Headline: Tiny Arizona highway meets big expectations

Deckhead: Rock formations, other scenery define Red Rock Scenic Byway

Don’t let size fool you. Sometimes, the best things in life come in small packages.

Red Rock Scenic Byway is one of those treats. The Arizona highway is 7.5 miles in length and takes advantage of every inch. What it lacks in length, it more than compensates for it in sights, beauty and adventures.

Located off Interstate 17 and 40 miles south of Flagstaff, the highway is considered an entrance to the worldly renowned Red Rock Country of Sedona. Rock formations light up the surroundings. Their unique shapes and sizes blend perfectly with the environment and can’t be ignored, leading many visitors to spend hours absorbing all it has to offer.

Red Rock Scenic Byway became Arizona’s first All-American Road in 2005, which means it’s a national “destination unto itself.” Once you rent a vehicle, you’ll quickly learn that driving is merely a means of transportation. You can stop, stroll, hike, bike, golf, shop, dine, stay … Do just about anything.

It will pique your curiosities and spark your senses. Tranquility might be an option, but it’s unlikely to be a priority. Upon first glance, this natural attraction will immediately grab your attention.

The byway winds through the charming Village of Oak Creek and is home to three of Sedona’s finest golf courses and two of its most famous and magnificent vortexes – Bell Rock and Cathedral Rock. It twists through the evergreen pinion-covered Coconino National Forest, with several scenic pullouts.

It also winds through fascinating prehistoric Red Rocks. Nearby parking is available and hiking and biking trails.

Don’t forget your smartphone. There are a many opportunities to take photos. The majestic landscape may burnish your memory, but the opportunity to photograph it will keep you in awe.

Astonishing hues of improbable splendor coat the natural features of the high desert and ancient red rocks that tower from all directions, offering breathtaking moments you won’t soon forget. You might need to remind yourself this isn’t a dream; it’s reality.

Little Horse Trail is a stunning, three-mile hike that offers the opportunity to explore not only the amazing rock formations but a diverse array of plant life. The path features shady spots under the dwarfed and crooked trees.

Bell Rock Pathway is nearly four miles and allows you to enjoy views of Bell Rock, Courthouse Butte and a number of other rock formations. It also is a popular spot for mountain bikers. Guests can rent bicycles and breeze through the territory.

Cathedral Rock is a sandstone butte on the Sedona skyline and it’s one of the most photographed sights in Arizona. Located on O’Beyond Road, it rises nearly 5,000 feet and is best witnessed at sunset, when sunlight reflects off its naturally designed exterior.

Red Rock Scenic Byway sits in a class by itself, and it shouldn’t be any other way. Few roads in the U.S. could possibly offer so much adventure in so little distance.

Cutline: ROCK AND ROLL – Massive sandstone buttes will steal your attention on Red Rock Scenic Byway in Sedona, Arizona. Image: Austin. Adobe Stock.