

Exodusters Itinerary



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Barton County

Claffin
Ellinwood
Great Bend
Hoisington

Stafford County

Hudson
Stafford
St. John

Byway Anchors

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area
The Nature Conservancy
Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve
Quivira National Wildlife Refuge



The Great Exodus of 1879 was a mass movement of 20,000 African Americans from the Southern United States to counties in Kansas following the Civil War. John Brown and his fiery abolitionist friends combined with the anti-slavery Civil War reputation of “Bleeding Kansas” made it seem a fair place where freed men and women and their families would be welcome.

Spend a day on the Kansas Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway as you trace the Exoduster migration and settlement in Barton and Stafford Counties. Begin at the Martin Cemetery in Stafford County and end in Barton County. The tour will take you to local cemeteries, museums and memorials to experience the stories of Exodusters. This tour will also take you through Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, where you will discover the natural wonders of our extraordinary piece of the planet.

Stafford County, Kansas

Stop 1: Martin Cemetery

Corner of NW 10 Ave & US-50 HWY, south of St. John.

GPS Coordinates: 37.9564, -98.7745

Established in 1906 and last used in 1954, this small, serene cemetery on US Highway 50 is populated by Exodusters and their descendants. Freed slaves settled in this part of Kansas beginning in 1879. By 1914 the African American population of Stafford County was 425.

Stop 2: Stafford Cemetery

On US-50 HWY, ½ mile west of Stafford

GPS Coordinates: 37.95360, -98.61390

Nearly a century ago, J.R. Carmichael, a local stonecutter, carved a limestone stump as a Grand Army of the Republic (an association of Union veterans) memorial to Stafford's Civil War veterans. While visiting, seek out Carmichael's own headstone.

Stop 3: Stafford County Museum in Stafford, Kansas

100 N. Main Street, Stafford

GPS Coordinates: N37.95493 W -98.60024

At this stop, the stories of Stafford County's Exodusters are told through an exhibit and 29,000 glass negative photos of these early settlers. The museum also has Civil War artifacts, an extensive genealogical library, and a self-guided area cemetery guide. *(Insider's Tip: Pick up a complete Exoduster brochure at the museum. While in Stafford, be sure to check out the 7 buildings on the National Historic Register)*



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Stop 4: **Quivira National Wildlife Refuge**

GPS Coordinates: 38.1833462, -98.508687

After the first part of your Exoduster history tour, enjoy a refreshment break at the Visitors Center and explore the interactive exhibits. Named after the Quiviran Indians, Quivira consists of sand dunes, century-old cottonwood trees, natural grasses and multiple grains harbor over 500,000 birds during spring and fall migrations. This salt water marsh attracts pelicans, eagles, cranes, shorebirds, ducks, geese and even whooping cranes. Next, you will get back on the Exoduster track to visit the final resting places of some of Oscar Micheaux's family members.

Stop 5: **Eden Valley Cemetery**

Corner of NW 180 Street & NW 20 Ave

GPS Coordinates: 38.2183464, -98.7856433

Many Exodusters and their descendants rest in peaceful Eden Valley Cemetery, including relatives of Harlem Renaissance filmmaker, Oscar Micheaux. Look for the headstones of Micheaux's grandmother, Melvina Micheaux and aunt Harriett Robinson. As you look at Samuel Gracey's stone, picture him leading his family out of slavery in a daring and dangerous late night escape to the free state of

Barton County, Kansas

Stop 6: **Barton County Historical Museum and Village**

85 S. US-281 HWY

GPS Coordinates: 38.34851°N 98.76519°W

Sitting on the banks of the Arkansas River and sheltered by huge cottonwoods, the museum has everything from a quilt collection to a research library and archive (including Grand Army of the Republic records and ceremonial artifacts). The Village itself is a little slice of life on the prairie with a one-room schoolhouse, an early stone house and a railroad station. The Museum features an exhibit of "The Civil War and The Exodusters in Central Kansas."

Stop 7: **Barton County Courthouse Square**

1400 Main Street, Great Bend

GPS Coordinates: 38.36557, -98.76453

The Barton County Courthouse is an example of Modern Eclectic architecture. Designed by W.E. Hulse & Co., the building was completed in 1918 and boasts marble floors and stairways. "The Rifleman" monument stands guard on the north side of the courthouse to honor local veterans, who fought for the cause of the Union in the Civil War.

(Insider's Tip: Vibrant 5-foot birdhouses invite you into several local restaurants, shopping stops, and coffee shops. Also be sure to check out the Quilt Walk



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Stop 8: Great Bend, Kansas Cemetery

4500 Broadway Ave

GPS Coordinates: 38.36810, -98.79970

Stroll through this cemetery where 12,000 people from all backgrounds and walks of life are buried. Veterans of the Civil War are honored in the Grand Army of the Republic Circle. The gravestone of George Washington and Catherine Walker, both born into slavery, is a monument to this couple who became wealthy in Kansas. In 1938 they hit a 1600 barrel a day oil well on their homestead! Be sure to visit the resting place of ground-breaking African-American film maker Oscar Micheaux. Micheaux is the only person buried in this cemetery who has a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.

Stop 9: Hoisington, Kansas Cemetery

Corner of K-4 HWY & Cedar Street

GPS Coordinates: 38°31'14"N98°46'2"W

Explore colorful African American history in the Hoisington Cemetery. The vibrant black population of South Hoisington, many of whom came to work on the railroad, were descendants of the Exodusters who homesteaded in Barton and Stafford Counties. You'll find charming folk-art headstones in this cemetery. *(Insider's Tip: As you drive down Main Street, don't miss the light poles! 62 hand crafted metal art banners depict the history and stories of Hoisington and the wetlands.)*

Stop 10: Cheyenne Bottoms Scenic Overlook

GPS Coordinates: 38.521981, -98.611393

Take time to reflect on the inspiring stories you uncovered along the Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway as you gaze out over Cheyenne Bottoms from the scenic overlook. From this "bird's eye view" you will be inspired by the beauty of the nearly 20,000 acre low-land basin that is a critical stopover point on the Central Flyway for over 300 species of birds. The mystery and abundance of these giant wetlands is reflected in what is deeply valued here - community, family, faith, hard work, and respect for the natural world.

Stop 11: Kansas Wetlands Education Center at Cheyenne Bottoms

592 NE K-156 HWY – 7 miles NE of Great Bend

GPS Coordinates: 38.4694559, -98.6559125

End your tour with a visit to the Kansas Wetlands Education Center where you can find a refreshing beverage and souvenir from the gift shop as you explore the interpretive exhibits.

(Insider's Tip: Our tour ends here, but there is so much more to see along our wondrous Byway! Add the WPA bridges in Clafin, Underground World in Ellinwood, and the Stafford County Flour Mill in Hudson to your 'must-see' list. Don't hurry though; you might miss a historic and allegedly haunted serene wine vineyard or a chance to witness the rehabilitation of an injured raptor!)