



Prairie Explorer Guide

Check off what you see along your journey!

Mammals & Birds:

- Bison or buffalo
- Prairie dog
- Meadowlark
- Red-tailed hawk
- Rabbit or cottontail

Insects & Critters:

- Grasshopper or cricket
- Monarch butterfly
- Dragonfly
- Ladybug
- Beetle or ant colony

Plants & Habitats:

- Big bluestem grass
- Indian grass
- Purple coneflower / sunflowers
- Wildflowers (variety)
- Native shrubs (sumac, dogwood)

Soil & Rocks:

- Exposed prairie soil
- Small stones or gravel
- Signs of erosion
- Animal tracks

Quick Facts

- Bison shaped the prairie ecosystem by grazing and helping native grasses grow.
- Prairie grasses have deep roots that prevent soil erosion and support wildlife.
- Monarch butterflies rely on milkweed to complete their life cycle.
- Meadowlarks are common grassland birds whose songs can indicate ecosystem health.

Tips for Families

- Bring binoculars for spotting birds and faraway wildlife.
- Stay on marked paths near water to protect fragile habitats.
- Take only photos; leave flowers, seeds, and rocks for others to enjoy.
- Keep a small journal or sketchbook handy to record observations.

Fun Explorer Challenges

1. Sketch It: Draw one plant, insect, or animal you see today.
2. Sound Tracker: List all animal calls you hear on the prairie.
3. Compare & Contrast: Find two plants that look similar but are different species.
4. Predator-Prey Game: Pick an animal and predict how it finds food or avoids predators.