

Frontier Military Itinerary

1. Fort Abercrombie State Historic Site, Abercrombie

The fort guarded the oxcart trails of the fur trade era, military supply wagon trains, stagecoach routes, and steamboat traffic on the Red River. Fort Abercrombie once served as a gateway to the West and the spear point of the army's advance to the northern Plains. The original guardhouse and the reconstructed blockhouses and stockade attest to the bloody conflict that spilled into the Dakotas from Minnesota. Explore the buildings and visitor center.

2. Fort Ransom State Historic Site, Fort Ransom

Fort Ransom was established in 1867 to safeguard overland travel from Minnesota to Montana. The fort was dismantled in 1872 and the materials were used to build Fort Seward at Jamestown because the army felt the protection of the railroad crews at the James River crossing was a higher priority. A dry moat and building depressions remain at the site.

3. Fort Totten State Historic Site, Fort Totten

Visit one of the best-preserved frontier military forts in the United States, with 16 original buildings. When the military left, Fort Totten became one of the largest Indian boarding schools in the nation. Explore buildings that rang with the jingle of cavalry harnesses and the voices of children, as well as the visitor center. Plan a unique stay at the Fort Totten Inn, located in an original fort building.

4. Camp Hancock State Historic Site, Bismarck

Before Bismarck, there was Camp Hancock. Once a bustling military supply post and later a weather station, Camp Hancock is now home to the oldest building in Bismarck, which serves as an interpretive museum, as well as an 1881 church and a locomotive from the glory days of steam transportation.

5. Fort Rice State Historic Site, Fort Rice

Fort Rice was established in 1864 by General Alfred H. Sully as a field base during his 1864 expedition to punish the Dakota people for attacks on people and steamboats. Fort Rice was the first of a chain of forts intended to guard northern Plains transportation routes on the Upper Missouri River. It became one of the most important military posts on the Upper Missouri River. While none of the original buildings or structures remain at Fort Rice, you will see depressions, foundation lines, and WPA corner markers.

6. Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, Mandan

Fort McKeen, an infantry post, was built in 1872 on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River and the former Mandan village, On-A-Slant Village. In 1873 a cavalry post was constructed on the flats along the Missouri and the combined installations were renamed Fort Abraham Lincoln. That same year, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer arrived as the commander of the new post. The post housed about 1,000 people. Reconstructed earthlodges depict the lifestyle of the Mandan Indians, who occupied this site from about 1575—1781. The Victorian-style home of George and Libbie Custer has been reconstructed and is open for living history tours. Also reconstructed are the commissary storehouse, which houses a gift shop, the enlisted men's barracks, granary and stable.



Frontier Military Itinerary

7. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center and Fort Buford State Historic Site, Williston

Here where two great rivers meet, people have gathered for thousands of years. At the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, take in the history of a place little changed since Lewis and Clark visited two centuries ago. At nearby Fort Buford, tour original and reconstructed buildings of the military post where Sitting Bull laid down his rifle. African Americans served in the frontier Army after the Civil War and were known as “Buffalo Soldiers” by the Native Americans. The 25th Infantry and the 10th Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers both served at Fort Buford. Original features still existing on the site include a stone powder magazine, the post cemetery site, and a large officers’ quarters building which now houses a museum.

****Bonus sites****

8. Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison

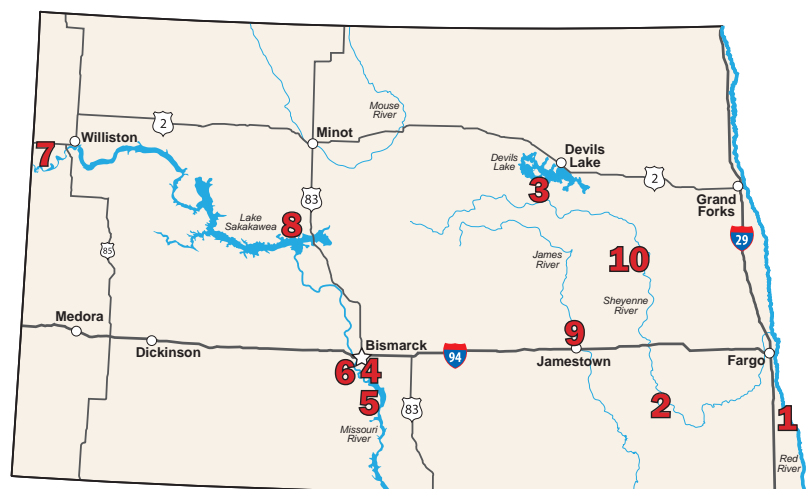
The original Fort Stevenson, now underwater, was established in 1867 to guard the emigrant route from Minnesota to the gold mines of Montana and Idaho. It provided military protection to the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribes from the Dakota tribes. It served as an intermediary point for the mail routes connecting the string of military forts across the Northern Plains and eventually became the supply base for Fort Totten. Supplies would come on steamboats up the Missouri River and go across land to Fort Totten. A replica of the fort’s original guardhouse has been constructed in the park and houses interpretive exhibits on the history of the fort and the Missouri River.

9. Fort Seward, Jamestown

An active military fort from 1872 to 1877, Fort Seward now houses an interpretive center displaying artifacts excavated from the site’s archaeological digs. A computer kiosk takes you on an audio-visual virtual tour of the site. The grounds are also home to a veterans’ memorial wall and scenic views of the James River Valley. The largest United States flag on display in North Dakota flies here when weather permits.

10. Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile State Historic Site, Cooperstown

This former missile launch site —once protected by high fences, search lights, and armed guards—offers visitors the opportunity to enter the security zone and drop 60 feet below ground to visit the launch control center on the front lines of America’s Cold War, a battle-less battleground. The Oscar Zero Launch Control Center and the November-33 Missile Facility played an integral part in the Cold War in North Dakota and the world. Experience how personnel lived their daily lives at Oscar Zero. See the top-side of the November-33 Missile Facility, still intact.



Learn more about North Dakota’s past at ndstudies.gov.

