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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Home, Home on the Range in Kansas

2013, Kansas ...Home, home on the range" ...these are more than just words in the Kansas state song. They are words that describe the experiences and down home hospitality travelers discover when they visit Kansas.

No other state in the nation can claim a more varied past in American history than the state of Kansas. Located in the geographic heart of the country, Kansas generates images of cowboys, Old West gun fighters, pioneer trials, cattle drives, frontier military forts and Native American culture. And all of these images are more than past history in Kansas. They exist today in dozens of attractions and events found throughout the state.

The larger-than-life cowboy legends of the Old West were born on the frontier plains and in the cattle towns of Kansas. Visitors today can still experience this cowboy heritage in museums and historic sites across the state. Wichita grew from a frontier cattle town to the largest city in the state. A visit to the Old Cowtown Museum 17-acre living history complex can also include an evening with the Diamond W Wranglers for an all you can eat barbecue Chuckwagon Supper and cowboy entertainment. Few towns capture the spirit of the American cowboy as Dodge City. Stroll the streets of the Boothill Museum, indulge in a great steak at Casey's Cowtown Club, or settle in for an evening of entertainment with the Depot Theatre Company for community theatre at its best. Historic Abilene was the end of the line for thousands of longhorn cattle driven from Texas on the Chisholm Trail, established by Kansas native Jesse Chisholm.

At the Moore Ranch in Bucklin, city slickers will experience daily cowboy life on a working longhorn cattle ranch, or during the ranch's spring cattle round up or fall cattle drive.

From April through October, the rodeo is a popular activity in communities throughout Kansas. From the state's largest night rodeo in Pretty Prairie to the Kansas Championship Ranch Rodeo in Medicine Lodge, the rodeo is the perfect place to experience the thrills of thundering hoofs as cowboys take on bucking broncos and raging bulls. Caldwell, the "border queen," and Ellsworth, "the wickedest town in the West," also help keep the cowboy image alive year round.

With the cowboys came some of America's most famous lawmen and gun fighters. Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, Billy the Kid, and the infamous Dalton brothers all crossed paths in Kansas. Old west history buffs will enjoy the Dalton Defenders Museum, which honors those gunned down by the brothers in the 1892 bank robberies in Coffeyville, and the hideout tunnel used by the Daltons in Meade.

The settling of the West brought pioneer traffic on the Santa Fe, California, Oregon and Smoky Hill trails and with it a frontier military history. Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley, Fort Hays, Fort Larned and Fort Scott all played a role as gatekeepers and peacekeepers to the American West. These forts have excellent museums and 19th century military life living history programs. Two of the forts, Fort Scott and Fort Larned, are National Historic Sites. Black cavalry soldiers, known as buffalo soldiers, were stationed at these forts. Two monuments dedicated to the black cavalry can be seen at Fort Leavenworth and in Junction City, home of Fort Riley. Travel the Frontier Military Scenic Byway along the eastern edge of Kansas for a driving tour through frontier history extending from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Scott.

The state is named after the Kansa Indians, the People of the Southwind, who once inhabited the land. While many of the early tribes were forced to move to Oklahoma, four nations remain in Kansas. The state's Native American culture is honored in many museums, including the Mid-America All Indian Center in Wichita, the Pawnee Indian Village Museum near Republic, the Native American Heritage Museum near Highland and the El Quartejeo Pueblo Ruins near Scott City. Two missions, the Kaw Mission in Council Grove and the Shawnee Indian Mission in Fairway, are state historic sites with living history programs. Popular Indian Powwows are held across the state and help keep this Native American ritual alive in Kansas. The Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence is the only inter-tribal Native American college in the country and offers a self-guided tour, including its Medicine Wheel earthwork. All four Kansas tribes operate Indian gaming casinos on their reservations in northeastern Kansas.

Most of America's virgin tallgrass prairie is located in Kansas in the Flint Hills region. Walk in the prairie in Kansas and you will experience one of the four remaining untouched tallgrass prairies left in the world and the last one in North America. The Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve just outside Cottonwood Falls, is the only unit of the National Park System dedicated to the tallgrass prairie. The NEW, exquisite, Flint Hills Discovery Center and the Konza Prairie Natural Area are both near Manhattan, and are just a few of the places to experience the beauty of this very special prairie. The Cimarron National Grasslands near Elkhart offers experiences in a short grass ecosystem.

In Kansas you can hike or take a guided tour through the prairie. At Flying W Ranch near Cedar Point climb on the back of a 1950s wheat truck for a Prairie Drifter sunset excursion. Or learn about ranch life first hand with an all inclusive ranch holiday package offered at the Flying W Ranch or the Moore Ranch. The Cassoday Café is a good place for food and gossip and has been serving both to area ranchers and cowboys since 1879.

Kansas is still home on the range for American bison. Two state wildlife refuges, the Finney Game Refuge in Garden City and the Maxwell Game Preserve in Canton, offer guided tours into the prairie to view these magnificent creatures up close.

To experience Kansas' outdoor beauty and adventure at it's peak, plan travel between April through October when the weather is mild offering warm afternoons and cool mornings & nights.

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