

## Mesalands Scenic Byway

### MAP: Mesalands Scenic Byway Map

*Click to view Area attractions and map in new window.*

The Mother Road Route 66 may be in northeast-north central New Mexico's best-known claim to fame, but anyone simply whizzing by Tucumcari and Santa Rosa on the highway is missing remarkable remnants from the prehistoric Mesozoic Period, the Age of the Dinosaurs. The meandering Mesalands Scenic Byway is about beauty, solitude, cowboys and cattle, and even about dinosaurs, the inhabitants when the area was a vast inland sea. You best take a map for the byway route, which encompasses pieces of a number of highways, which stretch in fingers and loops between Santa Rosa and Tucucari.

## Bell Ranch

Arguably, no New Mexican ranch has a more fabled history than the Bell. Among the largest ranches in the country, with some 300,000 acres, it was originally part of the Montoya land grant, double the current size. A stunningly beautiful property 45 miles northwest of Tucumcari, the Bell is a working cattle ranch with its own brand of cattle, RedBell, uniquely suited to the environment. The ranch raises horses too, known for their spirit, beauty, and physical capabilities. Bell Mountain sits on the ranch, and its unusual bell-shaped curves gave the ranch its name, logo, and distinctive 1-iron brand, registered in 1875. Scenes from movies and the "Rawhide" TV show were shot here, and several Bell cowboys were Marlboro Men. Near the historic hacienda and headquarters buildings, there's a museum with artifacts of Bell cowboy life. It's open for respectful visitors when the ranch is. Remember this is a working ranch, not a theme park. [www.thebellranch.com](http://www.thebellranch.com)

## Blue Hole

The landscape around Santa Rosa is semi-arid ranch country but the area has a renowned scuba diving mecca, the geological phenomenon called the Blue Hole. In this land of reddish plateaus and mesas the artesian well is a true oasis. The Blue Hole's natural, bell-shaped pool is 80 feet deep and has astonishing clarity and a constant water temperature of 64 degrees. The bottom is nearly twice as wide as what you see on top. A privately operated dive center provides divers with permits, equipment rentals, and tank refills. [www.santarosanm.org/scubadiving.htm](http://www.santarosanm.org/scubadiving.htm)

## Conchas Lake State Park

A refreshingly shaded park sits on the bank of the 25-mile-long reservoir lake. Water sports abound. Marina and boat ramps, and camping and picnicking. The 60-plus miles of varied shoreline contain rock formations dating back to the Age of Dinosaurs. Watch for fossils of early sea creatures. 34 miles northwest of Tucumcari on NM 104. [www.emnrd.state.nm.us/PRD/Conchas.htm](http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/PRD/Conchas.htm)

## Mesalands Dinosaur Museum

The decade-old museum is a part of Mesalands Community College in Tucumcari, established because Quay County has one of the earth's premier deposits of fossils. The Museum focuses on the Mesozoic Era, the "Age of Dinosaurs," which is comprised of the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous periods. The world's largest collection of bronze skeletons, fossils, and replicas of prehistoric creatures is housed at Mesalands, many of them fabricated by the College's Foundry. [www.mesalands.edu/museum/museum.htm](http://www.mesalands.edu/museum/museum.htm)

222 East Laughlin Street  
Tucumcari, New Mexico 88401  
Phone (575) 461-3466

### **Puerto de Luna**

Driving south from Santa Rosa on NM 91 brings you to a small community with an enchanting name, "Door of the Moon." Puerta de Luna or PDL as locals call it sits on the banks of the winding Pecos River, in hauntingly beautiful landscape. According to one legend, Coronado's conquistadores built a bridge across the Pecos here and watched the moon come up behind rock outcroppings. The ancient adobe village feels much as it must have 100 years ago. Its charms include the gnarly cottonwoods, the acequias, the old buildings including the roof-less courthouse from era when this was the county seat, the plastered stone home of Alexander Grzelachowski, an early merchant, and 2 churches, Nuestra Señora de Refugio on the river's east bank, and Santa Ynez on the west. Billy the Kid had many friends in Puerta de Luna, and ate his last Christmas dinner at Grzelachowski's house. His connection to the village is commemorated by Kid Lane. Try some PDL chile during your visit, a unique strain cultivated here for more than a century. [www.santarosanm.org/area\\_attractions.htm](http://www.santarosanm.org/area_attractions.htm)

### **Ute Lake State Park**

Outside of Logan, Ute Lake, a Canadian River reservoir some dozen miles long, offers excellent walleye fishing. Anglers can also try their luck for bass, crappie and catfish. Fishing is available 24-hours per day, every day of the year for fishing fanatics. The lake has produced several state-record game fish. Marina and full range of water sports.  
[www.emnrd.state.nm.us/PRD/UteLake.htm](http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/PRD/UteLake.htm)