

scenic drive



BEAVERHEAD FLAT ROAD

If you're in a hurry to get to Sedona, take the main highway. For a different twist, check out the scenic route through Cornville and Page Springs.

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The most direct road to Sedona from Interstate 17 is State Route 179, but there's another route to Red Rock Country that offers less traffic,

far-reaching views and some interesting stops. Robert Frost might have suggested this route.

The 15-mile drive begins on Beaverhead Flat Road — a lonely stretch of paved highway surrounded by Coconino National Forest land — just off State 179, 3 miles north of the I-17 Sedona exit. Check out the road's 360-degree views, which include Verde Valley to the south and the foothills of the Mogollon Rim to the east. In 1864, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Francisco Chaves created an important 130-mile wagon trail through here, following an ancient, well-worn Hopi Indian trading path that stretched from Prescott through the Verde Valley to the Mogollon Rim.

Heading west, Beaverhead Flat Road passes through a gentle saddle as it dips and weaves over rolling high desert grassland dotted with junipers, creosote and yuccas for approximately 6 miles until it meets Cornville Road. Take a right at the intersection to go to Cornville.

This small community sits on the banks of Oak Creek, and it has an interesting history. In 1887, when the townspeople applied for a U.S. post office, they intended to call the spot Cohnville, after the Cohn family who had settled there. But the postmaster general misread the name, granting a post office to Cornville instead.

If you want to enjoy Oak Creek

without the crowds, Cornville is the place. Pack a picnic and head to Windmill Park. You can't miss it — it's the only park in town with a working windmill. You can lounge creekside and listen to Oak Creek ripple along its course as cottonwood trees rustle in the breeze.

When it's time to pack up, backtrack to Page Springs Road and turn left. This two-lane, paved highway takes visitors into the heart of Northern Arizona's wine country, where, just a few miles down the road, three wineries — Page Springs Vineyard & Cellars, Oak Creek Vineyards and Javelina Leap Vineyard and Winery — offer vineyard tours and daily wine tastings.

Across the highway from Javelina Leap sits Page Springs Fish Hatchery. It's the state's largest cold-water fish facility, producing more than 700,000 trout per year. Although the hatchery is closed to fishing, you can hike the interpretive nature trail along Oak Creek and visit its holding ponds.

Adjacent to the hatchery, the Audubon Society oversees the Oak Creek Important Bird and Wildlife Viewing Area. More than 100 natural springs feed lower Oak Creek, making its cottonwood-willow riparian corridor a natural habitat for resident and migrating bird species, including belted kingfishers and yellow-billed cuckoos.

From there, the road meanders over rolling hills for a little more than 3 miles, ending at State Route 89A, where red and white bluffs point the way to Sedona — on a road less traveled.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For more scenic drives, pick up a copy of our book, *The Back Roads*. Now in its fifth edition, the book (\$19.95) features 40 of the state's most scenic drives. To order a copy, call 800-543-5432 or visit arizonahighways.com.



LEFT: With the foothills of the Mogollon Rim rising behind them, cyclists head west along Beaverhead Flat Road toward Cornville.

ABOVE: Javelina Leap Vineyard and Winery in Page Springs offers wine tastings and a fine selection of red wines, including a Zinfandel made with the winery's estate-grown grapes.