

“America’s Loneliest Road” has a lot goin’ on

You can cover a lot of ground in eight or nine hours. That’s about the drive time from Phoenix straight to Ely, Nevada. From Tucson, a little more; from Flagstaff, you have a head start. And with everything from Las Vegas, St George, and several National Parks in between, you can make a road trip expedition out of it.

About 240 miles from Las Vegas or Salt Lake City, Ely is one of Nevada’s best kept secrets, perfect for people who want to create their own adventures off the beaten path. Sitting on the eastern edge of “The Loneliest Road in America” (US Highway 50 across Nevada, earning its name for hauntingly beautiful landscapes and lots of elbow room), Ely is a great base camp for some of the best outdoor recre-

ation in the Silver State, year ’round, from mountain biking and climbing to hiking and hot springs. It’s also just a short drive to Great Basin National Park, home of the magnificent Lehman Caves and ancient Bristlecone pine forests.

Ely was founded as a stagecoach station along the Pony Express, and its rich history is celebrated in a series of murals that decorate downtown. Up here, you can still stretch out in the wide open spaces, while you’ll also be in the center of plenty of on- and off-road adventures.

DAY TRIPS: Historic towns in the region boast museums that are truly gems, with friendly tours, boutique shopping, dining and plenty of action-filled activities. And you’ll still find Pony Express Trail markers along the way.

Just about 15 minutes from Ely lies one of the more unusual museum experiences you’ll find. The McGill Drugstore was shuttered in the 1950s when the resident pharmacist passed away, and the store was literally frozen in time. Shelves are still stocked with items from the ‘50s like Ipana toothpaste and Dippity-do styling gel. On your way back to Ely, stop at Economy Drug for an old fashioned

soda fountain experience.

In addition to Great Basin National Park, lovers of the outdoors can grab a fishing rod and drive 20 minutes to Cave Lake State Park. Stocked with trout for anglers, Cave Lake also offers swimming, boating, hiking and mountain biking for all levels.

SILVER STATE CLASSIC CHALLENGE: Have you always wanted to enter a major road rally, but may or may not have the supercar or million-dollar classic it usually takes? The annual Silver State Classic Challenge (September 18-20, 2020) is a great opportunity to check this one off anyone’s bucket list. Whether you drive a sports car, pickup or even the proverbial Prius, as long as your vehicle can average 95 mph or more (and meet safety requirements), you can test your mettle in this open road race down Highway 385. For full rules and information on how to enter the event, visit www.ssc.us.

NEVADA NORTHERN RAILWAY: Step back in time at the Nevada Northern Railway museum in Ely, a National Historic Landmark that offers visitors the opportunity to experience an actual working railroad and provides excursions on both steam and diesel locomotives.



Today boasting the best-preserved, least altered and most complete main yard complex remaining from the steam railroad era, the Nevada Northern Railway was established in 1905 to support the area’s booming copper mining industry. The East Ely yard escaped modernization due to its geographic remoteness and the decline of the mining industry it once served.

Now a museum, NNRy offers visitors train rides pulled by beautifully restored 100-plus-year-old steam engines, hundreds of Hands-On-History events and a popular “Be the Engineer” experience, where you actually operate a locomotive on the original mainline. For more info on the Nevada Northern Railway, visit www.nnr.com.

By the time you’re done visiting Ely, the Loneliest Road won’t seem so lonely anymore. Visit www.ElyNevada.net. ■

