

Loess Hills Scenic Byway

The Loess Hills Scenic Byway weaves through the rugged landscape of windblown silt deposits along the Missouri River Valley. This unique American treasure possesses natural features found only in one other place in the world: the Yellow River Valley of China. Accordingly, the landscape supports many rare plants and animals.



Length: 220 miles / 352.0 km

Time Plan five hours to drive or
to seven or more hours to

Allow: enjoy the byway.

Local Information

Loess Hills Scenic Byway Council

712-482-3029

Send E-mail

Western Iowa Tourism Region

888-623-4232

712-623-4232

Send E-mail

Visitor Services

Fees



There are no fees along the byway proper.

Accessibility



All visitor/welcome centers are handicapped accessible. Most Nature/ Interpretive Centers are also handicapped accessible and many trails and overlooks are handicapped accessible.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities



With the addition of the Wabash Trace Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail, the byway now includes those two forms of transportation. There are many smaller trails that bicyclists and pedestrians can travel on throughout the corridor as well, but the Wabash Trace was specifically created for biking and walking. A total of 20 bicycle routes along more than 458 miles of existing roadways and trails have been identified in the Loess Hills corridor. Bicycles share the road with automobiles except for the 63-mile Wabash Trace Nature Trail and the many city trails.

Camping



There are places to camp along this byway.



Food

There are places to buy food along this byway.



Gasoline

Gasoline is available.



Information

There are six welcome centers along the byway and within five miles of the byway. Sergeant Floyd River Museum and Welcome Center is open 9-5 daily. Harrison County Historical Village and Welcome Center is open from 9-5 Mon-Sat and 12-5 on Sunday. There are four additional welcome centers within five miles of the byway that offer visitors services.



Lodging

Visitors will find motels all along the byway and a few bed & breakfasts.



Phone

Public phones are available along this byway.



Restrooms

There are toilet facilities along this byway.



Retail

There are places to shop along this byway.

Special Considerations

To accommodate international, non-English-speaking visitors, the byway website is translated into multiple languages. Byway Welcome Centers also have on-staff certified travel counselors to assist with inquiries, and have available for rent “talking” pocket dictionaries that translate into 12 languages.

Restrictions

Occasionally, winter weather may cause a slower rate of travel. The gravel roads on some of the excursion loops may also become somewhat degraded during high rainfall periods.

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

Spring through fall

High Season

Spring through fall

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	Other Road	Other Federal Lands	Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

Driving Directions

- Begin at the intersection of State Highway 12 and State Highway 48, north of the city limits of Akron, Iowa, in Plymouth County.

- Travel south 29 miles on Highway 12 to Interstate 29, milepost 151 in Sioux City.
- Go south on Interstate 29 for 10 miles, leave the Interstate at exit 141 to go east through Sergeant Bluff on County Road D38 (1st Street).
- Travel east of Sergeant Bluff on County Road D38 (also 210th Street) 5 miles to Old Highway 141.
- Traveling southeast on Old Highway 141, turn right on County Road K67 (also Hancock Avenue). Follow K67 to Iowa 141.
- Turn east on Iowa 141 and follow it into Smithland, Iowa to South Hickory Street.
- Turn south on South Hickory Street and continue out of Smithland on County Road L12 (also Lee Avenue).
- Five miles after leaving Smithland, turn east at County Road E16 (133rd Street).
- Drive 3 miles to county road L20 where you will turn south on L20 and travel 8 miles to Castana.
- Turn south onto Iowa Highway 175 and travel 4.5 miles to Highway 37.
- Follow County Road L12 for 5 miles to its junction with County Road E16.
- Drive CR E16 10 miles to its junction with County Road L20 and State Highway 175.
- Take State Highway 175, 5 miles, from Castana to State Highway 37.
- Follow State Highway 37 for 1.5 miles to its junction with County Road L16.
- Turn south on L16 and travel 7.5 miles until it joins County Road E54. In less than a mile, you'll enter Moorhead.
- In Moorhead, take 1st Street east to Oak Street. Turn south at Oak Street and go 1 block to Iowa Highway 183.
- At Iowa Highway 183, turn right and travel 18 miles to its junction with Iowa Highway 127.
- Follow State Highway 127 for 11 miles to its junction with US Highway 30.
- Stay on US Highway 30 for 6 miles.
- Take County Road F58 for 4 miles to its junction with County Road L34. Turn south going 19 miles to County Road G8L.
- At County Road G8L (also Railroad Highway) go south for 3.5 miles to U.S. Highway 6, which takes you into Council Bluffs.
- At US Highway 6 turn east and travel 5 miles to 7th Street (Highway 192) and turn south to travel 3 miles to the South Omaha Bridge Road (also called Iowa Highway 92 and US Highway 275).
- At the South Omaha Bridge Road turn east (left) and travel 2 miles to Harry Langdon Boulevard.
- Turn south (right) onto Harry Langdon Boulevard which then becomes Wabash Avenue (also County Road L35).
- Travel County Road L35 which becomes 221st Street (also County Road L35) until you reach Glenwood where 221st Street becomes Locust Street). Continue south until you reach US Highway 34 and go east for 4 miles to US Highway 275.


- At US Highway 275, turn south traveling through Tabor, to County Road J10 where you will turn west (right).
- Travel 6 miles southwest on County Road J10 (also Plum Creek Road) to Filmore Street and turn west (right) to enter Thurman.
- Travel on County Road J24 (also Filmore Street) to Washington Street and turn south (left) onto Washington Street, which becomes County Road L44 (also called the Bluff Road).
- Travel 17 miles to Hamburg, Iowa where County Road L44 becomes E Street, which will take you to US Highway 275.
- Follow Highway 275 for 3 miles, to Iowa's southern border and continue east to cross the Nishnabotna River and continue to follow U.S. Highway 275 to Iowa's southern border and the end of the byway.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby cities

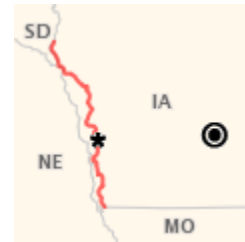
Des Moines, IA (113 miles / 181.86 km, 1 hour 45 minutes)

Start:  Des Moines
N 41.589° W 93.620° [?]


Directions:

- Travel west on Interstate 80 to the I-80/I-680 interchange.
- Take I-680 to exit 21.
- Exit onto L34, which is the byway.

Junction with byway: * Intersection with I-680 with L34
N 41.499° W 95.746° [?]



Kansas City, KS (130 miles / 209.21 km, 2 hours)

Start:  Intersection of I-29 and I-435 in Kansas City

From the south or Kansas City, Kansas/Missouri

Directions:

- Start at I-29 and I-435 north of Kansas City.
- Drive north on I-29 and exit at Hamburg.
- Follow Highway 275 north onto the byway.



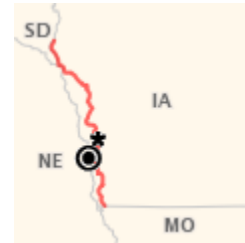
Junction with byway: * Intersection of I-275 and IA-12
N 40.607° W 95.655° [?]

Omaha, NE (10 miles / 16.09 km, 20 minutes)

Start: ● Omaha
N 41.260° W 95.942° [?]

Directions:

- From I-80 continue east into Iowa.
- Exit at the Lake Manawa exit and continue to the stop light.



Junction with byway: * Intersection of Lake Manawa to L-34
N 41.499° W 95.746° [?]

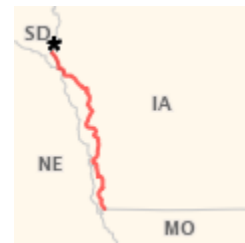
Sioux Falls, SD (58 miles / 93.34 km, 1 hour)

Start: ● Intersection of I-29 and I-229 in Sioux Falls

From the north or South Dakota

Directions:

- Take exit (31) from Interstate 29.
- Head east on Highway 48 into Akron, Iowa.
- Head south on Highway 12 to start your journey on the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway.



Junction with byway: * Intersection of SD-48 and IA-12
N 42.827° W 96.561° [?]

Road Trip: Loess Hills Prairie Tour

Departure: Sioux City, Iowa

Destination: Broken Kettle Grasslands, Iowa

Time to allow: 1 day

Spend the day in enchanting northwestern Iowa where the Loess Hills Prairie Tour takes you on a journey through several beautiful grassland prairies. Hike along the hilltop ridges, discover endangered species, and understand what makes the Loess Hills in Iowa so extraordinary.

Day 1

- **Start: Sioux City**

With a downtown along the shores of the Missouri River, this city has some scenic qualities of its own.

- **Stop 1: Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center**



From previous stop: 7 minutes / 3.6 mi (5.8 km)

Directions: Begin your tour of Loess Hills Prairie in Riverside Park of Sioux City. Drive northeast on Council Oak Drive toward IA-12. Turn left at IA-12 and proceed for 1.5 miles. Turn left again to stay on IA-12 and drive another 1.8 miles to the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

Our first stop on the Loess Hills Prairie Tour is the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, which is a destination nature preserve located within the boundaries of Stone State Park dedicated to informing visitors about Loess Hills. These hills were formed thousands of years ago by countless deposits of windblown soil. Deposits of this magnitude have only been found on Iowa's western border and in China.

Experience the 400-gallon native fish aquarium, butterfly garden, hands-on exhibits, and a walk-through exhibit showing life under the prairie at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

- **Stop 2: Stone State Park**



From previous stop: 3 minutes / 1.4 mi (2.2 km)

Directions: From Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center head north on IA-12 toward Stone State Park Drive. Turn right at Stone State Park Drive. Then turn right again to head towards the center of the park.

Suggested time at this stop: 4 hours

Our next stop on the Loess Hills Prairie Tour is Stone State Park, which is adjacent to the Big Sioux River. Known for its impressive views of Loess Hills from the tops of bluffs and ravines, Stone State Park is an adventurer's dream. Take your mountain bike and hit the trails, hike along the hilly ridge tops, set-up camp, or simply park your car for a panoramic view. Enjoy the scenic overlooks of Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa that the Dakota and Elk Points provide. One of the most popular trails in the park is the 9-mile hike up to Mount Lucia. Loop around the park as the trail leads you up dark, forested hollows to prairie-covered hilltops overlooking the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers.

The multi-use trails handle hikers, cyclists, horseback riders, and snowmobilers. The park also offers 30 camping sites (10 with electric hookup) and heated camping cabins. Take a moment and enjoy over 1,000 acres of prairie-topped ridges and dense woodlands and you might see a wild turkey, white-tailed deer, red fox, or coyote. Stop and smell the many rare species of wildflowers, including yucca, Skeleton Plant, and Buffalo Berry, which thrive in this unique mixture of prairie and woodlands.

- **Stop 3: Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve**

From previous stop: 18 minutes / 9 mi (14.4 km)

Directions: From the Stone State Park Drive, turn right and drive five miles north on IA-12. Turn right onto K18. Go north 3 miles and turn left onto 260th Avenue. Watch for County Conservation sign. (Warning: 260th Avenue is not drivable when wet. You may want to park along K18 instead of driving down 260th Avenue.) Drive west for 1 mile on 260th to enter Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve.

Suggested time at this stop: 2 hours

Five Ridge Prairie is one of the best sites of unbroken prairie remnants left in the State of Iowa. Named for its five major prairie ridges and with no paved roads, visitors who wish to see this site can only access it through various hiking trails. Hike through the forested ravines between the ridges of Loess Hills, and catch a glimpse of the prairie as Native Americans and pioneers must have seen it. Notice the climate changes between open grasslands, which are warmed by the sun and the cool, humid shadows of the woods. Enjoy the true wilderness of Loess Hills with some cross-country skiing, hiking, hunting, and mountain biking (on established trails only).

- **End: Broken Kettle Grasslands**



From previous stop: 20 minutes / 10 mi (16.0 km)

Directions: From Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve head back to IA-12 from K18. At the intersection of K18 and IA-12, turn right onto IA-12. Drive northwest on IA-12 for five miles then turn right onto Butcher Road. Drive one mile along Butcher Road to enter our last stop on the Loess Hills Prairie Tour.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

The Broken Kettle Grasslands has the largest remaining tracts of contiguous native prairie left in the state. Its 6,000 acres are home to many animals, including the endangered prairie rattlesnake, the Great Plains toad, badgers and coyotes.

Get out of the car, stretch, and enjoy a picnic lunch as you watch several butterfly species like the Dusted Skipper, Regal Fritillary, Ottoe Skipper, and Pawnee Skipper flutter around you. Take a quiet moment, hear the wind comb through the grasses, and you might hear the various bird calls of the bobolink, Black-billed Magpie, Upland Plover, and Western Kingbird. The botanists of your party will be captivated by plenty of plant life here, including the Purple Coneflower, Snow-on-the-Mountain, Scarlet Gaura, Dotted Blazing Star, and the Ten-petaled Mentzelia.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 24 miles / 38.4 km

Total Travel Time: 48 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 8 hours