



It's Time to Book Lodging for the 2026 National High School Finals Rodeo

Lincoln is "Rodeo Ready" and Officials Urge Fans to Start Planning Vacations

LINCOLN, Neb., Feb. 2, 2026 — It's time to lock in lodging reservations for the 2026 National High School Finals Rodeo this July in Lincoln, according to the host city's tourism officials.

Since Nebraska's capital city last hosted the world's largest rodeo in 2021, Lincoln has opened multiple new hotels, but rooms and campgrounds are still likely to fill up.

"We're expecting more than 100,000 people to travel to Lincoln for the National High School Finals Rodeo July 19 to 25," said Kendra Ronnau, Lancaster County Agricultural Society Board President. "Just like football season, we look forward to accommodating everyone, but the early bird will certainly have the most options."

Even though Lincoln is a relative newcomer to the host-city circuit for the 78-year-old event, it has become a fan favorite due to its combination of accessibility, affordability and entertainment suiting the range of visitors.

"There are only a handful of locations in the country that can meet the logistic requirements for this event and we're proud to show rodeo fans, once again, what makes Lincoln stand out among host sites," Ron Bohaty, managing director of the host venue Sandhills Global Event Center, said. One of those things is a recent \$10 million investment in the Sandhills Global Event Center, formerly the Lancaster Event Center Fairgrounds. Fans and contestants who attended the 2021 National High School Finals Rodeo in Lincoln will notice several upgrades that make their visit more convenient and comfortable, such as additional air conditioning and shade, remodeled bathrooms, rocked parking lots and access roads, and a new playground.

"We've made significant investments and rolled up our sleeves to be 'rodeo ready' for the National High School Finals Rodeo," Bohaty said. "Being the host city for both 2026 and 2027 is an honor and a responsibility we don't take lightly."

At the event center, spectators will find a bustling pop-up city as they take in 13 different rodeo events with top high school athletes vying for world champion titles. Those looking for pageantry or memorabilia will find it among the largest gathering of rodeo queens and a renowned Western and equine shopping expo.

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“There is constant activity and truly something for every type of rodeo fan at this major event in Lincoln,” Ronnau said. “The talent of the athletes will knock your socks off. Quite a few will turn pro after this, and we’ll get to say we knew them when.”

Beyond the grandstands, the city of Lincoln offers visitors premium museums including the International Quilt Museum with the largest quilt collection in the world, the Speedway Motors Museum of American Speed, voted “Best Motor Racing Museum in the Country” by “Newsweek” readers, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Larsen Tractor Test & Power Museum, among others.

Historically, rodeo fan favorites have included the University’s Dairy Store, offering locally sourced, handmade ice cream created by college students, the Lincoln Children’s Museum, including hands-on agriculture exhibits, the Lincoln Children’s Zoo, featuring a giraffe feeding experience, and more than 185 miles of trails for biking, walking and—of course—horseback riding.

“Just like the National High School Finals Rodeo, Lincoln prides itself on a family-friendly environment, a sense of community and a strong heritage,” Bohaty said. “We are thrilled that the finals trail leads to Lincoln for the next two years and we look forward to making memories with you.”

Visit NHSFRLincoln.org to start planning your visit.

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About National High School Finals Rodeo

The National High School Finals Rodeo (NHSFR), sanctioned by the National High School Rodeo Association and presented by Cinch, is recognized as the world’s largest youth rodeo. Each year, the nation’s top high school rodeo athletes compete across a range of events for national titles, scholarship money and championship buckles.

About Sandhills Global Event Center

Sandhills Global Event Center (formerly Lancaster Event Center Fairgrounds) is a public nonprofit county fairground owned and managed by the Lancaster County Agricultural Society since 2001. SGEC is the home of the annual Lancaster County Super Fair and offers year-round space for up to 500 days of local 4-H/FFA and other youth education and sports activities, as well as local to national nonprofit, business, government, and family events.

Media Contact:

Jayme Sandberg, APR

Media Relations Consultant on behalf of NHSFR Lincoln/KidGlov

jayme@itsallstories.com

402-937-0905

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