

# River Road Scenic Byway

River Road Scenic Byway showcases all the AuSable River Valley has to offer. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the Huron National Forest, enjoy panoramic views from high bluffs, spectacular fall colors, or quiet winter splendor. Hike, canoe, birdwatch, snowmobile, or ski--River Road can be explored during any season.



Length: 22 miles / 35.2 km

Time     Take one hour to drive or  
to         two days to enjoy the entire  
Allow:    byway.

## Local Information

**Huron-Manistee National Forests**  
989-739-0728

**Oscoda CVB**  
877-868-2632

**Tawas Area Chamber of  
Commerce**  
800-558-2927

## Visitor Services



### Accessibility

Most of the overlooks and developed areas have sidewalks and paved parking. Toilet facilities are accessible.



### Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

All major outlooks and points of interest are accessible by stairways and trails. For those unable to walk the stairways, large overlooks are provided for panoramic views of the river. Eagle Run Trail system is open to mountain bikes.



### Camping

Old Orchard Park Campground has over 200 sites with RV service. Camping is also available in the Huron National Forest. Links to reserveUSA.com to make reservations at nearby National Forest campgrounds: \* [Ausable River Primitive Campground]([http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Ausable\\_River\\_Camping\\_Mi/r/campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=74157&topTabIndex=CampingSpot](http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Ausable_River_Camping_Mi/r/campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=74157&topTabIndex=CampingSpot)): Huron National Forest \* [Monument Campground]([http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Monument\\_Campground\\_Mi/r/](http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Monument_Campground_Mi/r/))

campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=72181&topTabIndex=CampingSpot):  
Huron-Manistee National Forest \* [Rollways  
Campground]([http://www.recreation.gov/  
recAreaDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&facilityId=372183&agencyCode=131](http://www.recreation.gov/recAreaDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&facilityId=372183&agencyCode=131))

### **Food**



There are places to buy food along this byway.

### **Gasoline**



Gasoline is available.

### **Information**



Westgate and Eastgate Welcome Centers have maps and information about points of interest along River Road. For Scenic Byway information call the US Forest Service at 989-739-0728 or write: \_USDA Forest Service 5761 N. Skeel Rd. Oscoda, MI 48750\_

### **Lodging**



There is overnight lodging along this byway.

### **Phone**



A public telephone is available at Footsite Village.

### **Restrooms**



Service is available at several sites along the byway.

### **Retail**



There are places to shop along this byway.

## **Restrictions**

The roadway is open through the winter; however, it is advisable to check local road conditions and exercise caution, especially after heavy snows. Lumberman's Monument, Whirlpool River Access, Eagle Run Trailhead, and Corsair Trail Systems are the only sites plowed during the winter.

## **Seasons**

### **Best Time to Drive**

The River Road Scenic Byway is open all year. However, more wildlife is seen and vegetation is greater during the summer months.

### **High Season**

Travelers can expect high visitor use on July and August weekends, summer holiday weekends, and during the peak fall color season.

## Map and Directions



### Legend:

 Point of Interest	 Campground	 Featured Byway	 Water	 State Border
 Park	 Picnic/Rest Area	 America's Byways	 Wildlife Refuge	 Urban Area
 Mountain	 Interstate	 Other Byway	 Wilderness Area	 Tribal Nation
 City	 U.S. Highway	 Trail	 Other Federal Lands	 Military Base
 Capital	 State Highway		 Other State Lands	

### Driving Directions

- Start the byway 6.7 miles northeast of Hale, Michigan, at the intersection of M-65 and Rollways Road.
- Continue east on M-65, 4.3 miles to the intersection of M-65 and River Road, a county highway.
- Turn right onto River Road.
- Follow this road east for 17.7 miles until it intersects with US-23 (Huron Shores Heritage Route) in Oscoda, Michigan, where the route terminates.

### Getting to the Byway

#### From Chicago, IL (396 miles / 7 hours)

- Take I-90 east toward Indiana, 33.8 miles.
- Merge onto I-94 East via Exit 21 toward Detroit, 138.7 miles.

- Merge onto I-69 North via Exit 108 toward Lansing, 94.7 miles.
- Merge onto I-75 via Exit 133 toward Saginaw, 74.3 miles.
- Take the M-61 exit, Exit 190, toward Standish, 0.3 miles.
- Turn right onto MI-61, 2.6 miles.
- Turn left onto US-23 and continue to follow to the junction of US-23 and River Road in Oscoda, 51.5 miles.

### **From Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (203 miles / 3 hours, 40 minutes)**

- Start out going Northeast on William G Rogell Dr. toward Hohn D Dingell Dr., 1.2 miles.
- William G Rogell Dr. becomes Merriman Rd., 0.3 miles.
- Merge onto I-94 W toward Chicago, 3.5 miles.
- Merge onto I-275 North via Exit 194 toward Flint, 18.2 miles.
- Merge onto I-96 West via the exit on the left toward Lansing, 18.1 miles.
- Merge onto US-23 North via Exit 1488 toward Flint, 104.4 miles.
- Take the M-61 exit, Exit 190, toward Standish, 0.3 miles.
- Turn right onto MI-61, 2.6 miles.
- Turn left onto US-23 and continue to follow to the junction of US-23 and River Road in Oscoda, 51.5 miles.

### **From East Lansing, MI (170 miles / 3 hours)**

- Take I-69 North toward Flint, 38 miles.
- Merge onto I-75 North via Exit 133 toward Saginaw, 74 miles.
- Take the M-61 exit, Exit 190, toward Standish, 0.3 miles.
- Turn right onto MI-61, 2.6 miles.
- Turn left onto US-23 and continue to follow to the junction of US-23 and River Road in Oscoda, 51.5 miles.

### **From Toledo, Ohio (232.46 miles / 4 hours)**

- Take I-75 North to Detroit, 1.6 miles.
- Merge onto I-475 W via Exit 204 on the left toward US-23/Sylvania/Ann Arbor, 6.4 miles.
- Merge onto US-23 North via Exit 14 toward Sylvania/Ann Arbor, 166.8 miles.
- Take the M-61 exit, Exit 190, toward Standish, 0.3 miles.
- Turn right onto MI-61, 2.6 miles.
- Turn left onto US-23, continue to follow to the junction of US-23 and River Road in Oscoda, 51.5 miles.

### **From Toronto, Canada (379 miles / 6 hours, 30 minutes)**

- Take Hwy 401 Express West, 12.8 miles
- Highway 401 Express W becomes Provincial Rte. 401 W, 99 miles.
- Take the HWY-402 W exit toward Sarnia, 0.5 miles.
- Merge onto Provincial Rte. 402 W, 66.3 miles.
- Merge onto I-475 N/UAW FWY via Exit 137 toward Saginaw, 10 miles.
- Merge onto I-75 North toward Saginaw, 65 miles.

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- Take the M-61 exit, Exit 190, toward Standish, 0.3 miles.
- Turn right onto MI-61, 2.6 miles.
- Turn left onto US-23 and continue to follow to the junction of US-23 and River Road in Oscoda, 51.5 miles.

## Road Trip: Spring Renewal

**Departure:** Eagle Run Trail System, Michigan

**Destination:** Canoeing and Kayaking on the Au Sable, Michigan

**Time to allow:** 2 days

Spring is a wonderful time to explore River Road in a tranquil setting. Pack a picnic lunch, wear comfortable walking shoes, and bring your camera and binoculars and plan for two full days of enjoying nature waking up from a long winter's sleep.

### Day 1

- **Start: Eagle Run Trail System**

A morning hike along the banks of the Au Sable River is a great way to begin the day. Enjoy the first blossoms of spring in the wet lowland areas, watch for bald eagles, great blue herons, and a variety of songbirds and waterfowl. If you're quiet, beaver and otter are often seen swimming along the shoreline.



- **Stop 1: Foote Dam Fishing Access**



**From previous stop:** 10 minutes / 4.25 mi (6.8 km)

**Directions:** Continue west on River Road four miles to Rea Road in Foote Site Village. Turn right on Rea Road and drive a quarter mile to the entrance road for Foote Dam.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

Spring beckons steelhead trout and salmon from Lake Huron to the spawning beds in the cool rivers and streams. The Au Sable River is an angler's paradise. You can watch these large fish make their way back to Lake Huron from the platforms along the dam or the DNR River Access along River Road.

- **Stop 2: Au Sable River Queen**



**From previous stop:** 5 minutes / 1 mi (1.6 km)

**Directions:** Return to River Road by following Rea Road a quarter mile south. Continue west on River Road to Foot Site Park and the docking area for the Au Sable River Queen.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 2 hours 30 minutes

After a hike and watching the anglers you're probably ready to get on the water. The Au Sable River Queen offers a relaxing tour of Foote Pond without the effort of paddling yourself. Enjoy the captain's stories of colorful lumbermen and Native American lore, while appreciating the scenery and wildlife.

- **Stop 3: Foote Pond Overlook**



**From previous stop:** 5 minutes / 3 mi (4.8 km)

**Directions:** Foot Site Park and the docking area for the Au Sable River Queen, follow River Road west to the entrance of Foote Pond Overlook.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

This observation point is high above the Au Sable River, yielding a breathtaking view of the Au Sable River Valley with the upper stretches of Foote Pond below. Interpretive panels provide bald eagle history, identification tips, and Forest Service protection practices. This is a good area to watch the skies for this huge bird of prey. The observation deck is perched at the top of a dune known as Champagne Hill. You are welcome to climb down, but remember it is a grueling, steep climb back up.

- **End: Lumberman's Monument Visitor Center**



**From** 10 minutes / 8 mi (12.8 km)

**previous stop:**

**Directions:** From Foote Pond Overlook, continue west on River Road approximately eight miles.

End your day at Lumberman's Monument Visitor Center. Climb through a log jam, roll a log with a peavey, cut a wooden cookie with a cross-cut saw, and learn about the life of a lumberjack through video and displays. Learn about the industry that helped develop northern Michigan and the men that cut the pine that helped build a nation.

Staff are available to answer questions and help plan the rest of your trip. Hike the stairway to the wanigan, or take the short trail to the dune observation deck. Watch for delicate spring flowers that grow on these dry sand plains, and bright indigo buntings and scarlett tanagers that nest in this area.

When you've had your fill of all that Lumberman's Monument has to offer, put down stakes for the night at the adjacent campground.

### **Totals for Day 1**

**Total Distance Traveled:** 16.25 miles / 26.0 km

**Total Travel Time:** 30 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 3 hours 30 minutes

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## Day 2

- **Navigation: Tuttle Marsh Wildlife Area**



**From previous stop:** 20 minutes / 12 mi (19.2 km)

**Directions:** From Lumberman's Monument, take River Road east nine miles to Wells Road. Turn right on Wells Road, travel south three miles to Old US-23. Turn left on Old US-23, travel two miles to Tuttle Marsh Rd (FR 4548). Take Tuttle Marsh Road through the center of the marsh area.

Begin day two with a morning excursion to Tuttle Marsh Wildlife Area. Spring is an optimum time to visit this wetland habitat. Migratory waterfowl, song birds, and raptors pass through this area on their way north. It is also a prime nesting location for local species such as bittern, great blue heron, osprey, Canada geese, and many species of ducks and songbirds. Beaver and muskrat are often spotted in the smaller ponds and white-tail deer feed on lush spring grasses along the roadside.

- **Stop 1: Iargo Springs Interpretive Site**



**From previous stop:** 20 minutes / 11 mi (17.6 km)

**Directions:** Tuttle Marsh Road ends on Davison Road. Turn right on Davison Road one and a half miles to Sherman Road. Turn right on Sherman Road two miles to Brooks Road. Take Brooks Road north three miles to Well Road. Travel Wells Road three miles back to River Road. Continue west on River Road 11 miles to the entrance on your right. A large sign identifies the site and you will see the paved parking area.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 1 hour 30 minutes

Even if you only take in the view from the overlook, this stop is still worth the driving time! The birds-eye-view of the river and landscape is breathtaking. But if you are willing to brave the 300 steps that lead down to the spring area, you will discover beauties well worth the effort of climbing back up. Look for unique wildflowers that prefer wetland ecosystems such as jack-in-the-pulpit and skunk cabbage under the cool canopy of large trees. You'll have a good chance to spot birds and animals that prefer an old growth habitat. The beauty of the springs isn't duplicated any where else in the region!

- **End: Canoeing and Kayaking on the Au Sable**



**From** 10 minutes / 5.5 mi (8.8 km)  
**previous**  
**stop:**

**Directions:** From Iargo Springs, travel west on River Road to the junction with M-65. Travel south on M-65 4.5 miles to Rollways Road. You will see the sign for the canoe livery on your right.

What better way to end a perfect day than to get out and paddle the river. You may want to confer with the staff at Lumberman's Monument the day before to aid in choosing a livery and trip that fits your expectations and experience level. What we will recommend here will get you to the upper stretches of Loud Pond, a portion of the river not yet encountered in this itinerary. The livery on Rollways Road will provide shuttle service along with rental. You should contact the livery the day before to reserve your shuttle time. Spring is a perfect time of year to paddle this stretch, avoiding the higher use summer season. Enjoy the unspoiled shoreline, the quiet solitude, and the clean fresh smells of spring. Around every bend are opportunities to spot wildlife in their natural environment. End your trip at Rollways Picnic Area located across from the canoe livery with a picnic dinner!

### **Totals for Day 2**

**Total Distance Traveled:** 28.5 miles / 45.6 km

**Total Travel Time:** 50 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 1 hour 30 minutes