

= Sierra Highway =

Sierra Highway or El Camino Sierra is a road in Southern California , United States . El Camino Sierra refers to the full length of a trail formed in the 19th century , rebuilt as highways in the early 20th century , that ran from Los Angeles to Lake Tahoe following parts of modern State Route 14 , U.S. Route 395 and State Route 89 . Two portions of this road are currently signed as Sierra Highway . The first is an old alignment of SR 14 / U.S. Route 6 from Los Angeles to Mojave . This road is also signed with the unusual designation of State Route 14U through the city of Santa Clarita . The second part signed as Sierra Highway is a portion of US 395 in Bishop .

Traversing the extremes of California , from the Mojave Desert to the Sierra Nevada , El Camino Sierra has been advertised to the world as a highway to showcase the natural beauty of California as far back as 1910 . Though most of Sierra Highway was bypassed in the early 1970s with freeways , the road is still well known . The portion through the San Gabriel Mountains is noted as the primary filming location for the film *Duel* .

= = Route description = =

El Camino Sierra connects Los Angeles with Lake Tahoe along the eastern edge of California , serving the counties of Los Angeles , Kern , Inyo , Mono , Alpine and El Dorado . The highway exists as a roadway now called Sierra Highway from Los Angeles to Mojave . North of Mojave , El Camino Sierra is better known by the numbered designations in current use . While traversing the state , the highway crosses several mountain passes . The highway crests the San Gabriel Mountains via Soledad Pass . While in the Sierra Nevada the highway crosses Sherwin Summit , Deadman Summit , Conway Summit , Devil 's Gate Pass , Monitor Pass and Luther Pass .

= = = Southern California = = =

Sierra Highway begins at Tunnel Station near the north limit of the City of Los Angeles , where it intersects with San Fernando Road . This junction was historically the intersection of U.S. Route 99 and U.S. Route 6 . It is located adjacent to the intersection of the replacement freeways , the Newhall Pass interchange of Interstate 5 and State Route 14 .

The highway serves as one of the main thoroughfares of Santa Clarita . Through the city , Route 14 was moved to a freeway alignment in 1971 ; however , the process to decommission the old alignment of Route 14 is not complete . As a result , this portion is signed California State Route 14U , the U signifying " un @-@ relinquished " . Formal specifications for Route 14U are not published on Caltrans logs , but the route 's existence is acknowledged in Caltrans ' bridge inventory logs . According to the City of Santa Clarita , Caltrans maintains Sierra Highway (14U) from 500 feet north of Newhall Avenue to Whispering Leaves Drive . The remaining part of Sierra Highway through the City of Santa Clarita is maintained by the City and not part of the 14U designation .

Sierra Highway , modern Route 14 , and a main line of the Union Pacific Railroad all cross the San Gabriel Mountains , cresting the mountains at Soledad Pass (elevation 3 @,@ 179 feet (969 m)) . The three transportation arteries use different paths up the mountains , separating at Santa Clarita and converging near Acton . Sierra Highway uses Mint Canyon , the railroad uses Soledad Canyon and the modern Route 14 is a hybrid route using the ridges and side canyons between the two older routes . These canyons are formed by the Santa Clara River and its tributaries .

Upon exiting the mountains , Sierra Highway enters the Antelope Valley and serves as one of the main streets of Palmdale , Lancaster , and Rosamond . The highway runs parallel to the modern Route 14 and the railroad , becoming a frontage road . Just shy of Mojave the freeway portion of Route 14 ends , while the frontage road becomes a dirt path and eventually terminates . From this point , the canonical route of Sierra Highway joins State Route 14 , passing through downtown Mojave .

= = = U.S. Route 395 and State Route 89 = = =

North of Mojave the alignments of State Routes 14 and 89 , and U.S. Route 395 have not significantly changed since first paved , and are called El Camino Sierra . Significant portions have been upgraded to a divided highway ; however , most of the upgrades used the same alignment as the old two lane road . The highway cuts across Red Rock Canyon State Park to follow a series of valleys along the crest of the Sierra Nevada . While traversing the Owens Valley , the Sierra Highway passes Mount Whitney , the highest point in the contiguous United States , 10 @, @ 000 feet (3 @, @ 000 m) above the highway . As of 2009 , the only other signed section of Sierra Highway is a portion of U.S. 395 past the separation with U.S. 6 in Bishop .

U.S. 395 was rebuilt on a new alignment on the ascent to Sherwin Summit and around Crowley Lake . Unlike the highway relocation in southern California , the old alignments have been renamed , now called Lower Rock Creek Road , Old Sherwin Grade , and Crowley Creek Road ; not Sierra Highway . From here to Lake Tahoe , the highway crosses mountainous terrain inside the Sierra Nevada , giving the highway its name . While in the Sierra Nevada , the road passes by attractions such as Mammoth Mountain , Yosemite National Park and Mono Lake . El Camino Sierra separates from U.S. 395 , just prior to the Nevada state line at Topaz Lake , following SR 89 . This is the only portion of the route not used year @-@ round , as Caltrans closes Route 89 over Monitor Pass during winter months . Motorists destined for Lake Tahoe during the winter closures can continue along US 395 into Nevada , and return to California via Nevada State Route 88 or Nevada State Route 207 .

= = History = =

= = = El Camino Sierra = = =

The first recorded journey along what would become El Camino Sierra was by Jedediah Smith in 1826 . The trail was in common use by prospectors passing through the area because of the California Gold Rush and Comstock Lode . While still mostly a dirt road , several people began promoting El Camino Sierra as a scenic route . In 1910 , the Los Angeles Times announced that Governor Gillet had announced funding to construct a new road to connect El Camino Real with Yosemite National Park . When finished , a new " wonderful circuit " route would be complete and El Camino Sierra would become " one of the most beautiful scenic routes in the world . " In 1912 , the Southern Pacific Railroad published an article called " Two Mules and a Motorist " in which the author 's trip down El Camino Sierra was detailed , promoting the trail as a scenic side trip , via pack mules , from its rail lines . In 1915 , the California Teachers Association distributed a promotional book to the annual convention of the National Education Association . This book contained an article that sung the praises of this " soon @-@ to @-@ be @-@ world @-@ famous highway " called El Camino Sierra . While noting that it was still mostly an unimproved trail , the article assured the readers that county and state officials were working frantically to upgrade the route and , with the aid of convict labor , this would soon be a " boulevard the entire distance from Los Angeles to Lake Tahoe . " The article concluded by stating El Camino Sierra was " a highway with a hundred by @-@ ways , each by @-@ way with a hundred wonders " . The article also implored the state legislature to extend El Camino Sierra to Truckee , Quincy and Susanville using a route similar to modern State Route 89 , SR 70 returning to US 395 .

By 1918 , El Camino Sierra had been included in the Blue Book , an early road atlas of the United States . The Los Angeles Times declared El Camino Sierra complete on Feb 19 , 1931 , announcing that the portion from Mojave to Owens Valley was now paved , and would be dedicated the following Sunday .

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During the 1930s , two U.S. highways , both formed in 1926 , were extended into California using El

Camino Sierra . The southern terminus of U.S. 395 was extended from Spokane , Washington to San Diego , using El Camino Sierra from near what is now Topaz Lake to Inyokern , by 1935 . By 1937 , U.S. Route 6 was extended from Colorado , mostly along the Midland Trail , to Long Beach using El Camino Sierra south of Bishop . As part of the 1964 state highway renumbering US 6 was truncated at Bishop , and the route from the separation with US 395 to I @-@ 5 was renumbered SR 14 .

Though during the 1970s most of Sierra Highway was bypassed by freeways and expressways , the old two @-@ lane road remained a famous roadway . In 1971 , Steven Spielberg made his first feature @-@ length film , Duel , along Sierra Highway , near Acton . The film is about an unseen truck driver who stalks and attempts to kill an innocent motorist trapped in the truck 's game . It prominently shows the desert portions of Sierra Highway . With Duel 's status , one of the trucks used in the film is still on the road and in the process of being restored . The current owner has driven the truck along Sierra Highway for nostalgia , enjoying the terrified looks he receives from passing motorists who recognize it . Other movies have since been filmed in the vicinity , including scenes in The Terminator .

= = Major intersections = =