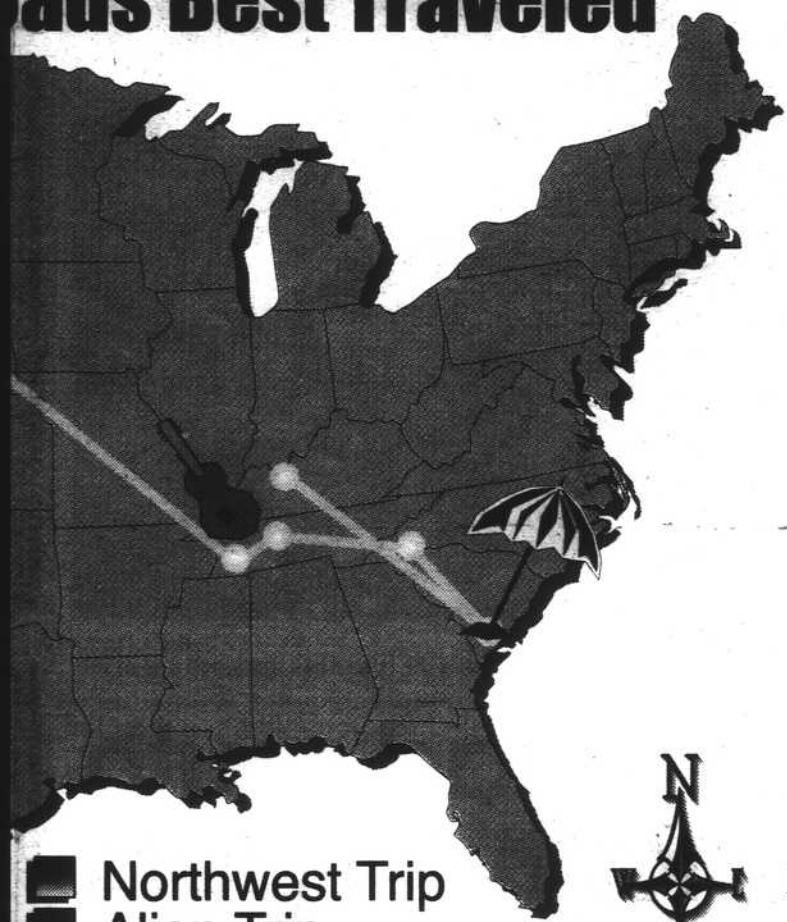


rules

ads Best Traveled



JON FRANK/DN

Ski the slopes

On this trip, you'll spend most of your transportation days on skis. Sure, you'll drive more than 10 hours to the slopes. But once you're there, you've got five days of powdered slopes to conquer.

Day One: Roll out of bed before the sun comes up and load everything into the car. Strap your skis or snowboards to the roof and go.

On the way to the slopes, stop at a front-range grocery store for discount lift tickets and a sack lunch. (Buying anything at the resort is expensive.)

A resort close to Denver such as Loveland Basin or Keystone may be your best bet for best drive time, cost and fun on the first day.

At the end of the day find yourself some lodging - anywhere with a hot tub is preferable - and relax. The nightlife possibilities are wide open.

Days Two through Six: The heart of the trip will be spent on the slopes, but the extras are all up to you.

Some of the larger resorts such as Winter Park and Breckenridge have

entire mountains devoted to expert slopes and entire towns devoted to grub and souvenirs.

If you venture deep into the mountains, you will come to love the mountain passes with roads hardly wide enough for one car, endless drops and breathtaking views. For the first time in your life, a speed limit of 30 mph will seem excessive.

At night, Denver offers plenty of entertainment options. Beer tasting is popular in Colorado, and many bars specialize in brewing their own beer.

As for skiing, hit a different resort every day or stay at the same one. Consider taking a day or two off in the middle to sleep in and recover and your body will thank you.

Remember: You're on vacation, so have fun but avoid a mountainside rendezvous with those killer Colorado trees.

Day Seven: If you're a die-hard, you'll spend one last morning on the slopes before heading home. Others might go shopping for the commemorative spring break T-shirt or cap.

Just make sure someone in the group is awake enough to drive back.

The following Daily Nebraskan staff members contributed their seven-day road trip stories:

Josh Funk, Erin Gibson, Joshua Gillin, Lane Hickenbottom and Jeff Randall.

Survey the Southeast's Smokies

This trip requires a deep love of country and blues music, southern accents and camping. A warm tent and a tolerance for bears helps, too.

Day One: Drive about 14 hours toward Memphis, Tenn., where Beale Street beckons. Stop by for the best of soul food and some original blues.

Day Two: Commemorate the immortal Hunka Burnin' Love at Graceland - the tackiest, most contagious place in the United States. Fall in love again with Elvis and buy a few compact discs for a sing-along. Head to Nashville, Tenn., by noon.

Once in the Country Music capital, pay the \$5 parking fee to view the amazon Opryland Hotel. Inside its several glass domes, you'll find waterfalls, rivers, boat trips, a southern mansion and breathtaking gardens. There is no comparison.

That night, grab a good dinner near the beautiful Vanderbilt University campus and walk it off before catching a show at the Grand Ole Opry. Get a little sad when they mention Grandpa Jones died Feb. 19.

Day Three: Get up early and drive through Falls Creek Falls State Park, which contains the highest waterfall east of the Rocky Mountains. Lock the food in the car. Avoid the bears.

Continue east past Dollywood, Dolly Parton's theme park, and into the Great Smoky Mountains National

Park - the most popular national park. Go hiking on one of its many trails. Get a camp site by a roaring creek, and it will sing your lullaby.

Day Four: Spend another day hiking in the park. You'll want for a shower, since there are none in the park. But the clarity of your mind will make up for the crud in your hair.

Day Five: Get up early and drive east to Charleston, S.C. The scenery will amaze you.

Once there, you're already filthy, so take a dip in the Atlantic Ocean. Who cares if it's cold?

Then check into a hotel, praise God for hot showers, and head downtown for seafood.

Day Six: Get up early to walk around the Battery downtown. The architecture's memorable, as is a little time spent sitting on a dock in the sun and staring out across the Atlantic.

By afternoon, start your drive back toward Nebraska. With a little will power, you'll make Louisville, Ky., this night.

Day Seven: It's still a long way home, but you can take a break from the road with a Budweiser Brewery tour in St. Louis. Drivers: No tasting.

By the time you get home that night, you will hate your car so much that you will have forgotten enjoying the trip.

But wait a week, and it will all come back to you.

Erin Gibson/DN
GRACELAND VISITORS mourn Elvis' death while staring silently at his tomb. The King's ultra-tacky abode highlighted one road trip through the Southeastern United States.



Encounter alien life at Area 51

For those obsessed with "The X-Files" and the Time-Life "Mysteries of the Unknown" book series, most vacations might seem earthly dull.

But the alien-obsessed with money and a spring break to spare could enjoy a legendary road trip to the now-closed Area 51.

It may not see much action nowadays, but it's like a little piece of conspiracy history ripe for the picking.

Besides, rural Nevada is a world all its own.

Day One: Driving through snow-capped Colorado in the earliest days of spring can be dangerous, but the

scenery is worth the risk. Drive west from Denver, and you'll see why it's called the Mile High City.

Day Two: Prepare for some serious mountain driving and make time for a few scenery stops. Unless you're adventurous enough to climb the fence and get in without paying, skip the Royal Gorge. For a glimpse of

some real-life ski-and-snowboard hippies, stop for the night in Durango, Colo.

Day Three: Here comes the desert. Take Highway 666 through New Mexico to get that whole "Natural Born Killers" feel. If you really shake your tail, Las Vegas is within reach. And, if you're 21 or over, it's definitely worth the long drive.

Spend the morning and afternoon hours in Vegas. Eat from an ultra-cheap buffet, win a jackpot or two, then head out for your true destination: Area 51.

Area 51 is located in Rachel, a remarkably tiny town in the middle of nowhere, Nevada. The town's hotel is named the Little A B Inn (pretty witty, eh?). Its owners, Joe and Pat Travis, are hospitable conspiracy theorists who make a mean hamburger and always are willing to swap abduction stories.

After nightfall, head out and park by the road. Shut the headlights off.

Watch for aliens.

Day Five: Now that Area 51 (actually, Nellis Air Force Range) is supposedly abandoned, there won't be any major activity in the area. But you can still climb White Sides Mountain and get a good look at both the world's longest airstrip and the half-buried hangars that may once have held alien aircraft.

and spying. Las Vegas is a fun destination again will be.

Day Six: When you reach your departure point, lighttail it through the desert on your way home. If you drive fast, you will have time to stop at the Grand Canyon for an hour or so. Stop for sleep when you're too tired to see the road, wherever that may be.

Day Seven: It's home-stretch time. After you make it through the jagged landscape of Colorado, Nebraska will seem flatter and duller than ever. But still, it's home and not all bad - even if aliens seldom visit.



Josh Funk/DN
FROM LEFT: SNOWBOARDERS Jesse Poore and Ryan Hendrickson skid to a stop near the bottom of a run at Keystone Resort in Colorado's Summit County. Their run was part of a weeklong snowboarding trip to Colorado.