



State Route 89A Prescott to Flagstaff Highway

Location: Flagstaff, Prescott District; Coconino, Yavapai County
Length: 81 miles
Begins: At the Junction of State Route 89 and 89A near Prescott (MP 317.85)
Ends: At the Junction of Interstate 19 and 89A near Flagstaff (MP 398.94)

State Route (SR) 89A, from its origin near Prescott to its terminus near Flagstaff, is one of Arizona's most picturesque roadways. Four separate segments totaling 43 miles have been officially designated either as scenic or historic Arizona roads, including the first road so recognized—the Sedona-Oak Creek Canyon Scenic Road. The pine-clad Black Hills; the quirky former mining ghost-town of Jerome; the free-flowing Verde River and its ancient and modern bankside communities; the stunning Red Rock formations near Sedona; and the lush beauty of Oak Creek Canyon delight locals and visitors alike.



Oak Creek Canyon, 1 mi south of Indian Gardens (1939). Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society / Tucson . PC 180 (Wallace Collection), Box 12, File 115 #1005.

As with many roads, SR 89A was built in stages. A route from Prescott to Flagstaff, via the middle Verde River valley, however, was planned as early as 1919. When the Arizona Highway Commission finally approved the route in 1927, it was designated as SR 79. The highway

maintained this label until 1940 when it was redesignated as US 89A to indicate its "alternate" status to the faster route from Prescott to US 66 and Flagstaff along US 89. In 1992, the route lost its US highway status, but it regained its place among Arizona's most loved state highways as SR 89A.

Most of today's SR 89A follows historic trails and roads over the Black Hills, along the Verde River, across the flats and hills to Sedona, and up Oak Creek Canyon to reach the Colorado Plateau near Flagstaff. Ancients trail used by American Indians and historic trails and wagon roads used by nineteenth-century mountain men, military troops, miners, and settlers established the route. The advent of motorized vehicles in the early twentieth century and the need for transportation corridors encouraged state officials to transform unimproved dirt roads into well engineered, safe, and efficient highways.

Beginning in 1919 and 1920, road segments were graded and graveled for the first time, and where possible, roadways widened to be single-lane undivided highways with rare stretches designed as double-lane roads. Thereafter, the most heavily used segments, such as those near Jerome, were subject to road surface treatments that included several kinds of asphalt emulsions mixed with gravel or Portland cement concrete. During the Depression years, various highway projects along the length of SR 79 took place, which resulted in wider and more durable roads and bridges. The northern segment of the SR 79 closest to Flagstaff was paved for the first time in the mid-1930s.

Although many segments of today's SR 89A have been altered to facilitate traffic and safety in newly populated communities, there are still places along the old route that maintain their historic character and rural feel.