

*Experience the Prairie!*

# Tallgrass Prairie

NATIONAL PRESERVE



The only unit of the National Park System  
dedicated to the rich natural and cultural history  
of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem

**KANSAS**  
as big as you think™

# Prairie Partners

*The Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is a unique public/private partnership.*

**National Park Service** preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park System comprises 390 areas covering more than 84 million acres throughout the United States and its territories. Legislation establishing the preserve limited federal land ownership to no more than 180 acres, with the rest of the land to be held privately. Currently 34 acres are federally owned with the remaining 10,800-plus acres privately owned by The Nature Conservancy. Daily operation of the preserve is by the National Park Service.



**The Nature Conservancy** is a private nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to preserving the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Conservancy and its million members have been responsible for the protection of over 117 million acres of land, 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide, and many other biologically significant areas totalling 77,435 acres in Kansas. The Nature Conservancy partners with the National Park Service in natural resource planning and management. For more information visit [www.nature.org/kansas](http://www.nature.org/kansas).



**Kansas Park Trust**, through an agreement with The Nature Conservancy, and in cooperation with the National Park Service, is dedicated to the mission of enhancing visitor experiences at the preserve by assisting in private fundraising efforts, encouraging Congressional support for implementation of the preserve management plan, conducting special public events, and operating an on-site bookstore and gift shop.



photos: Bob Smith

# TOUR INFORMATION

*The preserve offers a variety of activities including guided tours of the 1881 ranch house, prairie bus tours, living history events, hiking trails, a Junior Ranger booklet, and nature programs. Admission and most activities are free.*

## GUIDED TOURS

**House Tours** – National Park Service rangers conduct guided tours through the historic 1881 limestone ranch house. Tours are conducted hourly from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. from May through October. House tour schedules vary November through April.

**Bus Tours of the Prairie** – The diversity of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve awaits your discovery on this 6.4-mile bus tour led by National Park Service rangers. While touring the preserve's backcountry, you will learn about the prairie's intricate system of plants and animals, American Indians, the geology that formed the Flint Hills, and the legacy of ranching. You will also experience the vast prairie landscape – sweeping views, rolling hills, and an endless sky. The tour lasts approximately 90 minutes and is available daily from the last Saturday in April through the last Sunday in October.

**Bus tour times** – 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m.

\$5.00 per adult, \$3.00 age 5 – 18 years, 4 and under free

*Advance reservations are recommended, but arrangements can be made the day of your visit if space is available.*

## GROUP TOURS

### Ranch Headquarters/Prairie Bus Combination Tour

Groups of 15 or more may schedule a ranch headquarters tour in conjunction with a prairie bus tour. The two-hour combination tour includes a one-hour tour of the ranch house, barn, and outbuildings, and a one-hour prairie bus tour. Reservations for group tours must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance. The combination tour is available from the last Saturday in April through the last Sunday in October.

\$7.00 per adult, \$4.00 age 5 – 18 years, 4 and under free

**Ranch Headquarters Tour** – Tours for groups of 15 or more can be arranged throughout the year. National Park Service rangers lead visitors on a tour of the ranch house, barn, and outbuildings. The tour lasts one hour and must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance.

\$4.00 per adult, \$2.00 age 5 – 18 years, 4 and under free

## FRONTCOUNTRY TRAILS

*The preserve's frontcountry nature trails are open year-round during daylight hours only. For visitor safety and resource preservation, we ask that visitors stay on the designated trails.*

**The Southwind Nature Trail** – A 1 3/4-mile hiking trail through the tallgrass prairie, passing by the Lower Fox Creek School. Scenic overlook areas offer a wide-open view of the prairie.

**The Bottomland Trail** – A 3/4-mile loop or a shorter 1/2-mile loop through bottomland prairie along Fox Creek. Wayside exhibits and an information kiosk tell the story of the prairie restoration and cultural history in the area. This trail is wheelchair accessible and offers a comfort station.

## BACKCOUNTRY TRAILS

*The preserve's backcountry day hiking trails are open daily between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. from May through October and on weekends from November through April. Permits are required for the backcountry hiking trails. A limited number of permits will be issued daily and may be reserved in advance by calling the preserve at 620-273-8494.*

**Scenic Overlook Trail** – A 6.4-mile round-trip hike along the bus tour route (improved ranch road) to the scenic overlook area. Along the trail, visitors will see limestone outcroppings, one of 26 human-made ponds on the preserve, remnants of stone fences, and native prairie wildlife. Experience the scenic beauty of native rolling prairie on a grand scale, as you take in the wide-open vistas up to 1,490 feet above sea level.

**3 Pasture Loop Trail** – A 3.8-mile backcountry hike through upland prairie. This trail winds along existing ranch roads and a mowed path. From May through July, cattle graze on the hillsides and valleys as they have for the past century.

**Red House Trail** – A 6-mile backcountry hike through upland prairie and natural drainage areas. This trail passes through several cultural features of the historic ranching era, while allowing visitors to experience an intimate view of wetland prairie flowers and vegetation through a scenic grove of cottonwood trees.



Brochure produced by the Kansas Geological Survey  
Design by Jennifer Sims

# Welcome



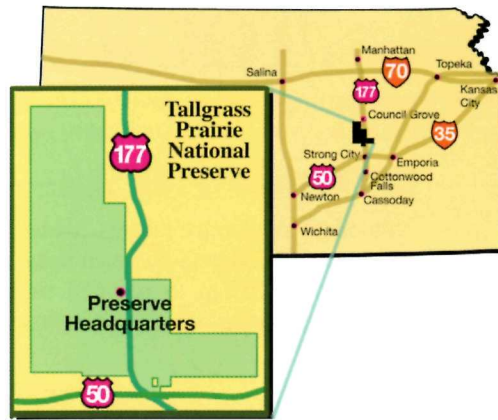
photo: John Charlton

## to Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

**T**allgrass Prairie National Preserve is your opportunity to experience the natural wonder and rich cultural history of the Kansas Flint Hills. The expansive rolling hills and wide-open vistas of this Great Plains region are a rare remnant of the expanse of tallgrass prairie that once covered 140 million acres of North America.

Once the hunting grounds of the Kansa and Osage Indians, the preserve's 10,894 acres are home to an astonishing variety of life: over 450 species of plants, 150 kinds of birds, 39 types of reptiles and amphibians, and 31 species of mammals. A cycle of climate, fire, and animal grazing – once buffalo, now cattle – has sustained this ecosystem. Much of the grassland flora and fauna is too subtle to be seen from a passing car, but careful scrutiny reveals the special beauty, wonder, and complexity of the prairie.

Cattlemen Stephen F. Jones built his home in 1881 with hand-cut limestone. The 11-room house is characteristic of the Second Empire style of 19th century architecture. The springs on the hillside provided water to the house – thus the name, Spring Hill Farm and Stock Ranch. Nearby are the massive three-story limestone barn and Lower Fox Creek School, a one-room schoolhouse. The ranch was designated a National Historic Landmark in February 1997.



**Location:** The preserve headquarters is located:

- 2 miles north of Strong City on Kansas State Highway 177 (Flint Hills National Scenic Byway)
- 18 miles west of Emporia
- 16 miles south of Council Grove
- 85 miles northeast of Wichita

**Hours:** The historic ranch headquarters is open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily (except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day).

**Admission:** No admission and most activities are free

- Brochures and a 10-minute site orientation video are available in the barn (May – October) and on the back porch of the house (November – April).
- A self-guided tour of the historic ranch headquarters is available daily between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. A brochure and wayside exhibits tell the story of Stephen F. Jones, who owned the ranch from 1878 to 1888.
- The bookstore/gift shop in the ranch house is open daily from 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Visitors may purchase books for children and adults, prints, postcards, educational and hand-crafted gift items, natural objects, and items related to local culture.

While in Chase County, make time to visit the towns of Strong City and Cottonwood Falls. Steeped in prairie history, these scenic communities will take you back in time. They offer dining, shopping, and much more.

**Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve  
Strong City, KS**

**Telephone: 620-273-8494 Fax: 620-273-8950**

**Email: [tapr\\_interpretation@nps.gov](mailto:tapr_interpretation@nps.gov)**

**Website: [www.nps.gov/tapr](http://www.nps.gov/tapr)**

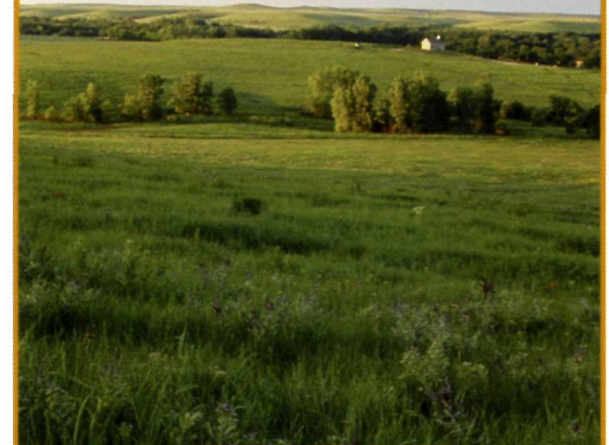
**National Park Service mailing address:**

**Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve  
P.O. Box 585, Cottonwood Falls, KS 66845**

**Kansas Park Trust Telephone: 620-273-8139  
The Nature Conservancy [www.nature.org/kansas](http://www.nature.org/kansas)**

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photos: Yvonne O'Brien