

Conservation Corner

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“The open road still softly calls, like a nearly forgotten song of childhood.” Carl Sagan

Summertime – the perfect time for traveling the open road while remembering the songs of one’s youth. What kind of summer traveler are you? Do you enjoy just getting in the car and seeing where the road takes you? Or do you pre-plan and pre-program each minute and mile of each trip? Probably you fall somewhere in between, and like us head for the open road with a general destination in mind but the freedom to explore unexpected detours and side paths.

Whatever your traveling style, I think we can all agree our country offers both a bounty of beautiful scenery as well as endless miles of highway. Have you driven along any of these AAA top 5 scenic drives in America?

1. Skyline Drive, Virginia. This 105-mile byway through the Shenandoah National Park features stunning panoramas of the Blue Ridge Mountains.
2. Kancamagus Highway, New Hampshire. This 34.5-mile highway, known as “The Kanc,” is especially scenic in autumn as it winds through the flaming maple, beech, and birch trees of the White Mountain National Forest.
3. Trail Ridge Road, Colorado. Known as “the highway to the sky,” this road travels 48 miles through Rocky Mountain National Park as viewed from 12,000 feet and crossing the Continental Divide at Milner Pass.
4. Hana Highway, Hawaii. Running 52 miles along the rugged coastline of Maui, this island byway features rainforests, black sand beaches, and cliff-top vistas. Movie buffs might recognize the opening scenes of *Jurassic Park* that were filmed at the Garden of Eden Arboretum and Botanical Garden.
5. Coastal Highway Route 17 runs along our country’s southeastern seaboard – 1,200 miles of Atlantic coastline, historical sites, and Southern charm.

Here in Iowa, of course, we don’t have any mountain ranges or ocean vistas, but we still have scenic roadways. In fact, The Land Between Two Rivers is home to two national scenic byways – the Great River Road along the Mississippi River and the Loess Hills Byway along the Missouri River. Iowa is also home to nine state byways. Our closest is the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway, a 36-mile loop that travels through the Little Sioux River Valley and the towns of Peterson and Linn Grove to our west.

Pocahontas County is home to 103 miles of state highways, including Highways 3 and 4 which pare the county into quarters. Our county is also home to over 200 miles of paved and 800 miles of graveled county roadways. And while many of those miles may appear to be the same old – dusty, flat, and boring – each mile also has its own appeal and personality. Each mile offers its own panorama of verdant farm fields, family homesteads, or natural landscapes as they trail alongside prairies, wetlands, and woodlands. And some days, when the sky is clear and my heart is open, each mile “still softly calls, like a nearly forgotten song of childhood.”

