

Welcome to Omaha!



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As one who has lived here most of his life, I can assure you that it's an easy place to explore, with many nice places to see and visit. Let me fill you in on how to get around and what to see, should you have the time!

Most of the city that you will see is organized as a simple grid. For the most part the streets run either North/South or East/West. It's a common statement in Omaha that "you can get anywhere in 20 minutes". That may no longer be true, but it may seem like it due to the simplicity.

The major East/West thoroughfare is called Dodge Street, although this has nothing to do with dodging the traffic. Dodge Street is "zero" as far as distance is concerned. You will notice on the E/W street signs that they will say "Howard Street" and then under that in smaller text: "1100 South". This implies that you are south of Dodge. Likewise, a named street sign that says "2300 North" is North of Dodge.

The streets are, in general, numbered in increasing order traveling West from the Missouri River. An address such as "12345 Jones St" would be 123 blocks West from the river.

For example: To drive from the conference hotel to the conference dinner, let's see how it works. The Holiday Inn is at "3321 South 72nd St" according to their web page. This would be 33 blocks South of Dodge and 72 blocks West. The dinner is at "12627 Pacific Street". All we need that is missing is the knowledge that Pacific is about "1100 South" – 11 blocks, that is. So the directions would be to proceed North on 72nd Street, since we need to go from 33 South to only 11 South. Then West (left) on Pacific out to block 126. To go back, just reverse directions. If you think you're going East but the numbers are getting larger, you're probably mistaken.

Here are a few things you might want to see if you have an extra day. All opinions are mine – not the Chamber of Commerce or the Tourism Department. I'd be happy to clue you in on anything else you might have questions about.

The Old Market – This is one of the nicest areas of the city, with old shops, antique stores, plenty of unique restaurants, and so on. This is the area where all of the visitors go, but for a good reason. It's located roughly at about 7 blocks South and 10 blocks West. Be aware that a few of the streets in this area are one-way. One nice thing about the Old Market is that it is on the way to the Omaha airport, so if all you have is a few hours that you need to kill, you can stop here for a bit and then continue to your flight. See <http://www.oldmarket.com/> for Old Market information.

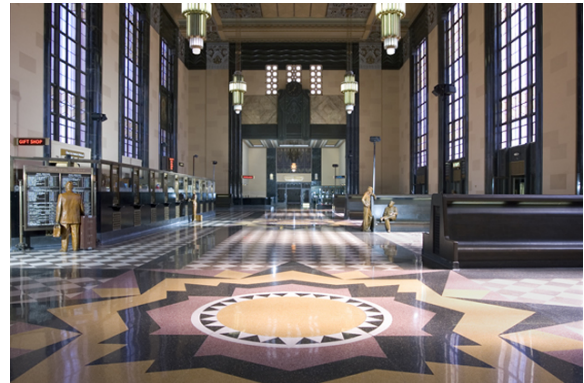


The Henry Doorly Zoo – Surprise! Omaha’s zoo is one of the best in the U.S. It features an aquarium that you can walk through (a glass tunnel), a “Kingdom of the Night” cave exhibit with bats and such, and the world’s largest indoor rain forest. The gorilla area is wonderful. You’ll know you are in the right place when you see the “desert dome” from the street. It is a bit pricey (\$11/person) but if you have time it is most definitely worth the visit. The zoo is also more or less on the path to the airport, and if you are taking the interstate there from the hotel, just take I-80 East and get off at 13th street going South. You will see the dome behind the baseball stadium. <http://www.omahazoo.com/>



If you are more of an art museum type of person, the Joslyn Art Museum is easy to find and pretty good. It’s located at 2200 Dodge Street, and we know how to get there, correct? Admission is \$7 and there’s more information at <http://www.joslyn.org/contact/>.

Omaha has a restored train depot which is now a nice museum. It is the Durham Western Heritage Museum at 801 South 10th. The station is “Art Deco” and is restored as if World War II was still on. The Byron Reed Coin Gallery features rare coins, medals, tokens and autographs. An arrangement with the Smithsonian brings outstanding traveling exhibits to Omaha. (If nothing else, you can tell everyone you visited, but secretly you only took the video tour at <http://www.durhammuseum.org/>).



If you have even more time, and like to hike, I suggest the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center. About the only thing bad about it is that the location does not follow the usual “row and column” numbering, but if you are interested in hiking, ask me and I can direct you. Allow an afternoon for this, or even longer, because there’s about 20 miles of trails within 2,000 acres of woods. See <http://www.fontenelleforest.org/> for details.

If you’re interested in aircraft, the Strategic Air & Space Museum is good. It’s not the National Air and Space Museum by any means, but it’s only about a 30-35 minute drive on the interstate from the Holiday Inn. (I-80 West until you go over the Platte River, and then it is the next exit. There are plenty of signs.) The museum has two aircraft display hangars, a traveling exhibit area, and an aircraft restoration gallery. If you like aircraft there’s a lot – it has an SR-71 in the lobby, for example. It’s \$7 and there are more details at <http://www.strategicairandspace.com/visitmuseum.html> for you.

Finally, if none of those sound good, try <http://www.visitomaha.com/static/index.cfm?contentID=67> because it lists sample “day trips”!