

Photography & Bird Watching

Three Days/Two Nights on the Byway

On this itinerary, you will follow the Byway from the salt water marshes of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge to the fresh water wetlands on Cheyenne Bottoms. Overnight lodging positions visitors close to the wetlands for those all-important early morning hours when the light is just right for photography and wildlife viewing.

DAY ONE

Check into Henderson House - a **Stafford** bed and breakfast retreat center listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The innkeeper is a nature photographer and cyclist, who can help you plot your excursions into **Quivira National Wildlife Refuge** and other wildlife watching at the southern end of the byway. Enjoy the afternoon and evening in Stafford with an architectural walking tour. Stafford has six buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Frank Lloyd Wright inspired Methodist Church, the Larabee Library (if the library is open, settle into a Stickley arm chair and do some reading), and three buildings in the Henderson House Retreat Center. Don't miss the extensive collection of glass negatives from the gray Studio that documents life in this region from 1880 to 1947, now displayed at the Stafford County Historical Museum on Main Street. Take a quick jaunt west to **St. John** to snap a shot of their picture perfect town square and enjoy an evening dinner at Pueblo Nuevo. Then it's early to bed and early to rise for the best birding. Request a very early breakfast or something to grab and go from the inn. Henderson House specializes in sand hill plum jelly made from locally picked sand hill plums – be sure to get some before you check out (ask about their jelly making workshops, perfect homemade gifts).

DAY TWO

Arrive early at **Quivira National Wildlife Refuge**. If it is clear, climb the viewing platform near the visitor center. When the center opens, gather information about this vast salt water marsh and the surrounding short grass prairie and ask refuge staff what species are migrating or resident. Head out for a full morning of viewing and photography. Quivira hosts migrating members of the only wild flock of whooping cranes in the world, last numbers at around 260 individual birds. Bald eagles successfully nested at Quivira for the first time in 2010, producing two eaglets. Winter numbers of bald eagles in the refuge area topped 200 in mid-December 2010.

Depart Quivira and head north to **Ellinwood** for lunch at the Lone Wolf and an entertaining 30-minute underground tunnel tour. Walk the brick streets downtown and view brick structures adorned with elaborate ironwork. A stop at Wolf Pond is a must for a great photo opportunity with the duck and geese flocks that make Ellinwood their home. Arrive at the **Kansas Wetlands Education Center** to scout out viewing and photo locations in Cheyenne Bottoms for the following morning. Enjoy a gorgeous sunset from the viewing platform, and then head in to **Great Bend** for dinner, lodging, and a movie.

DAY THREE

Arrive early at **Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area** for photography, birding, and wildlife viewing. Stop in again at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center for restrooms, reports of morning bird sightings, an excellent gift shop, and guided van tours.

Plot your route home so you can enjoy stops in additional byway communities. Head north just a few miles to **Clafin**, where Millers of Clafin had completely transformed this tiny town into a furniture showroom. Continue north through a fascinating landscape boasting oilrigs, WPA limestone bridges, and historic post rock limestone fence posts and churches. Head west from Cheyenne Bottoms to **Hoisington**, a town that has survived multiple severe weather events - the most recent being the prom night tornado of 2001. Main Street is lined with 60 handcrafted metal banners that tell the history of the area. The WPA constructed city hall boasts a sky high sundial that keeps perfect time and the Dairy Queen serves the best treats in town.



More to see and do on the Byway

Clafin. Horseback riding on the nature trails at Camp Aldrich. Call Barton Community College facilities office for reservations. 620-792-9340

Ellinwood. Camp or RV at Ringering's Campground and Nature Walk or Wolf Pond.

Great Bend. Access the Arkansas River from the hike and bike trail for kayaking and canoeing. Visit Heartland Farm to pet the alpacas, walk the labyrinth, and visit the organic garden.

Hoisington. Visit WPA era projects – high school, city building, sundial, and the post office murals.

Hudson. Eat Sunday dinner at the Wheatland Café. Ride the TransAmerica Bike Trail.

St. John. Visit the Mormon church where Stake of Zion was driven in 1875.

Stafford. Watch a movie at the renovated Ritz Theater and grab a treat at the old-fashioned soda fountain.