

Scenic Byways Lead to Unforgettable Tennessee River Valley Adventure Destinations

Historic American highways put you on pathways toward precious natural beauty, phenomenal outdoor recreation and priceless cultural-heritage preservation.

KNOXVILLE, TN, UNITED STATES, April 12, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It's no wonder that taking leisurely drives through the countryside has consistently ranked among America's favorite pastimes – because few things could be more American than motoring down the open road. And few regions of the country are better situated to entice people on a journey into the picturesque heart of America than the [Tennessee River Basin](#), which contains more than a dozen nationally recognized scenic highways.



“

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This year the Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council is celebrating our seven-state region's culture, heritage and spectacular landscapes by encouraging travelers to embark upon an open-road adventure and get up close and personal with out-of-the-way destinations along the many scenic byways that meander through Southern Appalachian river valleys, farmlands and backcountry.

Each month at [ExploreTRV.org](#) in 2023 we'll be highlighting one of the Tennessee Valley's great drives and grand diversions from the more well-worn thoroughfares of modern automobile travel.

Here are a few bucolic and breathtaking roadways we plan to showcase:
Natchez Trace Parkway (Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi)

Russell-Brasstown National Scenic Byway (Georgia)
Woodlands Trace (Tennessee)
Sequatchie Valley Scenic Byway (Tennessee)
Ocoee USFS Scenic Byway (Tennessee, Georgia)
Cheroke Valley Skyway (Tennessee, North Carolina)
Newfound Gap Road (Tennessee, North Carolina)
Cumberland Historic Byway (Tennessee, Kentucky)
Norris Freeway (Tennessee)
East Tennessee Crossing (Tennessee)
Blue Ridge Parkway (North Carolina, Virginia)
Woodlands Trace (Kentucky)
Wilderness Road Heritage Scenic Byway (Kentucky)

Launched in 1991 to recognize roads having outstanding archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities, the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration's scenic byways program is designed to "capture your imagination, satisfy your curiosity, and enliven your spirit every season of the year," advertises National Geographic's "Guide to Scenic Highways and Byways."

But scenic byways aren't just blacktop strips set aside for soaking up wonderful scenery at 60 miles per hour. They pave the way for luring automobile occupants out of their vehicles and onto historic downtown sidewalks, public nature trails and majestic TVA rivers and Reservoirs.

The Tennessee Valley is unusual not just for its overabundance of stunning landforms, lakes and overlooks, but also an overwhelming richness of history and cultural heritage, said Marge Davis, president of the Volunteer State's chapter of Scenic America. The state of Tennessee has more national scenic byways than any other state east of the Mississippi, she said – and several of those byways are shared with surrounding states.

By showcasing the "intrinsic qualities" of a particular area that make it extraordinary – not just its exquisite landscapes, but also the historic, recreational, cultural and archaeological assets – scenic byway designations are aimed at boosting leisure travel to rural areas that have struggled the past few decades. Scenic byways serve to increase public awareness of, and interest in, charming rural communities, but can also help raise appreciation and participation in environmental conservation and historic preservation efforts, as well as encouraging economic development of a sustainable and responsible nature.

"Scenic byways tell a great story – what the Tennessee Valley is, who its people are and what its geophysical history is," said Davis. "By celebrating the aesthetic and environmental values of a region, as well as its history and heritage, scenic byways encourage multiple communities along a scenic corridor to be thinking about how they can work together to preserve their linkages and build prosperity from their shared resources."

Encouraging communities along a scenic byway to embrace their special status and always be “focusing on improving visitor experiences” is a key to making the most of a scenic byway designation, said Sharon Strouse, executive director of the National Scenic Byway Foundation, a nonprofit organization that bills itself as the “National Voice of Scenic Byways and Roads.” “Scenic driving is more than just the drive itself,” said Strouse. “Scenic driving is taking advantage of the opportunities along the way — not just driving straight through to your destination. People who are setting out on scenic byways are looking to enjoy things along the way – they are seeking out experiences and activities to enjoy and remember.”

“There’s obviously merit in marketing yourself to the world,” Strouse said. “But what I try to tell people is that word-of-mouth is still No. 1. When people come to the byway and have a fantastic experience, they're going to tell everybody they can about it.”

Julie Graham

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