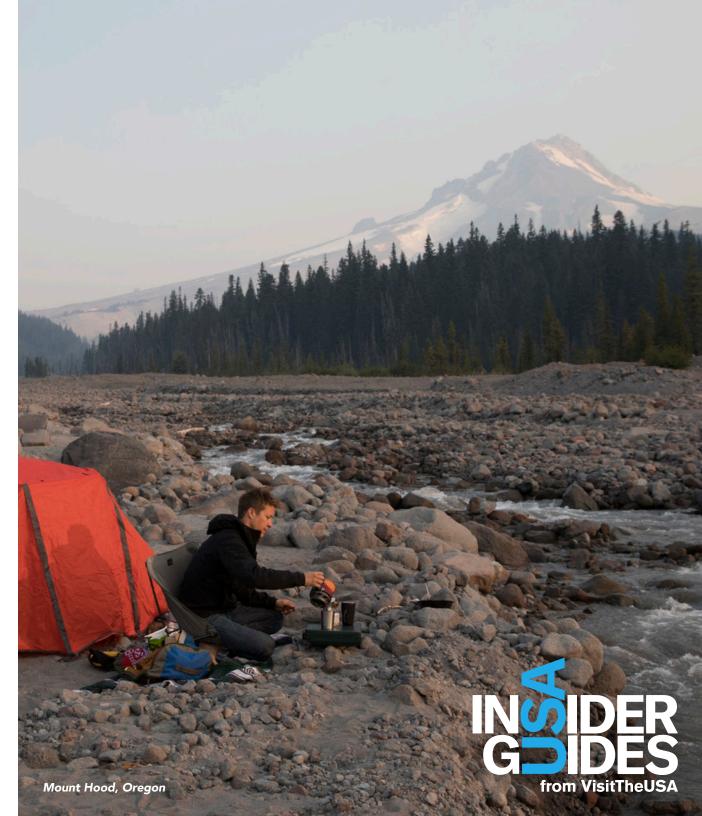
Accommodation: Walla Walla, Washington

#### WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON TO OREGON CITY, OREGON

• • • • • • • • • • • • • 4 hours/252 miles
Day 13

A short distance from town is **Whitman Mission National Historic Site**. The Whitmans were among the earliest to cross the Rocky Mountains, setting the Oregon Trail route for the travelers who would follow them. Enter **Oregon** and follow the **Columbia River Gorge** as you head west. Stop at **Biggs Junction**, one of the last sets of wagon ruts before you reach **The Dalles**, the end of the overland journey. The early settlers needed to take a raft and cross the **Columbia River** from this point, risking the many rapids, to reach their destination in **Oregon City**. In later years, a second option was available, the **Historic Barlow Road**. The state's first toll road took a longer route around **Mount Hood** to Oregon City. A replica of the tollgate is in the community of **Rhododendron**.

Accommodation: Oregon City or Portland, Oregon





#### Day 14

Oregon City was the end of the Oregon Trail, six months and 2,170 miles from the start in Independence. Just south of **Portland**, it was initially named **Willamette Falls** after the famous falls on the **Willamette River**. The **End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive & Visitor Information Center** is an interactive experience that celebrates the

journey and its completion in Oregon City. Exhibits, craft demonstrations, storytelling and reenactments commemorate the early pioneers, their bravery and sense of adventure.

Accommodation: Oregon City or Portland, Oregon





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