



What are National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads?

The U.S. Secretary of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration recognize certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways based on one or more intrinsic qualities described below and at

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/about>

To be designated a **National Scenic Byway**, a road must possess characteristics of regional significance within at least one of the intrinsic qualities. **All-American Roads** must possess characteristics of national significance in at least two of the intrinsic qualities and are considered destinations unto themselves.

- **Archaeological** - Archaeological Quality involves those characteristics of the scenic byways corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. The scenic byway corridor's archeological interest, as identified through ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence have scientific significance that educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.
- **Cultural** - Cultural Quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features including, but not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, vernacular architecture, etc., are currently practiced. The cultural qualities of the corridor could highlight one or more significant communities and/or ethnic traditions.
- **Historic** - Historic Quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past. The historic elements reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- **Natural** - 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, landform, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife. There may be evidence of human activity, but the natural features reveal minimal disturbances.
- **Recreational** - Recreational Quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly association with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. They include, but are not limited to, downhill skiing, rafting, boating, fishing, and hiking. Driving the road itself may qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized.
- **Scenic** - Scenic Quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment of the scenic byway corridor. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a pleasing and most memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape -- landform, water, vegetation, and manmade development -- contribute to the quality of the corridor's visual environment. Everything present is in harmony and shares in the intrinsic qualities.



What Makes the Minnesota Great River Road an All-American Road?

The Minnesota Great River Road was notified of its designation as an All-American Road in February of 2021. Nowhere along its 2,552-mile course does the Mississippi River's scenic landscape change more than in Minnesota. The 565-mile Minnesota Great River Road is designated along a cornucopia of state and local roads from the iconic Lake Itasca headwaters to the Iowa border. Evolving river landscapes feature 40+ cities hosting river exploration. While Minnesota's Great River Road offers 700+ places to see and things to do, and 13 specially designated Interpretive Centers, the All-American Road nomination highlighted 16 historic and scenic features to represent the journey and feeling along Minnesota's Great River Road.

Eight Unique Scenic Reaches

- Lake Itasca – the Mississippi River's birthplace
- Serpentine River – a twisting, snaking river that confounds the best of paddlers
- Headwaters Lakes – part of America's first reservoir system meant to augment navigation
- Prairie River – where the Mississippi grows into adolescence and straightens out
- St. Anthony Falls – the Great River's only major waterfall
- The Gorge – where the river falls 110 feet over 8.5 miles through a narrow canyon
- Where the Big River Begins – here the Mississippi becomes the river of Mark Twain
- Driftless Area – where majestic bluffs frame the broad river and valley

Eight Historic Gems

- Rustic Architecture of Itasca State Park – blending architecture with nature
- Headwaters Dams – create reservoirs that now serve recreation and wild rice production
- Charles Lindbergh House & Museum – boyhood home of America's famous pilot
- Oliver Kelley Farm – historic living farm and home of national farm movement leader
- St. Anthony Falls Historic District – where Pillsbury & Gold Medal Flour and General Mills began
- Historic Fort Snelling – from frontier outpost to World War II – stories of tragedy and heroism
- I-mni'-za-ska-dan (Dayton's Bluff) – site of Hopewell Culture mounds dating back nearly 2,000 years
- River Towns (featuring Hastings, Red Wing, Wabasha and Winona) – quintessential river towns

