

The Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway

Tour the byway or venture into wetlands of international importance at Cheyenne Bottoms and the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, two of the largest wetland ecosystems in North America. As the byway moves through breathtaking wetlands teaming with wildlife, endless skies and vibrant flora, one will find the charming rural communities shaped by nature with histories as rich and varied as the area's natural resources. While the ancient wetlands have attracted wildlife for millennia, they eventually brought Native peoples who occupied the land for hundreds of years, though little remains of their presence today. As immigrants and homesteaders were drawn by the area's natural resources, the Native peoples were displaced, often forcefully. Traveling by the Santa Fe Trail starting in the 1820s and the railroad in the late 19th century,

settlers were attracted to the fertile ground for wheat production. Abundant oil also provided a livelihood for many in the bustling rural communities. Today, the byway draws on this past, especially its rich natural habitat for birds and wildlife. Using innovation to protect the wetlands, promoting ecotourism, and honoring its history through art and community activities, this byway provides a natural and human experience that is second-to-none.

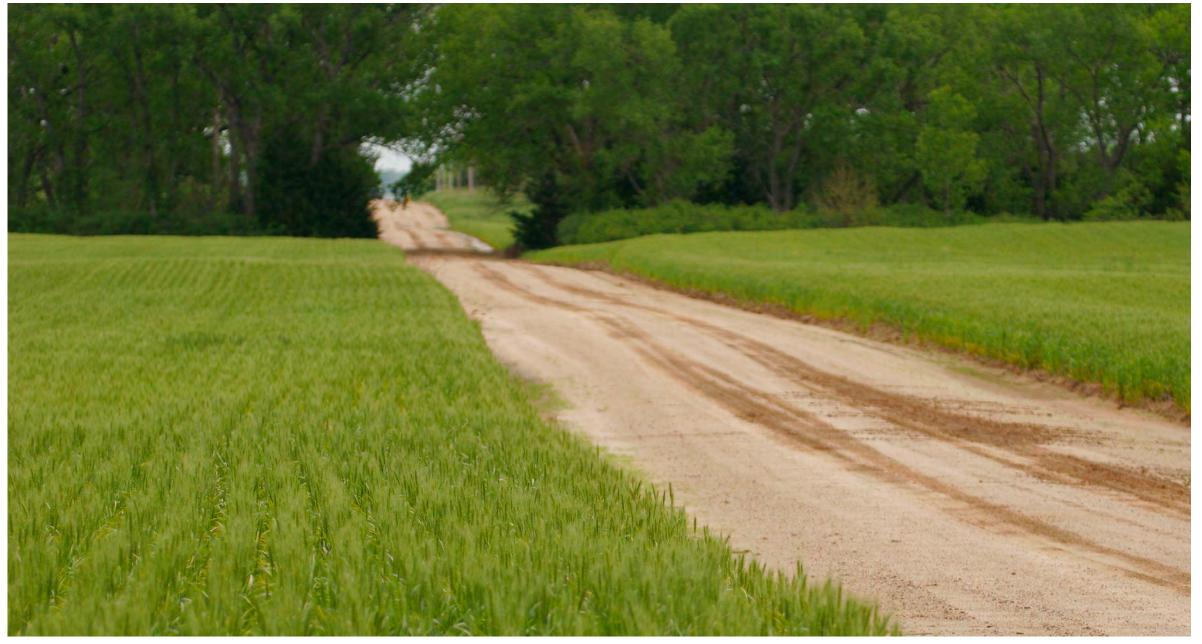


torylines of the Kansas Byways

While Zebulon Pike's description of the "Great American Desert" discouraged settlement, the Santa Fe Trail in 1821 and the trains that followed brought Immigrants All who discovered that crops could thrive. This area attracted homesteaders of all kinds, among them Germans, Mormons, African-Americans, Irish, and Hispanics.



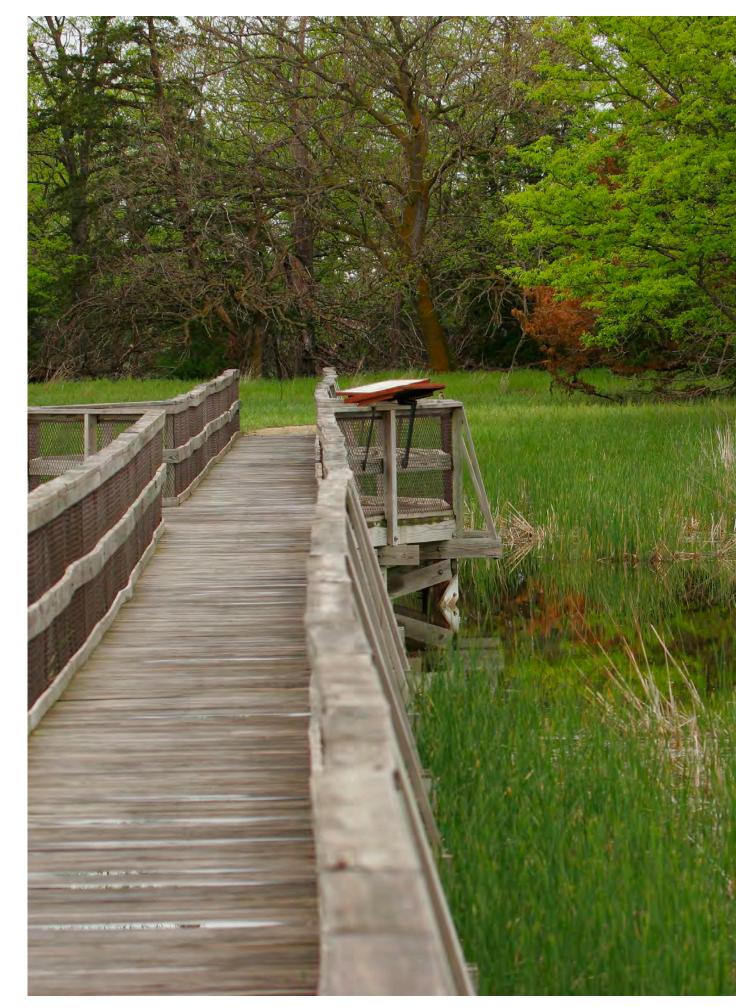
Kansas Wetlands Education Center Nature Trail







The Arkansas River at the Diversion Dam in flood stage.



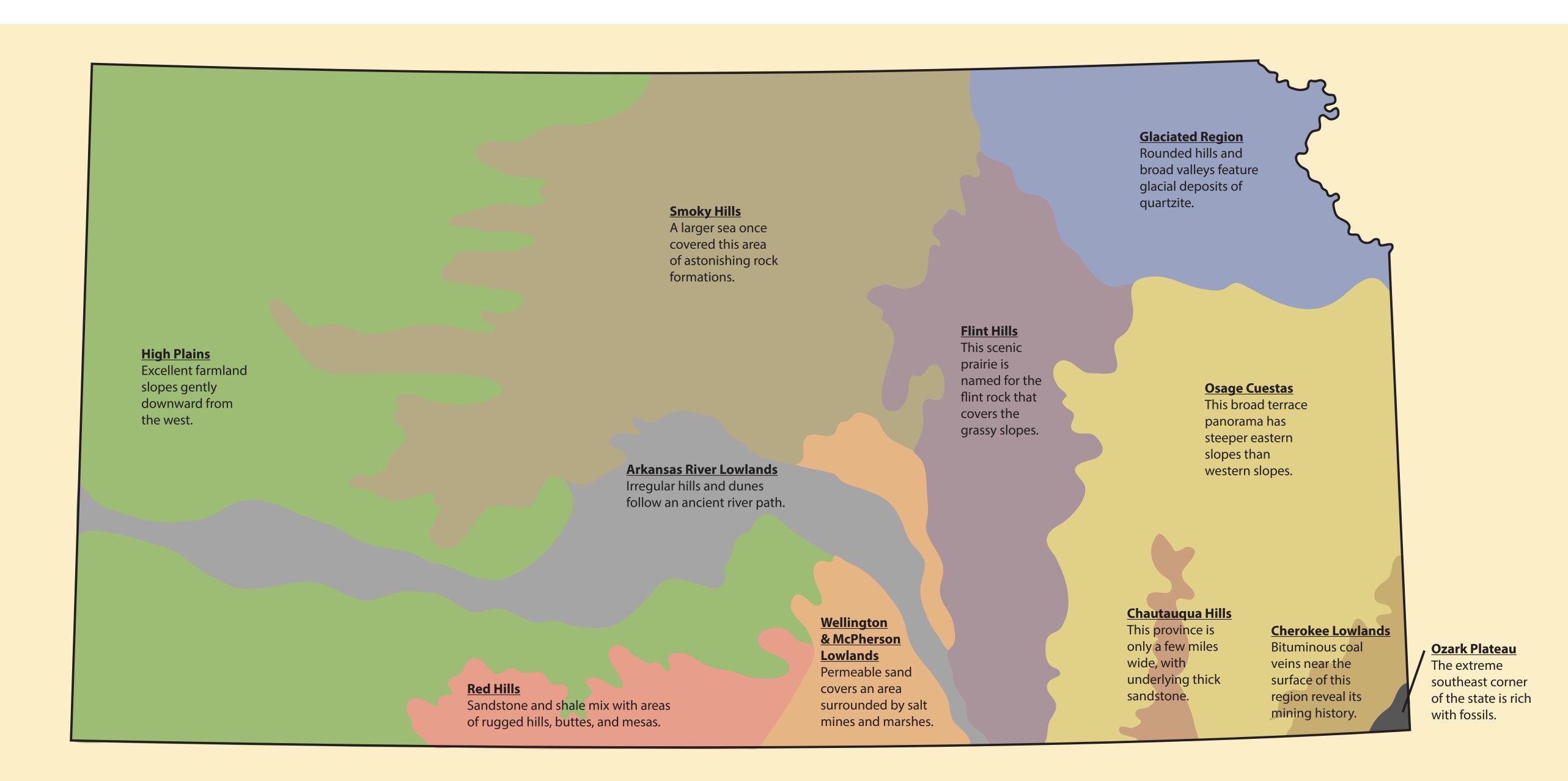
Migrants Mile Trail, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge



Limestone double arch bridge

Bridging the American Divide

Fleets of wagons carried settlers over the plains through the byway, including massive freight wagons traveling the Santa Fe Trail. As the rail lines were completed, they replaced these former "highways." Later, automobiles and local oil reserves helped to populate the byway, Bridging the American Divide.

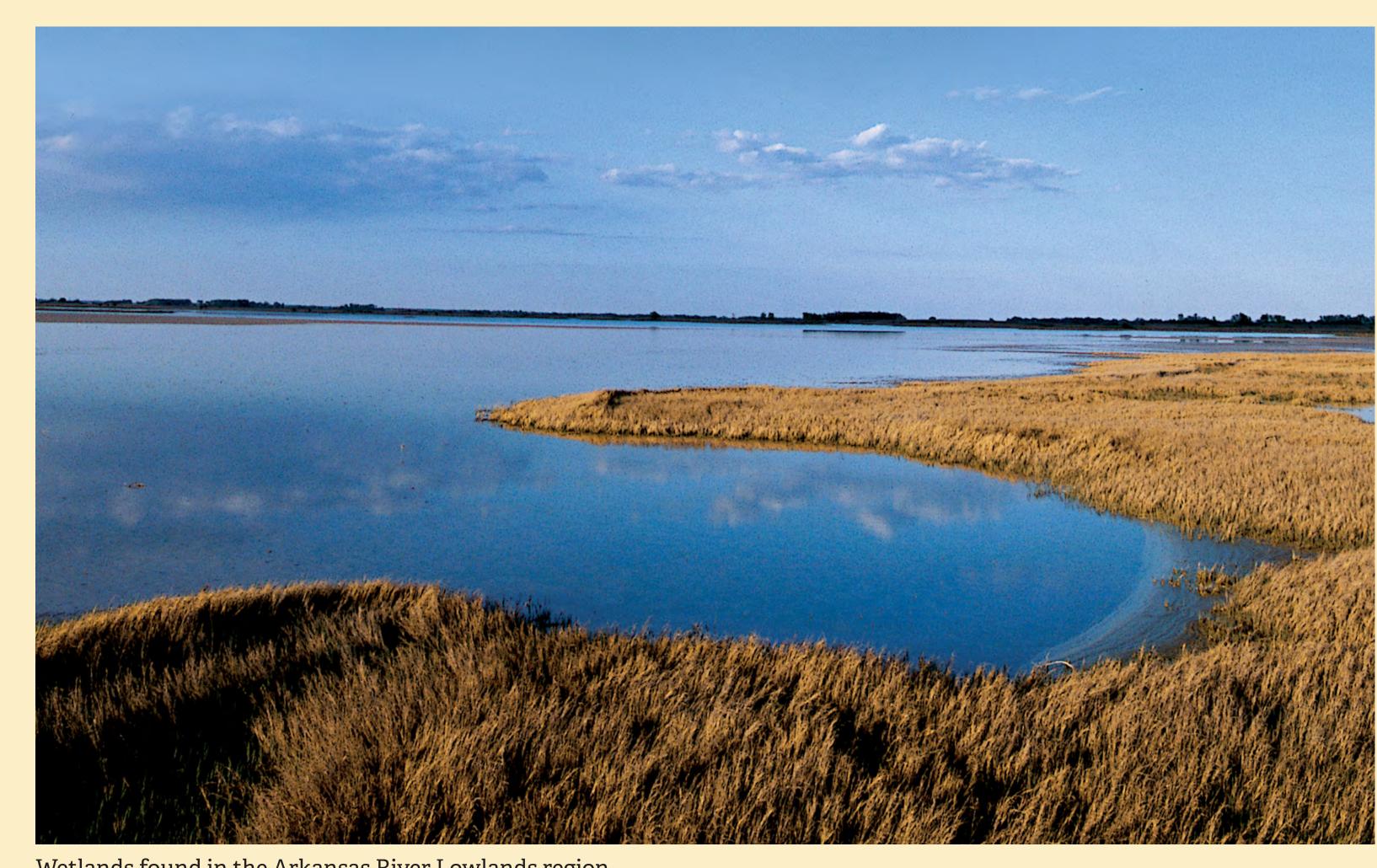


The Landscapes of Kansas

Kansas includes a wide variety of landscapes, shaped by both geologic processes and human activities, such as farming and mining. Many of our byways are based on unique landforms and habitats that provide wonder and pleasure to resident and visitor alike. On the Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway, visitors will discover two of the largest wetland systems in North America, along with seven communities providing an authentic rural experience. Filled with wildlife, this byway is a nature lover's paradise.

Physiographic Regions of Kansas

Based on common landscape features and geological history, geologists have divided Kansas into the 11 different regions shown on the map. These regions (sometimes called physiographic provinces) each tell its own story about Kansas' geology.



Wetlands found in the Arkansas River Lowlands region



The Kansas byways are as much about people and stories as they are about the scenery. The story of Kansas can be organized into five storylines, like chapters in a novel. Kiosks and signs along the byways tell the larger story with context to enrich your experience, spark your interest in the state, and shine a spotlight on its unique landscapes and communities.

Land's Legacy

To know America, you must know the Great Plains. To know the Great Plains, you must know Kansas.

Land's Legacy, the first byway storyline, explores the land itself and how that landscape has shaped human history. As a vast grassland - that once extended unbroken from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains - the Great Plains defines this country and its people as fundamentally as any of the nation's better-known landscapes. Often overlooked, the stunning landscapes and varied wildlife of the Great Plains provides a scenic backdrop against which this country was made whole as the last frontier for American settlement.

First People, First Nations

Native Americans have a rich 11,000year history in Kansas, inhabiting the state since the end of the Ice Age.

First People, First Nations focuses on pre-Columbian history, before contact with Europeans, American settlement, and the subsequent displacement of tribes. This storyline presents Native American heritage independent of the eventual influences of Euro-American peoples. While it provides basic facts concerning the Native Americans in Kansas, it is more than a retrospective, emphasizing the history and importance of the Native Americans to present-day generations.

Immigrants All

All Kansans are or have been immigrants, from the first Native American to today's most recent Kansan.

Immigrants All follows the people who came to and settled in Kansas. While discussions of settlers often bring to mind stories of Euro-American pioneers, this storyline also includes Native American tribes who were forced to come to Kansas, whether they stayed or not. From settlers to traders, soldiers to passers-through, migrants to refugees, Immigrants All is about people and their efforts to eke out an existence in the Kansas territory. There is no native Kansan; all are immigrants.

Bridging the American Divide

The Great Plains is an iconic American landscape that changed the complexion of the American saga.

The Great Plains is a land that fundamentally changed the way Americans view the country and themselves. American settlers pushed west, but it wasn't until they were able to occupy the space in the middle, Bridging the American Divide, that America was finally complete from sea to shining sea. The Kansas Byways, in general, stretch across a rural landscape where travelers are exposed to some of the most open vistas in the nation, a landscape that redefined America.

Past Forward

Adaptations and inventions necessary to settling the Great Plains continue evolving to serve humanity.

Kansas settlers were faced with a foreign landscape that challenged their abilities to adapt, adjust, and persevere. Many from the humid, forested eastern United States were unprepared for the treeless expanses west of the Missouri River Basin. With harsh winters, endless wind, and scarce wood, new adaptations and inventions were developed to tame the rugged landscape. As inventions such as the American windmill continue to evolve, Kansans illuminate the way forward by drawing on the lessons of the past.

Explore the Byways



Travel northwest Kansas where the wide-open expanse and endless sky meet on the horizon. Along this scenic route, one can scale the highest point in Kansas, explore the rugged Arikaree Breaks, follow the Great Western Cattle Trail, and learn about agriculture adaptation in the dry High Plains.



Z - WESTERN VISTAS

Visit a rugged landscape on the culturally and visually fascinating route in the Wild West of legend. Where Native Americans and pioneers once eked out a living, this historic byway has become a geologist's and paleontologist's paradise with unusual rock formations such as Monument Rocks and Little Jerusalem, and one of the world's best fossil hunting areas.



3-SMOKY VALLEY

Named for their hazy, blue appearance at sunrise and sunset, the Smoky Hills divide the mixed-grass prairie from the shortgrass prairie of the western Great Plains. Passing along the historic Smoky Hill Trail, this byway showcases native grasses and wildflowers year-round in addition to its unique history and places of special beauty like the Cedar Bluff Reservoir.



4-POST ROCK

Over weathered bedrock in the Smoky Hills, this scenic byway displays its striking beauty across fields, pastures, prairies, and special places like Wilson Lake. The challenging landscape required pioneers to earn their space here, as revealed by the route's namesake limestone fence posts. This creative and resourceful legacy lives on in its people.



WETLANDS AND WILDLIFE

Formed by ancient and ongoing geological motion, this is a land of stunning bird migrations, wild winds and weather, and richly layered human activity, along with its rare inland salt marsh. Everywhere is evidence of movement and change, from rippling wheat fields to the spectacle of 100,000 shorebirds alighting in wetlands along this National Scenic Byway.



6 - GYPSUM HILLS

Noteworthy for its rolling, weathered red hills, picturesque vistas, and outdoor recreational options, this byway offers plenty of diverse and tantalizing views. With a rugged landscape of ancient floodplains, buttes, canyons, mesas, and sinkholes, the drive includes two scenic overlooks to help visitors soak it all in.



7 - PRAIRIE TRAIL

culture, natural beauty, and rich history against a backdrop created over the millennia.

Experience Kansas along its 12 distinctly unique byways. With nine scenic and three historic

byways—including two National Scenic Byways—you can connect with the state's authentic

Along the byway, follow the steps of Native Americans, explorers, and pioneers as they sought food, shelter, adventure, and a better life. Early traders followed the nearby Santa Fe Trail, 19th century cowboys drove cattle along the Chisholm Trail, and today tourists visit places like Kanopolis and the Maxwell Wildlife refuge to experience the



Limestone is the bedrock on which much of Kansas rests, providing countless natural landmarks and building material for many historic buildings. This byway highlights the natural wonder of the rock formations and the amazing craft-work of masons who built Kansas' communities of native stone.



9 - FLINT HILLS NATIONAL SCEN NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

Experience incredible views of the native grasses and flowers of the tallgrass prairie, one of the last in the world along this National Scenic Byway. Unlike in other places, much of the land looks as it did for thousands of years as the Kaw and other native tribes lived here, and as settlers and traders navigated the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico.



10 - GLACIAL HILLS

This scenic byway gets its name from the rolling hills and rock-strewn valleys carved by ancient glaciers. The receding ice left a beautiful landscape of fertile farmland and nearby rivers. Its magnetic presence has drawn many visitors, from Lewis and Clark, to Kansas' earliest settlers, to present-day sightseers.



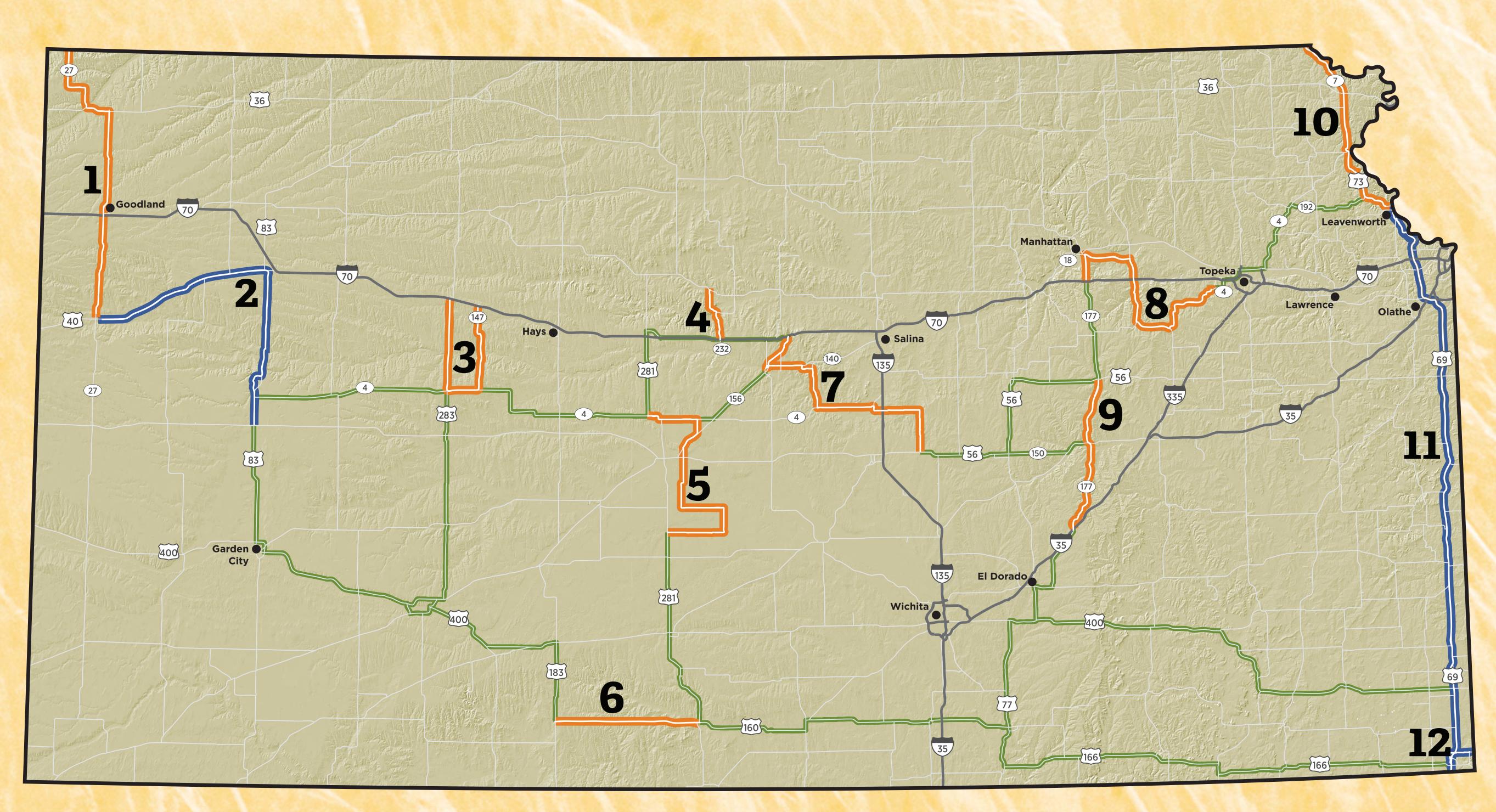
- FRONTIER MILITARY

Travel through time, visiting the forts built along this historic byway. Originally meant to move soldiers and supplies, the Military Trail watched American history unfold. From north to south, visitors will find historical gems from Kansas' frontier days and the Civil War, including the historic Forts Leavenworth and Scott. A small cabin in Baxter Springs marks the spot of Fort Blair.



66 12 - HISTORIC ROUTE 66

Kansas' Historic Route 66 Byway offers opportunities for visitors to "get their own kicks" while driving the original Kansas portion of Route 66. In southeast Kansas on the "Ozark Plateau," this Byway invites travelers to enjoy and experience the history and culture of Kansas along this famous route.



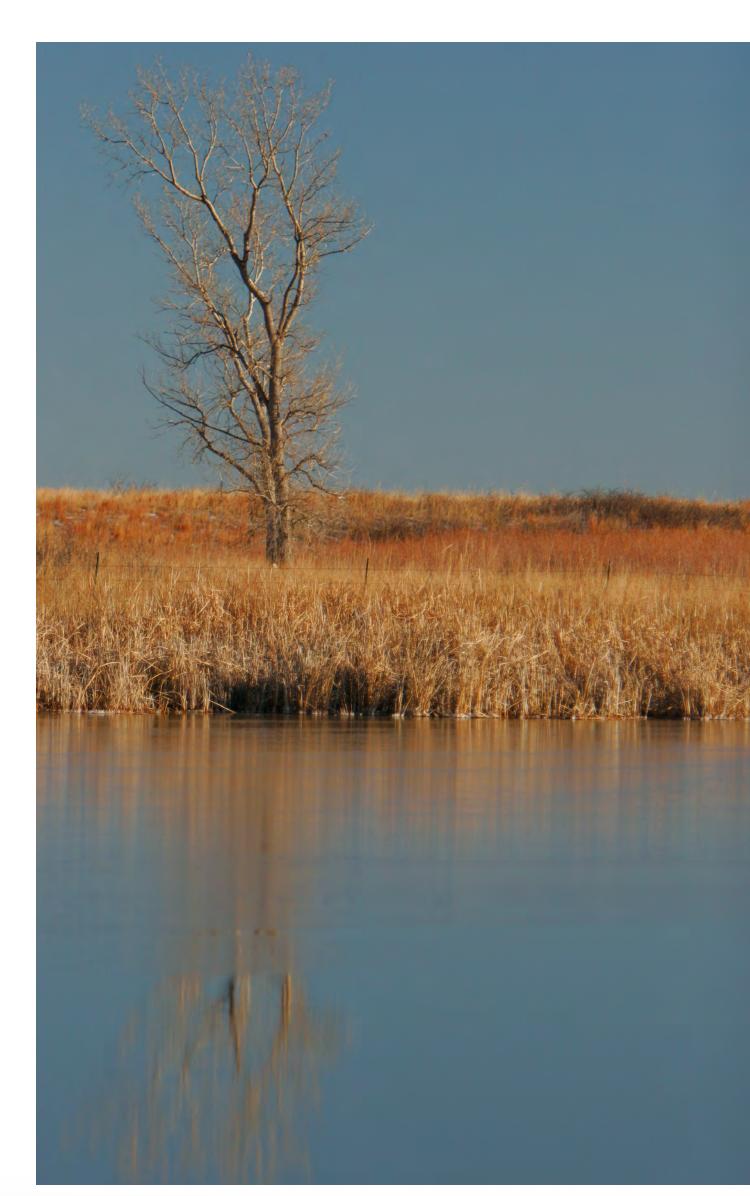








The history of this corridor is rich, varied, and ancient with tenacious residents and astounding natural resources. It is a byway through the worlds of both man and nature.



Big Salt Marsh at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

The attractions of this byway are by no means limited to wetlands and wildlife. The region, once part of the hunting territory of the Plains Apaches and traversed by the freighters of the Santa Fe Trail, includes seven distinctive communities with unique resources. Explorers can venture through the underground tunnels of downtown Ellinwood or visit Brit Spaugh Zoo in Great Bend. View the comprehensive collection of 29,000 glass photographic negatives chronicling the story of early settlers and liberated post-Civil War slaves in Stafford. Enjoy the hospitality and attractions of all seven towns. For those interested in physical activity, the Byway offers some of Kansas' best road cycling opportunities along quiet, paved county roads. Whatever visitors' interests may be, the Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway offers a truly fulfilling experience.

First People, First Nations

The area's wetlands are ancient, drawing First People, First Nations as they had wildlife. Inhabited by the Wichita and their ancestors since before 1100 AD, pressure from other tribes, including the Kiowa, led to shifting tribes along the Arkansas River's "Great Bend" until the U.S. government removed them to reservations.

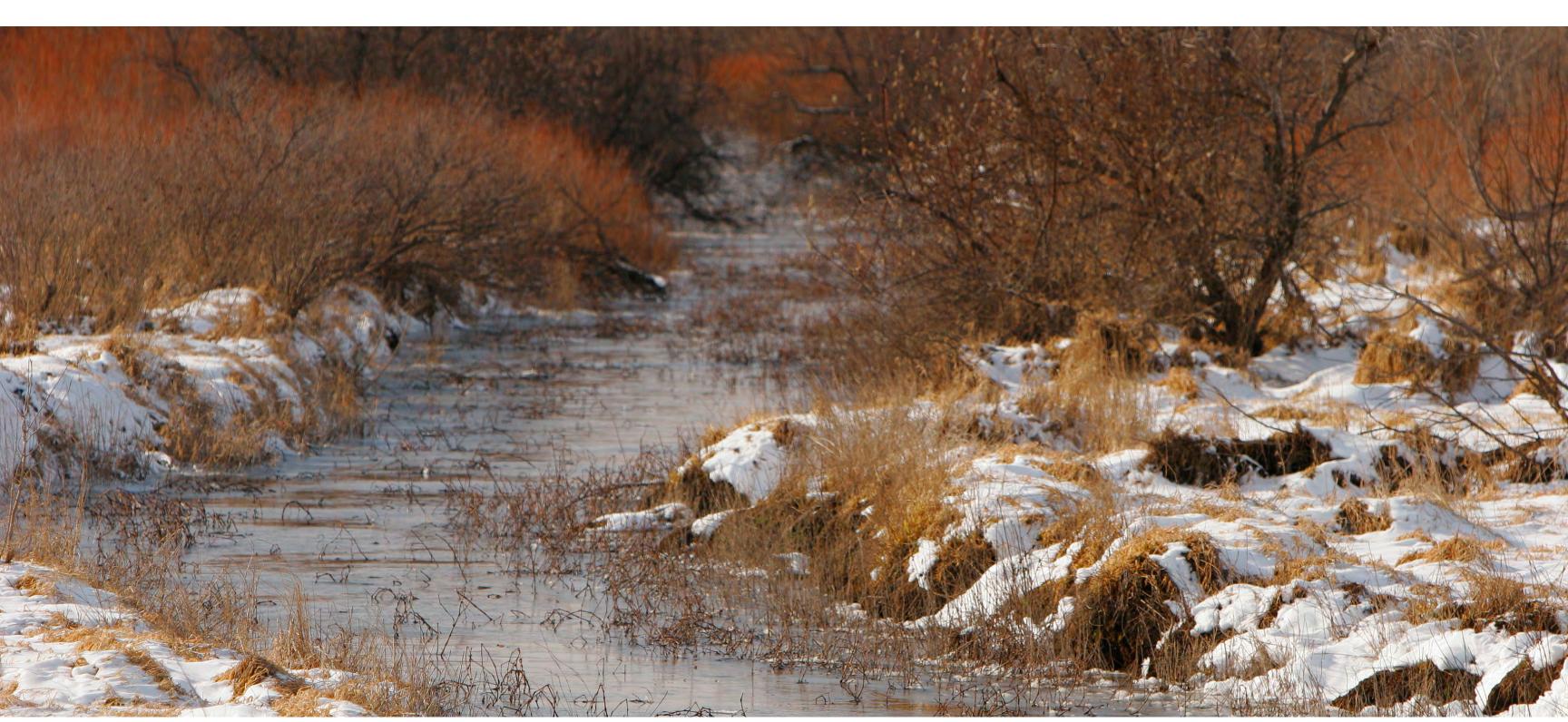








Snow Geese gather at the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge during migration.



Cheyenne Bottoms in the winter.



A cloud of geese take flight.

Past Forward

Storylines of the Kansas Byways

The loss of the prairie ecosystem during the Dust Bowl lessened the area's resilience during the Great Depression, so to help, the Work Projects Administration was formed to create jobs and lasting structures, many of which are still found on the byway. Modern efforts also enhance the byway's nature and history while protecting and sharing its wildlife, moving the Past Forward.