

TOWN OF GILA BEND SCENIC DRIVE

Old Highway 80 to Gillespie Dam Bridge

OVERVIEW

Gillespie Dam Bridge was completed in 1927 and was the final peg in completing a coast-to-coast highway from Georgia to California. The steel truss bridge is one of the most important examples of early bridge construction in Arizona. The original Gillespie Dam was completed back around 1920 by local rancher Frank Gillespie and then reconstructed by the Arizona Department of Transportation. In 1993, due in part to very heavy rainfall, the dam was breached and a section collapsed allowing for an estuary to form! Visitors to the area enjoy fishing, birding, photography and picnicking. Gillespie Dam Bridge is now on the historical registry for historic places.

The drive to Gillespie Dam Bridge takes you north up Old Highway 80 through a mix of Sonoran desert and farmland. At the bridge, be sure to check out the plaque under the ramada and walk around. There is limited parking available at either end of the bridge.

Best time to do the drive:

November through early April. If you can handle the heat and humidity, August is a great time since the monsoon rains will bring more water to the river.

Average Time:

25 minute drive time each way. You can make it an afternoon for fishing and other activities.

How to get there:

From Gila Bend, on Pima turn North onto Old Highway 80 and keep to the right. Follow HWY 80 for about 26 miles until you come upon the Gillespie Dam Bridge.

