

Sky Island Scenic Byway

Start your journey among giant saguaro cacti of the Sonoran desert and climb to shady conifer forests at nearly 9,000 feet, passing biological diversity equivalent to a drive from Mexico to Canada in just 27 miles. Enjoy spectacular views and recreational opportunities from hiking and camping to picnicking and skiing.



Length: 27.2 miles / 43.5 km

Time Plan for three to six hours to drive, including

Allow: backtracking.

Local Information

Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau

1-800-638-8350

USDA-Forest Service, Coronado National Forest

520-388-8300

520-749-8700

Visitor Services

Fees



Certain stops along the byway require a \$5.00 use pass to access.

Camping



Camping is available in the Santa Catalina Ranger District. Links to Recreation.gov for campground reservations in the Coronado National Forest:

* [Rose Canyon](http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Rose_Canyon_Az/r/campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=70583&topTabIndex=CampingSpot)

Gasoline



Gasoline is available in Tucson only.

Information



Information about the byway is available from websites, travel guides, and books. Road signs in Tucson guide visitors to the byway. A brochure for the byway can be picked up at the entrance station. Signs along the byway help visitors find vista points, picnic areas, trailheads, campgrounds, Summerhaven, and Ski Valley.

Restrooms



There are toilet facilities along this byway.

Special Considerations

Following winter snowstorms, the route is sometimes restricted to four-wheel-drive vehicles or closed to all vehicles for a short time until the route is plowed. Once the route has been plowed, the route is reopened to all traffic. Closures typically last less than a few hours.

This is a winding mountain road with sharp curves and steep grades. Potential hazards include sudden weather changes, areas of concentrated traffic, and falling rock. Drivers should be aware of bicyclists on the byway. No gasoline is available along the route.

Restrictions

Very large motor homes, trailers over 22', and buses may have trouble negotiating steep grades and sharp turns. Places to turn around are few. The route is suitable for most other vehicles. The entire route is paved and accessible year-round to two-wheel-drive passenger vehicles.

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Seasons

Best Time to Drive

The best time to drive is during the summer, when the trees in the Coronado Forest create a cool, shady environment to spend the day hiking.

Winter

Winter storms may cause roads to close. Cars may need snow tires.

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

- The Sky Island Scenic Byway starts at the junction of E. Catalina Hwy and N. Lemmon Short Rd.

- From this point, drive northeast on Mt. Lemmon Hwy to Summerhaven, AZ, where the byway ends.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby cities

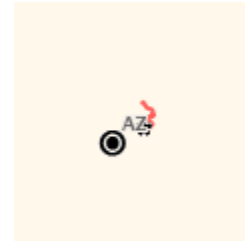
Tucson, AZ (14 miles / 22.53 km, 30 minutes)

Start: ● Intersection of Speedway Blvd. and
Campbell Ave
N 32.236° W 110.944° [?]

Directions:

- Get onto Speedway Blvd and go east.
- Follow until you reach Wilmot Road and curve on to Tanque Verde Road.
- Turn to the left on Catalina Highway.
- The byway begins on this road, where it becomes Mt. Lemmon Highway shortly before entering the Coronado National Forest.

Junction with byway: * Intersection of Catalina Hwy. and Mt
Lemmon Short Rd, Tucson
N 32.304° W 110.745° [?]



Road Trip: Driving into the Sky Islands

Departure: Mt. Lemmon Ski Valley, Arizona

Destination: Rose Canyon Lake and Campground, Arizona

Time to allow: 1 day

From the quaint village of Summerhaven to a day spent along the shores of Rose Lake; the Sky Island Scenic Byway treats you to a diverse landscape in the Arizona desert.

Day 1

- **Start: Mt. Lemmon Ski Valley**



Suggested time at this stop:

2 hours

Enjoy a few hours enjoying skiing at Mt. Lemmon, the southernmost downhill ski area in the continental US. With recreation all season, there is always something offered.

- **Stop 2: Summerhaven**



From previous stop: 5 minutes / 1.7 mi (2.7 km)

Directions: Start out going east on E Ski Run Rd toward E Red Ridge Road for 1.0 miles before turning right onto N General Hitchcock Hwy for .1 miles; road then turns into N. Sabino Canyon Park, after .4 miles, end in Summerhaven.

Suggested time at this stop: 40 minutes

Take a break from the desert heat in the quaint village of Summerhaven, full of myriad shops and restaurants.

- **End: Rose Canyon Lake and Campground**



From previous stop: 25 minutes / 9.5 mi (15.2 km)

Directions: Start out going north on N Sabino Canyon Park toward E Douglas Ave for 0.1 miles, then turn right onto E. Retreat Rd for .1 miles, then right again onto N. Tucson Ave for .2 miles. Turn right onto N Middle Sabino Rd for .6 miles, then make a slight right onto N Loma Linda Extension Rd for .1 miles before turning right onto N. General Hitchcock Highway for .7 miles. N. General Hitchcock Hwy becomes N. Hitchcock Hwy, travel on this for .4 miles before road turns into N. Mt. Lemmon Hwy. Drive for 5.5 miles, then take a right onto E. Rose Canyon Rd, travel 1.5 miles before ending at Rose Canyon Lake.

Suggested time at this stop: 3 hours

Enjoy a day at Rose Canyon Campground, among the pines at 7,200 ft., one the largest campground along the Byway.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 11.2 miles / 17.9 km

Total Travel Time: 30 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 5 hours 40 minutes