

Omaha

BY MARY ELISABETH PITZ

“Everybody loves Omaha. It’s an easy, entertaining city. With a restored historic district and thriving riverfront, Omaha offers 58 major attractions, 80 performing arts groups, 50 golf courses, 33 sports facilities, numerous biking and hiking trails, more than 500 restaurants and 10,000 hotel rooms.”

— Debbie Skinner, *Tourism Marketing Manager of the Greater Omaha Convention & Visitors Bureau*

The Past Comes Alive

An Omaha tour is a great way to build loyalty because the city has it all - tender, juicy Omaha beef, shopping, theater, outdoor attractions, and exciting new venues along the recently constructed riverfront.

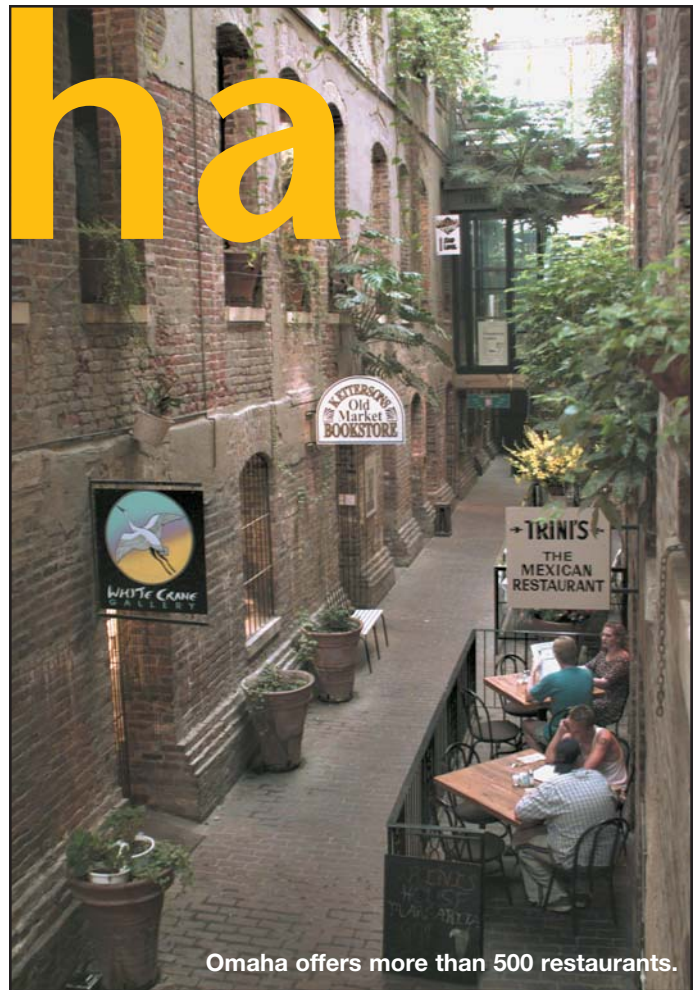
At the beginning of the 19th century on July 27, 1804, Lewis and Clark landed where Omaha flourishes today. While these famous explorers dubbed the wilderness area “White Catfish Camp,” wiser minds later prevailed and re-named it Omaha. These intrepid explorers arrived in the area, which is between Douglas and Farnam from 6th to 15th Street on Omaha’s beautiful riverfront.

Today it is identified as the Gene Leahy Mall and Heartland of America Park. City fathers have developed an entertaining and expansive riverfront for residents and visitors. Covering 23 acres, it’s full of walking paths, fountains, an observation platform, theaters and restaurants. The riverfront buzzes with activity from morning to late evening. There is a boardwalk on an 8 ft. river wall leading to a restaurant with al fresco dining and a surprising circular stairway winding down to the river level plaza. A popular bike trail travels west from the riverfront.

Starting in spring 2004, lively interpretive exhibits along the riverfront will be open. The exhibits have been carefully organized to reflect what Lewis and Clark saw, felt, and discovered, from animals to their encounters with Native Americans. 402-444-5900.

Bridging the Gap

Not only will your clients enjoy the official Lewis and Clark landing site, they will see the first pedestrian bridge, called the Missouri River Pedestrian Bridge, which links two states: Nebraska and Iowa.



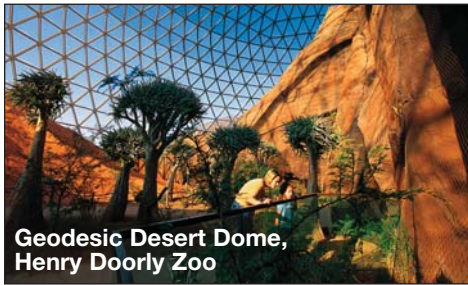
Currently under construction, people will be able to walk across this bridge in the very near future.

The Union Pacific Railroad Museum, which opened on May 10, 2003, is the area’s newest attraction. Located across the Missouri River in Council Bluffs Iowa, the museum displays 140 years of railroad and America Western history. The state-of-the-art interactive displays appeal to adults as much as to the 12 year-old computer game aficionados. Younger children thrill to the sound of a locomotive whistle and the noise in the workers’ camps. People who haven’t ridden a train in a while will be amazed at the railway experience in the 21st century. The Union Pacific clearly is courting business. Watch your group’s reaction to the sweeping changes in railway travel. You may consider adding a rail trip for a future tour. 712-329-8307.

Omaha’s Entertaining Attractions

What better way to dine than on the River City Star, the city’s only restored riverboat that captures the zest that Omaha promised and delivered. Lunch or dinner or just a cruise, boarding the River City Star is a great way to relax and savor the magnificence of the Missouri River from April to November. Visit www.rivercitystar.com or call 866-227-7827.

Omaha’s famous Henry Doorly Zoo has the largest indoor rain forest and geodesic desert dome in the world; it rivals the world-class quality of the renowned San Diego Zoo. Because Omaha doesn’t have the temperate climate of southern California, the zoo offers numerous indoor exhibits that raise the bar for zoos everywhere. The newest and most impressive attraction is the intriguing “Kingdoms of the Night,” which opened in April 2003. Located beneath the



**Geodesic Desert Dome,
Henry Doorly Zoo**

world's largest indoor desert in the world's largest glazed geodesic dome, this exhibit show the busy lives of more than 75 animal species, including eight varieties of bats, when the day-night cycles are reversed. www.omahazoo.com, 402-733-8401.

Although The Joslyn Art Museum presents visiting exhibits from other museums regularly, the museum is best know for its excellent collection of Western art by the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer. He traveled for two years along the upper Missouri River with a German prince, carefully depicting the lives of early settlers and the region as Lewis and Clark saw the area. With 30 types of marble from seven countries, the building housing the museum is often considered art. www.joslyn.org, 402-342-3300.

A lively museum is the Durham Western Heritage Museum in Union Station. The art deco building has been beautifully restored, offering 50,000 sq. ft. of displays on the early West, period homes, covered wagons, a tepee, an earth lodge, and many other eye-catching displays. One of the most popular is the authentic soda fountain, which is always busy. www.dwhm.org, 402-444-5071.

**All this and More—
Top Festivals**

From July through August every Thursday night, there is a concert series on the East lawn of the Joslyn Art Museum. August celebrates Arts on the Green at the Joslyn Art Museum and the Omaha Jazz, Blues and Gospel Festival at 30th & Fort Sts. September's annual events are the Fort Omaha Intertribal Powwow and the River City Roundup Fair & Festival at the Omaha Convention Center & Arena. October is the Annual American Indian Day/Native Pride Powwow. November features Dickens in the Market in the Old Market and Gingerbread on Parade at the Mormon Trail Center. December's big treat is the Irish Christmas at Father Flanagan's House in Girls and Boys Town. No wonder everybody loves Omaha. [tips](#)

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