2019

U.S. Scenic Byways

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to another journey across America! This year we're crisscrossing the country through its scenic byways and highways. From the Florida Keys Highway that weaves through a chain of tropical islands for 110 miles from Key Largo to Key West, to historic Route 66 that winds from the Midwest to the Pacific Ocean, the visitor cannot miss the immense natural diversity of the American landscape.

2018 was an exceptionally rewarding year here at VOA. Innovative programming and increased use of digital media propelled Voice of America to new heights, with audience and engagement metrics breaking past records. At a time when press freedom was under assault globally, audiences turned to VOA for news and information they could trust. For example, weekly website visits to VOA Persian went up more than 100%; visits to VOA Deewa, which targets Pakistan's FATA region, were up more than 200%; and Russian video views on Facebook were up more than 500%. Similarly, VOA Mandarin ranked the third most popular Mandarin language media on YouTube and VOA Spanish experienced a 350% increase in video views on Facebook.

Providing accurate, objective, and comprehensive news and information to global audiences is at the heart of what we do. In 2018, VOA documented and fact-checked the Russian government’s disinformation campaigns at home and abroad, through its website polygraph.info; put a spotlight on humanitarian crises involving Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and ethnic Yazidis in Iraq; and gave voice to those trying to flee chaos in Venezuela.

Having led VOA for more than two years now, I’m more proud now than ever before of our reporters, our technical staff, and our senior leaders working together to bring extraordinary journalism to places around the world with little or no access to free press. We promise that we will continue on the same path throughout the New Year.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and productive 2019!

Sincerely,
Amanda Bennett, VOA Director
Great River Road (Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, Wisconsin)

The Great River Road is one of North America's longest and most important scenic byways along the course of the Mississippi River. It stretches from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, crossing through 10 states and hundreds of river towns. This byway is rich with history, serving as a source of life for the Dakota, Chippewa, and Hopewell Native American societies, an escape for African-Americans on the Underground Railroad in the 1800s, and a route for French voyageurs primarily in the 1700s.
Creole Nature Trail (Louisiana)

The Creole Nature Trail is also known as Louisiana's Outback, one of America's “Last Great Wildernes." The environment changes throughout the trail from marshlands and prairies, and along the Gulf of Mexico beaches. Accordingly, the trail is teaming with animals unique to Louisiana's wilderness including alligators, spring warblers, and speckled trout.
Route 1 - Big Sur Coast Highway (California)

Highway 1 runs 90 miles through Big Sur with the stunning Santa Lucia Mountains to the east and the beautiful Pacific Coast to the west. The trail has numerous viewpoints and turnouts to stop and take in the scenery. It is not uncommon to see California's unique wildlife including California condors and migrating gray, humpback, and blue whales along the way.
The George Parks Highway Scenic Byway (Alaska)

George Parks Highway is the perfect way to explore the beauty of the wilds of Alaska. Connecting Anchorage to Fairbanks, this byway travels 323 miles through forests and tundra, accompanied by beautiful, snowy views of North America's highest mountains. The George Parks Highway is one of Alaska's most important roads and runs through Denali National Park.
Historic Route 66 (Arizona, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)

The Historic Route 66 is known as the “Main Street of America” or “The Mother Road.” It is an iconic route that runs 2,338 miles from Chicago, Illinois, through the Midwest and Southwest to Santa Monica, California. This byway has a rich history and served as the main road on the migration west during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.
Scenic Byway 12 - Red Canyon (Utah)

The Scenic Byway 12 is also known as “Highway 12-A Journey Through Time Scenic Byway.” It runs through Utah between Capitol Reef National Park and Bryce Canyon. The road is a landscape of color with terrain ranging from canyons and the remains of ancient sea beds to some of the highest alpine forests in the world.
Highland Scenic Highway (West Virginia)

Highland Scenic Highway runs through the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia along the high mountainous regions and dark forests of the Allegheny Highlands. The road is 43 miles long and reaches to heights of 4,500 feet. This route is especially a sight to see during the fall when the trees across the mountains have changed colors from greens to beautiful reds and yellows.
Florida Keys Scenic Highway (Florida)

The Florida Keys Highway extends through the tropical islands of the Florida Keys from Key Largo to Key West for 110 miles. The road is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the south and the Gulf of Mexico to the north, giving the driver a 360-degree view of the vast ocean. It is easy to get lost in the tropical breezes, beaches, and island towns along the way.
Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway (South Dakota)

Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway is an oval-shaped path that runs through tight curved roads, six rock tunnels, winding “pigtail” bridges, scenic lakes, and natural granite statues in the Black Hills of South Dakota. It is not uncommon for rock climbers to stop along the mountainous regions for a quick adventure. The road runs through a number of national parks including the famous Mount Rushmore National Memorial.
Blue Ridge Parkway (North Carolina, Virginia)

Blue Ridge Parkway, also known as “America’s Favorite Drive,” is the longest linear American park in the United States, running 469 miles between Virginia and North Carolina. The road connects the Shenandoah National Park to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park along the Blue Ridge Mountains of the Appalachians. The drive is beautifully scenic with great views of mountain ranges and landscapes.
Mt. Hood Scenic Byway (Oregon)

Mt. Hood Scenic Byway is the perfect way to explore the wilderness of Oregon. The 100-mile route winds through valleys, forests, and waterfalls, offering the driver opportunities for immersive activities such as hiking, skiing, and camping. At the end of the byway, the road merges with Barlow Road which was a part of the original Oregon Trail of the 1800s.
Acadia All-American Road (Maine)

The Acadia All-American Road begins on Maine’s north-central coast where a bridge connects the main road to Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park, two of Maine’s most popular vacation destinations. The route winds through woodland forests, shorelines, and elevated mountains, and the driver will get a beautiful 360-degree view of the Atlantic Ocean and the Maine coast.