

# THE

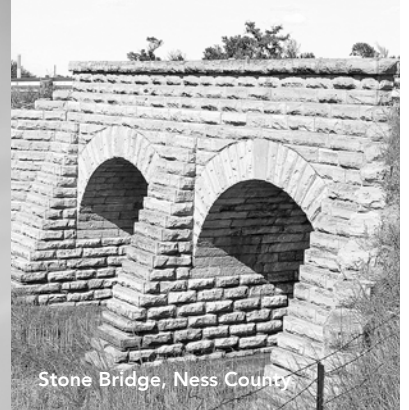
# EXPLORER



Big Brutus, West Mineral, Cherokee County



Dinosaur Park, Erie, Neosho County



Stone Bridge, Ness County

## ABOUT US

The Kansas Explorers Club is created to inspire, educate, and encourage the exploration and appreciation of Kansas... and to have fun doing it! Explorers are urged to look for the rural culture elements in each town -

**architecture, art, commerce, cuisine, customs, geography, history and people**

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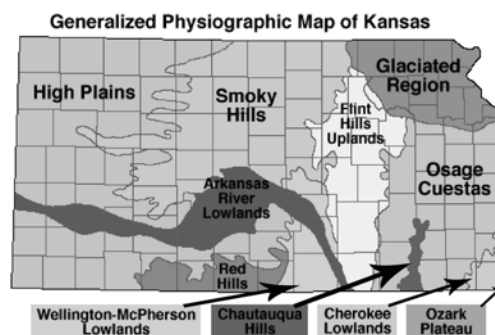
R.J. Wilson, Shawnee

## THE GEO DIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Kansas weather in November and December will give us some of the most beautiful days of the year, or some of the most chilly and windy. But on those good days, oh, take advantage. Travel the routes suggested in this geography-heavy newsletter and you'll see Kansas with new eyes.

With an Explorer spirit, any back road in the state is interesting, especially if you've not been on it before. Drive through cemeteries, notice architectural styles, look for historic markers, note the crops, the livestock, fencing, telephone poles, soil color, grasses and trees. Observe what makes an area distinct.

**Note:** Much of the region descriptions come from the Kansas state map. The page numbers after certain descriptions refer to the *Kansas Guidebook 2 for Explorers* book.

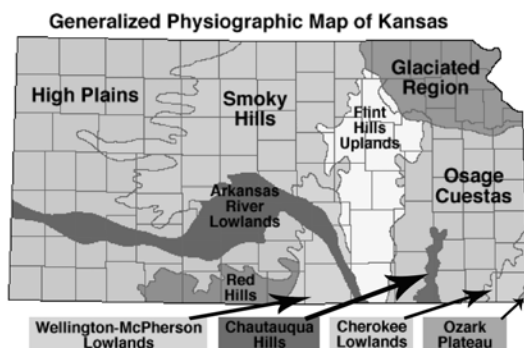


### THE DIVERSITY OF KANSAS GEOLOGY

This newsletter provides a brief description of the eleven physiographic regions and suggests driving routes to help you get to know a region. We've also sprinkled in some explorer-y places along the way.

Paper-map nerds will love getting the map out and studying these routes. Though the current state map has an inset showing the geologic regions, the 2003 map is entirely color coded. Contact us for a copy of that map (small donation would help cover postage).

Continued on page 2



## Arkansas River Lowlands

The Arkansas River Lowlands is a relatively flat, alluvial plain made up of sand, gravel, and other sediment deposited by a meandering Arkansas River. The area is good for farming but also includes sand dunes.

### Region back roads:

\*The 77-mile Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway connects two of the world's most significant natural wetlands—Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms in Barton (1), Stafford (2) and Reno (3) counties. (p. 377, 295). Currently, many shorebirds are making a stop here on their migratory path.



If you're taking this route on a Sunday, stop in Hudson (2) between 11 a.m.-2 p.m. to eat at one of the most famous buffets in Kansas: pan-fried chicken, ham, made-from-scratch mashed potatoes and gravy, cream corn, salads, bread, green beans, dessert. 620.458.4761. (p. 378).

River Road from Coolidge (4) to Deerfield (5) will take you by historic points of interest along the Santa Fe Trail and historic irrigation canals. River Road is on the south side of U.S. 50. (p. 413, 414, 418, 419).

Stay at the Trail City Bed & Breakfast and cabins in Coolidge to give yourself a treat at the west end of River Road. (p. 413).



## Chautauqua Hills

This region (averaging 10 miles in width) is a sliver of sandstone-capped rolling hills. It coincides with the Cross Timbers

ecosystem, a patchwork of ancient hardwood forests interspersed with prairie grasses.

### Drive and hike to know the region:

One of the most beautiful drives in this slice of Kansas is from Chautauqua to Elgin to Hewins to Cedar Vale, all in Chautauqua County (6). It's a tree-lined and scenery packed, mostly unpaved, route. (p. 232).

Perhaps the best way to immerse yourself in this region is to hike the Ancient Trees of the Cross Timbers one-mile trail to see the old post and blackjack oaks at Cross Timbers State Park near Toronto (7). (p. 287).

Stop at Lizard Lips Country Junction at the intersection of U.S. 54 and K-105 (7) for gas, grocery staples, deli, or bait. (p. 288).



## Cherokee Lowlands

The rocks in this region are the second oldest rocks (323 million years old) found at the surface in Kansas. Layers of coal formed from vegetation that accumulated in swamps.

### Region back roads:

Strip Pit Alley Scenic Drive takes you from Franklin to Mulberry to Arcadia (8) and back up to U.S. 69. You'll pass many reclaimed strip pits that are now lakes with thriving ecosystems, as well as some former coal camps. (p. 245)



Stop first at Miners Hall Museum in Franklin to learn about the area's mining history. (p. 245)

Start at Big Brutus (9) and learn about the mined land lakes and wildlife areas. Then head toward 7545 NW Belleview, southwest of Brutus, to see more lakes (p. 240). Keep your eyes open for lakes—they are everywhere!

Feast on some old-recipe Italian food at Josie's Ristorante in Scammon (9), located just a few miles from Big Brutus. Open Thursday-Saturday 5-9 p.m. (p. 239).



## ARE YOU A CUSPER?

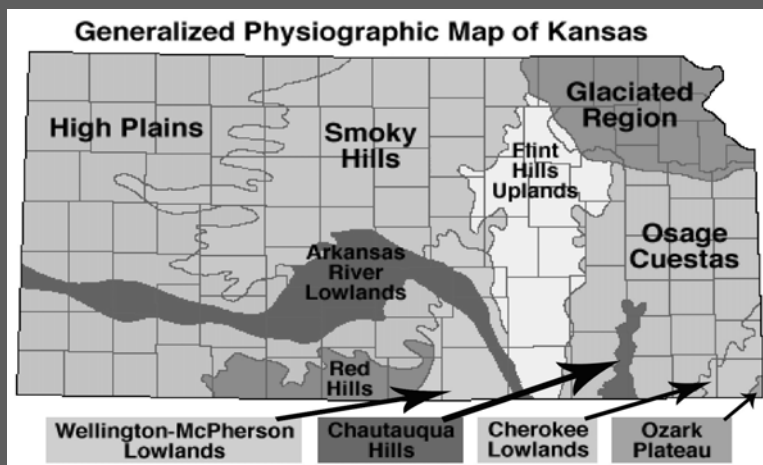
Cuspers are explorers who know when you're on the edge, or cusp, of two physiographic regions! If you are alert, you'll start to notice the differences in soil, topography, and vegetation.

The current state map 2021-2022 has a physiographic map as an inset but, if you'd like, contact [wendee@kansassampler.org](mailto:wendee@kansassampler.org) for a 2003-2004 map that has the physiographic regions color coded across the entire map! We have a few maps left.

## THANK YOU, EXPLORER DAR MEMBERS!

The following Explorer Club members are also members of local Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) organizations. Dating back to 1902, the Kansas Daughters started a campaign to place red granite boulders across the state to mark the Santa Fe Trail route.

KE #5 Lynda Fort, Mulvane  
KE #821 Gerry Winters, Wichita  
KE #1036 Sally Hatcher, Hastings, NE  
KE #2948 Brenda Dooley, Jewell  
KE #7279 Claudia Noakes, Overland Park  
KE #3438 Carolyn Thompson,  
McCracken



## GEO DIVERSITY OF KANSAS - continued from page 2

### Flint Hills

Because there is chert (flint) below the surface, the land is better suited for ranching than farming. This region in Kansas is now the last sizable remnant of a tallgrass prairie that once stretched across a vast swath of North America.



#### Region back roads:

\*\*The 48-mile Flint Hills National Scenic Byway (Council Grove (10) to Cassoday (11) and the 75-mile Native Stone Scenic Byway (Shawnee (12), Wabaunsee (13), Riley (14) and Pottawatomie (15) counties) are in this region and they offer a diverse feel of this prairie region. (p. 160 and 192).

Another option is to take any exit off I-70 in the Geary (16), Riley (14), and Wabaunsee (13) county region that ends with "creek," i.e. Humboldt Creek Road, McDowell Creek Road.

To sharpen your explorer vision for this region, first visit the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Chase County (17) (p. 226) or the Flint Hills Discovery Center in Manhattan (14) (p. 181).

### Glaciated Region



This region was defined by at least two glaciers. Rich soils formed from the silt (called loess) and red quartzite boulders were left behind.

\*The north-south 63-mile Glacial Hills Scenic Byway from Fort Leavenworth (18) through Atchison (19) and past White Cloud (20) is a route on K-7 that often shows bluffs on one side of the road while the Missouri River or cropland are on the other. (p. 141)

An east-west route in this region that proves Kansas is not flat is the K-9 route from Whiting (20) to Barnes (22). You'll find lots of explorer-y attractions in the small towns on this two-lane paved road including a great café in Whiting, a round square in Blue Rapids (23), and one-of-the-best antique stores, and a bakery (get the bierocks and cinnamon rolls) in Barnes.



Continued on page 4

## High Plains

This region has a higher elevation than the rest of the Great Plains, thus the name. Short, drought-tolerant grasses and desert-type plants, such as small cacti and yucca, are common in this area where topographic relief is largely restricted to streams and river valleys.



### Region back roads:

\*The 88-mile Land and Sky Scenic Byway takes you from Wallace County (24) into Sherman County (25) and through Cheyenne County (26) from the highest point in the state to the massive Van Gogh mural on an easel to the Arikaree Breaks.

Other great routes include the Ancient Deposits Scenic Back Road (p. 426) in Meade County (27), the Stone Bridge Tour (p. 432) in Ness County (28), the Haviland to Belvidere Scenic Back Road (p. 420) in Kiowa County (29), and the Ravanna Ruins Scenic Back Roads (p. 394) in Finney County (30).



Like in most regions, almost any road you've never traveled can be interesting, like the eight-mile dirt road from Clayton to Norcatour on W-15 in Norton County (31).

## Osage Cuestas

Covering much of eastern Kansas south of the Kansas River, the prevalent landscape includes relatively flat plains to rolling hills. Rocks near the surface dates back to about 300 million years ago.

### Region back roads:

Motor down the entire 148 miles of the Osage Cuestas region on U.S. 59 from Lawrence (32) to the Oklahoma border south of Chetopa (33). It's a federal two-lane road but take the challenge to drive down the main street of the 16 towns that the highway goes through or skirts within a mile. Those towns are Ottawa, Princeton, Richmond (34); Garnett, Lone Elm, Kincaid (35); Mildred, Moran, Elsmore, Savonburg (36); Stark, Erie (37) and Parsons, Altamont, Oswego, Chetopa (33). For those with a



compulsive nature, U.S. 59 goes north of Lawrence 50 miles in the Glacial Hills to Atchison (19) and on into Missouri.

## Ozark Plateau

Though a part of a much larger region that covers other states, this is the smallest region in Kansas and located in southeast Cherokee County. The oldest surface rocks in Kansas—limestone that formed about 345 million years ago—are located here. It's one of the wettest regions in the state.

### Region back roads:

\*There is lots to see on the 13.1 miles of Kansas Historic Route 66 Byway located in the southeast corner of Cherokee County (9). A Marsh Arch bridge, the Nelson Old Riverton Store, and more attractions can be found in Galena and Baxter Springs.



## Red Hills

Also known as the Gypsum Hills, the soil, shale and sandstone get their color from iron oxide (rust) which turns bright red when exposed to oxygen. Gypsum, a white rock, is found in layers within the red beds.

### Region back roads:

\*Travelers can view the beautiful hills, buttes, and mesas of the Red Hills along the 42-mile Red Hills Scenic Byway along U.S. 160 between Medicine Lodge (38) and Coldwater (39).



The *Kansas Guidebook 2 for Explorers* also suggests the Search for Buffalo Scenic Back Road (p. 291), and the Gyp Hills Scenic Back Road (p. 293) in Barber County (38) or the Rugged Red Canyons Scenic Back Road (p. 389) in southern Comanche County (39).

## Smoky Hills

The range of hills in this region are composed of three principal rock outcrops—the sandstone of the Dakota Formation, the Greenhorn Limestone range that include a bed called Fencepost limestone, and the westernmost range of thick beds of Niobrara Chalk known for fossils and spires of chalk remnants.

### Region back roads:

\*Post Rock Scenic Byway from Wilson (40) to Lucas (41) (p. 60) passes Wilson Lake and delivers sweeping vistas of grasslands,



rock outcroppings, and long rows of the post rock fences. This route features the Greenhorn Limestone range.



\*The vast majority of the 80-mile Prairie Trail Scenic Byway is in this region. Along with Maxwell Wildlife Refuge near Canton (42), some stops that feature Dakota Sandstone are Coronado Heights (43), Mushroom Rock State Park (40), Fort Harker (40), and trails at Kanopolis State Park (40). McPherson, Lindsborg, Marquette (42) and Ellsworth (40) are just a few cities on this route.

For 102 miles of the Western Vistas Historic Byway you'll get an eyeful of the Niobrara portion of the Smoky Hill region. Geology and history are the features here bookended with the Buffalo Bill sculpture in Oakley (42) to Fort Wallace (24) with Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park (44), Historic Scott State Lake (45), and Monument Rocks (46) in between.

\*WaKeeney and Trego County (47) are the home base for this 60-mile Smoky Valley Scenic Byway that features the stunning ruggedness of the cliffs of Cedar Bluff Reservoir and Castle Rock and its Badlands (46). In the right season of the year, the wildflowers dot the roadsides with the short grass prairie and cropland as the background. The Smoky Hills Trail went through this area.

Shorter routes to enjoy are the Historic Bridges Scenic Back Road in Lincoln County (48) (p. 66); the Stone Buffalo Sculpture Scenic Back Road in Ottawa County (49) (p. 75) and the White Rock Creek Scenic Back Road in Jewell County (50) (p. 63).

**Wellington and McPherson Lowlands**



The McPherson Valley Wetlands, the Arkansas River and the Little Ark River branch and the Ninnescah and the Chikaskia rivers helped shape this region. You'll find

sand dunes and fertile cropland in this flattish area.

**Region back roads:**

U.S. 81 (and old U.S. 81) will take you from Caldwell (51) at the south end to McPherson (42) in the north. Keep a look out and you'll find Chisholm Trail signage up through Newton (52) telling the story of cattle drives from 1866-1887.

For another challenge, start in McPherson or Caldwell and drive straight north or south. Well, you might have to drive one to three miles east or west three times. Otherwise, it's a 100-mile north-south trip on backroads and through small towns.

\*These are Kansas Scenic or Historic Byways. Find more information at [travelks.com/things-to-do/byways-and-highways/byways/](http://travelks.com/things-to-do/byways-and-highways/byways/).

**Pass through multiple regions on one trip**

**Eight regions:** From just north of unincorporated Crestline in Cherokee County (9) to the Colorado line just beyond Manter in Stanton County (53), this 455 miles of U.S.



160 takes you across eight physiographic regions. That's a full day drive!

**Six regions:** Some of you may want to drive U.S. 56 across six physiographic regions and 440 miles from Gardner in Johnson County (54) to Elkhart (55) in the most southwest corner of Kansas. This route follows the Santa Fe Trail.



**Four regions:** An interesting drive in the state is K-99 from Chautauqua in Chautauqua County (6) at the Oklahoma border to Summerfield in Marshall County (23) at the Nebraska border. This 230-mile route will take you through four regions. It's kind of a zig zaggy narrow-at-times road but you'll come across three soda outains, many Toto dogs in

Wamego (15), yellow brick roads (sidewalks) in Sedan (6) and Wamego, and to top off your trip, you'll find the town of Climax (56)!



# KANSAS EXPLORERS CLUB MEMBERSHIPS as of November 3

Renewers, as always, thanks for being our strong base. Happy road trippin'!

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- #4803 Retta L. Underwood, Garden City
- #4805 Betty Stevens, Manhattan
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- #4989 Joan & Steve Heide, Lawrence
- #4997 Janet & Steve Hamous, Wichita
- #5035 Gary & Glennys Doane, Downs
- #5038 Joanne Pridey, Salina
- #5069 Liz Sosa, Garden City
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 #7183 Mary Sue Winneke, Leavenworth  
 #7185 Nancy Taylor, Wichita

**NEW EXPLORER MEMBERS**

(as of November 3) Welcome aboard, new Explorers! Good to have more people getting out to see the state!

#7208 Mary Jo & Dan Davis, Winchester  
*Gift from KE #2629 Virginia Richards, Perry*

#7269 Connie Claycamp, Seneca  
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 #7282 Brian & Jill Barnhardt, Lebo  
*Gift from KE #5539 Pat Barnhardt, Leavenworth*  
 #7283 Bethanie Popejoy, Topeka  
*Gift from KE #5715 Ronna Stump, Topeka*  
 #7284 Dawn & Phil Anderson, Manhattan

**EXPLORER TRACKINGS**

**KE #1609 Lucille Heller** recommends the fresh pies at the community-owned cafe in Hunter (57). Monday-Saturday 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. (pies ready after 10:30 a.m.) Cash or check only. Order whole pies ahead of time!

**KE #7223 Curtis Carlson** recommends the Commercial Street Diner (614 Commercial) in Emporia (58) for their quick service, large portions, and homey atmosphere.

**KE #4287 Claire & Warren Willenberg**, Friends of the Historic Fresh Air Baby Camp, helped restore the Historic Fresh Air Baby Camp/Girl Scout Little House, 1221 W. 11<sup>th</sup>, Wichita (60).

Beth Hall and Mike Hall are 4<sup>th</sup> generation siblings to operate Gronis Hardware in Leavenworth (18). **KE #1036 Sally Hatcher** gets gardening supplies and tools and kitchen items there and calls it the best little hardware store in Kansas.

**Kansas Explorers Club Membership and Renewal Form & Special Guidebook Price**

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# The Explorer #139

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## HOLIDAY SHOPPING CHOICES MATTER!

Non-scientific studies show that gifts made in your home area or state, or items purchased from independently-owned stores are not only more meaningful to receive but the money spent supports the local economy. Here are some places to look:

- Gift shops in local museums, art galleries or attractions.
- Independently-owned grocery stores.
- Independently-owned bookstores.
- Find more than 100 Kansas products that you can buy online as listed on the Kansas Sampler Foundation Holiday Shopping List. Find it on [kansassampler.org](http://kansassampler.org)



## SAVE THE DATE

### BIG KANSAS ROAD TRIP

[bigkansasroadtrip.com](http://bigkansasroadtrip.com)

May 5-8, 2022

Adventure ala carte to take place in Bourbon (59), Cherokee (9) and Crawford (8) counties in southeast Kansas

## FIND THE COUNTIES HERE

26 Cheyenne	Rawlins	Decatur	31 Norton	Phillips	Smith	50 Jewell	Republic	22 Washington	23 Marshall	Nemaha	Brown	20 Doniphan	Leavenworth
25 Sherman	Thomas	Sheridan	Graham	Rooks	Osborne	57 Mitchell	Cloud	49 Clay	15 Pottawatomie	21 Jackson	Atchison	9 Wyan-dotte	
24 Wallace	44 Logan	46 Gove	47 Trego	Ellis	41 Russell	48 Lincoln	43 Saline	44 Dickinson	13 Shawnee	12 Vernon	18 Dodge	14 Franklin	54 Jackson
Greeley	45 Wichita	45 Scott	28 Lane	Ness	1 Rush	Barton	42 McPherson	17 Marion	58 Morris	Osage	34 Franklin	34 Miami	
4 Hamilton	5 Kearny	30 Finney	Hodge-man	Edwards	2 Paynee	2 Stafford	3 Pice	52 Harvey	11 Chase	56 Lyon	Coffey	35 Anderson	59 Linn
63 Stanton	Grant	Haskell	30 Graj	Ford	29 Kiowa	Pratt	Kingman	60 Sedgwick	11 Butler	56 Greenwood	36 Woodson	37 Allen	8 Bourbon
55 Mor-ton	Stevens	Seward	27 Meade	Clark	39 Comanche	38 Barber	Harper	51 Sumner	61 Cowley	51 Butler	6 Chautauqua	33 Mont-gomery	9 Cher-okee

## DID YOU KNOW?

The mission of the Kansas Sampler Foundation is to preserve and sustain rural culture. The Kansas Explorers Club was designed to help educate the public about what there is to see and do in Kansas and to create a difference-making audience for rural communities. The Kansas Sampler Foundation also puts grassroots efforts into place to help sustain rural communities.