



North Dakota

Photography on the Prairie

Tour Leader: Dan Hodges

May 30 - June 4, 2027

Itinerary Overview:

May 30: Arrival in Bismarck, North Dakota - Transfer to Hotel

May 31: Photography around Bismarck - Transfer to Steele

June 1-3: Photography in the Prairie Pothole Region of Central North Dakota

June 4: Photography in the Prairie Pothole Region - Transfer to Bismarck

Detailed Itinerary:

May 30: Arrival in Bismarck, North Dakota - Transfer to Hotel

Arrival in Bismarck no later than 5:00pm. We will have a nice dinner and introductions will be made on our first evening. We will have an early morning the following day.

-Overnight: Bismarck, North Dakota

May 31: Photography around Bismarck - Transfer to Steele

Photography in and around the Bismarck area with a focus on Lazuli Bunting, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Black-billed Magpie. We will eat a nice lunch before heading east towards Steele. We will check into our hotel and head out for the evening to shoot (targets will be based on weather conditions).

-Overnight: Steele, North Dakota

June 1-3: Photography in the Prairie Pothole Region of Central North Dakota

The next several days will be spent near Steele which is in the prairie pothole region. We will spend our mornings focusing on songbirds and will decide on locations based on weather conditions. Afternoons will be spent focusing on shorebirds, ducks, grebes and more. Our biggest meals of the day will be lunch with breaks in the afternoons since the days are long. Sunrise is around 5:45 am and sunset is not until 9:30 pm. Expect a long afternoon break on sunny days.

-Overnight: Steele, North Dakota

June 4: Photography in the Prairie Pothole - Transfer to Bismarck

After a final morning in and around Steele, we will depart for Bismarck to catch afternoon flights home.

Equipment

Bring your longest telephoto lens and matching teleconverters. A 500mm or 600mm lens is preferred but a 400mm lenses with a teleconverter and/or one of the small sensor cameras (1.5 or 1.6x crop) will provide ample magnification for a great number of opportunities. If your longest lens is 400mm then you likely are used to having your subject a little smaller in the frame. We will discuss how to make pleasing compositions when the subject is not frame filling. A wider lens will come in handy for fully documenting your trip and taking the required tourist snaps and scenics. Chest waders and a bag blind are highly recommended for this tour. We will be happy to provide suggestions as to which style might be best for you. Muck boots can be a nice substitute or addition to the chest waders if you are sure you will not want to get into the water but photographing ducks and grebes in their environment at eye level is a very special experience

Environment

Participants should be prepared for a wide range of weather on the great plains. Low temperatures can be quite cool, so anticipate chilly mornings while day time highs may soar into the 90s. Layers should definitely be part of your clothing plan. A waterproof jacket is a great option but be sure it is large enough to layer underneath. Mosquitoes will likely be a nuisance at least some of the time so plan on a head net and gloves at least and long sleeves may come in handy. Bug repellent with picardin as the active ingredient is suggested. Deet works fine but can be terribly hard on the plastic parts of your camera, binoculars and tripod. Picardin is just as effective without doing damage to your gear. Ticks can be an issue as well. Do consider treating clothing with Permethrin. It is also suggested to wear light-colored clothing so ticks can be spotted more readily. We also suggest tucking pant legs into socks and shirt tails into pants as part of your tick defense system.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is fairly low for this tour. Much of the photography is done along road sides and near the vehicle. Some light walking over rolling prairie can be anticipated but these are not strenuous. A number of shorebirds, song-birds, ducks and grebes will be photographed quite close to, or even from the road. There will be an opportunity to put on waders and enter the water with your camera gear. This can be nerve racking even for the initiated and no one should feel they have to do this. That said it is extremely rewarding to be accepted into the realm of our photographic quarry while we share the marsh with them. Most wading opportunities will be very short distances. You may find the early morning alarms and late nights on the prairie to be the most difficult part of this trip but long breaks during the middle of the day will help you recoup and recharge.

Likely Species on This Tour:



Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall

Northern Pintail

Ruddy Duck

Ring-necked Pheasant

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Pied-billed Grebe

Horned Grebe

Red-necked Grebe

Eared Grebe

Western Grebe

Virginia Rail

Sora

Upland Sandpiper

Marbled Godwit

Wilson's Snipe

Wilson's Phalarope

Franklin's Gull

Black Tern

Forster's Tern

American White Pelican

American Bittern

Black-crowned Night Heron

White-faced Ibis

Swainson's Hawk

Red-tailed Hawk

Ferruginous Hawk

Western Kingbird

Eastern Kingbird

Black-billed Magpie

Bank Swallow

Cliff Swallow

Sedge Wren

Chestnut-collared Longspur

Grasshopper Sparrow

Clay-colored Sparrow

Vesper Sparrow

LeConte's Sparrow

Nelson's Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow

Baird's Sparrow

Song Sparrow

Swamp Sparrow

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Bobolink

Western Meadowlark

Orchard Oriole

Brown-headed Cowbird

Brewer's Blackbird

Common Yellowthroat

Lazuli Bunting

Trip Details:

Cost:

Price per person (double occupancy), from Bismarck, North Dakota: \$3,599

Single Supplement: \$600

Minimum Participants: 3

Maximum Participants: 6

Price Includes:

Expert Guide

Ground Transportation in North Dakota

All Lodging

All Meals

Park Entrance Fees

Price Does Not Include:

Airfare to and from Bismarck, North Dakota

Airport Taxes

Passport and Visa Fees (if applicable)

Alcoholic Beverages

Personal Items

Travel Insurance

Tips

Deposit:

A deposit of \$500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (March 1, 2027).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact us at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

Responsibility/Disclaimer Statement:

Sabrewing Nature Tours acts only as an agent for the various independent suppliers that provide hotel accommodations, transportation, sightseeing, activities, or other services connected with this tour. Such services are subject to the terms and conditions of those suppliers. Sabrewing Nature Tours and their respective employees, agents, representatives, and assigns accept no liability whatsoever for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or any other incident which may be caused by the negligence, defect, default of any company or person in performing these services. Responsibility is not accepted for losses, injury, damages, or expenses of any kind due to sickness, weather, strikes, hostilities, wars, terrorist acts, acts of nature, local laws, or other such causes. All services and accommodations are subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which they are provided. Sabrewing Nature Tours is not responsible for any baggage or personal effects of any individual participating in the tours/trips arranged by Sabrewing Nature Tours. Individual travelers are responsible for purchasing a travel insurance policy, if desired, that will cover some of the expenses associated with the loss of luggage or personal effects.