

Cherokee Hills Byway

Situated in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains the Cherokee Hills Byway is a showcase of eastern Oklahoma's tremendous diversity.

Length: 84 miles / 134.4 km

Time to Allow: Allow at least 2 hours



Local Information

We do not have contact information for this Byway.

Visitor Services



Accessibility

At the Oklahoma Welcome Center, there are wheelchair ramps and picnic tables, TDD phones, and braille restroom signs. The Cherokee Nation Welcome Center is wheelchair accessible, the Tahlequah Chamber of Commerce has a wheelchair ramp, and the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission has a wheelchair ramp and braille restroom signs.



Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

Portions of the Cherokee Hills Byway in Historic Downtown Tahlequah are equipped with sidewalks for pedestrian access.



Food

There is food available on the byway.

Information



Visitor Canters along the Cherokee Hills Byway

- Oklahoma Welcome Center - US-412/Cherokee Turnpike - Kansas, OK. Open 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Brochures, maps, free coffee, gift shop, restrooms.
- Cherokee Nation Welcome Center - Gore, OK. Open Mon-Sat 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun noon-5 p.m., or by appointment. Restrooms, gift shop, museum, travel information.
- Tahlequah Chamber of Commerce. Open Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (Memorial Day-Labor Day) restrooms, visitor information, free coffee, souvenirs.
- Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission. Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Brochures, maps, restrooms.

Restrooms



There are restrooms along the byway.

Restrictions

No vehicle restrictions exist although US-412, US-62 and US-59 are the only highways designated by ODOT as commercial routes.

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

Most of the cultural attractions are open year round, however April through October is considered peak season for the byway.

High Season

The summer season from Memorial Day to Labor Day is the time for maximum visitors due to Lake Tenkiller traffic and the Scenic Illinois River traffic.

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

West Siloam Springs to Kansas

- The byway's easternmost terminus is at the Oklahoma/Arkansas Border. Drive west on U.S. Highway 59 to Kansas.

Kansas to Tahlequah

- Turn south on State Highway 10.
- Turn west on U.S. Highway 62 to Tahlequah.

Tahlequah to Interstate 40

- Turn south on U.S. Highway 62.
- Turn southeast on State Highway 82.
- State Highway 82 changes to State Highway 100.
- Turn south on State Highway 10A/100.
- State Highway 100 changes to N. Main Street.
- Turn southeast on U.S. Highway 64.
- Turn south on State Highway 10 to Interstate 40, where the byway ends.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby airports

NW Arkansas Airport, AR (26 miles / 41.84 km, 54 minutes)

Start:



NW Arkansas Airport
[N 36.280° W 94.302° \[?\]](#)

Directions:

*Head east on Tower Drive toward Airport Service Road/Regional Avenue. *Turn right (south) at Airport Service Road/Regional Avenue. *Turn left (south) at Airport Blvd/Regional Avenue. *Turn right (west) at AR-264/Healing Springs Road. Continue to follow AR-264. *Sharp left (west) at AR-12/AR-264. *Continue to follow AR-12. *Turn right (south) at S Collins Road toward SW 1st Street. *Slight right (west) at AR-264/AR-59/S Gentry Blvd. Continue to follow AR-59. *Turn right (west) at AR-412/AR-59/AR-68. Continue to follow AR-68.

Entering Oklahoma

*Continue on Cherokee Turnpike/US-412, where the byway begins.



Junction with byway: * On US-412 on the OK/AR border.
N 36.176° W 94.565° [?]

Tulsa International Airport, OK (78 miles / 125.53 km, 1 hour 15 minutes)

Start: ✈ Tulsa International Airport
N 36.189° W 95.889° [?]

Directions: *Head northwest on Airport Blvd/Airport Dr toward N 75th E Ave. Continue to follow Airport Blvd. *Turn right (southwest) at E Virgin St. *Turn left (southeast) toward OK-11 E (signs for OK-11 E/I-244 E/Tulsa/Joplin). *Take the ramp onto OK-11 E. *Take the exit onto I-244 E/US-412 E toward US-169. *Merge onto I-44 E. *Continue on US-412 E (signs for Chouteau) Partial toll road. *Exit onto Cherokee Turnpike/US-412/US-59. *Continue to follow US-412, where the byway begins.



Junction with byway: * At the intersection US-412 and US-59.
N 36.190° W 94.711° [?]

 **Nearby cities**

Fayetteville, AR (37 miles / 59.55 km, 45 minutes)

Start: 📍 At US-71 and E. Lafayette St.
N 36.069° W 94.158° [?]

Directions: *Take US-71 North, merge on to I-540 North, take exit 72 to US-412 West. *Continue on US-412 for approximately 25 miles. *The byway begins at its northern point at US-412 in West Siloam Springs, OK.



Junction with byway: * On US-412 on the OK/AR border.
N 36.176° W 94.565° [?]

Road Trip: The Cherokee Heritage & Culture Trail

Departure: Tahlonteskee Cherokee Museum, Oklahoma

Destination: Natural Falls State Park, Oklahoma

Time to allow: 2 days

Take the opportunity to learn many aspects of the culture and traditions of the Cherokee people as you hear the language spoken, or get hands-on experience making traditional baskets or pottery. The Tsa La Gi Ancient Village will take you back to the pre-European era for the Cherokee people. Learn about the dug-out canoes of yesterday and then try your hand at modern-day canoeing down the Illinois River. Historic downtown Tahlequah affords the visitor trips to the Cherokee buildings still in existence today, such as the Capitol Building, the Supreme Court Building and the Cherokee National Jail. The drive up Scenic Highway 10 along the Illinois River gives a glimpse into not only the beauty of the river but the necessity it was as the Cherokees arrived from the Southeastern US. Finally, take in Natural Falls, the highest waterfall in Oklahoma.

Day 1

- **Start: Tahlonteskee Cherokee Museum**



Suggested time at this stop:

45 minutes

Named for Chief Tahlonteskee, this is the reconstructed site of the Cherokee Nation's former capital during 1828-39, including a council house, courthouse and log cabin. It is now a museum representing the history of the Cherokees who came before the Trail of Tears. Experience the architecture of the period for the public buildings as well as the style of home they lived in.

- **End: Cherokee National Holiday**



From previous stop: 1 hour / 41 mi (65.6 km)

Directions: Take OK-100 from Gore north to Jct. 100/82. Continue on OK-82 through Cookson and Keys until Jct. 82/62. Turn south on OK-62 to the Cherokee Nation Tribal Complex or north on OK-62 to downtown Tahlequah.

In this one weekend, visitors can experience all the Cherokee culture has to offer. The Traditional Foods Cook-Off shows how the meal is prepared and then after the judging it is available for the crowd to enjoy. Lively games of Stickball, Cherokee Marbles, and Chunky are thrilling to watch as the Traditional Games Championships are decided.

Everywhere you look, ladies and gentlemen are dressed in traditional clothing, especially at the Cherokee National Holiday Parade in historic downtown Tahlequah. For the art lover's delight, the Cherokee National Holiday Art Show is a must as visitors will experience arts created specifically for the show as they compete for prize money. The evening will end with an inter-tribal Pow Wow that is sure to amaze. During the Cherokee National Holiday, many activities take place at the Cherokee Heritage Center. Spend some time in the Tsa La Gi Ancient Village and Adams Corner Rural Village. Arts and Crafts are plentiful throughout the grounds of the Cherokee Heritage Center.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 41 miles / 65.6 km

Total Travel Time: 1 hour

Total Stopping Time: 45 minutes

Day 2

- **Stop 1: Scenic Illinois River**

From previous stop: 20 minutes / 15 mi (24.0 km)

Directions: Follow OK-51 East from Tahlequah to OK-10 North.

Suggested time at this stop: 4 hours

While in Tahlequah for the Holiday, you will have had the opportunity to visit the Tsa La Gi Ancient Village to see how primitive canoes were made before European contact. A nice leisurely float down the Illinois River will allow you to understand how the Cherokee people once utilized the river for their daily routines.

- **End: Natural Falls State Park**



From previous stop: 25 minutes / 17 mi (27.2 km)

Directions: Follow OK-10 north to US 412-A East. Directional signage to the park is located on the highway.

Suggested time at this stop: 2 hours

On territory that was part of the Cherokee Nation at the end of the Trail of Tears, the Natural Falls have attracted visitors since at least the 1800s. It was formerly known as Dripping Springs by the Indians but when the State of Oklahoma acquired the property they changed the name due to there being other Dripping Springs in Oklahoma. Natural Falls State Park features a 77-foot waterfall cascading through rock formations, creating a hidden, serene atmosphere at the bottom of a narrow V-shaped valley. A one-and-a-half mile hiking and nature trail reveals this oasis. Visitors can try their hand at catch-and-release fishing, which is completely different than in yesteryear when Cherokees were avid fishermen for food. Ever wonder “Where the Red Fern Grows”? See for yourself why this beautiful natural wonder was chosen as the setting for the delightful movie. Visitors should definitely plan a picnic lunch which can be enjoyed on the ground or under a shelter.

Totals for Day 2

Total Distance Traveled: 32 miles / 51.2 km

Cherokee Hills Byway



Total Travel Time: 45 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 6 hours