

**June 17, 2009**

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# PLATTE CHAT

## What Brings People to Nebraska?

*Jimmy Conway  
Platte Institute Intern*

What makes people want to come to Nebraska? We may not attract any avid skiers or mountain climbers and there is not a five star amusement park in the state, but tourism is Nebraska's third largest industry. It's also the third largest revenue source following agriculture and manufacturing.

Nebraska's tourism is bringing in over \$3.3 billion annually. Each dollar spent by tourists in Nebraska is re-spent in the state to produce an additional \$1.70 in business and income, creating an overall economic impact of \$2.70 (NebGuide: Tourism's Financial Impact).

In 2007, Nebraskans and visitors to the state made 19.4 million trips in the state to destinations 100 miles or more away from home. Kansas sent the most visitors to Nebraska, followed in order by Iowa, Colorado, Missouri, South Dakota, Illinois and Minnesota.

Where are all of these visitors spending their time? Research by Dr. Ernie Goss of Creighton University finds that Ogallala is the top visiting spot with the annual College World Series, currently taking place in Omaha, a surprisingly 13<sup>th</sup> most visited location.

- [Alliance Times-Herald](#)
- [Arapahoe Public Mirror](#)
- [Arlington Citizen](#)
- [Arthur Enterprise](#)
- [Ashland Gazette](#)
- [Aurora News-Register](#)
- [Beatrice Daily Sun](#)
- [Bellevue Leader](#)
- [Blair Enterprise](#)
- [Burwell Tribune](#)
- [Cambridge Clarion](#)
- [Cedar County News](#)
- [Chadron News](#)
- [Columbus Telegram](#)
- [Cozad Tri-City Tribune](#)
- [Curtis Hi-Line Enterprise](#)
- [Custer County Chief](#)
- [Doniphan Herald](#)
- [Elgin Review](#)
- [Elkhorn Douglas County Post Gazette](#)
- [Elm Creek Beacon-Observer](#)
- [Fairbury Journal-News](#)
- [Fremont Tribune](#)
- [Friend Sentinel](#)
- [Gering Courier](#)
- [Gibbon Reporter](#)
- [Gothenburg Times](#)
- [Grand Island Independent](#)
- [Grant Tribune-Sentinel](#)
- [Gretna Breeze](#)
- [Hastings Tribune](#)

### Nebraska's Top Tourist Attractions for 2007

| Rank      | City         | Event or Attraction                     | Summer Attendance | % from Outside NE |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1         | Ogallala     | Front Street and Cowboy Museum          | 738,000           | 70.0%             |
| 2         | Omaha        | Henry Doorly Zoo                        | 666,147           | 46.0%             |
| 3         | Prague       | Czechland Lake                          | 650,000           | n.a               |
| 4         | Omaha        | Heartland of America Park and Fountain  | 605,971           | n.a               |
| 5         | Ashland      | Eugene T. Mahoney State Park            | 535,600           | n.a               |
| 6         | Ponca        | Cook Blacksmith Shop                    | 476,000           | 40.0%             |
| 7         | Louisville   | Art Chicks, A Girlfriends Gallery       | 470,000           | n.a               |
| 8         | Burwell      | Calamus Reservoir State Recreation Area | 399,500           | 10.0%             |
| 9         | Louisville   | Louisville Lakes State Recreation Area  | 399,500           | 10%               |
| 10        | Louisville   | Platte River State Park                 | 392,919           | 5.0%              |
| 11        | Ponca        | Ponca State Park                        | 369,330           | 40%               |
| 12        | Alma         | Harlan County Lake                      | 303,330           | n.a               |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Omaha</b> | <b>College World Series</b>             | <b>300,702</b>    | <b>48.5%</b>      |

- [Hemingford Ledger](#)
- [Hickman Voice News](#)
- [Hyannis Grant County News](#)
- [Imperial Republican](#)
- [Kearney Hub](#)
- [Lexington Clipper-Herald](#)
- [McCook Gazette](#)
- [Nebraska City News-Press](#)
- [Norfolk Daily News](#)
- [North Platte Bulletin](#)
- [North Platte Telegraph](#)
- [Omaha Catholic Voice](#)
- [Omaha Daily Record](#)
- [Ord Quiz](#)
- [Oshkosh Garden County News](#)
- [Osmond Republican](#)
- [Pawnee Republican](#)
- [Plainview News](#)
- [Plattsmouth Journal](#)
- [Ravenna News](#)
- [Scottsbluff Star-Herald](#)
- [Seward County Independent](#)
- [Sidney Sun-Telegraph](#)
- [South Sioux City Dakota County Star](#)
- [Superior Express](#)
- [Sutton Clay County News](#)
- [Syracuse Journal-](#)

|    |           |                                            |         |       |
|----|-----------|--------------------------------------------|---------|-------|
| 14 | Omaha     | The Rose Theater                           | 300,000 | n.a   |
| 15 | Crawford  | Fort Robinson State park                   | 298,350 | 50.0% |
| 16 | Omaha     | Standing Bear Lake                         | 250,000 | n.a   |
| 17 | Omaha     | Cunningham Lake                            | 237,090 | n.a   |
| 18 | Lincoln   | Pawnee State Recreation Area               | 230,000 | n.a   |
| 19 | Omaha     | Zorinsky Lake                              | 226,111 | n.a   |
| 20 | Crofton   | Lewis and Clark Lake State Recreation Area | 209,494 | 50.0% |
| 21 | Lincoln   | Great Plains Art Museum                    | 199,000 | n.a   |
| 22 | Papillion | Papio Fun Park                             | 175,000 | n.a   |
| 23 | Blair     | DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge            | 158,929 | n.a   |
| 24 | Omaha     | Florence Mill                              | 150,000 | n.a   |
| 25 | Omaha     | Boys Town                                  | 140,748 | n.a   |

Over the years, there has been a yearly attendance of approximately 1,150,600 visitors to Mahoney State Park; 1,335,170 to the Henry Doorly Zoo; 881,600 go to Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area and 124,129 check out the Strategic Air and Space Museum. (Nebraska’s Department of Economic Development)

**What does Nebraska’s tourism population look like?**

Of the non-Nebraskan CWS visitors, 64 percent planned to attend another Omaha attraction while in town while roughly 47 percent of non-Nebraska CWS visitors planned

- [Democrat](#)
- [Wahoo Newspaper](#)
- [Wauneta Breeze](#)
- [Waverly News](#)
- [West Point News](#)
- [Wood River Sunbeam](#)
- [Wymore Arbor State](#)
- [York News-Times](#)

to visit Omaha's Old Market and another 34 percent of non-Nebraska CWS visitors planned to visit the Henry Doorly Zoo while in town (According the research compiled by Dr. Goss).

With the tradition of the College World Series every year what kind of impact does it have on Nebraska's economy? Long-term contracts have been debated and signed to keep the championship here until 2035 – the championship that pumps nearly \$40 million annually into the economy. The College World Series contributes to the attractiveness of the state, encouraging immigration and discouraging out-migration.

Each year, the College World Series attracts other sports-related activities. As an example, the United States Specialty Sports Association baseball championship series attracted 133 teams with each team staying three nights in the city. This series was organized to coincide with the CWS. Also held in conjunction with the College World Series is one of the largest youth baseball tournaments- the SlumpBuster- sponsored by Triple Crown Sports in Fort Collins, Colorado. The 2007 SlumpBuster drew 325 teams and nearly 10,000 players, coaches and fans, according to Keri King of Triple Crown Sports. The participants came from 40 states including Hawaii. The 2007 tournament began June 18 and ended June 27 with many teams coming in to the city on June 15 to catch the opening of the College World Series. In 2007, Triple Crown Sports purchased 10,000 general admission tickets which were used by the players, coaches attending the tournament. 2008 marked the sixth year of the Omaha SlumpBuster tournament.

Other than the College World Series, where is this money coming from? The average non-resident traveling party visiting Nebraska by highway during the summer is 2.5 people who stay two nights and spend \$439. (Over a third of the non-residents go to attractions or events, such as the College World Series). For each attraction or event visited, they average a half-day longer in Nebraska, spending an additional \$101. Visitors that stayed overnight in lodging establishments accounted for one-half of all visitor spending in 2008 (Nebraska Department

of Economic Development, 2008 Fiscal year Annual Report). Visitors that stayed overnight in unpaid accommodations (primarily private homes of friends or relatives) accounted for 24 percent. Day travelers accounted for about 22 percent.

### **The Importance of Hospitality and Tourism to Nebraska**

Nebraska's hospitality and tourism industries are integral to the economy. The restaurant, lodging, outdoor activity and tourism industries provide a large percentage of tax revenues, as well as employment. (NebGuide: Nebraska's Hospitality and Tourism Industries)

- Direct travel spending in Nebraska generated 36,000 jobs with earnings of \$556 million in 2008. Four out of five of these jobs were in leisure and hospitality.
- More than 288 industries and countless companies in Omaha experienced increases in revenues because of the CWS.
- Expected increase in employment for the Hospitality industry. For example, employment for recreation workers is projected to increase by 13 percent between 2006 and 2016.

Despite their integral role, these industries often are overlooked when determining the important economic factors providing sustainability to Nebraska.

### **Higher Education Personnel Spending Possibly in Need of Reduction**

***Kelly Dunlap***  
***Platte Institute Intern***

In conversations aimed at reducing Nebraska's spending, higher education is frequently cited as being in need of improvement. Dr. Ernie Goss's policy study, "Nebraska's Spending Habits," reports that Nebraska outspends its neighbors, such as Iowa and Wyoming, as well as the U.S. state average in higher education costs. Solutions to this issue, such as increasing tuition and reducing redundant programs, have been suggested. Also important to

consider are personnel costs, which speak for over half of the state's higher education spending. Statistics show that this area might have room for improvement.

The annual salaries of Nebraska's public professors fare well in comparison to those of surrounding states, possibly even lagging behind them. Statistics reveal that the average salary of a full-time professor at a Nebraska public 4-year institution receives a salary similar to that received by professors at comparable institutions in neighboring states. The average annual salary is \$63,588 for Nebraskans, a bit lower than Iowa, Wyoming, Kansas and Colorado, but a bit higher than Missouri and South Dakota.[\[1\]](#)

Within our borders, however, the average professor's salary at a state institution is greater than that at private institutions. Professors at public 4-year institutions with an estimated fall enrollment of 1,000 or more receive an annual salary of approximately \$63,588. Surprisingly, professors at private 4-year institutions with similar enrollment receive \$56,147— a difference of \$7,441 annually. Furthermore, 2-year institutions show the same inconsistency. Professors at public 2-year institutions benefit from an average of \$2,159 more each year in their paycheck.[\[2\]](#)

While most would agree that educators are deserving of greater compensation than what is usually offered, perhaps personnel costs may be considered alongside other solutions, such as tuition rates, in addressing Nebraska's spending dilemma.

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[\[1\] http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/Default.aspx](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/Default.aspx)

[\[2\]](#) Ibid.

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