

the most scenic drives in america

The most scenic drives in America offer breathtaking views, stunning landscapes, and unforgettable experiences. From coastal highways to mountainous routes, these drives capture the essence of America's diverse geography. Whether you're looking for a leisurely day trip or a week-long adventure, the country is dotted with extraordinary roads that showcase nature's beauty. This article highlights some of the most scenic drives across the United States, each with its unique charm and allure.

1. Pacific Coast Highway (California)

One of the most iconic drives in America, the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), also known as California State Route 1, stretches along the rugged coastline from San Francisco to Los Angeles. This 656-mile route offers breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean, charming seaside towns, and dramatic cliffs.

Highlights of the Pacific Coast Highway

- Big Sur: A must-see along the PCH, Big Sur features stunning coastal views, towering cliffs, and the famous Bixby Creek Bridge.
- Monterey and Carmel-by-the-Sea: These picturesque towns offer quaint shops, art galleries, and beautiful beaches.
- Hearst Castle: A historical estate located in San Simeon, this opulent mansion is a testament to California's rich history.

2. Blue Ridge Parkway (North Carolina and Virginia)

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a 469-mile scenic highway that connects the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina to Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. Known as "America's Favorite Drive," this parkway offers stunning vistas, hiking trails, and a chance to experience the Appalachian culture.

Key Attractions along the Blue Ridge Parkway

- Linn Cove Viaduct: This engineering marvel hugs the side of Grandfather Mountain, providing spectacular views of the surrounding landscape.
- Mabry Mill: Located at milepost 176.1, this historic mill is a popular spot for photographs and features demonstrations of traditional Appalachian crafts.
- Craggy Gardens: Famous for its rhododendron blooms in late spring, this

area offers breathtaking views and hiking opportunities.

3. Going-to-the-Sun Road (Montana)

The Going-to-the-Sun Road is a 50-mile route that crosses Glacier National Park, showcasing some of the most stunning mountain scenery in the United States. Opened in 1933, this engineering feat provides access to breathtaking views of glaciers, waterfalls, and diverse wildlife.

Must-See Spots on Going-to-the-Sun Road

- Logan Pass: The highest point on the road offers panoramic views and access to numerous hiking trails.
- St. Mary Lake: A picturesque alpine lake with surrounding mountains, perfect for photography and picnics.
- Wild Goose Island: A small island in St. Mary Lake, it's a popular spot for photos, especially at sunrise and sunset.

4. The Florida Keys Scenic Highway (Florida)

The Florida Keys Scenic Highway, or Overseas Highway, runs 113 miles from Miami to Key West. This remarkable drive features a series of bridges that connect the islands, offering stunning views of the turquoise waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.

Top Experiences on the Florida Keys Scenic Highway

- Seven Mile Bridge: One of the longest bridges in the world, it provides breathtaking views of the ocean and surrounding islands.
- Key Largo: Known for its coral reefs, it's a paradise for snorkelers and divers.
- Key West: The southernmost point in the continental U.S., this vibrant town is famous for its sunsets, lively nightlife, and historical sites.

5. Route 66 (Illinois to California)

Route 66, often referred to as the "Main Street of America," is a historic highway that stretches over 2,400 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica. This iconic route takes travelers through diverse landscapes, small towns, and urban areas, making it a nostalgic drive filled with Americana.

Highlights of Route 66

- Chicago: The starting point of Route 66, known for its architecture, deep-dish pizza, and vibrant culture.
- Cadillac Ranch: Located in Amarillo, Texas, this public art installation features a row of vintage Cadillacs buried nose-first in the ground.
- Santa Monica Pier: The western terminus of Route 66, this iconic pier is home to an amusement park, restaurants, and beautiful ocean views.

6. The Million Dollar Highway (Colorado)

The Million Dollar Highway is part of U.S. Highway 550, stretching from Ouray to Silverton. This spectacular drive features steep cliffs, dramatic mountain views, and vibrant wildflower fields. The highway's name is believed to come from the gold and silver mines in the area.

Key Attractions Along the Million Dollar Highway

- Red Mountain Pass: One of the most scenic sections, offering stunning views and photo opportunities.
- Ouray: Known as the "Switzerland of America," this charming town is famous for its hot springs and outdoor activities.
- Silverton: A historic mining town that retains its Old West charm, offering various shops and restaurants.

7. Acadia National Park Loop Road (Maine)

The Acadia National Park Loop Road is a 27-mile scenic drive that winds through one of America's most beautiful national parks. The route offers coastal views, lush forests, and the chance to explore the park's diverse ecosystems.

Highlights of the Acadia National Park Loop Road

- Cadillac Mountain: The highest point on the East Coast, offering breathtaking sunrise views.
- Sand Beach: A stunning beach surrounded by mountains, perfect for a picnic or a swim.
- Thunder Hole: A popular natural rock formation that produces a thunderous sound as waves crash against it.

8. The Natchez Trace Parkway (Mississippi to Tennessee)

The Natchez Trace Parkway is a 444-mile drive that follows an ancient trail used by Native Americans, settlers, and traders. This scenic highway showcases the rich history and natural beauty of the Southern United States.

Notable Stops Along the Natchez Trace Parkway

- Mount Locust: An old inn that served travelers in the 1800s, now a historic site with interpretive exhibits.
- Jefferson College: A historical site in Washington, Mississippi, showcasing early 19th-century architecture.
- Rocky Springs: An abandoned town with remnants of old buildings, offering a glimpse into the past.

9. Highway 12 (Utah)

Highway 12, also known as the All-American Road, is a 124-mile route that runs through the heart of southern Utah's stunning landscapes, including red rock canyons, cliffs, and unique geological formations.

Key Attractions Along Highway 12

- Bryce Canyon National Park: Famous for its unique hoodoo rock formations and stunning vistas.
- Escalante National Monument: Offers breathtaking views, hiking trails, and opportunities for exploration.
- Zion National Park: A short detour from Highway 12, known for its towering cliffs and stunning canyons.

10. The Oregon Coast Highway (Oregon)

The Oregon Coast Highway, or U.S. Route 101, runs along the stunning coastline of Oregon. This scenic drive features rugged cliffs, sandy beaches, and charming coastal towns.

Highlights of the Oregon Coast Highway

- Cannon Beach: Famous for its iconic Haystack Rock and vibrant art scene.
- Cape Perpetua: Offers stunning views of the coast and opportunities for hiking.

- Coos Bay: A charming coastal town with a rich maritime history.

Conclusion

Exploring these **most scenic drives in America** provides an opportunity to experience the country's natural beauty, rich history, and diverse landscapes. From the rugged coastlines of California to the stunning mountains of Montana, each drive offers unique experiences that make them worthy of a spot on your travel itinerary. Whether you're planning a weekend getaway or a cross-country road trip, these scenic routes promise unforgettable memories and breathtaking views. So pack your bags, hit the road, and prepare to be amazed by the beauty that America has to offer.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are some of the most scenic drives in America?

Some of the most scenic drives in America include the Pacific Coast Highway in California, the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia and North Carolina, the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Montana, the Overseas Highway in Florida, and the Million Dollar Highway in Colorado.

What makes the Pacific Coast Highway a must-drive route?

The Pacific Coast Highway is renowned for its breathtaking ocean views, dramatic cliffs, and charming coastal towns. The route offers numerous viewpoints, beaches, and state parks, making it a favorite for both locals and tourists.

Is the Blue Ridge Parkway suitable for all types of vehicles?

Yes, the Blue Ridge Parkway is accessible for all types of vehicles, including cars, RVs, and motorcycles. However, some overlooks and hiking trails may have restrictions for larger vehicles, so it's best to check ahead.

When is the best time to drive the Going-to-the-Sun Road?

The Going-to-the-Sun Road is typically open from late June to mid-September, depending on snow conditions. The best time to drive is during the summer when wildflowers are in bloom and the weather is most favorable.

What unique sights can be seen along the Overseas Highway?

The Overseas Highway offers unique sights such as the stunning views of the Florida Keys, crystal-clear waters, and historical landmarks like the Seven Mile Bridge and the Coral Castle. It's a paradise for water sports and fishing enthusiasts.

Are there any notable attractions along the Million Dollar Highway?

Yes, the Million Dollar Highway features several notable attractions, including the historic town of Ouray, the breathtaking Red Mountain Pass, and stunning views of the San Juan Mountains. It is also known for its thrilling twists and turns.

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