John Bruce & Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan

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There's a rumor going around that Lincoln is a boring town.

We decided to investigate this allegation. And what did we discover? Well, we're not going to make a harsh judgment about the capital city because, after all, as freshmen you're stuck here for at least four years.

You may complain about Lincoln at first.

"There's no scene here," you'll say. "I wish I was in Omaha . . . I'll bet Omaha's more exciting!"

But look at it this way: Lincoln is certainly more hip and happening than Hickman, or whatever small town you're from.

The following is a survival guide to the best of Lincoln, full of suggestions that may make the long road to graduation less painful.

Best student neighborhood: You'll have to live in a residence hall or fraternity/sorority house your first year, but eventually off-campus life will beckon. Unless you have the cash to live way out in the east Lincoln suburbs, you'll move where all the hip University of Nebraska-Lincoln students move: the Near-South neighborhood. Why? Because it's minutes from campus and downtown. And it's within walking distance of Russ's B&R IGA, the only large grocery store near downtown. All your friends will live in this neighborhood. All their friends will live here, too. In fact, you'll wind up living in one of the area's old converted duplexes.

Best student clothing store: You're a student at UNL now, and you're going to have to dress the part. This is the time to analyze your personality, aspirations and beliefs. Are you into peace, love, social concern and living on a budget? Lincoln has a wealth of thrift stores and secondhand clothing shops to outfit thrifty peace lovers with everything they could possibly need.

Want to be the coolest, in-vogue thing to come down the campus runway? Then become acquainted with the trendier-than-thou Post and Nickel, Lincoln's own mecca for the style-conscious. The stores carry lots of things to spend Daddy's credit card dollars on --turtlenecks, acid-washed denim, mini-skirts and $70 designer T-shirts.

And for the rest of you, Lincoln does have two major department stores, many boutiques and several sporting goods stores. Whatever your personal taste, you can find it in Lincoln -- although the styles will be at least six months behind national trends.

Best hair salons: Aching to look drop-dead chic? Want to have your hair dyed fuschia and sculpted into a topiary bush? Or do you just want a nice style created by people who know what they're doing? Lincoln has two salons that cater to both avant-garde hair hoppers and conventionalists: The Phoenix and the Pink Flamingo. The two salons aren't exactly cheap, but you'll get what you pay for: a chic atmosphere, hip stylists, numerous fashion magazines for ideas, and they'll even light your cigarette, too.

Best music stores: Twisters and Pickles. Sure, they sound more like nursery rhymes than places to buy tapes, LPs and CDs, but you won't find a better selection of alternative music elsewhere. And if you're broke, both places will buy your used music and give you pocket cash in return.

Best bookstores: For the best selection of books, art films, greeting cards and kitschy little toys, try Nebraska Bookstore. For a good selection of used hardcover books, check out Bluestem Books. For used potboilers of the Jackie Collins vein, visit a used paperback bookstore like Page One. Looking for a place to find Proust and dirty magazines in one location? Visit Readers Choice in the Atrium.

Best pizza: No, it's not Valentino's, as you may have heard. Godfather's Pizza has a thicker crust, spicier sauce, loads of cheese and toppings. Want it delivered? Try Pizza Shuttle.

Best ethnic food: For its location, Lincoln offers a universe of choices, ranging from East Indian cuisine in sleek settings to Italian favorites to Szechuan to traditional American ribs and sauce. For great East Indian food, try The Indian Oven. For Chinese, check out the Imperial Palace. The best Mexican food north of Texas can be found at Tico's -- make sure you try the Ticorito.

Best park: It depends on your mood. Pioneers Park, a Lincoln institution, has lakes, animals, a threatened population of pines and acres of room for frisbees, picnics and assorted park activities. And of course, there's the Smoke Signal, the monumental Native American on the hill next to the Pinewood Bowl, Lincoln's outdoor amphitheater. But Lincoln also has another hidden secret, Hazel Abel Park, complete with romantic turn-of-the century gazebos and fountains.

Best cinemas: A movie theater is only as good as the film it's currently showing, but sometimes a theater's decor can add character to the viewing experience. The two most distinguished theaters are the State and the Stuart. The State resembles the small-town Bijous of the 1950s, and features a marvelously tacky day-glow mural of the Old West. The Stuart has the feel of an old opera house.

For the best art films, go to the Sheldon Film Theatre.

Lincoln's only drive-in, the 84th and O, doesn't show any sleazy B movies that would excite Joe Bob Briggs, but between showings of second-run Hollywood blockbusters one will be bombarded by 1960s concession stand promos and cartoons featuring Corny the Dancing Corndog.

Yearning to slum and experience Lincoln's seamy soft underbelly? There's probably no dirty movie house in Broken Bow, but Lincoln has Cinema X and the Embassy. You know what they show and sell there. We're a tasteful publication, so we won't mention the hilarious titles of films, magazines and videos.

Best radio station: This is a hard one. Both top-40 and album-rock devotees have the two heavyweight stations, KFRX and KFMQ, respectively. However, both these contenders are trampled by two underdogs. The Eagle, KTGL, plays everything KFMQ plays, plus a better selection of things outside the AOR jungle. On the top-40 side, B104 is ten times less obnoxious than KFRX, whose hyper-cutesy disc jockeys and frantic contests could curdle milk. But the best bet for the ear is KZUM. Okay, it's trendy to like alternative music. But KZUM actually does offer an unbelievable selection of choices, ranging from folk to reggae to dance music to Latin American music. And the disc jockeys are real people with real names, just like you and me. If you're into rap, hip-hop and house, tune into Taraneh Tanavoli's "Saturday Night Special" show on KZUM every Saturday at 9 p.m.

Editor's note: This article reflects the opinions of its authors. Opinions given are not opinions of the Daily Nebraskan as a whole.

Yes . . . . there ARE after-dark diversions for freshmen

By Joeth Zucco
Staff Reporter

A handful of local bars open their doors to minors under special circumstances.

•Mingles, 800 P St., sponsors a teen night every Sunday. A large dance floor and plenty of soda await the under-21 crowd.

•Julio's, a Mexican restaurant and bar at 132 S. 13 St., features jazz on Thursday nights. Minors are allowed in the dining room during performances.

•Chesterfield's, 245 N. 13 St., occasionally sponsors all-age band shows.

•The Boardwalk, 104 N. 20 St., lets minors in every night of the week.

Martin Crowl, Boardwalk manager, said there is a Lincoln city ordinance which states that minors are allowed into bars at age 16. The Boardwalk lets minors in at age 18.

Crowl said minors must sign a Boardwalk contract which states that they won't do drugs or drink alcohol before coming to, or while at, the bar. Minors then are issued a minor card which they must show with their drivers license or state identification at the door. If minors are caught drinking, they are banned until they reach 21 years of age.

Crowl said he has only had to kick two people out since starting the system.

The Boardwalk, a dance bar, features a dance floor, a beer garden patio and two full bars.

•The Run Bar, at 1715 Leavenworth St., in Omaha, offers after-hours dancing every Friday and Saturday night from 1:30 to 3:45 a.m. Minors over age 18 are admitted with a current drivers license. The cover charge is $4.00 and entitles patrons to all the free soda or coffee they can drink.