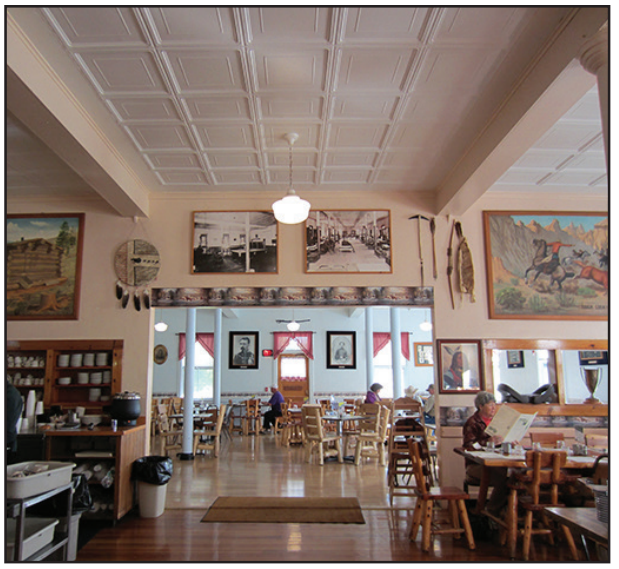

The restaurant in Fort Robinson, Nebraska offers ambiance plus home cooked meals.

Nebraska is not just the great plains but an awesome desert

by Annette Dixon

Traveling can be expensive, but not if you make it a family fun trip. There are many reasons to go to Western Nebraska, maybe your interest lies in following the unsettled dust of two famous pony express riders: Wild Bill Hickok and Buffalo Bill Cody. You may want to travel on the celebrated centennial Lincoln Highway, Route 30 to Western Nebraska and follow the Wagon Train route of The Oregon Trail, Mormon Trail, California Gold Rush Trail, Pony Express and the first Transcontinental Railroad.

The Lincoln Highway (Route 30), also the nation's first transcontinental road follows the great Platte River Road along the Platte River running through Western Nebraska.

For a faster way to Western Nebraska, drive the super highway and avoid all the history and just enjoy what Western Nebraska has in the way of historical and Native American sights.

Sidney was the first large city to have a name for itself after the Gold Rush, titled the sinful city, for they had the most lynchings and killings recorded. Now they are a flourishing city with new industry coming into town. They are noted for their Pony Express Monument near Cabela's retail store on Cabela Drive. Sidney is home to numerous buildings listed on the National Historic Register. The only city in Western Nebraska to have a historic district due to the buildings being adjoining.

The most noted monument is Chimney Rock, a stop for Wagon Trains. It was of interest to many and documented in their diaries. A cemetery is near and you can see their grave sights.

North of the Platte are the Sandhills covering nearly a third of the state. The rolling prairie coverings are home to cattle ranches and the road will take you to one of the last unexplored frontiers where vast treasures can be found.

Nebraska's Pine Ridge is in the northwest corner, where the bighorn sheep live and home to the largest and most historic State Park in Nebraska. Fort Robinson State Park has 22,000 acres and is considered one of the most popular tourist attraction.

Fort Robinson was an active Fort from 1874 until 1948 and it has so much history about the Indian War of 1874 and General Crook, Chief Crazy Horse's life and death in the Fort. Famous buildings are designated as museums and barns with animals and artifacts to give a true picture of the workings of this Fort.

There is lodging and modern camping available from April 1 to November 30th. Cabins and Adobes sleep 4 to 12 people and brick officer quarters sleep 14 to 20 people. Comanche Hall handles 60 people for sleeping, cooking, and dining which has a complete kitchen. Officer quarters also has a full kitchen. Linens are furnished for all accommodations and some utensils, dishes and silverware are also provided, except in the lodge rooms.

There is a horse and wagon ride that takes you around the whole complex where the history is told and the buildings are housing the artifacts. This is an endless place for those interested in story telling and for the pure enjoyment of history and everyday fun.

The monument is from 2006, Boot Hill, Ogallala , Nebraska a cemetery, where cowboys and drifters lost their life and buried with their boots on in the late1800's.

names of Indians such as Dull Knife, Red Cloud and a post Civil War Indian Agency protective post. Fort Robinson survived the Indian Wars and was the site of the Tragic Cheyenne Outbreak, and the last great gathering place of the Sioux Nation. It was the nation's largest quartermaster remount depot. In the 1900's it became a WWII prisoner of war camp, mostly Germans captured and worked at the camp. In the 50's it served as a U.S. Department of Agriculture research station, also a training center for dogs used in WWII, and an Olympic equestrian training center.

A tour of the place is given each day and many

There is a leisure hayride breakfast ride. If you want to see the park by horseback, you can do this also. It could be fun on an open jeep ride among the buttes and enjoy a refreshing swim in the indoor Lindeken Pool, complete with outdoor wading pool and sundeck.

There are evening steak cookouts, fishing, nature center or backpack into the Soldier Creed Wilderness Area. Drive through buffalo herd pasture or head to many recreational sites such as Toadstool Geologic Park and the Oglala National Grasslands, Agate Fossil Bed National Monument, Legends Butte Golf Course near Crawford and a Rodeo Show on the premises.

Cars are not used for junk metal in Nebraska. The art decor is unique, titled Carhenge

A current Nebraska park entry permit is required for all vehicles when entering the park. Also fishing and hunting permits can be obtained on-line.

To make reservations OutdoorNebraska.org. Phone reservations can be made through the Nebraska State Park call center at 402-471-1414. The center is open from 9 am to 6 p.m.Central time Monday through Friday, or call Fort Robinson at 308-665-2900.

Westward Ho across the Great Plains of Western Nebraska, brings more sights than I have seen in many other states.

On the Oregon trail many years ago, there was uncertainty, when fabled frontiersmen like Kit Carson drove those first wagon trains from Missouri in 1842. No doubt, their favorite treacherous tourist stops had to be the Platte Valley of Trails West Country. And when the railroad arrived sights like Ash Hollow, Courthouse, Jail rocks and Scotts Bluff National Monument were still there and the tourist knew what they all stood for.

Many sights took my interest, but the one I felt necessary to finish with is the Museum of the Fur Trade.

The Museum of the Fur Trade is on the site of James Bordeaux's trading post. The current Museum Director is Gail Debuse Potter.

This fur trade museum is by far the best and complete museum I have ever seen. They focused on maps, guns, furs, wardrobes of clothes during the colonial days to Native Americans. There are rooms of pottery, glass, beads, gems, ropes, brass, steel, coins, saddles, hand beaded clothes from various Indian tribes. All of this is individually displayed in a light and heat sensitive regulated room so not to disturb the contents of centuries ago.

Guns and weapons are displayed with information of the rules of trading. The Museum is three miles east of Chadron,NE call 308-432-3843 or wwwfurtrade.org

This is the scenery of Western Nebraska! Surprise, it's not just rolling meadows.