

Wichita Mountains Byway

A natural beauty capable of astonishing even well-traveled visitors, the Wichita Mountains Byway guides you through the protected valleys of the 550 million-year-old Wichita Mountains, which shelter the largest remnant block of southern mixed grassland and ancient cross-timbers in North America.

Experience the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, one of the oldest managed nature preserves in the Nation and the site that President Theodore Roosevelt chose for the first effort to save American bison from extinction.



Local Information

We do not have contact information for this Byway.

Length: 93 miles / 148.8 km

Time to Allow: at least 2 hours

Visitor Services



Accessibility

Parking and access to most facilities along the byway route accommodates individuals with disabilities. The Refuge Visitors Center is accessible, and communities along the route are aware of their responsibilities to provide accessible facilities and are working toward that goal.



Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

Most sections of the byway route have sufficient shoulder width to accommodate bicycles. Bicycle travel is limited within the refuge, but a designated road behind Mt. Scott accommodates off-road bicycles. Pedestrian travel is accommodated using sidewalks and other independent pedestrian paths in byway communities, and with numerous hiking and recreational trails within the refuge.



Camping

There are places to camp along this byway.



Information

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center currently provides information (in the form of a brochure) in Spanish, which is their most frequent non-English speaking visitor. In addition to these materials, the Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department offers numerous travel

publications associated with Wichita Mountains in Spanish including: Oklahoma Visitors Guide, Oklahoma RV Parks, Lakes & Campgrounds Guide, Oklahoma Trails, Oklahoma Travel Guide & State Map. Wichita Mountains Visitor Center, open Wed-Mon 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Restrooms, food, and information available. Closed on major holidays. Apache Historical Society Museum, open Mon-Sat 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Restrooms and information available. Closed on holidays. Museum of the Great Plains, open Tues-Sun. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Restrooms, food, and information available. Closed on major holidays. Ft. Sill National Monument and Museum 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tues-Sat. Restrooms and information available. Closed on major holidays.

Restrooms



There are restrooms located in numerous museums and visitor centers along the byway.

Special Considerations

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Seasons

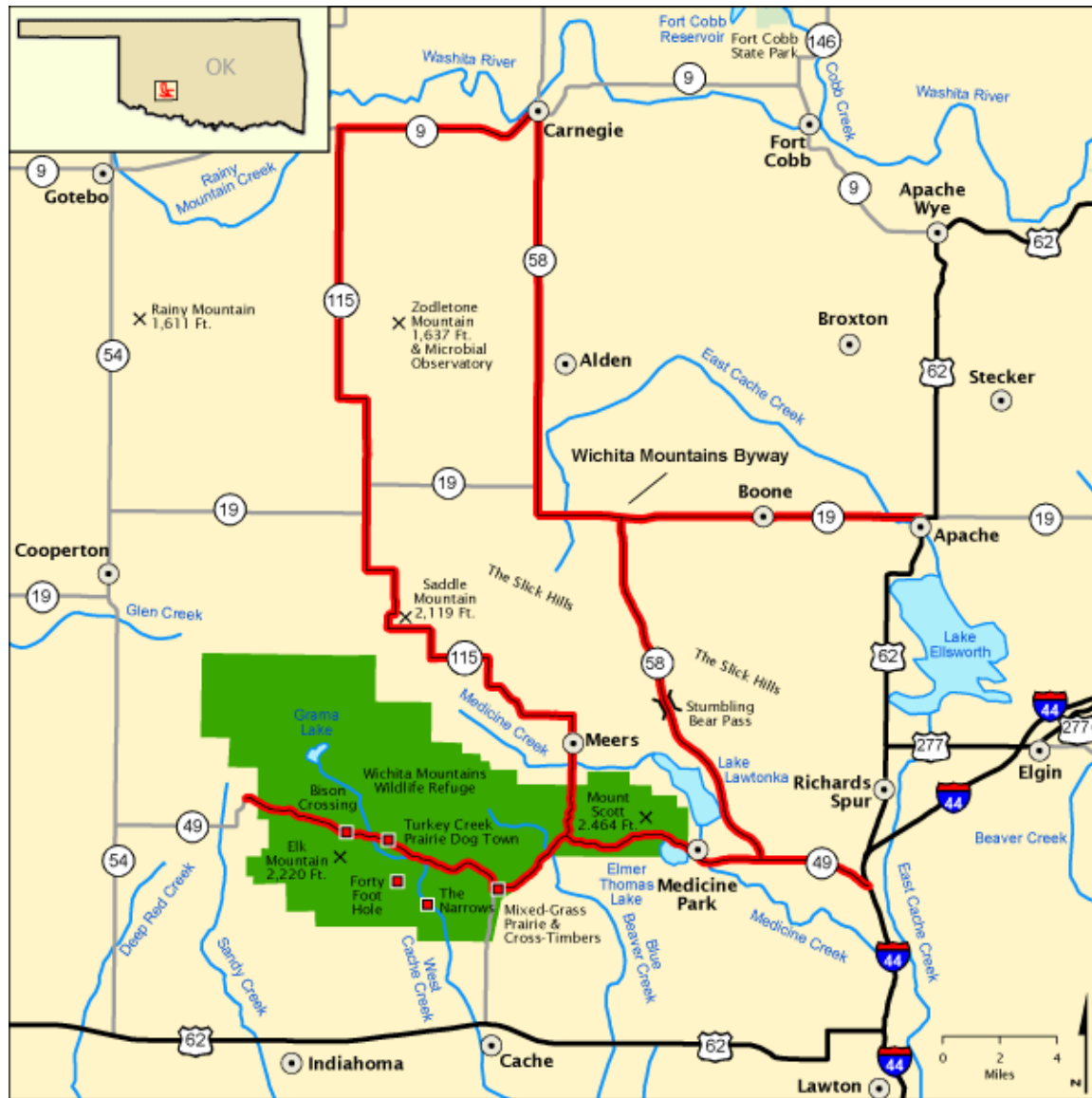
Best Time to Drive

The best time to visit the byway is from April through October. This period has the greatest diversity of activities and good weather.

High Season

The byway experiences increased traffic during school holidays and during late spring to late summer.

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

Carnegie to Meers

- Carnegie is the byway's northeastern corner. Drive west on State Highway 9 from the intersection with State Highway 58.
- Turn south on State Highway 115.
- Stay on State Highway 115 to Meers.

Meers to inside the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge

- Drive south on State Highway 115.
- Turn west on State Highway 115/State Highway 49/Cache Meers Rd.
- Turn north on State Highway 49/Scenic Highway to the end of the refuge.

Meers to Medicine Park

- Drive south on State Highway 115.
- Turn east on State Highway 49 to Medicine Park.

Medicine Park to Interstate 44

-Stay on State Highway 49 to Interstate 44 on ramp, where the byway ends.

Medicine Park to Apache

-Drive on State Highway 49 going east. -Turn north on State Highway 58. -Turn east on State Highway 19 to Boone and Apache. The byway ends at the intersection of State Highway 19 and US-281.

Apache to Carnegie

-Drive west on State Highway 19. -Turn north on State Highway 58 to Carnegie.

Getting to the Byway



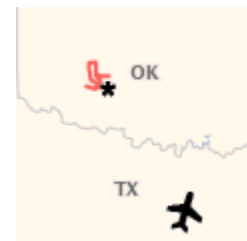
Nearby airports

Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, TX (182 miles / 292.90 km, 3 hours 7 minutes)

Start:  Dallas/Fort Worth Airport
[N 32.898° W 97.044° \[?\]](#)

Directions:

- Head southwest on Terminal D Access.
- Turn right (east) onto the ramp to TX-97 N.
- Keep left (north) at the fork to continue toward TX-97 N and merge onto TX-97 N.



- Take the TX-121 S/TX-144 W exit toward Grapevine/Ft. Worth.
- Merge onto TX-114 W.
- Take the ramp onto TX-114/US-287/US-81 continue to follow US-81.
- Continue on US-287 N Continue on I-44 E.
- Take exit 45 for OK-49 toward Carnegie/Medicine Park.
- Turn left (west) at OK-49 (signs for Medicine Park).

Junction with byway: * I-44 exit 45
N 34.714° W 98.402° [?]

Lawton- Ft. Sill Regional Airport, OK (12.6 miles / 20.28 km, 23 minutes)

Start: ✈ Lawton-Ft. Sill Regional Airport
N 34.565° W 98.419° [?]



- Directions:**
- Head west on SW Coombs Road toward SW Sheridan Road.
 - Turn right (north) on SW 23rd St/ SW Sheridan Road and continue to follow Sheridan Road.
 - Turn right (east) at NW Cache Road/NW Cache Road Square.
 - Merge onto I-44 E/US-277 N/US-281 via the ramp to Oklahoma City.
 - Take exit 45 for OK-49 toward Carnegie/Medicine Park.
 - Turn left (west) at OK-49 (signs for Medicine Park).
 - Turn left (west) onto the ramp to enter the byway.

Junction with byway: * I-44 exit 45
N 34.740° W 98.402° [?]

Will Rogers World Airport, OK (72.9 miles / 117.32 km, 1 hour 6 minutes)

Start: ✈ Will Rogers World Airport
N 35.396° W 97.597° [?]

Directions:

- Head southwest on Terminal Dr. toward Air Cargo Rd.
- Slight right (north) at Air Cargo Rd.
- Turn right (east) at SW 54th St.
- Turn right (south) onto the I-44 S. ramp.
- Merge onto I-44 W.
- Take exit 45 for OK-49 toward Carnegie/Medicine Park continue on the ramp.

Junction with byway: * I-44 exit 45
N 34.714° W 98.402° [?]



Nearby cities

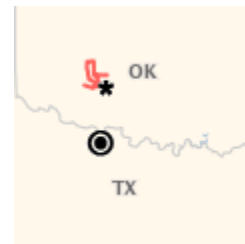
Wichita Falls, TX (60.9 miles / 98.01 km, 58 minutes)

Start: 📍 Wichita Falls
N 33.901° W 98.504° [?]

Directions:

- Head north on Brook Ave toward 10th St.
- Turn right at 10th St.
- Turn left at Broad St./Central Fwy/US-277.
- Take the ramp on the left onto I-44 E.
- Take exit 45 for OK-49 toward Carnegie/Medicine Park.
- Turn left at OK-49 (signs for Medicine Park).

Junction with byway: * I-44 exit 45
N 34.714° W 98.402° [?]



Road Trip:

The Natural Wonders of the Wichita Mountain Byway

Departure: Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma

Destination: Saddle Mountain, Oklahoma

Time to allow: 1 day

From start to finish, travelers along the Wichita Mountains Byway will be captured and enthralled by the region's rugged, wild, and natural intrinsic qualities. The byway passes through one of the oldest geological formations in the United States, the Wichita Mountains. These mountains date back over 550 million years and rise over 2,000 feet above sea level with a relief of over 1,000 feet above the surrounding cross-timbers and mix-grass prairie. The Wichita Mountains have even moved presidents to declare it a national treasure and the site to preserve our western heritage in perpetuity. Thus, it became one of the first areas of the country set aside from development to preserve its natural character for future generations to enjoy and explore. The area's rich depth of natural history presents a traveler a lifetime opportunity to explore one of this country's great gems.

Day 1

- **Start: Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge**

This stop helps set the natural tone of the byway by focusing the traveler's attention on the unchanged rugged landscape, wildlife, geological wonders, and habitats. The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge is a tract of approximately 60,000 acres embracing a major portion of the Wichita Mountains in southwestern Oklahoma. The refuge was established to protect this area from development and save iconic species such as bison and elk from extinction.



- **Stop 1: Elk Mountain**



From previous stop: 7 minutes / 3.9 mi (6.2 km)

stop:

Directions: Head east on OK-49 toward Caddo Lake. Elk Mountain Turnout will be located on the right side of the road.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

at this stop:

Elk Mountain dominates the southwestern end of the refuge along the Wichita Mountains Byway. From its nearly vertical cliff faces and boulder fields of ancient granite, travelers get a sense of the timelessness of the region. Wildlife such as elk and white-tailed deer are often seen foraging the grasses around the flanks of the mountain. There is also a hiking trail for those travelers who wish to get a bird's-eye view of the byway corridor.

Elk Mountain also straddles the Charon's Garden Wilderness Area. This area is part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. However, by an act of Congress it will remain a wilderness area without roads or changes to the natural qualities.

- **Stop 2: Turkey Creek Prairie Dog Town**



From previous stop: 3 minutes / 1.8 mi (2.9 km)

stop:

Directions: Head east on OK-49 toward Caddo Lake. The pullout is along right side of the road.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

this stop:

The Turkey Creek Prairie Dog Town is one of the largest black-tailed prairie dog colonies in the southern plains region. These photogenic creatures give travelers a good show of their complex social behaviors. Other creatures that depend on prairie dogs, such as burrowing owls, can also be seen along the site.

- **Stop 3: Forty Foot Hole**



From previous stop: 4 minutes / 1.8 mi (2.9 km)

Directions: Head southeast on OK-49 toward Lost Lake. Turn right at Lost Lake. Travel down Lost Lake Road until you arrive at the parking section.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

Forty Foot Hole showcases some of the region's best geological wonders along the Wichita Mountains Byway. This stop allows visitors to view the deep natural depression and a series of waterfalls and clear pools as Cache Creek cascades over the ancient rock faces.

- **Stop 4: The Narrows**



From previous stop: same location

Directions: This spot is located at the same spot as Forty Foot Hole. However, there is a trail marker pointing to its location.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

The Narrows is a natural rock carved canyon composed of reddish granite that is transected by Cache Creek. It is an unchanged feature that is a favorite of visitors who come to watch flora, fauna, and the gently flowing creek.

- **Stop 5: Cross-Timbers**

From previous stop: 7 minutes / 3.1 mi (5.0 km)

Directions: Head north on Lost Lake Road toward OK-49. Turn right at OK-49. The road passes through a prime cross-timber forest with many turnouts for travelers to get out and experience.

Suggested time at this stop: 20 minutes

The Wichita Mountains contain some of the best examples of this ancient type of forest left in the United States. The cross-timbers are composed of various types of trees, mainly blackjack and post oak. These trees have a weathered appearance and some of them can be hundreds of years in age. They are also home to the federally endangered Black-Capped Vireo, a species of bird sought out by birdwatching enthusiasts from across the country.

- **Stop 6: Mix-Grass Prairie**

From previous stop: 3 minutes / 1.5 mi (2.4 km)

Directions: This site has many pullouts along OK-49 as the visitor heads east. A good view of the mix-grass prairie lies at the Wichita Mountains Refuge Visitors center located at the corner of OK-49 and 115.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

The rocky soils of the surrounding Wichita Mountains protected the mix-grass prairie along the byway route and corridor from being plowed for farmland. These grasslands contain hundreds of species of unique plants and animals. During the spring visitors are greeted with carpets of blues, yellows, and whites from blooming wildflowers, while visitors in the fall will enjoy the grass seed-heads and colors of the surrounding cross-timbers.

- **Stop 7: Bison**

From previous stop: same location

Directions: Bison are viewable along the Wichita Mountain Byway route along OK-49.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

No other animal in the United States is as iconic as the American Bison. This species is one of the foundations for setting aside the Wichita Mountains from development or other human activities. During the early 20th century, fifteen bison were brought to the Wichita Mountains from the Boston Zoological Park. Today, these iconic symbols are an American conservation success story.

- **Stop 8: Mount Scott**



From previous stop: same location

Directions: Heading east along OK-49 travelers will see a sign for Mount Scott Summit. The summit is along the left side of the roadway. Turn left at the sign and travel up to the summit of Mount Scott.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

The summit of Mount Scott is the second highest peak in the Wichita Mountains at 2,464 feet above sea level. It is the most photographed geological feature of the byway due in part its grandeur and the surrounding natural landscape of mountains, lakes and waterways. Visitors along the Wichita Mountains Byway can travel by road to the top of Mount Scott to get a 360-degree view of the surrounding mountain range, Slick Hills, and Lake Lawtonka.

- **Stop 9: Lake Lawtonka**



From previous stop: 15 minutes / 6.8 mi (10.9 km)

Directions: At the intersection of Mount Scott Summit Road, turn left onto OK-49. Turn left at OK-58 heading north. The lake runs parallel to OK-58 with many pullouts for visitors.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

Lake Lawtonka is the largest water feature along the Wichita Mountains Byway. Visitors enjoy all the activities the lake provides. The lake also provides great views of the ancient lava flows and boulder piles along the northeast and eastern sides of Mount Scott. The lake is also a destination for bird watchers during the fall through spring due to the large amounts of over wintering bird species.

- **Stop 10: Stumbling Bear Pass**



From previous stop: 7 minutes / 4.8 mi (7.7 km)

Directions: Head north on OK-58. The roadway passes right through the pass and there is a interpretive site along the route on the right side of the road.

Suggested time at this stop: 20 minutes

This natural passageway has brought visitors through the Wichita Mountains for centuries. The once vast bison herds, Native American tribes, traders and U.S settlers and pioneers have all depended upon this gap to access the Wichita Mountains from the Slick Hills region along the Wichita Mountain Byway. Stumbling Bear Pass is a natural corridor flanked on both side of the roadway by Permian aged rock outcroppings, newer limestone ridges, and cross-timber forest.

- **Stop 11: The Slick Hills**



From previous stop: 5 minutes / 2 mi (3.2 km)

stop:

Directions: Head north on OK-58. Slick Hills are viewable along both sides of the road with many areas to pullout.

Suggested time 30 minutes

at this stop:

After passing through Stumbling Bear Pass, the roadway characteristic totally changes from the granite/boulders of the Wichita Mountains changing to the limestone formations of the Slick Hills. These formations are covered by mix-grass prairie and provide spectacular views of the the Wichita Mountain peaks.

- **Stop 12: Rainy Mountain**



From previous stop: 40 minutes / 28.8 mi (46.1 km)

stop:

Directions: Head north on OK-58. Turn left at OK-19/OK-58. Turn right and stay on OK-58 North. In Carnegie turn left along Highway 9/OK-115. Follow Highway 9/OK-115. Turn Left as OK-115 goes south. Rainy Mountain is viewable on the right side of the road as you travel south.

Suggested time 20 minutes

at

this stop:

Rainy Mountain's low dome appearance and gentle rise along the Wichita Mountains Byway is a pleasant surprise amongst the mix-grass prairie surroundings. It is also the tallest topographical feature on the northern stretch of the byway. Rainy Mountain's beautiful prairie vistas engage travelers to watch the blowing wind move of the prairie-like ocean waves. This site is also sacred to the Kiowa Nation and other Plains Tribes.

- **Stop 13: Mount Zodletone and the Microbial Observatory**



From previous stop: 19 minutes / 7.6 mi (12.2 km)

Directions: Head south along OK-115. Mount Zodletone is viewable along the route. To get a closer look, travelers can take E1400 Rd. closer to the summit.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

Mount Zodletone is an unexpected find along the Wichita Mountains Byway. Along the northern flanks of the mountain, lies a natural spring that produces a lot of sulfides and methane much like the Earth's environment over 2 billion years ago. This living laboratory brings in geologists and visitors from all over the nation. The site also used to be a bath house during the early 1900s as health aide. Now, travelers can experience and smell this natural wonder along the byway.

- **End: Saddle Mountain**



From previous stop: 20 minutes / 9.1 mi (14.6 km)

Directions: Head south on Scenic OK-115. Turn left at the curve to stay on Scenic OK-115. Continue after the curve to travel south along the route. The Destination will be along the right side of the road.

Suggested time at this stop: 30 minutes

This natural feature rests along the northern edge of the Wichita Mountain Range. Visitors will notice the mountain has two distinct peaks and a slight curve between them, thus appearing like a saddle. The mountain is surrounded by crosstمبر forest and undisturbed rock outcroppings, making it a great stop for travelers seeking solitude and reflection in nature.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 71.2 miles / 113.9 km

Wichita Mountains Byway



Total Travel Time: 2 hours 10 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 7 hours