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Sunbathe with Alligators, Cross a Haunted Bridge, or Visit Ancient Indian Mounds on America's Byways™

Make your journey as exciting as the destination with a southern springtime ride on some of America's best drives

Washington, D.C. – This spring, get off the highway and onto the Byway. America's Byways™ beckon with sights and activities – natural, historical, and just plain quirky – to suit any traveler. Designated by the US Secretary of Transportation, the 39-state collection of the nation's finest roads spans the country, including the south, where the spring season is rich in beauty, color and activities.

America's Byways™ is a community-based grassroots program with each roadway nominated for distinction by local residents. In **Louisiana**, the 180-mile **Creole Nature Trail** was one of the first America's Byways™ to be selected because of its spectacular natural beauty and culture. As temperatures warm, nature lovers gear up for birding along one of the nation's best bird watching areas, which also happens to be the home of sunbathing alligators. Travelers can also visit one of the many springtime festivals and enjoy delicious Cajun food along this byway.

In **South Carolina** along **Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway**, travelers slow down for a closer look at the "Peachoid" – the mammoth water tower in Gaffney decorated in honor of one of South Carolina's leading agricultural products. In **Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee**, the 444-mile ancient hunter's path and trading route known as the **Natchez Trace** follows the original Native American trail, with thousand-year-old pathways still visible today.

"America's Byways™ tell America's story," says Shelley Johnson, of the Creole Nature Trail. "With stops at Civil War sites and Native American settlements – as well as swimming holes and down-home diners – these roads showcase some of the best that America has to offer. Plus, travelers can often avoid the congestion and stress of major roadways. The journey on America's Byways™ is as enjoyable as the destination."

America's Byways™ are a collection of distinct and diverse roads, designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. Travelers can plan trips that last for an hour, a day or longer by visiting www.byways.org. Maps, weather information, and unique stories are available for all 96 roads designated as America's Byways™. For more information about itineraries, visit www.byways.org or www.seeamerica.org. This spring, featured drives in the south include:

Louisiana: The Creole Nature Trail

180 miles (Half day)

- Look eye-to-eye with giant reptiles when alligator-watching season begins in April. Bring the bug spray, because Louisiana is home to 39 species of mosquitoes.
- Visit Contraband Days, the springtime festival that celebrates the life of pirate Jean Lafitte. Enjoy Cajun food and culture while learning about the notorious outlaw. (April 29 to May 11.)
- Visit Sabin Pass, where Union soldiers used the lighthouse to spy on enemy ships. Take pictures of the lighthouse and visit the graveyard at nearby Monkey Island, where Blue and Gray soldiers are buried side by side.

South Carolina: The Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway

112 miles (3 hours)

- Explore Native American culture at the Native American Day Festival, which draws visitors from across the state (March 17, Walhalla/Oconee Station).
- Peer over Whitewater Falls – among the fifty waterfalls near the Byway. Whitewater, which is the highest series of falls in eastern America, plunges 700 feet into Lake Jocassee.
- Walk across Poinsett Bridge – named for the statesman who brought the poinsettia plant to America. Used by Civil War soldiers from both sides, moonshiners later transported their goods across the stone span. Today, locals swear it is haunted.

Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee: The Natchez Trace Parkway

444 miles (2 days)

- Tour the great historic homes of Natchez, Mississippi on the Antebellum Pilgrimage, which runs from March 8 to April 12.
- Stop for a picnic, swimming or fishing at Byway Mile 327.3 in Alabama. Ferryman George Colbert reportedly charged Andrew Jackson \$75,000 to haul his army across the river at this spot.
- Discover conical Indian burial mounds and flat-topped ceremonial mounds that dot the landscape. (One spans eight acres.) On the parkway, six of the seven mound sites are identified and interpreted.

About America's Byways™

Established in 1991 by the US Secretary of Transportation, the America's Byways™ designation is awarded to the country's finest roadways. To date, the Secretary of Transportation has selected 96 roadways across the country, each nominated by local communities. Roads must meet rigorous standards for specific intrinsic qualities: scenic, historic, cultural, archaeological, recreational, and natural. America's Byways™ are divided into two designations: National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads. There are 75 National Scenic Byways, considered "the roads less traveled." The 21 All-American Roads are the country's best drives and are destinations unto themselves.

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