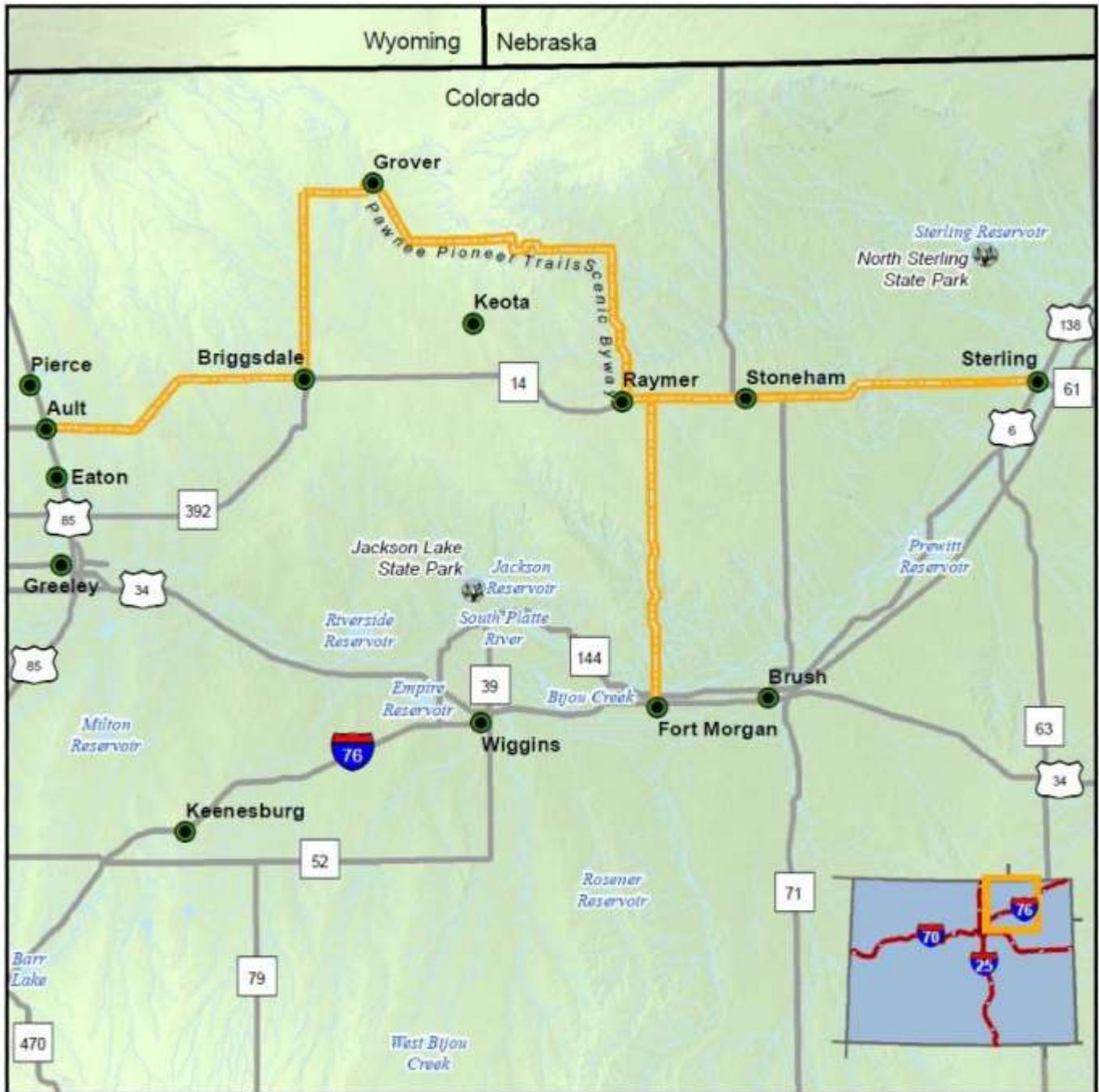




Pawnee Pioneer Trails/South Platte Scenic and Historic Byways

This, in the massive tallgrass prairie, to quote the song, is where the deer and the antelope play. No trees grow here, because it's in the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains. All the rain is wrung out when the clouds pass over the mountains. The Pawnee Pioneer Trails Scenic and Historic Byway traces the steps of Native American and pioneer trails across the open grassland plains of Northwest Colorado. Once sprinkled with Plains Indians and buffalo, frontiersmen, ranchers and homesteaders settled in the 19th century. Life here was hard, it still mostly is, challenged every day by isolation, droughts, high winds and blazing sun. Railroad towns grew up, but few flourished. The Pawnee Buttes, two 350-foot sandstone wonders that author James Michener called "the sentinels of the plains" stand proudly looming over it all. In spite of the harsh conditions, the wind-swept region is known internationally for birding. The lark bunting, the Colorado State Bird, is common in the spring and summer. Other species include the long-billed curlew, mountain plover and burrowing owls. As you drive, watch for pronghorn, mule deer, coyote, swift fox, snakes and prairie dogs. At the end of your Pawnee Pioneer Trail Byway, we've extended the trip with a drive on the South Platte River Trail, the shortest Byway in Colorado.



Prairie Ranching Experience



Driving the Byway

Your journey begins in Greeley, the center of agriculture and farming in northeast Colorado. From there, you'll travel up to Ault, the beginning of the Byway and the gateway to the Pawnee National Grasslands. From there, it's on to Briggsdale and to Grover, where the Grover Depot Museum introduces you to early life in the region. Just beyond Grover, you'll see the Pawnee Buttes. Then drop down to Fort Morgan, for an overnight stay. Back up at New Raymer, you'll be on your way to Sterling and then to Julesburg and the South Platte River Trail. Unlike many of Colorado's Byways in the mountains, the roads here are straight and the drive goes fast.

Day One



Greeley

Greeley was one of America's first planned towns. After Nathan Meeker, the agricultural editor of the New York Tribune visited in 1869, he returned dreaming of a new home. The support of the editor of the Tribune, Horace Greeley, and his article, "A Western Colony" were instrumental in recruiting 737 colonists for a Utopian farming community near the confluence of the Cache la Poudre and the South Platte Rivers. Meeker was seeking educated, religious non-drinking families who had strong values and were able to use irrigation for farming. Even though Greeley was built on farming and agriculture, it was very progressive. There were telephones by 1883 and electric lights in 1886. Cars coexisted with buggies by 1910. The Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra was started in 1911. Today, Greeley has an excellent collection of museums that serve as a great introduction to farming on the high plains and the culture it generated.

Day One

Centennial Village Museum



The living history experience at Centennial Village Museum includes exploring over 35 historic buildings, interpreters in period dress and heritage farm animals on eight landscaped acres. Visit to learn about early pioneer life on the high plains, when grand houses, growing businesses, extensive prairies and farming were all part of life. Check out living history demonstrations of the High Plains Post print shop, blacksmithing, rope making, chuckwagon cooking, scrub board laundry, corn shucking and grinding, cooking on a cast iron stove and more.

1475 A Street, Greeley, CO 80631 970-350-9220 Friday-Saturday 10AM-4PM. Sunday Noon-4PM. Allow 2 hours \$8 per person

Greeley History Museum



The main exhibit at the Greeley History Museum “Utopia: An Adaption on the Plains” illustrates the story of Greeley’s unique beginning. Located in the 1929 Greeley Tribune Building, exhibits showcase the region’s history with regular gallery changes, featuring artifacts and images from the impressive collection of photographs and documents.

714 Eighth Street, Greeley, CO 80631 970-350-9220 Wednesday-Sunday 10AM-4PM Allow 1 hour, \$5 per person

Day One

Meeker House Museum



The 1870 Meeker House Museum was the original family home of Greeley's founder that has been restored with furnishings original to the home and used by the family. Special items include a 10 foot diamond dust mirror, a tall case clock and Meeker's cherry desk. As you tour the home, you'll learn the story of Meeker's life as the agricultural editor, his founding of the town, and ultimately becoming an agent of the White River Ute tribe. The landscaped grounds include interpretive panels, historical facts, maps and images of the town and its history.

1324 Ninth Avenue, Greeley, CO 80631 970-350-9220
Wednesday-Sunday 10AM-4PM. Allow 1 hour, \$5 per person

White-Plumb Farm Learning Center



Experience a Colorado Centennial Farm run by the same family for over 100 years. The property was originally settled by Charles White as a turn of the century tree claim that was later turned into a farming operation. The farmhouse has been significantly renovated and the outbuildings repurposed for educational use.

955 39th Avenue, Greeley, CO 80631 970-350-9220
Wednesday-Sunday 10AM-4PM Allow 1 hour, Donations accepted

Greeley Destination Distinctive Accommodations and Dining



Destination Distinctive Accommodations: The Currier Inn 1221 Ninth Avenue, Greeley, CO 80631 970-392-1221

Stay in an elegant historic octagon-shaped Inn, equipped with all the amenities of modern lodging. Breakfast is served each morning at the time of your choice.



Lucky Fins 4848 Centerplace Drive Greeley, CO 80634 970-673-8805

Local cuisine, American, seafood, shushi, vegetarian and gluten free.

Day Two



Ault

The little town of Ault is well known as the “Gateway to the Pawnee Grasslands”. The tree lined Main Street is lined with antique stores and restaurants, and all the other amenities of a small farming town. Greeley to Ault—12 miles

Day Two

Pawnee Pioneer Grasslands



The Pawnee National Grasslands preserves a part of the windswept plains that evolved from the “Dust Bowl” to a massive grassland. A network of numbered US Forest Service and country roads take you within walking distance of almost all parts of the grassland. The 21-mile Pawnee National Grassland Bird Tour moves through a variety of bird habitats, old homesteads, abundant wildlife, wildflowers and the peaceful serenity of the prairie. The tour begins at the Crow Valley Recreation area and follows county roads to ultimate meet up with Highway 14. The birds you will see depends on the season you are visiting.

115 North Second Avenue, Ault, CO 80610 970-834-9270
24/7, Free

Antique Shopping



Ault is known for antique shops, including Jen’s Antique Mall, HR’s Antiques etc, Faded Rose Antiques, Blooms and Heirlooms and Antiques Whistle Stop, some of which have been there for decades.

Regular retail hours, generally Tuesday-Saturday 10AM-4PM

Gray’s Café

200 First Street
Ault, CO 80610
970-834-0741



Gray’s is a great stop where the food is good, the coffee is always hot and fresh, the cinnamon rolls awesome and the service always fast and friendly.

Day Two

Grover



Surrounded by the Pawnee National Grasslands, Grover is home to 150 residents. It was once home to businesses, stories, a stagecoach station and hotels, which are now either boarded up or reduced to rubble. Even though the dusty little town is usually by-passed by visitors, Grover still holds on to its old western charm.

Grover Depot Museum



Two-story railroad depots are rare, and the depot which houses the Grover Depot Museum is the only surviving example of its type in Colorado. It represents the important role played by the railroad in the founding, growth, and long-term survival of many Colorado agricultural towns. Exhibits here weave together Grover's tales of boom and bust.

600 Chatoga Avenue, Grove, CO 970-895-2344

Hours vary, Free

Day Two



Fort Morgan

With a commanding view of the South Platte River, Fort Morgan played an integral role in protecting stagecoaches using the cutoff that went through Fort Morgan that shortened the route of the Overland Trail. The fort, built by “Galvanized Yankees,” Confederate soldiers who pledged their allegiance to the Union after the war in exchange for being released from prison, at one time was the only presence between Julesburg and the Rocky Mountains. The Union Pacific Railroad bypassed the fort in 1867, leading to a mass desertion when many of the soldiers escaped into the vast frontier never to be seen again. Ault to Fort Morgan—64 miles

Fort Morgan Accommodations and Dining



Destination Distinctive Accommodations: Fairfield Inn and Suites
1290 Cottonwood Parkway, Fort Morgan, CO 80701 970-441-6200

Unwind in a spacious room or suite, with contemporary design and functional furnishings. Complementary Wi-Fi is available throughout the hotel, with mini-refrigerators, micro-waves, and coffee makers in every room. Complimentary breakfast is served daily.



The May Kitchen and Tap House

1409 Barlow Road
Fort Morgan, CO 80701
970-542-9482

The number one restaurant in Fort Morgan that features the flavors of western America, with a dash of tradition and a twist of creation, in an extraordinary selection of offerings.

Day Three

Historic Walking Tour of Fort Morgan



The most significant homes included on the historic walking tour (pdf included with the detailed itinerary) were associated with the prominent pioneers who transformed the high plains into prosperous farms. The district was part of an original 160-acre tree claim made by George Warner in 1883, who needed a place to protect his cattle and sheep protected when they were moved from the train to farms. Sherman Street remained a gravel road until 1945. In addition to creating the historic district in 1990, four of the historic houses were placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Tour begins at 508 Sherman Street, Allow 30-45 minutes

Fort Morgan Museum



The Fort Morgan displays the community as it once was, including a Soda Shop from the 1930s, school desks, details of the challenging days of farming in northeastern Colorado, exhibits of Native American life on the Great Plains with an impressive collection of stone tools and arrowheads. A scale model of the town's first train station and the sugar processing plant illustrate the critical role the industry played in the early 1900s. The lower gallery has five different art shows each year and the museum also has a section about the life of jazz bandmaster Glenn Miller.

414 Main Street, Fort Morgan, CO 80701 970-542-4010
Monday-9AM-6PM, Tuesday-Saturday 9AM-5PM, Allow 2 hours



Morgan County Barn Quilt Tour

Barns are a normal part of any farming community and barns painted with quilts are special. Morgan County has no less than 119 barns painted with quilts, making for a great tour (pdf included with the detailed itinerary) through the area. At that same time you're viewing quilts, you're also absorbing the timeless farming landscape so famous in this area. Allow at least 2 hours

Day Three



Sterling

Known as the Queen City of the Plains, the first residents of Sterling were Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, Blackfoot, Sioux, Kiowa and Pawnee. French Canadian fur trappers passed through on their way to the beaver-rich foothills of the Rockies. Discovery of gold in California and Colorado made the Overland Trail the most heavily traveled route in America in the 1850s. When the first people came to Greeley, they found the best farmland already taken so they moved east to settle along the South Platte River, building sod huts on the banks. Locals made sure that the Union Pacific Railroad came through the town by offering 80 acres for a right of way. Fort Morgan to Sterling— 47 miles

Day Three

Historic Walking Tour of Sterling



When the Civil War ended families from the east and the south came west searching for farmland on which to rebuild their lives. By 1875, 12 homesteads had been established in Sterling and six years later the Union Pacific Railroad came through town, promoting great growth. The walking tour (pdf provided with the detailed itinerary) begins at the Logan County Courthouse, where you'll see early paintings of town, and from there proceeds to the W.C. Harris House, Union Pacific Depot, which has seen visits from the likes of Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover; and the Great Western Sugar Factory, which once processed more than 224,000 tons of sugar beets and later housed prisoners of war during World War II.

Tour begins at 315 Main Street

Overland Trail Museum



Between 1862 and 1868, the Overland Trail took more than 250,000 settlers, prospectors, explorers, and trappers, plus goods and mail across the Great Plains. The original museum building was designed after early forts and constructed of native rock. It is now complemented by a turn of the century village, including the Stoney Buttes one room school house, the Dailey Cash General Store, and the Evangelical Lutheran Concordia Church. The granary barn holds a collection of branding irons and other farm and ranch equipment. The blacksmith shop is authentic. The grounds also display an extensive array of farm machinery. The Dave Hamil R. E. A. (Rural Electric Administration) building illustrates how electricity changed life in rural America. A 1900s barbershop with original furnishings and a back room furnished for Saturday night baths has recently been moved to the property, along with a historic print shop, an old filling station, the Herford Depot, and an old box car.

110 Overland Trail, Sterling, CO 80751 970-522-3895
Monday-Saturday 9AM-5PM, Allow 2 hours

Sterling Accommodations and Dining



Destination Distinctive Accommodations: Best Western Sundowner
125 Overland Trail, Sterling, CO 80751 970-522-6265

Stay in a conveniently located hotel with two pools, complimentary breakfast and free WiFi.



The Grill at River City
1116 West Main Street
Sterling, CO 80751
970-526-6969

From Hand Cut Steaks to Beer Battered Shrimp and Onion Rings the Grill takes pride in making all items from scratch daily with fresh ingredients. If you want to sit for a while, there is plenty of space to relax both inside and outside, as well as free WiFi.

Day Four



Julesburg

Julesburg wasn't always a sleepy little town in fact it was once known as the "Wickedest City in the West." Before it was a busy way station on the region's transportation known as the Upper California Creek, the area was home to Arapaho, Cheyenne and other Plains Indians. Established in 1858, Julesburg soon became the largest settlement between Fort Kearney, Nebraska and Denver, serving as a rendezvous point for traders, Indian fighters, buffalo hunters, desperados and bandits. Sterling to Julesburg—60 miles

Day Four

South Platte River Trail Scenic and Historic Byway



The South Platte River Trail Scenic and Historic Byway follows the main route westward between Julesburg and Ovid. The 19-mile loop features interpretive signage at the location of Colorado's only Pony Express station and Fort Sedgwick established in 1864 to protect the trail and the telegraph line. Other markers commemorate the Transcontinental Railroad and the Lincoln Highway, the first coast to coast automobile road in the United States.



D&J Café

114 Cedar Street
Julesburg, CO 80737
970-474-1520

Visitors say this is the kind of place you hope you run into on a trip. It's in the middle of a small town and everyone in there knows everyone else. The food is good and the place was packed.
