O’Brien, Clay, Buena Vista and Cherokee Counties in Northwest Iowa

Discover Iowa’s agricultural roots, Native American history and the glacier-carved landscape
GTSB Group Travel Itinerary

The Glacial Trail Scenic Byway provides a compelling experience where nature, scenery, archaeology and history intersect. This 36-mile corridor encompasses a landscape like no other in the region. The Glacial Trail Scenic Byway will immerse you in the prairie landscape of the Little Sioux River Valley, which harbors native Iowa grasslands second only in land area to those in the Loess Hills to the west. Remnant prairies and oak savannas dot the bluffs above the river. Native flora and fauna abound in more than a dozen public parks and preserves along the byway. You’ll appreciate the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway, a place that still has a little touch of “wildness”.

Unique Adventures

The Glacial Trail Scenic Byway has a rich cultural heritage with tangible evidence of early settlement history and the prehistory of the region. Historic Peterson, Iowa provides an in-depth look at the settlement of Iowa and the United States. Walk through the Kirchner Farm Machinery Museum, Jim’s History Barn, Fort Peterson Blockhouse and more. View Iowan history at its core including antique farm equipment, western memorabilia, Native American artifacts, wildlife displays and military items ranging from the 1700s to WWII.

At Bogenrief Studios, staff excel at the antiquated craft of stained glass restoration and creation. This studio has become world-famous for their skill in cut and blown glass. You’ll be amazed by their projects and the process to create these amazingly intricate works of art.

Scenic Spots

A trail meanders through the diverse and rare ecosystem at Waterman Prairie. In addition to spectacular vistas of the Little Sioux River Valley and the breathtaking prairie in full bloom, be sure to look at the Hanging Valley. This geological wonder was created when glacial melt water surge changed the course of the Little Sioux River about 12,000 years ago. Hike to the bluff-top grave of ‘Dutch Fred’ on the very homestead he established in 1868. The Linn Grove Dam Area provides outdoor recreation including watersports, camping opportunities and more. Learn more about the history of the area from informative interpretive panels located on-site and don’t forget your fishing gear. The 12-acre park is a chance for anglers to catch their next trophy on the Little Sioux River.

Points of Discovery

Enjoy the displays, hike the trails, savor the beauty of the wildflowers and engage in bird and wildlife watching. Check out all of the events and activities at Prairie Heritage Center west of Peterson that celebrate Iowa’s natural wonders. Learn about the unique prairie environment as well as preserving and protecting prairie heritage in O’Brien County.

Archeology, art, astronomy, geology, natural history or paleontology up your alley? The Sanford Museum & Planetarium in Cherokee, established in 1951, was created for historical, cultural and educational purposes. It has welcomed over one million visitors! The museum is an amazing natural science adventure and offers wonderful programming that will take you to the moon, the stars and the neighboring planets.

Local Flavors

The Juke Joint Grille is Northwest Iowa’s favorite little blues bar. Located in Larrabee, this eatery has unique lunch specials and mouthwatering prime rib on Friday and Saturday nights. The cozy location often hosts live music as well.

Stroll through picturesque vineyards, taste amazing wines made from local grapes and enjoy the calming views overlooking the pond and orchard at Innspiration Vines & Wines. Started as a bed and breakfast, this family-owned seasonal location has grown into a full vacation destination. It’s a great place to unwind on the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway.

Lodging Locales

For the more adventuresome travelers, Dog Creek Park offers a unique Iowan lodging opportunity. Multiple grain bins have been converted into cabins containing six queen beds, heat and A/C, walk in shower and kitchen. Located two miles from Sutherland alongside the lake, park and campground, there are many outdoor activities to choose from including hiking, swimming and fishing.
For More Group Tour Options

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