



Iconic Drives

Sometimes a day or two of scenic vistas is just what the doctor ordered.

By Ivy Lamb

★ Getting away from it all can often be as simple as getting behind the wheel. America's many scenic highways and byways wind through some of the country's most striking and iconic landscapes. All of these routes can be accessed from a nearby US Airways or American Airlines destination airport.

Pacific Coast Highway

CALIFORNIA

Rugged cliffs, soaring redwood groves, and endless ocean views — it's no wonder that the Pacific Coast Highway is considered one of the nation's most scenic drives. While the route spans almost the entire California coastline, we recommend

starting in Monterey and driving south roughly five hours to Morro Bay. Along the way, you'll pass historic towns, state parks, and Hearst Castle, the mansion built by early 20th-century newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. But nothing compares to the views in Big Sur, a sublime 90-mile stretch where the Santa Lucia Mountains dramatically flank the Pacific Ocean. visitcalifornia.com/trip-ideas/coastal-fun/

From top:
California's
Bixby Bridge
on the Pacific
Coast Highway,
Muir Woods
Redwoods

Overseas Highway

FLORIDA KEYS

There's a dreamlike quality to this route, which includes vast stretches of clear turquoise waters and coral reefs. The Overseas Highway connects the Florida Keys via about 120 miles of road and 42 bridges — a true feat of engineering. Start in Miami and take U.S. Route 1 south toward Key Largo. The drive takes less than four hours, but leave extra time in your schedule to stop and dive or snorkel and to eat fresh fish



Diversions |

at a local seafood joint. At the end of the day, you'll be rewarded with one of Key West's famous sunsets. fla-keys.com/highway.cfm

Blue Ridge Parkway

NORTH CAROLINA

Stretching 469 miles from Virginia to western North Carolina, this highway winds through the southern Appalachian Mountains. Stop off at the many hiking trails and scenic overlooks to admire the undulating peaks swathed in their characteristic blue haze. For an easy day trip, start in Asheville, North Carolina, and drive north about three hours to Boone. You'll pass Linville Gorge, where you'll see a 90-foot waterfall in a breathtaking setting, and Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi. To catch the renowned autumn color at its peak, time your visit for late September or early October. blueridgeparkway.org

Red Rock Scenic Byway

ARIZONA

Time feels relative when traveling through Sedona, Arizona's red rock country. The rust-colored landscape speaks to ancient geological forces that carved out deep canyons, towering buttes, and craggy pinnacles over millions of years. There are awe-inspiring views around every turn, and the Red Rock Scenic Byway takes you to several picturesque pullouts. Take exit 298 off Interstate 17 to get on the byway, which also winds through the evergreen Coconino National Forest. While the drive is short — only 7.5 miles — it allows plenty of time to hike one of the many nearby trails or play a round of golf at one of the three public courses on the byway. redrockscenicbyway.com

Cascade Loop

WASHINGTON

Few other scenic highways take you through such varied terrain as Washington's Cascade Loop, which starts



Coffee Pot Rock
Sedona, Arizona



Bald River Falls,
The Blue Ridge Parkway



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just north of Seattle and circles 440 miles through the Cascade Mountains. Begin in the lush farmland of the Snohomish River Valley and travel Highway 2 up the west slope of the Cascades to Stevens Pass, which offers sweeping views of the surrounding countryside. Meander down into the Columbia River Valley, blanketed with a patchwork of apple orchards, and end at the glacier-fed Lake Chelan

— unless you're feeling ambitious and want to complete the loop by ascending into the rugged North Cascades. While you could drive the entire loop in a day, consider allocating a few days so you can make stops along the way and soak it all in. cascadeloop.com ✦

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