

Thank you for your interest in The Nature Conservancy's Nachusa Grasslands! This is a privately funded "working" preserve, dedicated to restoring habitat for the native plants and animals of northern Illinois.

Most of our guided tours are conducted by volunteers. Right now the demand for these tours exceeds our resources and currently there are no available formal educational programs. However, your group is welcome to visit anytime and explore on your own. Listed below are ideas to give your group the best experience during your visit.

## Visitor Center

Nachusa's Visitor Center is located at 2075 Lowden Road, Franklin Grove, IL. Perched atop a gentle slope, the Visitor Center offers outstanding views of the surrounding grasslands. Under the pavilion there are informative interpretations and exhibits that tell the story of Nachusa. From the center you can enjoy a short prairie trail walking loop or drive to one of five trailheads and explore. Except for the bison units, the prairie, wetlands, and woods are open to the public every day from dawn until dusk. Trailhead signs are posted at the main trails. You are also encouraged to hike off trail and explore the prairie on your own.

Around the new Visitor Center there is available parking and vehicle turnaround, with space to accommodate school buses and tours. For your comfort, the center is ADA accessible and provides two self-composting restrooms. Near the pavilion there are some large boulders for children to climb or sit on while enjoying a view of the prairie. Also, to quench the thirst on a hot day, there is a hand pump which supplies cold, potable water, or a place where people can cool off and get their feet wet! Since this facility doesn't rely on water or electricity, it has a low-carbon footprint. Please scout the area before you leave for any traces of your visit. **Help keep our ecosystem attractive and clean by taking your trash with you.**

## Bison Tours

Please consider signing up for the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands free monthly public bison tours. The tours can be reserved on the Friends of Nachusa website; they take place on various Saturdays from May through October. The available tours are posted at the beginning of each month, so signup early to secure a spot(s). On or after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month you can find the new signup at <http://www.nachusagrasslands.org/public-tours.html>.

## Hiking

If you would like to explore on your own, consider one of the 5 hiking destinations listed on Nachusa's website: <http://www.nachusagrasslands.org/hiking-destinations.html>. With over 700 native species, there is always something to see! Clear Creek Knolls has a small parking lot for vehicles. From the lot, you can follow the tracks east to the remnant prairie hill (never plowed) that is easily visible. Please do not walk directly on the sandstone (it crumbles), but enjoy all the lichen patterns you see on the rocks. If you follow the tracks south from the base of the hill, there is a creek that you can cross — just remove your socks and shoes and wade across.

**Caution!** Never cross the creek if there is flooding and the conditions are unsafe. On the other side of the creek is more prairie and a longer two-track to hike.

Be sure to bring bug spray if you plan to explore the woods and bring water and sunscreen if you are planning to hike in the prairie. For more info about how to prepare for your visit, read our hiking suggestions at <http://www.nachusagrasslands.org/hiking-guidelines.html>.

## Where to See Bison

**Please be aware that no hiking is permitted inside the fenced North or South Bison Units.**

The bison roam across 1500 acres of rolling land in no particular pattern, at no predictable time, and are often not visible from the road. However, there are a few places to check that may increase your chances to see the herd. From the junction of Lowden and Stone Barn Roads, turn west on Stone Barn and travel to the dead end; looking north and south, the bison might be seen from this stretch of road. Another place to check is from the parking lot of our Visitor Center located at 2075 Lowden Road. For more information about the bison, see <http://www.nachusagrasslands.org/bison.html>.

## Bison Safety

- **Stay 100 yards from the bison at all times, even when separated by a fence.**
- **No admittance to the North or South Bison Units by foot or vehicle.**
- Use the provided pull-offs to view the herd and turn on your car's hazard flashers!
- Do not stop on the road. Pull off!
- Close the car doors when you exit your vehicle.
- Bison cows are extremely protective of the calves & defend them at all costs.
- Bison can quickly accelerate to 30+ miles per hour and jump 6 feet vertically.
- When a bison's tail begins to raise, it is stressed and agitated.

## Volunteer

Staff and many volunteers work hard to restore habitat at Nachusa's 3,600-acre preserve. Volunteers have diverse backgrounds, wide ranging skills and abilities, and, above all, a strong desire to make a difference. If you would like to learn more or volunteer on a Saturday Workday, please visit <http://www.nachusagrasslands.org/saturday-morning-workdays.html>.

Again, thank you for your interest in Nachusa Grasslands!