



by Amelia Painter

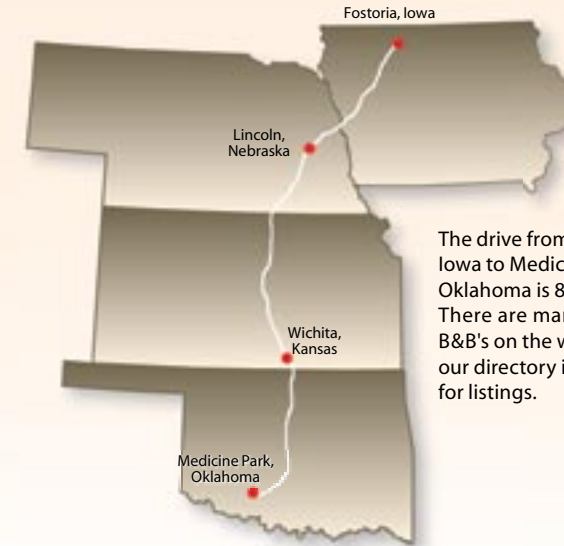
B&B Road Trip

Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas & Oklahoma

The Rogers House Bed & Breakfast Inn
Lincoln, Nebraska

Serenity Bed & Breakfast Inn
Wichita, Kansas

Stardust Inn Bed & Breakfast
Medicine Park, Oklahoma



The drive from Fostoria, Iowa to Medicine Park, Oklahoma is 800 miles. There are many other B&B's on the way. Check our directory in the back for listings.



▲ Lincoln's Sunken Gardens

Wow. What a whirlwind trip! And I should talk because my husband, Doug, did practically all the driving as we traveled from Iowa to Nebraska, on to Kansas, then Oklahoma and back to Iowa – stopping along the way to interview innkeepers, speak at a B&B Association Conference, visit family and take photographs of the Midwest in the Fall.

On the morning of October 16th we were busy packing and making sure we hadn't forgotten anything we simply couldn't live without. By noon we were on the road. By mid-afternoon we'd driven through the Winnebago Indian Reservation and decided just to stop and enjoy mother nature's Fall Foliage Show and snap a few photos. It was truly a Kodak moment.

By 7 p.m. that evening, we were pulling into the driveway and porte cochere of the Rogers House Bed & Breakfast in Lincoln, Nebraska. Innkeeper Nora Houtsma greeted us, and gave us an insightful tour of her property, which includes two historic mansions: The Rogers House and The West House. (Read The Rogers House feature article on page 36.)

Doug and I were more than ready to eat after settling into our room and fully touring the property, so our delightful

hostess gave us directions to Lazlo's Brewery and Grill in the Haymarket District – just a quick five minute drive. The menu was very diverse, and except for the waitress dropping a full bowl of Bar-B-Q Sauce onto Doug's booth seat (luckily he'd gone to wash his hands), the experience could have been called perfect.

The next morning I was up early enough to watch the sun rise while the sunroom in our suite filled with a warm glow, that made all the plants come alive. What a great way to start any day.

By noon, we'd left The Rogers House and were five blocks away taking our fill

of photographs of flowers in bloom and the very striking domed entry pavilion at Lincoln's Sunken Gardens. I now understand why it is the only Nebraska garden listed in the "300 Best Gardens to Visit in the United States and Canada" in the National Geographic Guide to Public Gardens.

Our next stop was Grand Island, Nebraska, where I was scheduled to speak on topics related to the internet and the special needs of a Bed & Breakfast web site. Having designed the Nebraska Bed & Breakfast Association's web site a few months back, I was thrilled to finally get to meet the people whom I had been

corresponding with. E-mail is great, but nothing takes the place of meeting someone in person.

From the conference we drove most the day and arrived in Wichita, Kansas, as the sun was going down. It was dark by the time we entered the page 42 Bed & Breakfast Inn, so we were relieved to meet yet another friendly and relaxed innkeeper, Ken Elliott.

Since the Kansas skies were filled with thunder and lightening, we were glad to be off the highway, at our destination, and taking a tour of this extremely immaculate inn. We had just finished admiring all the outstanding features of the inn – hardwood floors, custom draperies with matching bed spreads, period reproductions, wireless high speed internet access, and numerous luxury amenities – when a city transformer was hit by lightning and all the lights in the area went out. Being someone who gets nervous in the dark, I was a bit frightened for a few moments, but my always-prepared-boy-scout-husband had a flashlight, and Elliott immediately began providing emergency lighting at the end of each hallway so all the guests could feel safe in the dark. (Since my husband just happened to have four more flash lights in the van, he promptly retrieved them and

passed one out to all in need.) Within ten minutes we were out of a mini-crisis and readying ourselves for bed in our very Scottish room named "Ralph."

The restful night's sleep I experienced in the Ralph Room was most refreshing. Now, I can't be sure if it was the 1,000 thread count Egyptian cotton sheets we were snuggled in between, the extremely comfortable feather topped bed or the fluffy comforter, but one thing I know for sure, the Egyptian cotton sheets are a must-have for Christmas this year! What a soft and luxurious sensation – like a silky touch caressing my skin.

We woke the next morning, with both mind and body refreshed, to a delicious gourmet pancake breakfast. Elliott says he's never taken any cooking lessons, but he is either watching Emeril Live in his spare time or he is a natural-born chef. (Read the Serenity Bed & Breakfast Inn feature article on page 42.)

We hated to leave Serenity Bed & Breakfast Inn, but about 10 a.m. it was time to head our van toward Oklahoma and spend two days visiting with family and tend to a little business.

Our visit with my husband's cousin Ligea, and her husband Mike, was fun, refreshing and, as always at Ligea's, very nutritious and delicious. They had just

returned from a vacation in Scotland so I found it fascinating to hear about the Bed & Breakfast where they stayed. But all good things do come to an end, and after a hearty Scottish breakfast on Saturday, we struck out for the historic cobblestone community in southwest Oklahoma called Medicine Park.

We arrived at the Stardust Inn Bed & Breakfast in Medicine Park late in the afternoon. Ajax, a beautiful German Shepherd, greeted us with a friendly wag-of-the-tail before we could get parked and out of the van. Little did we know that Ajax and Doug would become good friends over the next two days. Our hosts, Clark and Pegi Brown, were on the heels of Ajax greeting us with a warm and

The Rogers House Bed & Breakfast



▼ Serenity Bed & Breakfast





B&B Road Trip

Continued

sincere welcome.

The Stardust Inn was very different from the mansions we had stayed at over the past week, but it certainly was no less enjoyable. The wrap-around porch with wooden rocking chairs was a hint of greater comforts soon to come.

Our room – the Prairie Rose – had a private entrance and featured a two-person Jacuzzi tub. (And, yes, I tried it out that evening!) The motif was western with creative touches found all around the room from cowgirl print pillow shams to the lariat, chaps and 10 gallon hat hanging on the wall. It was fun and comfy.

Sunday I accepted the invitation of our innkeepers to attend an open house celebration in Oklahoma City for the Rusty Gables Guest Lodge & Gallery. Doug preferred to remain behind to take photographs on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, which is less than a five minute drive from the inn – and nap. As it turned out, we both made the right decision. He enjoyed his nap and I had a nice time with the Browns at the Rusty Gables Guest Lodge. I especially enjoyed

▼ Rusty Gables Guest Lodge and Gallery



the gourmet cuisine prepared by Chef Walter, an Oklahoma City celebrity seen weekly Friday mornings on KSBI TV.

The lodge is alive with rustic charm, but in a most elegant manner. The two luxurious suites are a must-see. Both rooms have private outdoor entrances, king-size pillow-top beds, custom bedding and drapes, private baths with oversized Jacuzzi tubs and separate showers, stone fireplaces, refrigerators, microwaves, warm cotton robes and charming bath amenities. All guests at the open house seemed to enjoy the touring of the



▲ Stardust Inn Bed & Breakfast

lodge and its grounds as much as I did. Innkeepers Sam Nicolosi and Don Paul were on hand to greet everyone. They appeared to be enjoying the gala as much as their guests.

Taking photos at the event was Ann Amme. She and her husband Mark own and operate Red Stone Inn – a Bed and Breakfast less than a mile from the Rusty Gables. I was delighted to meet her and briefly discussed her role as the new President of the Oklahoma Bed & Breakfast Association. Since the Browns needed to pick-up some photos from Ann's husband, arrangements were made for our group to stop-by the Red Stone Inn on our way back to Medicine Park.

Our arrival at the Red Stone Inn couldn't have been timed better. A tour of the inn was easily arranged and the

photos were presented exactly as the Browns had requested. (Read the Red Stone Inn feature article on page 48.) With all business taken care of, we enjoyed a leisurely drive back to Medicine Park.

As we pulled into the driveway of the Stardust Inn, we met my husband. He was leaving, with camera in hand, to attempt to photograph a buffalo. He and I had talked earlier in the day about capturing a buffalo on film. Seldom do we see them in our travels, yet here we were in the middle of a Wildlife Refuge where a large herd lives – what a great feature for the

Stardust Inn.

And, speaking of features, one of my husband's favorite features at the Stardust was the small creek that ran around the entire circumference of the inn. You can step out of your room onto the porch in the night air and immediately hear the calming murmur of the water as it flows from the waterfall pond at the front of the inn back down to the creek on the back of the property.

As for me, the terrific buffet-style breakfast was my next favorite feature after the two-person Jacuzzi. Pegi's quiche was excellent, and the bread she served – with no less than four toppings – was delicious; and I just knew it had to be good for us.

The cobblestone village of Medicine Park is filled with history, and building after building is constructed with the



▲ View of Lake Elmer Thomas from the top of Mt. Scott, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

local cobblestones. The community is to be commended for doing such a fabulous job of revitalizing the character of this charming Oklahoma resort. Originally constructed in the early 1900's, it is one of only three cobblestone communities remaining in the world today.

One of the cobblestone cottages in town is an extension of the Stardust Inn. We included a visit to it on our tour of the area. It is a great vacation cabin for anyone with children. Conveniently close to all the adorable gift shops and restaurants, the cabin could easily be home base for any nature-loving small group.

The surrounding area is adorned by trees, prairie grasses and an abundance of wildlife. Guests of the Stardust Inn can enjoy great fishing, hiking, biking, mountain climbing, water skiing and bird watching – and even buffalo watching, which is exactly what we did just before we left for home.

As we drove away from the Stardust Inn, we felt like we were leaving two best friends behind – and one very friendly German shepherd. It is easy to understand why many Stardust Inn guests return on

a regular basis. The innkeepers are terrific, you are surrounded by history and nature at every turn, the inn feels homey and private at the same time, the food is delicious, and, buffaloes really do roam just minutes from the front door of your room!

Leaving southwest Oklahoma and all the rich history and abundant wildlife

▼ Doug with Ajax



found in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge soon opened a new door of visual pleasure as we watched the breathtaking colors and glorious fall displays provided to us by mother nature along the roadways. We spent the entire day admiring the spectacular foliage and ever changing landscape as we traveled homeward through Oklahoma and Kansas. As dusk turned to night we continued to comment on nature's majestic beauty and discussed all the new people we'd met and inns we had toured.

It was a little before midnight when we pulled into our driveway on October 25th that brought an end to a very enjoyable ten day excursion. We were both glad to be home, but there must be a little bit of adventurers' blood in both of us, because we'd only just unpacked a few necessary bags before we were enthusiastically discussing the states we'd like to cover on our next Bed & Breakfast America Road Trip. ■

The Rogers House Bed & Breakfast Inn

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Serenity Bed & Breakfast Inn

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316-201-1120 • 800-281-0484
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Stardust Inn Bed & Breakfast

Medicine Park, OK 73557
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