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Legendary North Dakota

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Time Change

North Dakota covers two time zones, with the division roughly following the Missouri River. The eastern part falls in the central time zone, and the western part in the mountain time zone, meaning once travellers cross the river they'll need to put their watch back or forward by an hour. Around 75% of North Dakota is in the central time zone.



The Old Missouri

The Missouri River is the longest in North America and has inspired countless songs and books. It's a big part of life in North Dakota, and a sunny holiday will see the river teeming with holiday-makers swimming, sunbathing and having a beer on their boats. Visitors can't hire boats themselves at present, although the state is working on it—there is a water taxi in Bismarck though, and plenty of places to catch the action from the banks, including the Fort Lincoln Park just out of Bismarck.



Bounteous Bismarck

The capital of North Dakota is Bismarck, a friendly city that's home to around 70,000 people and is the second-largest in the state. Found on the banks of the Missouri River, it's easy to get around and not in the least bit intimidating for travellers. The city had been in decline since 1930, but is now growing again as a result of the oil boom, which has led to a focus on making downtown more vibrant. It's also worth crossing the river to visit Bismarck's 'twin', the sleepy town of Mandan, which is better known for ranching. See bismarckmandancvb.com

North Dakota: Where Legends Are Made



It's not for nothing that North Dakota has picked *Legendary* as its tagline—the state has links to famous names like former president Theodore Roosevelt and explorers Lewis and Clark, as well as awe-inspiring scenery, the Missouri River and quirky locals who inspired a cult film.

Visitors to the state can expect easy highways, sleepy cities, picturesque landscapes, sprawling national parks, plenty of cowboys, American history, and a warm welcome from locals thrilled that a Kiwi has stumbled across their quiet way of life.

"People come to North Dakota for culture, history and outdoors, and they recognise what they've read in history books or on tele-

vision," says ND's Fred Walker "Travellers go to the big cities first, LA, Las Vegas, then they come here and appreciate the slower pace. There's no rush hour, they're not being jostled along."

... Growth

North Dakota's tourism industry is currently going through a massive growth period, with new hotels popping up all over the state, while attractions like the North Dakota Heritage Centre and Lewis & Clark Interpretive Centre are undergoing expansions. See ndtourism.com

Enchanted Highway



Concerned about the future of his hometown of Regent, a canny local started building massive scrap metal sculptures along the highway leading to the tiny town.

It's impossible to miss the sculptures, which include giant geese, grasshoppers and an underwater scene, and the sculptor is apparently planning to build more. Geese In Flight, just off the I94, holds the Guinness World Record for the largest scrap metal sculpture in the world.

The Enchanted Highway extends from Regent to the Gladstone exit of Interstate 94, east of Dickinson. Visitors should take exit 72 off the I94 and head south (they'll see the Geese in Flight sculpture).

Famous Fargo

North Dakota locals have a bone to pick with the Cohen brothers and their film 1996 *Fargo*—mostly surrounding the hapless characters and their quirky accents.

Fargo is North Dakota's largest city, and almost 20 years after the movie, it still attracts tourists keen to experience the charm of the locals as shown in the film—and they can stop by the Fargo-Moorhead Convention and Visitors Bureau to take a picture with the 'Woodchipper'. It's not just for film buffs though—there are golf courses, unique shopping, cultural and artistic events, football and major events and concerts. See fargomoorhead.org



Local Breweries

For many years there were no local breweries in North Dakota because of local laws—but they're catching on since the law change, with at least eight in the state.

They include Bird Dog Brewing and Buffalo Commons Brewing Company in Mandan; and the Edwinton Brewing Company and Laughing Sun Brewing Company in Bismarck. See birddogbrewingnd.com, edwinton.com, laughingsunbrewing.com

Duhamel Spotting

North Dakota Tourism has signed up the rather lovely actor Josh Duhamel to help advertise the state he grew up in, and has helpful hints for any fans hoping to spot the handsome hunk. Duhamel is part-owner of two restaurants in the state and comes back to visit quite often, says the STO—clients could hang around 10 North Main in his hometown Minot, and Sixteen03 Main Events in Bismarck. He also plays golf at the Bully Pulpit Golf Course. See ndtourism.com



Cowboy Fast Draw

Keen cowboys can try their sharp shooting skills at the Medora Range Riders' new Cowboy Fast Draw. Visitors aged eight to 80 can try their hand at the fast draw, a timed sport using single action .45 caliber long Colt cases with no more than six grains of black powder behind a wax bullet. See medorarangeriders.com

Boot-Scootin' Boots

Americans in the Mid-West seem to be brought up learning to dance, and there's nothing like heading to a bar and watching everyone break out their dancing boots and try to one-up each other on the dance floor.

For a good old-fashioned hoe-down, head to Boots Bar in the centre of Medora on a Fri or Sat night—there's live music and plenty of entertainment, even if visitors aren't brave enough to show their moves themselves. See bootsbarmedora.com



Pitchfork Fondue

For an old-fashioned cowboy cookout with a twist, suggest clients check out the Pitchfork Steak Fondue, where chefs load steaks onto pitchforks and fondue them Western style.

The cookout is located on a bluff overlooking the badlands, and includes all the trimmings, while diners are serenaded by band members from the Medora Musical. It's available over summer (06 Jun-06 Sep), and costs USD28 for steak and buffet.

From 1730-1830 Sun-Thu there's also a Cowboy Cookout, with favourites like Buffalo Roast and BBQ Ribs. [CLICK HERE](#)

Historic Cowtown In The Badlands



Surrounded by expansive parklands and towering cliffs, Medora is a tiny, picturesque town with strong links to cowboy culture and a perfect base to explore the nearby Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Found just off the I94 at the western fringe of North Dakota, it's a touristy spot so there are plenty of shops packed with cowboy paraphernalia to browse and pretty streets to stroll. There's a short history trail with stories about the original buildings still standing from the town's heyday, and

Top Golf Course

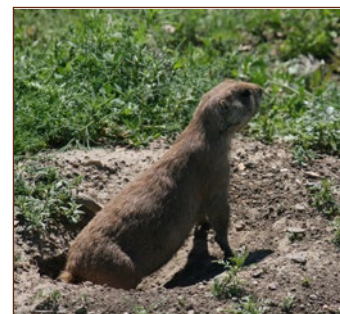
Medora is home to the Bully Pulpit Golf Course, ranked one of America's top and set amongst the Badlands, where players weave through meadows, woodlands and play next to the Little Missouri.

This 18-hole course is open Apr-Oct, with rates starting at USD59 for a sunset game.

The course is also a favourite of North Dakota celebrity Josh Duhamel. [CLICK HERE](#)

Where To Stay

The 115-room Badlands Motel is a favourite with families, with plenty of space to house big groups and a swimming pool to keep them entertained and a mini-golf course nearby. It's walking distance from everything in town and is bordered on one edge by rock cliffs of Theodore Roosevelt park. Rates start at USD79pn. For something a little more high-end, the Rough Riders Hotel in the centre of town was constructed in the 1800s and is open year-round. [CLICK HERE](#)



Roosevelt National Park

North Dakota is home to plenty of beautiful national parks, but the Theodore Roosevelt National Park is something special.

It's the only national park named after a person, and honours the influence the park had in shaping the president's famous conservation ethic.

As with the rest of North Dakota, it's an easy drive on open roads to get through the 70,416 acre park, stopping to spot buffalo, wander among petrified forests, admire colourful rock formations, dip a toe in the Little Missouri and, a definite highlight, chat with prairie dogs in one of the prairie dog towns. The towns are clearly marked on the map given to visitors, and the chirpy critters are impossible to miss.

Clients should allow at least a day to explore the park, and there are campsites if they're keen to stay longer. Entry is USD10 per car, valid for seven days. See nps.gov/thro



Medora Musical A Must-Do

For many people, the town of Medora is fondly known for the Medora Musical, a high-energy, western style show dedicated to the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt and the time he spent in North Dakota's Badlands.

Expect plenty of American patriotism with a good dose of cowboys at the show, which is on 1930 each evening over summer (06 Jun-06 Sep this year). It's performed in the out-door 2900-seat Burning Hills Amphitheatre, and features songs by the Burning Hills Singers and on-stage band, the Coal Diggers, as well as comedy and variety acts, live horses on stage and a gospel tribute.

Before the show is the Miss Cowboy Camp for Kids, on from 1915, where children are invited on stage to join the performers.

Tickets are from USD31 for adults, USD14 for children. [CLICK HERE](#)

Heritage Centre Expands

The best place to experience the state's history is at the North Dakota Heritage Centre, which is currently undergoing a massive USD52 million expansion due for completion in Nov, in time for ND to celebrate its 125th anniversary of statehood.

The centre will become more interactive and will feature a new Governors' Gallery for travelling exhibits; a geological time gallery showcasing the Ice Age, sabre tooth tigers and dinosaurs; First Peoples' Gallery telling the 13,000-year history of developing culture; interactive children galleries and learning labs; and a Great Plains theatre.

See statehistoricalfoundation.com



Lincoln State Park

Just south of Mandan, visitors can get a taste of two different types of history at the Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, where they can tour both a 400-year-old Mandan Indian village and the home of General Custer and his wife.

The story of the On-A-Slant Indian Village, which thrived for 200 years, is a fascinating one, as are the earthlodges (pictured) which visitors can enter and explore. There's an excellent visitor centre which tells the village's story. Meanwhile at Custer's home, May-Sep guides dressed in the costume of the time will do all they can to ensure visitors are transported back in time to when Custer lived there in 1876. There's also self-guided tours of Fort Abraham Lincoln, the last home of the Seventh Cavalry before its famous defeat at the Battle of Big Horn. The park is seven miles south of Mandan, see fortlincoln.com

History And Heritage In The Mid West



North Dakota is proud of its past and it's no surprise when its history boasts names and stories like Theodore Roosevelt, General Custer and the Battle of Bighorn, Lewis and Clark and their guide Sakakawea.

The Native American people and the settlers who tried to tame the land also have stories to tell which are just as impressive.

... Lewis And Clark

Famous explorers Lewis and Clark spent more time in North Dakota than any other state as they explored America, and it's where they met Sakakawea, the young Indian inter-



Interpretive Centre

The Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center and Fort Mandan – The Center, where the pair met Sakakawea, focuses on Lewis and Clark's voyage through the area, with exhibits portraying all Native American groups they encountered.

There's a hand-carved canoe replicating those used during the expedition, visitors can wrap themselves in a buffalo robe or carry a baby cradle on their back like Sakakawea did, and shop for traditional art and gifts. The centre is in Washburn, see fortmandan.com

preter who accompanied them.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was also known as the Corps of Discovery Expedition, and was the first to cross what is now the western portion of the US, departing in May 1804. Its primary objective was to explore and map the new territory, as well as study its plant and animal life, and establish trade with local Indian tribes.

There's all sorts of ways to learn about the intrepid journey in ND, including by following a Lewis and Clark trail roughly along the Missouri River.

Along the way visitors can see parts of the river looking as it did 200 years ago, and interpretive sites like the Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park (pictured), Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center and Fort Union National Historic Site.

See lewisandclarktrail.com

Native Americans

North Dakota is home to several Dakotah/Lakotah (commonly known as the Sioux) tribes each with its own histories and languages, but they're united by their respect for humans' relationship with nature.

They're welcoming people (Dakota means friend or ally) and visitors are invited to explore the reservations—but if it's a little intimidating, a brilliant way to experience the native culture is through a powwow, and North Dakota's are famous.

Watching the traditional dance, not to mention the costumes, is something else and definitely worth including on a ND itinerary.

The main one is the United Tribes Technical College Powwow in Bismarck, attended by more than 70 tribes, 1500 dancers and drummers and 20,000 spectators.

It's held on the weekend after Labour Day (the first Mon of Sep), see unitedtribespowwow.com



Lewis and Clark Riverboat

The majestic Lewis and Clark Riverboat cruises the Missouri River from Bismarck each day.

Cruise prices range from USD10 and the boat operates at different times depending on the day, with options including lunch, afternoon, evening and sunset cruises. See lewisandclarkriverboat.com

North Dakota Rodeos

Some of the larger North Dakota rodeos include:

Fargo PRCA Rodeo, Fargodome: Indoor professional rodeo.

North Dakota Rodeo Association Badlands Rodeo, Medora: Full rodeo in the Badlands.

North Dakota High School Finals Rodeo, Bowman. Top high school athletes compete.

Roughrider Days Fair and Expo Rodeo, Dickinson. Rodeo, live music, Fourth of July parade.

Mandan Rodeo Days, Mandan: Professional rodeo, parades, music, street dances and fireworks.

Killdeer Mountain Roundup Rodeo, Killdeer: Oldest PRCA rodeo in North Dakota.

McKenzie County Fair Rodeo, Watford City. Rodeo is part of the larger celebration.

Morton County Fair Rodeo, New Salem. Rodeo is part of the larger celebration.

Hettinger Chamber Bull-A-Rama and Rodeo, Hettinger: Held in conjunction with Adams County Fair.

58th Annual Champions Ride Rodeo, Sentinel Butte: Showdown between 20 of the top professional saddle bronc riders.

Ashley Rodeo, Ashley.

North Dakota Rodeo Association Finals, Watford City: Crowning of year-end champions in all events.

Roughrider Rodeo Association Finals, Jamestown: Year-end championship event.

Lake Region Rodeo, Devils Lake.

Badlands Circuit Finals Rodeo, Minot: Champions in the PRCA's Badlands Circuit will be crowned.

True America At North Dakota's Rodeos



Hot dogs and beer, blaring country tunes, cheesy announcers, an endless parade of cowboy boots, stars and stripes and not to mention the most patriotic national anthem you'll ever experience (expect to doff your cowboy hat)—for the most quintessentially American experience, you can't go past a rodeo.

The rodeo is a family sport for many locals, who grow up lassoing calves from a young age, many competing well into later life—and often collecting quite a following along the way. The top riders are something of a celebrity and it's easy to pick them from the whooping crowd when their names are called.

They take the sport seriously—there's big money involved—and

while things may get tense backstage, there's a great atmosphere in the crowd, all of whom are there for the show.

And what a show—the bravery of the bull-riders is obviously a favourite, but there's also the skill of events like lassoing, bareback riding, girls barrel racing and a bit of light relief from (very talented) rodeo clowns, as well as cute kiddie events (think tiny children clinging desperately to sheep as they take off around the arena).

The events are mostly held over summer (although there are some indoors), and there are different leagues. [CLICK HERE](#)



Day Of The Cowboy

North Dakota is working towards officially recognising National Day of the Cowboy, which has already become a permanent day in seven US states and is quickly gaining ground. The day is held on the fourth Sat in Jul, and is celebrated with events like branding demonstrations, shopping discounts, honouring local cowboys and cowgirls, hosting a western dance, and of course, rodeos. See nationaldayofthecowboy.com



Cowboy Christmas

Clients keen to really get among the cowboys should time their visit for 'Cowboy Christmas', when cowboys and girls travel the country trying to win money at the many rodeos held over that time.

It's the perfect time to visit the US because it's held in the two weeks around Independence Day (04 Jul), so clients are sure to witness some fantastic fireworks displays at the rodeos as well.



Coffee In Ted's Chapel

It's not easy to find what Kiwis would deem a decent coffee in the US (the choice is basically regular or decaf) so while clients are in town for a rodeo—or just passing through—urge them to check out The Brew coffee bar in Dickinson.

As well as an impressive coffee selection, the café has history—once a chapel, it's said Roosevelt used to worship there. See thebrew.org

Major Mandan Rodeo

The Mandan Rodeo, which runs every 02-04 Jul, is older than North Dakota itself—this year it celebrates its 135th anniversary.

It's a fantastic rodeo and the whole town of Mandan comes alive for the event with an Art In the Park festival, concerts, dancing, baseball, 04 Jul parade and a fireworks celebration. See mandanrodeo.com



North Dakota Cowboy Hall Of Fame

The North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame, where visitors can learn about the state's western heritage, is based in Medora.

The centre's vision is for people from all walks of life to understand the state's rodeo, ranching and Native American cultures.

There's permanent and travelling exhibits, a Hall of Honourees, theatre, gift shop, archives, meeting space and open-air patio. There are also special events like the National Day of the Cowboy, the Day of the Great Plains Horse People, and Old-Fashioned Cowboy Christmas. See northdakotacowboy.com



Dinosaur Museum

The Dakota Dinosaur Museum in Dickinson features 14 full-scale dinosaurs, including a complete, real triceratops skeleton.

In fact, the museum boasts that 91% of its exhibits are real, and as well as dinosaurs there's fluorescent minerals, mammals, a bison skeleton, and sea life.

It's open daily 01 May-Labour Day, entry is USD8 for adults, USD5 for children aged three to 12. See dakotadino.com

Five Nations Art Depot



Clients keen to pick up some Native American art should head to the Five Nations Art Depot, where they'll find everything from jewellery and dream catchers to paintings and quillwork.

The art is made by the native people in the northern great plains, including the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara) and the Lakota and Dakota.

It's found at 401 West Main St in the old Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Mandan. Visitors can also have artwork made.



Dakota Zoo Bismarck

The Dakota Zoo in Bismarck was originally home to the animals Lewis and Clark would have encountered, such as bears and wolves, but now boasts over 600 animals with more exotic creatures like tigers and leopards. Entry is from USD7.25 for adults, see dakotazoo.org

Home On The Ranch For Tourists



The best way to truly understand the cowboy culture that runs deep in North Dakota is to stay on a working ranch—even better if said ranch is owned by an extremely good-looking and charming family who have lived there for generations.

Black Leg Ranch in McKenzie is run by the Doan family, headed up by Jerry and Renee, but the tourism side of things is a project that's mostly been taken on by their sons Jay (pictured) and Jeremy.

The ranch was established in 1882, making it older than North Dakota itself, but there have been a few changes as the enterprising family looks to diversify.

Jay and Jeremy have constructed amazing log cabins and a very cool bar where they serve cowboy dinners to tourists, as well as the hunters who stay there as part of their Rolling Plains Adventures hunting business.

If you're dining with just the family, it's a great time to get an understanding of life in North Dakota and their take on everything from hobbits to Obama—and they're a very friendly, chatty bunch.

They're also very energetic and happy to have guests tag along and

watch them at work, whether it's rounding up a massive herd of cattle, feeding baby animals or practising calf roping for the rodeo. They'll also help guests onto a horse and take them on a very scenic ride to a 'ghost town' on the property.

Guests can be as involved as they like, and there's always the option of driving into town or to the nearby Missouri River.

See rollingplainsadventures.com or blacklegranch.com

Best For A Bite

If clients tire of cowboy cookouts and BBQs, there's some great dining options in downtown Bismarck.

Peacock Alley, a grill and bar, is set in the historic Patterson building and there's plenty of tales to be told about its past, including serving alcohol during the prohibition as well as hosting illegal gambling and prostitutes.

Photographs, antiques and original furnishings add to its charm, and there's a wide range of sandwiches and steaks on the menu, as well as 24 different tap beers to choose from. See peacock-alley.com

For finer dining, Pirogue Grille is generally understood to be the city's finest, with menu items like potato gnocchi with rabbit confit and sof-fritto, or house-made venison sausage. See piroquegrille.com



Hit The Trails On Horseback

For clients keen to hit the trails by horse but without time for a guest ranch stay, there's plenty of options for guided trail rides that give a taste of cowboy rambling—and they're usually fine for inexperienced riders.

In Medora, there's trail rides through the Badlands given by the Medora Riding Stables (medora.org/attractions) or the Peaceful Valley Ranch, with rides ranging from 1.5 hours through to five, with lessons before each ride (see home.ctctel.com/peacefulvalley).

Other options include horseback rides through the Little Missouri State Park with Badlands Trail Rides (see badlandstrailrides.com) or trail rides in the Sheyenne National Grasslands with Sheyenne Oaks Horse Camp (see sheyenneoaks.com).