



SIERRA VISTA SCENIC BYWAY

Sierra National Forest

WELCOME

Located in the Sierra National Forest, the Sierra Vista Scenic Byway is a designated member of the National Scenic Byway System. The entire route meanders along National Forest roads, from North Fork to the exit point on Highway 41 past Nelder Grove, and without stopping takes about five hours to drive.

The Byway is a seasonal route as forest roads are blocked by snow and roads are not plowed or maintained during winter months. The Byway is generally open from June through October. Call ahead to check road and weather conditions.

Following are some features along the route starting at the Ranger Station in North Fork, proceeding up the Minarets road north to Beasore Road, then south to Cold Springs summit, west to Fresno Dome and Nelder Grove, ending on Highway 41. Bass Lake can be reached via Beasore Road.

In 2020 the Creek Fire impacted some areas of the Scenic Byway. Although the fire's devastation has been deeply felt, it has also revealed new, stunning vistas and scenic spots. Also, recent and future upgrades are planned along the byway stops in the next few years.

RANGER STATION

Headquarters for the Bass Lake Ranger District has an information office and an after-hours kiosk available. The Cedars Interpretive Trail is a half mile walk behind the office along Willow Creek.

NORTH FORK/SOUTH FORK

Grocery stores and gas stations are available in North Fork. The Sierra Mono Indian Museum

displays Mono Indian culture and an extensive collection of taxidermied wildlife. (559-877-2115)

EXACT CENTER OF CALIFORNIA

After 150 years of debate over the exact geographic center of California, final confirmation with the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) settled the dispute. Travel six miles south on Italian Bar Road (Rd.225) to visit the marker.

REDINGER OVERLOOK (3320')

Outstanding view can be seen of Redinger Lake, the San Joaquin River and the surrounding rugged Sierra front country. This area of the San Joaquin River drainage provides a winter home for the San Joaquin deer herd. Deer move out of this area in the hot dry summer months and migrate to higher country to find food and water.

ROSS CABIN (4000')

The Ross Cabin was built in the late 1860s by Jessie Blakey Ross and is one of the oldest standing log cabins in the area. The log cabin displays various designs in foundation construction and log assembly brought to the west, exemplifying the pioneer spirit and technology of the mid-nineteenth century. Access to this area during the nineteenth century was by primitive trail along steep mountainous canyons and ridges.

The original inhabitants of the area were the Mono people. A historical Mono campsite is nearby with acorn pounding site used by Mono women. The Mono developed and regularly used for trading and for spiritual walks a foot trail across the Sierra Nevada to the Mammoth Lakes area. It is now called the French Trail and available for well-conditioned hikers. An accessible toilet is available.

MILE HIGH VISTA (5300')

A spectacular view of the Sierra Crest here includes the Minarets, Mount Ritter (13,157'), Mammoth Mountain, Mammoth Pool Reservoir, the San Joaquin River, Balloon dome and Fuller Buttes. Signs assist with locations of mountain peaks and other outstanding features at the vista.

ARCH ROCK (6200')

This granite arch is a unique geological feature resulting from wind and water erosion. The arch may be viewed by hiking a short distance and is well worth the effort. Mount Tom, Kaiser Ridge and John Muir Wilderness backcountry can be seen from here.

MINARETS/BEASORE JUNCTION (7000')

Several important points are accessible from this junction. Two miles to the north, on the edge of the Ansel Adams Wilderness is Clover Meadow Station. Wilderness permits and information on conditions are available during the summer.

Traveling down Beasore Road will eventually take you to the end of the Scenic Byway.

PORTUGUESE CREEK (7200')

This is a wayside turnout on the Beasore road at Portuguese Creek right at the timberline. To the north are the Balls, great glacier carved granite domes. To the south is an expansive vista of Shuteye Ridge and Chiquito basin with a lodge pole pine forest. Above the road is a glimpse of the higher elevation alpine zone offering few or no trees at the upper end of the red fir forest. Durable low growing plants, more adaptable to the short growing season, can be seen.

GLOBE ROCK (7152')

A geological oddity of an improbably large granite sphere perched precariously – appearing to possibly roll away at any moment. It was created by the action of water freezing and thawing on the granite. Globe Rock may be seen from the road but the short hike to view this large boulder up close is well worth it.

The area has been visited for a long time, as Mono pounding holes are visible in the base rock. President Theodore Roosevelt was photographed here.

BEASORE MEADOW (6800')

Jones' store has been at this location since the early 1900s. Services include meals, supplies, cabins and a campground during the summer season.

COLD SPRINGS SUMMIT (7308')

This is the highest point along the Byway. A short walk to Cold Springs Meadow will unveil a spectacular view of Madera Peak (10,509'). Turning to Fresno Dome to follow the Byway on to Nelder Grove will eventually take you to Highway 41 just north of Oakhurst, about two hours driving time (without stops). Continuing down Beasore Road will take you to Bass Lake, about 20 minutes. An accessible toilet is available.

FRESNO DOME (7540')

Fresno Dome is a dominant granite dome standing alone above the forest north of Sequel Meadow. The trailhead is a three-mile drive off the byway with a climb to the top providing a panoramic vista. Hiking shoes are recommended. Fresno Dome campground is close by.

NELDER GROVE (5300')

Nelder Grove of Giant Sequoias is located two miles on dirt road. The giant sequoia grove is a designated Historical Area located in the center of the natural range of *sequoia giganteum*, consisting of over 1500 acres within the forest with 106 mature giant sequoias.

On the way to Nelder Grove Campgrounds are several historic replicas and natural features: two restored cabins, life-size replicas of cross-log and two-pole logging chutes, several giant sequoia tree stumps left by the 1890s loggers, and a short walk to the "Big Ed" giant sequoia specimen tree.

The Shadow of the Giants National Recreation Trail is a one-mile, self-guided walk along the banks of Nelder Creek. The trail meanders quietly through the forest with giant sequoias greeting travelers along the trail offering peace and solitude.

Several other hiking options are available. The "Bull Buck Tree", a contender for the title of the "world's largest tree", has measurements of a height

of 246 feet and a ground level circumference of 99 feet. This easy and worthwhile hike begins at the campground.

A three-mile hike up to The Graveyard of the Giants contains several large fire-killed sequoias. Along the way watch for The Granddad and the Grandkids: a single isolated mature tree with one large branch outstretched like a protective arm, under which several young sequoias grow.

BASS LAKE (3425')

Four Forest Service campgrounds and five-day use areas are available at Bass Lake.

Campground reservations are suggested for this very popular area – 1-877-444-6777.

The Pines Village offers gas, food, lodging, and various shops, as do Millers Landing and the Forks Resort.

OAKHURST (2289')

A full-service community, Oakhurst has special weekend activities, a variety of lodging, restaurants, stores and a visitor center located at 41969 Highway 41 (559-658-7588).

Helpful Tips for Byway Travel

Services available along this route are limited. During summer months only, Wagner's store at Mammoth Pool has a private campground, food and is the only facility with gasoline. (559-841-3736).

The Byway is along forest roads with a variety of road surfaces. Minarets Road is a winding two lane paved road from North Fork to Beasore Road that is best enjoyed at a casual pace.

The Beasore Road has a graded dirt surface from the end of the Minarets Road to Muglar Meadow (8 miles). Passenger cars can negotiate this section but travel on the rough surface is slow- approximately 15 miles per hour. The remainder of Beasore Road is paved and offers an enjoyable trip. Traveling to Nelder Grove from Cold Springs Summit is a graded dirt road, so expect to travel slowly. A varied amount of flora and fauna can be seen year-round.

When travelling on any forest roads, be sure to come prepared for a variety of weather conditions. Bring extra food, clothing, blankets, flashlight and water. Let someone know where you are going and your expected return.

Camping outside of designated campgrounds requires a Campfire Permit, obtained at Forest Service offices. Be careful with fire. Pack home what you pack in and leave no trace on the land.

Restroom facilities are in all campgrounds along the way and at Ross Cabin, Mile High Vista and Cold Springs Meadow. Some campgrounds located on the Scenic Byway are on a first-come, first-served basis, while others are reservable. The National Reservation system phone number is 1-877-444-6777. Reservations can also be made at recreation.gov.

Contact the Forest Service at:

Bass Lake Ranger District

57003 Road 225

North Fork, CA 93643

559-877-2218 ext. 0