



Photo courtesy of the National Scenic Byways Program, [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org). © 2001, New Mexico Department of Tourism

# Transportation: Taking the Scenic Route to America's Treasures

## Did you know?

“America’s Scenic Byways are roads to the heart and soul of America. Byways help create a sense of pride in America. They connect us to this country’s beauty, history, and culture.”

— *Norman Mineta,*  
*U.S. Secretary of Transportation*

Ninety-five nationally designated Scenic Byways are linking Americans to the nation’s natural and cultural treasures and promoting tourism and education across the country.

Across America, highways provide links to the nation’s natural and cultural treasures—and none are more impressive than those designated as America’s Scenic Byways—a collection of distinctive routes that tell the story of America.

Comprised of 95 roads in 39 states, these byways connect visitors to the heart and soul of the country. Some byways feature America’s natural grandeur and scenic beauty, such as the Route 1 Big Sur Pacific Coast Highway, or the Seward Highway through Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula. Others feature treasured places and human achievements, such as the Selma to Montgomery March Byway, the Natchez Trace, Historic Route 66, and the Coal Heritage Trail. Each byway offers a piece of the American experience, both past and present.<sup>57</sup>

Connecting the American people to their environment and cultural heritage, roads like the Blue Ridge Parkway, Bear Tooth Highway, and El Camino Real, offer opportunities for all citizens to experience the beauty, the resources, and the history of the United States,—and to gain a greater appreciation of the need to preserve and protect these often fragile and scarce resources.

These roads—and other exemplary breathtaking roadways across the United States—demonstrate environmentally-sensitive design while providing access to areas of great scenic beauty and educate the public on the importance of environmental protection and enhancement.

America’s Scenic Byways are selected based on their outstanding archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic value. Since 1996, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation has designated 20 All-American Roads and 75 National Scenic Byways in 39 states.

Opposite – The Red Canyon Tunnel along Utah’s highway 12-A is literally a scenic journey through time.

Above – Although much of the original Route 66 has been replaced by a new Interstate, careful travelers can still journey on portions of the highway that inspired the words, “Get your kicks on Route 66.”

There are two levels of designation:

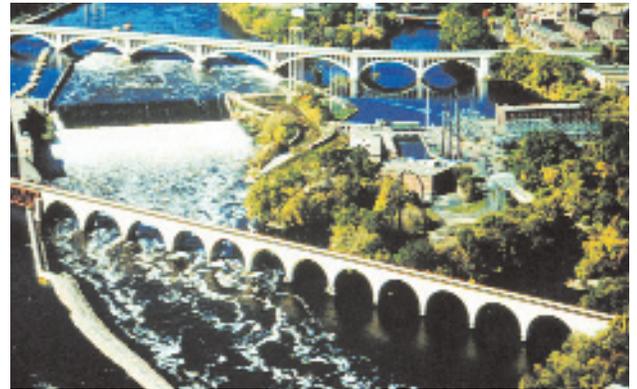
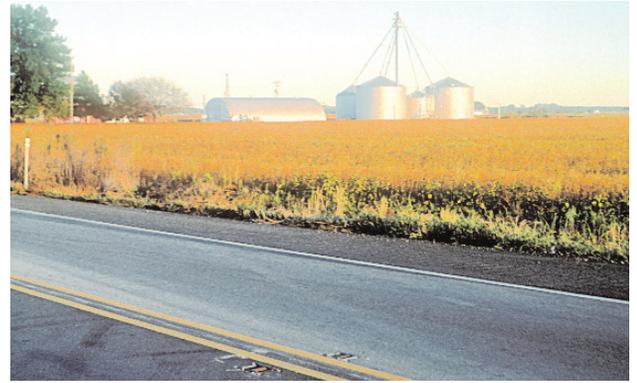
- ▶ **All-American Roads**, which have one-of-a-kind features so exceptional that they qualify as a destination “unto themselves.”
- ▶ **National Scenic Byways**, which have one or more intrinsically valuable qualities and are more regionally significant.

To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must possess at least one of the following six intrinsic qualities that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of an area.

- ▶ **Archaeological quality** involves those characteristics of the scenic byway corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric life that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted.
- ▶ **Cultural quality** is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features include—but are not limited to—crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, and vernacular architecture, that are currently practiced.
- ▶ **Historic quality** encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or man-made, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation of the past.
- ▶ **Natural quality** applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations, and may include geological formations, fossils, landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife.
- ▶ **Recreational quality** involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with—and dependent upon—the natural and cultural elements of the corridor’s landscape.
- ▶ **Scenic quality** is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment.

### Byways by Numbers

- ▶ **The longest byway:** The 1,707-mile Great River Road, along the Mississippi River through Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota
- ▶ **The shortest byway:** The 4.5-mile Las Vegas Strip in Nevada
- ▶ **The southernmost byway:** Tamiami Trail National Scenic Byway in Florida
- ▶ **The northernmost byway:** Seward Highway All-American Road in Alaska
- ▶ **The highest elevation:** Trail Ridge Road in Colorado
- ▶ **The lowest elevation:** Death Valley Scenic Byway in California



Photos courtesy of the National Scenic Byways Program, [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org)

Above, clockwise from left - The Great River Road provides thousands of miles of scenic, historic, and recreational opportunities highlighting the glory of the Mississippi River. The Helena River Reach Park, which includes a boardwalk extending from the levee, provides a close-up view of the Mighty Mississippi along The Great River Road in Arkansas. One of the actions in the Corridor Management Plan is to develop an education brochure about the many types of agriculture found along the route in Indiana. An aerial shot of downtown Minneapolis showcases the Stone Arch Bridge.

## A Few Impressive Examples of America's Scenic Byways

### *The Great River Road*

The Great River Road is a 3,000-mile network of federal, state, and local roads on both sides of the Mississippi River, from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The route has National Scenic Byway designation in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Arkansas, and Illinois, providing thousands of miles of scenic, historic, and recreational opportunities highlighting the glory of the Mississippi River.

### *Route 1, Big Sur Coast Highway*

From Carmel, California, south to the San Luis Obispo County line, The Route 1, Big Sur Coast Highway follows some of the most spectacular and highly scenic shoreline found along California's coast. Views include rugged canyons and steep sea cliffs, granite shorelines, sea lions and other marine life, windswept cypress trees, and majestic redwood forests. The byway also provides travelers with a lesson in California's rich Mission Era and natural history. The primary goal of the byway is to preserve California's delicate and pristine coastal ecosystem for its natives, visitors, and future generations, while still providing opportunities to experience its wonder.



Photo courtesy of the National Scenic Byways Program, [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org)

Views from the Route 1, Big Sur Coast Highway in California include rugged canyons and steep sea cliffs, granite shorelines, sea lions, and other marine life, windswept cypress trees, and majestic redwood forests.

### ***Historic Route 66***

Route 66's history is the story of an emerging nation. It is a tale of economic opportunity and the hardship of the dust bowl, of World War II, and the family vacation. Route 66 was designated in 1926 as a federal highway linking Chicago, Illinois, to Los Angeles, California. After almost 60 years as America's favorite route to the west coast, Route 66 was decommissioned in favor of the new interstate highways. Arizona's historic Route 66 travels through some of the most picturesque regions in the Southwest—with petrified forests, painted deserts, meteor craters, and the longest unbroken stretch of original Route 66. There are Homolovi Indian ruins to explore as well as the Grand Canyon Caverns. Byway travelers also enjoy driving from the desert regions of Arizona into the green forests surrounding Flagstaff. Natural beauty is not all you'll see on this byway. The region also is rich in cultural history, harkening back to the era when Americans took to the open road to see the United States. Although much of the original byway has been replaced by the new Interstate, careful travelers can still journey on portions of the highway that inspired the words, "Get your kicks on Route 66."

### ***Beartooth Highway***

Beartooth Highway in Montana and Wyoming is one of the most spectacular National Forest routes on this continent. To many, it is known as the most beautiful highway in America. From its beginning at the border of the Custer National Forest, to its terminus near the northeast entrance to Yellowstone National Park, the Beartooth Highway (US 212) offers travelers the ultimate high country experience as it travels through the Custer, Shoshone, and Gallatin National Forests.

Since its completion in 1936, the highway has provided millions of visitors a rare opportunity to see the transition from a lush forest ecosystem to alpine tundra in the space of a few miles. The Beartooths are one of the highest elevation and most rugged areas in the lower 48 states, with 20 peaks over 12,000 feet in elevation. Glaciers are found on the north flank of nearly every mountain peak over 11,500 feet in these mountains. The first recorded travel across the Beartooth Pass area occurred in 1882, when General Sheridan pioneered and marked a route across the mountains from Cooke City to Billings.

### America's Byways Fun Facts

- ▶ There are over 25,000 miles of America's Byways, which is equivalent to driving from Los Angeles to New York almost nine times.
- ▶ On the Historic National Road, which runs from Maryland to Illinois, condiment cravers will be awestruck when they see the world's largest bottle of catsup. It stands 170 feet tall and has its own fan club ([www.catsupbottle.com](http://www.catsupbottle.com)).
- ▶ Along the Ohio River Scenic Byway, travelers can visit the self-proclaimed home of Superman in the town of Metropolis, which features a seven-foot tall fiberglass statue of the superhero.
- ▶ The Washington Heritage Trail in West Virginia proudly displays George Washington's bathtub—the only monument to presidential bathing.
- ▶ The Great River Road, which runs from Minnesota to Arkansas, features a statue of Robert Wadlow, the world's tallest man. Standing at 8'11", he is called the Alton Giant.
- ▶ The Dinosaur Diamond Prehistoric Highway in Utah and Colorado is not only popular with Jurassic Park fans, but chicken lovers as well. The Mike-the-Headless-Chicken Days Festival along the byway celebrates the life of an ill-fated chicken that had its head lopped off, but still lived for several more years. [www.miketheheadlesschicken.org](http://www.miketheheadlesschicken.org)
- ▶ Travelers can retrace the life of the famed outlaw along the Billy the Kid National Scenic Byway in New Mexico.
- ▶ McKenzie Pass – Santiam Pass National Scenic Byway in Oregon contains an underwater forest. More than 3,000 years ago, a volcanic eruption created a clear lake, which swallowed trees that are still rooted to the ground today. Visitors can go for a boat ride and paddle directly over the submerged trees.

## National Scenic Byways and All-Americans Roads

### All-American Roads

- ▶ Selma to Montgomery March Byway (Alabama)
- ▶ Natchez Trace Parkway (Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee)
- ▶ The Seward Highway (Alaska)
- ▶ Route One, Big Sur Coast Highway (California)
- ▶ San Juan Skyway (Colorado)
- ▶ Trail Ridge Road/Beaver Meadow Road (Colorado)
- ▶ Historic National Road (Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia)
- ▶ Creole Nature Trail (Louisiana)
- ▶ Acadia Byway (Maine)
- ▶ North Shore Scenic Drive (Minnesota)
- ▶ Las Vegas Strip (Nevada)
- ▶ Lakes to Locks Passage, The Great Northeast Journey (New York)
- ▶ Blue Ridge Parkway (North Carolina)
- ▶ Hells Canyon Scenic Byway (Oregon)
- ▶ Historic Columbia River Highway (Oregon)
- ▶ Pacific Coast Scenic Byway (Oregon)
- ▶ Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway (California and Oregon)
- ▶ Utah's Scenic Byway 12—A Journey Through Time (Utah)
- ▶ Chinook Scenic Byway (Washington)
- ▶ Beartooth Scenic Byway (Montana and Wyoming)

### National Scenic Byways

- ▶ Talladega Scenic Drive (Alabama)
- ▶ Alaska's Marine Highway (Alaska)
- ▶ Glenn Highway (Alaska)
- ▶ Kaibab Plateau—North Rim Parkway (Arizona)
- ▶ Crowley's Ridge Parkway (Arkansas and Missouri)
- ▶ Great River Road (Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin)
- ▶ Arroyo Seco Parkway Scenic Byway (California)

- ▶ Death Valley Scenic Byway (California)
- ▶ Tioga Road/Big Oak Flat Road (California)
- ▶ Dinosaur Diamond Prehistoric Highway (Colorado and Utah)
- ▶ Frontier Pathways Scenic and Historic Byway (Colorado)
- ▶ Gold Belt Tour Scenic and Historic Byway (Colorado)
- ▶ Grand Mesa Scenic and Historic Byway (Colorado)
- ▶ Santa Fe Trail Scenic and Historic Byway (Colorado and New Mexico)
- ▶ Top of the Rockies (Colorado)
- ▶ Connecticut State Route 169 (Connecticut)
- ▶ Merritt Parkway (Connecticut)
- ▶ A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Highway (Florida)
- ▶ Indian River Lagoon Scenic Highway (Florida)
- ▶ Tamiami Trail Scenic Highway (Florida)
- ▶ Russell-Brasstown Scenic Byway (Georgia)
- ▶ Northwest Passage Scenic Byway (Idaho)
- ▶ Payette River Scenic Byway (Idaho)
- ▶ Pend Oreille Scenic Byway (Idaho)
- ▶ Country Music Highway (Kentucky)
- ▶ Wilderness Road Heritage Highway (Kentucky)
- ▶ Red River Gorge Scenic Byway (Kentucky)
- ▶ Lincoln Highway (Illinois)
- ▶ Meeting of the Great Rivers Scenic Route (Illinois)
- ▶ Ohio River Scenic Route (Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio)
- ▶ Loess Hills Scenic Byway (Iowa)
- ▶ Old Canada Road Scenic Byway (Maine)
- ▶ Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway (Maine)
- ▶ Schoodic Scenic Byway (Maine)
- ▶ Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway (Maryland)
- ▶ Woodward Avenue (Michigan)

Top to bottom –  
Scenes from Historic  
Route 66; the Great  
River Road in Iowa; and  
the Death Valley Scenic  
Byway in California.



Photos courtesy of the National Scenic Byways Program,  
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- ▶ Edge of the Wilderness (Minnesota)
- ▶ Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway (Minnesota)
- ▶ Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway (Minnesota)
- ▶ The Grand Rounds Scenic Byway (Minnesota)
- ▶ Little Dixie Highway of the Great River Road (Missouri)
- ▶ Lake Tahoe—Eastshore Drive (Nevada)
- ▶ Pyramid Lake Scenic Byway (Nevada)
- ▶ Kancamagus Scenic Byway (New Hampshire)
- ▶ White Mountain Trail (New Hampshire)
- ▶ Billy the Kid Trail (New Mexico)
- ▶ El Camino Real (New Mexico)
- ▶ Jemez Mountain Trail (New Mexico)
- ▶ Historic Route 66 (New Mexico)
- ▶ Turquoise Trail (New Mexico)
- ▶ Seaway Trail (New York)
- ▶ Sheyenne River Valley Scenic Byway (North Dakota)
- ▶ Cherohala Skyway (North Carolina and Tennessee)
- ▶ Amish Country (Ohio)
- ▶ CanalWay Ohio Scenic Byway (Ohio)
- ▶ Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway (Oregon)
- ▶ McKenzie Pass-Santiam Pass Scenic Byway (Oregon)
- ▶ Outback Scenic Byway (Oregon)
- ▶ Rogue—Umpqua Scenic Byway (Oregon)
- ▶ West Cascades Scenic Byway (Oregon)
- ▶ Ashley River Road (South Carolina)
- ▶ Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway (South Carolina)
- ▶ Savannah River Scenic Byway (South Carolina)
- ▶ The Native American Scenic Byway (South Dakota)
- ▶ Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway (South Dakota)



The majestic Seward Highway in Alaska.

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- ▶ The Energy Loop: Huntington and Eccles Canyons Scenic Byways (Utah)
- ▶ Flaming Gorge—Uintas Scenic Byway (Utah)
- ▶ Logan Canyon Scenic Byway (Utah)
- ▶ Nebo Loop Scenic Byway (Utah)
- ▶ Mountains to Sound Greenway—I-90 (Washington)
- ▶ Strait of Juan de Fuca Highway—SR 112 (Washington)
- ▶ The Coal Heritage Trail (West Virginia)
- ▶ Highland Scenic Highway (West Virginia)
- ▶ Midland Trail (West Virginia)
- ▶ Washington Heritage Trail (West Virginia)