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Native Stone Scenic Byway

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NATIVE STONE SCENIC BYWAY

The Native Stone Scenic Byway highlights both the natural wonder of rock formations and the amazing craftwork of masons who built the small towns, homes, barns, and fences with native stone. The seventy-five-mile rural route meanders southeasterly from Manhattan to the tiny town of Dover near Topeka. Informative kiosks tell the historic highlights at byway pull-offs. Follow along the prairie path:



1. DOVER

Dine at a former 1800s general store, known for its home cooking. Across the street the historic 1878 Sage Inn, listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), served as a stagecoach stop.

2. ECHO CLIFF

Fifty-foot cliffs tower above babbling Mission Creek and its shady, outsider-art picnic areas created by Earl Hepworth.

3. ESKRIDGE

In “The Gateway to the Flint Hills,” NRHP sites include the downtown’s 1906 Security State Bank and the city park’s 1908 bandstand.

4. LAKE WABAUNSEE

Homes line the pretty shores of this 235-acre, spring-fed lake, the “Gem of the Flint Hills.” View the all-encompassing byway kiosk near the lake entrance.

5. HIGHWAY 99

Watch for stunning stretches of limestone fences, turn-of-the-century homes, and barns through cattle country south of Alma. A kiosk near the intersection of Highways 99 and 4 tells the ranching story.

6. ALMA

This “City of Native Stone” boasts a showpiece 1930s courthouse and a treasury of downtown historic sites.

7. MOUNT MITCHELL HERITAGE PRAIRIE

Mount Mitchell Heritage Prairie Park, a part of Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area, recalls its American Indian, abolitionist, and Underground Railroad ties. Hike to the mount for a valley view beyond.

8. WABAUNSEE

At the Wabaunsee townsite, read about its Underground Railroad days and its still-remaining stone 1862 Beecher Bible and Rifle Church, named for a fiery abolitionist minister.

9. PILLSBURY CROSSING WILDLIFE AREA

Seven miles southeast of Manhattan, soak up the scenery at this stone-bottomed crossing on Deep Creek and its broad waterfall.

10. KONZA PRAIRIE BIOLOGICAL STATION

Hike the trails at this 8,600-acre tallgrass prairie research area or get a pretty prairie preview at the Highway 177 scenic overlook.

Mary Mertz serves on the Native Stone Scenic Byway Committee. The 1860 limestone home in which she and her husband, Bob, reside was recently added to the Kansas Registry of Historic Places and is situated on the byway near Zeandale.