

CALIFORNIA

Explore scenic and diverse landscapes. **P. 2**

ARIZONA

Take it easy in the Grand Canyon State. **P. 10**

TEXAS

See the sights across the Panhandle. **P. 16**

100 YEARS OF THE MOTHER ROAD

Route 66



175+
ROAD
TRIP
IDEAS

BEST BITES

DELIGHTFUL
DETOURS

PERFECT
PLAYLISTS

MUSEUMS
AND MORE!



Embark On an Adventure

THE WEST-TO-EAST REVERSE ROUTE ON THE MOTHER ROAD IS A JOURNEY
BACK IN TIME FILLED WITH DISCOVERY AROUND EVERY BEND.



EASY RIDER

The open road awaits for anyone heading east on Route 66, including this motorcyclist photographed near Oatman, Arizona.

In 2026,

Route 66 celebrates its centennial, offering eastbound travelers a fascinating journey into the past as they depart from Santa Monica, California. This reverse expedition along the Mother Road creates a poignant narrative—moving from the West Coast back through the memorable towns and spectacular vistas that fueled America's westward dreams.

Leaving Los Angeles County, with its palm-lined boulevards and trendy boutiques, you gradually transition into timelessness. The urban expanse yields to the San Bernardino Mountains, where vintage diners and preserved motor courts emerge like artifacts from another era. As you descend into the Mojave Desert, quirky roadside attractions and photo ops dot the landscape.

Arizona offers more dramatic wonders. Otherworldly rock formations near Oatman give way to Flagstaff's elevated desert terrain, which in turn leads to unforgettable towns like Winslow and Holbrook. In Texas, you'll be tempted by eye-catching neon signs, a water tower that looks like it's ready to tip over, and surreal art installations like Cadillac Ranch, where 10 graffiti-covered Cadillacs stand partially buried nose-first in the Texas soil.

Today's travelers have a rare opportunity to experience this quintessential American pilgrimage as its centennial approaches—connecting with the same path that has captivated adventurers for nearly 100 years. The Mother Road is a living museum of American aspirations still telling its stories, and there's never been a better time to explore it.

ON THE COVER

Roy's Motel and Cafe
in Amboy, California
Photographer: Corey Rich



California

PRESS PLAY

*Your California
playlist should
include these hits.*

California Dreamin’

The Mamas and
the Papas

Up Around the Bend

Credence
Clearwater Revival

California Love

Tupac Shakur
featuring Dr. Dre

Going to California

Led Zeppelin

California Stars

Billy Bragg and
Wilco

California

Joni Mitchell

FROM OCEANFRONT SCENERY TO BUZZY URBAN ATTRACTIONS
TO ETHEREAL DESERT LANDSCAPES, THE GOLDEN STATE’S
STRETCH OF ROUTE 66 OFFERS A DIZZYING ARRAY OF DIVERSITY—
ALONG WITH PLENTY OF NODS TO ITS STORIED PAST.



Standing at Santa Monica Pier, where Route 66 meets the Pacific Ocean, travelers find themselves at a delightful paradox. While officially marking “the end of the road” for this American institution, for west-to-east adventurers, this sun-kissed spot represents the thrilling beginning of a cross-country odyssey. Don’t miss the Route 66 Last Stop Shop, where memorabilia hunters can procure the perfect keepsake to commemorate either the conclusion or commencement of their journey.

California claims approximately 315 miles of Route 66’s total distance, but what this segment lacks in physical distance, it makes up for in scenic diversity. From **Santa Monica’s** breezy oceanfront to **San Bernardino’s** historic

landmarks, and through the mystical Mojave Desert where the road stretches endlessly toward the horizon, the Golden State portion of the Mother Road delivers concentrated Americana.

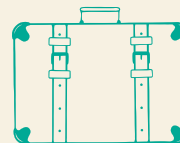
Expect to encounter midcentury motels with neon signs illuminating the night, quirky roadside attractions, and time-capsule diners serving pie that would make your grandma proud. The route winds through quintessential California landscapes—palm-lined streets giving way to stark desert vistas—with the San Gabriel Mountains creating a dramatic backdrop. As you navigate this sun-drenched corridor of nostalgia, remember you’re traversing the same path that carried many Dust Bowl migrants westward toward dreams of California prosperity.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (CAR) VISIT CALIFORNIA, (HOTEL) DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN,
COURTESY OF THE GEORGIAN, (SIGN) AMANDA FRIEDMAN

TIME TRAVELERS
Restored
architectural gems,
retro signage
and timeless
landscapes abound
along Route 66.



TOP STAYS GOLDEN GETAWAYS



THE GEORGIAN *Santa Monica*

This Art Deco gem marks Route 66's western terminus, where America's most famous highway meets the Pacific. Ocean-view rooms offer the ultimate "mission accomplished" sensation for cross-country travelers. Santa Monica lodging options are plentiful: Also consider the beachfront offerings of Shutters on the Beach, Casa Del Mar, and Regent Santa Monica Beach.

HOLLYWOOD HOTEL *Los Angeles*

Start your day with fresh fruit and house-made pastries at this property's Route 66 Bistro before taking a dip in the sparkling pool or visiting nearby attractions. The metro station across the street makes exploring LA a breeze.

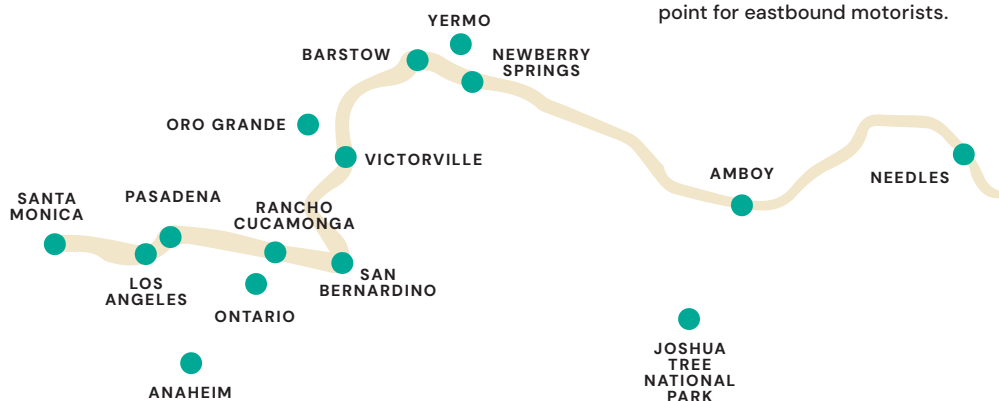
THE SAGA MOTOR HOTEL *Pasadena*

Located just blocks from Route 66's Colorado Boulevard alignment, this boutique hotel was built in 1959 by acclaimed architect Harold Zook. The rooms blend period details with contemporary comforts, and it's considered a prime location to view the annual Rose Parade.



NEW BEGINNINGS

The End of the Trail sign in Santa Monica doubles as a fabulous starting point for eastbound motorists.





NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Where the historic Mother Road meets modern California cool, **Santa Monica's** Third Street Promenade offers Route 66 travelers a refreshing detour from retro Americana. At oh-so-Italian Ugo Santa Monica, enjoy gelato, strong coffee and fresh pasta in an open-air setting that's perfect for people-watching. Those seeking pre- or post-trip shopping will want to check out California-originated brands, including Patagonia, Vans and PacSun. For a unique experience, The Gourmandise School offers cooking classes using local ingredients, sending you home with skills more valuable than souvenirs. Recharge at Éléphante with Mediterranean small plates and panoramic ocean views that create the perfect finale—or beginning—to your Route 66 travels.

PHOTO OP

Soaring 150 feet above the Arroyo Seco, **Pasadena's** magnificent Colorado Street Bridge has witnessed Route 66 travelers since its 1913 completion. This graceful concrete span features Beaux Arts arches and antique lampposts that create one of California's most photogenic roadway scenes. The 1,486-foot bridge earned a spot on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981, but it was closed after San Francisco's 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake exposed bridge vulnerabilities statewide. A community campaign saved and restored this architectural gem. For the quintessential Route 66 photo op, head to Lower Arroyo Park beneath the bridge at sunset, when golden light bathes its nine arches and transforms this engineering marvel into a cathedral of Route 66 transportation history.



THIRD STREET
PROMENADE
Santa Monica

DID YOU KNOW? THE THIRD STREET PROMENADE CONSISTS OF THREE OPEN-AIR, CAR-FREE BLOCKS ANCHORED BY UPSCALE SANTA MONICA PLACE, HOME TO MORE THAN 80 RETAILERS.



RITCHIE'S REAL AMERICAN DINER *Rancho Cucamonga*

Soak up the retro vibes at this charming eatery, and while you're at it, consider one of the house-made pies or perhaps the Triple Scoop Banana Split.

MITLA CAFE *San Bernadino*

This historic Mexican restaurant has been serving up tasty dishes to road-trippers since 1937. Its popular hard-shell tacos reportedly inspired California native Glen Bell to create Taco Bell.

EMMA JEAN'S HOLLAND BURGER CAFE *Victorville*

This no-frills 1947 roadside diner delivers the kind of honest, unfussy comfort food that defines the Mother Road experience.

PEGGY SUE'S 50S DINER *Near Yermo*

Prepare yourself for a kitschy time capsule of a restaurant that boasts memorabilia-lined walls, teal-and-pink-uniformed waitresses and hearty American fare.



CREDIT: (THIRD STREET) GETTY/ROBERT LANDAU, (ÉLEPHANTE) JAKOB LAYMAN, (MARKET) GETTY/HABESIN, (CHICKEN FUTURE STUDIO COLLECTION, (PORTRAIT) COURTESY SCOTT PIOTROWSKI



ÉLEPHANTE
Santa Monica



GRAND CENTRAL
MARKET
Los Angeles



CHICKEN BOY
Los Angeles

BAGDAD CAFE Newberry Springs

Immortalized in the 1987 film of the same name, this cafe is undergoing renovations and currently serves drinks amid walls covered with international visitors' mementos.

ROY'S MOTEL AND CAFE Amboy

The restored neon sign alone is worth the visit. Once a bustling rest stop, it's now a minimalist cafe offering cold drinks and packaged snacks beneath the shadow of the famous signage.

ASK A LOCAL

SCOTT PIOTROWSKI
*President of the
California Historic
Route 66 Association*
📍 **LOS ANGELES**

*Here are his five favorite
under-the-radar spots
to experience Route 66
in Los Angeles.*

GRAND CENTRAL MARKET

This place is right near the original western terminus of Route 66 between Broadway and Hill. It's been there for more than a century and has lots of great mom-and-pop food stalls to choose from. I'm really fond of places like Sticky Rice and Lucky Bird.

UNION STATION

It's a major transportation destination in Los Angeles and still in use by Amtrak and our light-rail and bus system. It's absolutely amazing. It's got this huge, vaulted ceiling—it's probably a three-story ceiling—with massive windows all over. It's total 1930s Art Deco. It's a wonderful spot.

CHICKEN BOY

Chicken Boy is the Statue of Liberty of Los Angeles. He is a Muffler Man—the westernmost of the Route 66 Muffler Men. His hands were intentionally repositioned so that instead of holding a muffler, he's holding a bucket of chicken. He was on top of a building in downtown LA that was going to be demolished.

A woman named Amy Inouye saw him, fell in love with him and moved him to North Figueroa Street in Highland Park.

ARROYO SECO PARKWAY

It's the first freeway west of the Mississippi River and it's the first freeway portion of Route 66. It's on the National Register of Historic Places and is the only National Scenic Byway anywhere in the nation that's fully contained in a metropolitan area. It contains four tunnels, which are the only remaining vehicle tunnels anywhere on Route 66.

SUNSET JUNCTION

Sunset Junction was a trolley line junction point, where Santa Monica Boulevard meets Sunset Boulevard. It's in the Silver Lake district and is very much the vibe of Route 66—the shops are locally owned and independent. Wine bar La Pharmacie du Vin is just fantastic. Not far away, there's an amazing cafe called Millie's Cafe that has been there since 1926.





ICONIC

SIGHTS AND STOPS



ORIGINAL MCDONALD'S SITE AND MUSEUM

San Bernardino

Route 66 pilgrims can discover the humble origins of this global phenomenon in San Bernardino. The shrine to fast-food history stands on the exact spot where brothers Dick and Mac McDonald opened their revolutionary Speedee Service System restaurant in 1940—a game-changing concept that transformed roadside dining. This unofficial museum houses a treasure trove of McDonald's memorabilia spanning decades: original signage, employee uniforms, Happy Meal toys and rare promotional items.

WIGWAM MOTEL

San Bernardino

Stay in one of the most whimsical—and instantly recognizable—roadside accommodations. This collection of 19 concrete tipis, built in 1949 and lovingly restored to their midcentury glory, offers travelers a chance to sleep inside a slice of Americana. Each cone-shape room, surprisingly spacious inside, combines nostalgic charm with modern comforts. Vintage cars parked throughout the property enhance the time-capsule ambience, creating perfect Instagram moments. Beyond its architectural novelty, the Wigwam represents the playful spirit of early American road trips, when highway attractions competed for motorists' attention through imaginative design.

CALIFORNIA ROUTE 66 MUSEUM

Victorville

In the high desert town of Victorville, this volunteer-run museum captures the Golden State's distinctive contribution to

the Mother Road legacy. Housed in the former Red Rooster Cafe and Pyrenees Cafe, this unassuming treasure trove showcases the route's evolution from dusty trail to American icon. Don't miss the meticulously restored 1917 Model T Ford, representing the earliest travelers who ventured along what would become Route 66. Slide behind the wheel of a Volkswagen hippie bus or pose in the faithfully re-created 1950s diner booth. The museum's prized possession—an original End of the Trail sign that once stood in Santa Monica—marks the journey's symbolic finale.

ELMER'S BOTTLE TREE RANCH

Oro Grande

One of California's most photographed Route 66 attractions, Elmer's Bottle Tree Ranch is a shimmering forest of metal "trees" adorned with thousands of colorful glass bottles that dance in the desert light. Created by folk artist Elmer Long (who passed away in 2019), this enchanting installation continues to captivate Mother Road travelers. The ranch features more than 200 metal sculptures, each topped with bottles Long collected with his father across the Mojave Desert. Listen carefully as desert breezes transform the installation into a gentle wind chime symphony. Look for whimsical found objects—typewriters, hubcaps, musical instruments—incorporated throughout the artwork. For the perfect Instagram moment, arrive just prior to sunset so you can capture the bottles with golden-hour light.

ROY'S MOTEL AND CAFE

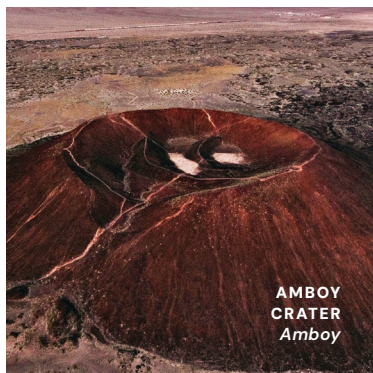
Amboy

The 1959 Atomic Age sign for Roy's Motel features a distinctive arrow that beckons travelers today—just as it has for generations. Founded in 1938 by Roy Crowl, this remote outpost flourished during Route 66's heyday, providing gas, food and lodging to weary desert travelers. Though the motel rooms now stand empty, the renovated gas station still operates 24/7, offering travelers cold drinks, Mother Road memorabilia and spectacular photo ops.

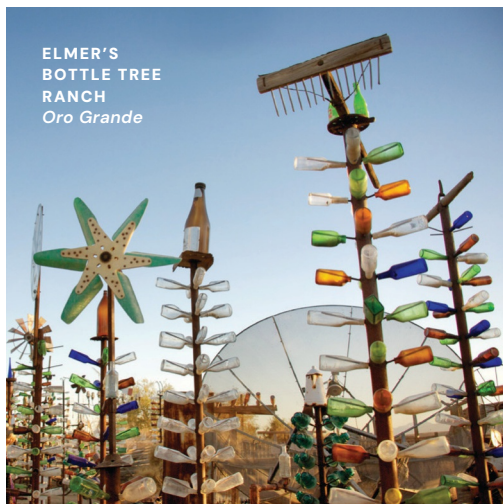
IN THE CONE ZONE The Wigwam Motel in San Bernardino provides a playfully retro lodging option.



DID YOU KNOW? AMBOY CRATER, A 250-FOOT-HIGH VOLCANIC CINDER CONE THAT RISES ABOVE THE MOJAVE DESERT FLOOR, WAS CREATED BY EXPLOSIVE ERUPTIONS 79,000 YEARS AGO.



AMBOY
CRATER
Amboy



ELMER'S
BOTTLE TREE
RANCH
Oro Grande



CAN'T-MISS EVENTS

MARCH

RT 66 CRUZIN' CAR SHOW *Amboy*

The inaugural RT 66 Cruzin' Car Show, not to be confused with the Route 66 Cruisin' Reunion held in Ontario each year, took place on March 1 at Roy's Motel and Cafe. Next year's gathering, timed to celebrate the Mother Road's centennial, is set for March 7, 2026.

SEPTEMBER

ROUTE 66 CRUISIN' REUNION *Ontario*

The spectacular two-day automotive festival transforms downtown Ontario into classic car heaven, with more than 1,000 vintage vehicles lining historic Euclid Avenue. Live music on multiple stages, gourmet food trucks and family activities complement the meticulously restored vehicles whose owners are eager to share stories of American automotive heritage.

OCTOBER

RENDEZVOUS BACK TO ROUTE 66 *San Bernadino*

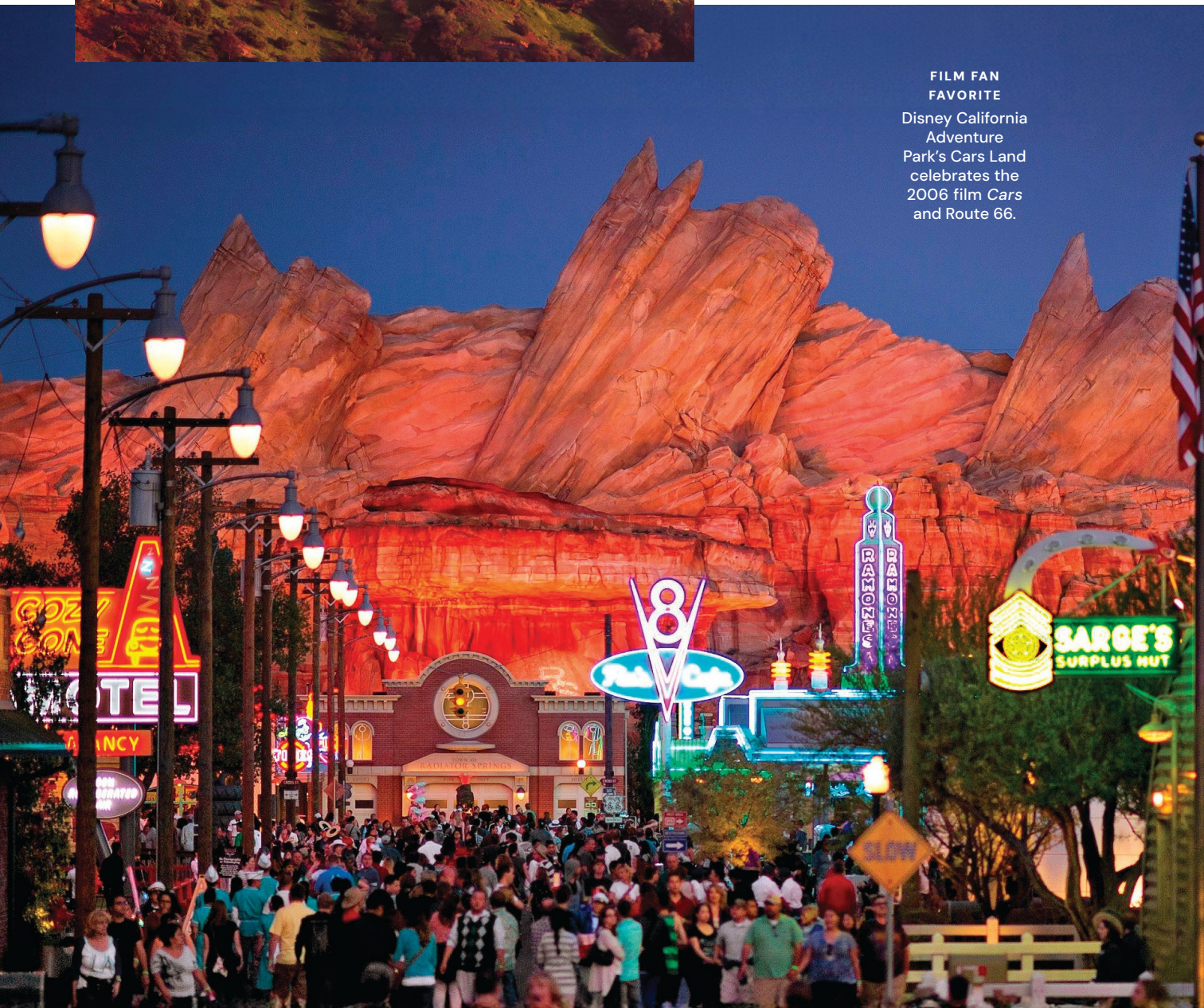
This popular celebration features 1,000+ pre-1999 classics and motorcycles rumbling in downtown San Bernadino. The one-day event includes classic cars and family fun, as well as vendors specializing in period memorabilia. All told, it's a fantastic immersion into Route 66 nostalgia.



THE NIGHT SKY Los Angeles' Griffith Observatory and Joshua Tree National Park both cater to stargazers.



**JOSHUA TREE
NATIONAL
PARK**



**FILM FAN
FAVORITE**
Disney California
Adventure
Park's Cars Land
celebrates the
2006 film *Cars*
and Route 66.

DID YOU KNOW? LOCATED JUST 20 MINUTES NORTHEAST OF BARSTOW, CALICO GHOST TOWN IS A REMARKABLY PRESERVED 1880S SILVER MINING BOOMTOWN.

RETAIL THERAPY

Where weary Route 66 travelers once sought basic necessities, the Outlets at **Barstow** now offers road-trippers a contemporary oasis of browsing, as well as some practical travel assistance. This open-air shopping center houses California-born brands like Guess, Levi's and O'Neill at desert-hot discounts—perfect for replacing that forgotten outfit on your cross-country trek. The mall's location, near the junction of interstates

15 and 40, as well as historic Route 66, puts it right on the way for those traveling between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, or to California destinations such as Joshua Tree National Park and the Mojave National Preserve. Don't miss the California Welcome Center housed within, where knowledgeable staff provide invaluable guidance for your Mother Road trip. Their free brochures and travel guides include detailed maps highlighting lesser-known attractions, like the nearby Calico Ghost Town.

TOP STOPS IN NEEDLES

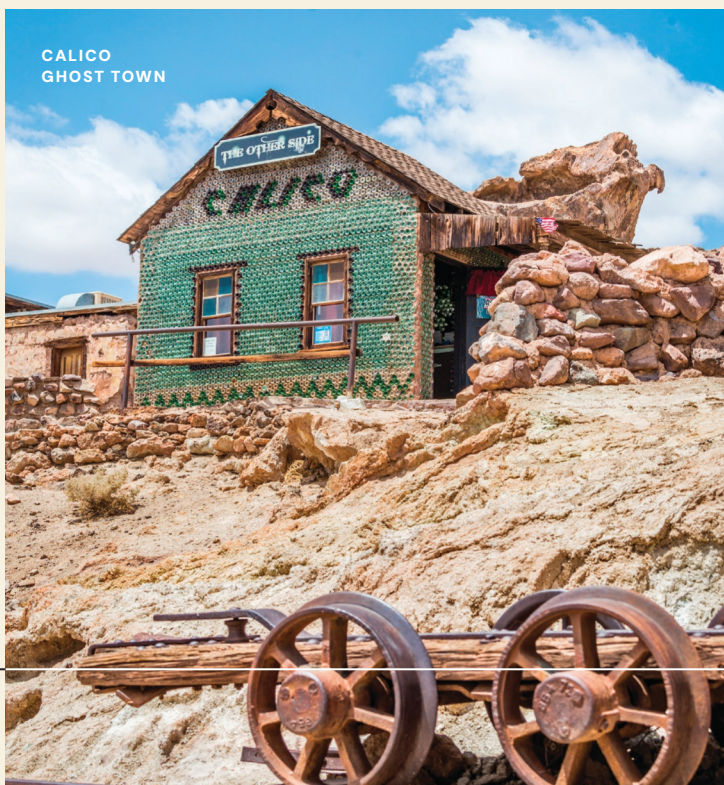
Charles M. Schulz lived in **Needles** briefly as a child, and you can pay tribute to the *Peanuts* creator at the Needles Regional Museum. Snap a selfie with its statue of Spike, Snoopy's mustachioed, hat-wearing brother.

The old-school Wagon Wheel Restaurant has been serving hungry travelers since 1978. Their hearty breakfast platters and hand-cut chicken-fried steaks offer roadside sustenance in a space adorned with Mother Road memorabilia.

El Garces is a beautifully restored 1908 Mission Revival train depot that at one time included a Fred Harvey restaurant and hotel serving early Route 66 travelers. The gleaming building stands as a monument to the time when rail and road travel intersected.

Capture a classic road trip photo of the Needles, California, sign adorning an old borax wagon. It's located at the intersection of Broadway and A streets.

Featuring both cabins and an RV park, Pirate Cove Resort, located on the Colorado River, is a perfect base camp for outdoor recreation. It's also a relaxing option for road-trippers who are ready to rest and kick back.



WORTH A DETOUR



CARS LAND Anaheim

Just an hour southeast of Los Angeles, Disney California Adventure Park's Cars Land is a meticulously crafted homage to the Mother Road. This 12-acre immersive landscape re-creates the fictional town of Radiator Springs from Pixar's 2006 film *Cars* with stunning accuracy.

GRIFFITH PARK Los Angeles

The city's largest municipal park offers 50 miles of hiking trails and a diverse collection of cultural institutions, including Griffith Observatory, the open-air Greek Theatre, and the Autry Museum of the American West.

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

The otherworldly landscapes here unfold like a surrealist painting come to life. The park's namesake trees—actually yuccas, not trees—stretch their spiky arms skyward in twisted silhouettes against vast blue horizons.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD Universal City

Take the famed Studio Tour, of course, and then explore SUPER NINTENDO WORLD and The Wizarding World of Harry Potter. The third "world" to hit up: Jurassic World—The Ride, which features frightening dinos and a good splash.



Arizona

BEYOND THE CHARMING SMALL TOWNS, KITSCHY DINERS
AND QUIRKY ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS, ARIZONA'S
PORTION OF ROUTE 66 PROVIDES EPIC LANDSCAPES AND
COUNTLESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCOVERY.

PRESS PLAY

Take It Easy
Eagles

(Get Your Kicks On)
Route 66
Depeche Mode

Dog Days Are Over
Florence +
The Machine

Go Your Own Way
Fleetwood Mac

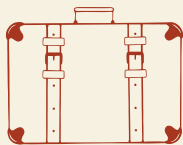
Fast Car
Tracy Chapman



COOL SPRINGS STATION
Golden Valley

TOP STAYS

LEGENDARY LODGING



LA POSADA HOTEL AND GARDENS Winslow

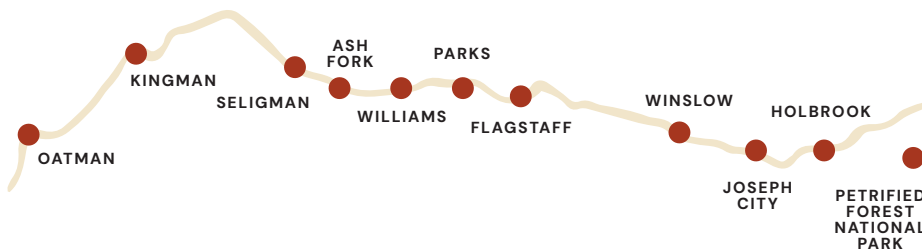
La Posada stands as the crown jewel of Winslow's historic treasures, a masterpiece designed by Mary Colter as the last great Harvey House railroad hotel in 1929. Rescued from demolition in the 1990s, this Spanish Colonial Revival gem has been restored to its former glory, offering guests uniquely appointed rooms, including one named after former guest Howard Hughes.

WIGWAM MOTEL Holbrook

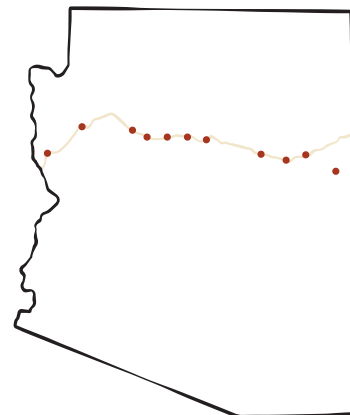
You can sleep in a tipi along Route 66 at one of just three remaining "villages" from a chain established in the 1930s. These 15 concrete and steel tipis (mistakenly called wigwams) stand 32 feet tall and line the perimeter of a courtyard adorned with vintage autos. Best of all, they make for comfortably cozy rooms.

THE AZTEC MOTEL AND CREATIVE SPACE Seligman

Originally built in 1915 as a guest house, this property has worn many hats over the years—including a beauty salon and a private home. In 2021 it was refurbished and reopened to overnight guests, offering modern amenities with plenty of retro flair.



If you are looking for pristine natural beauty, rich history, fascinating culture, adventurous experiences and genuine people, Arizona's stretch of Route 66 delivers an unparalleled journey through the soul of the American West. Spanning more than 385 miles—including the longest uninterrupted segment of the Mother Road remaining in America—this iconic highway weaves through landscapes that transition dramatically from the Painted Desert to the towering ponderosa pines of **Flagstaff's** high country. This storied corridor witnessed the Dust Bowl migration, wartime travels and the birth of American road trip culture. Today, meticulously preserved trading posts, motor courts and diners—like the snow-capped tipis of the Wigwam Motel in **Holbrook** and **Seligman's** famous Delgadillo's Snow Cap Drive-In—stand as living museums to midcentury Americana. In **Winslow**, visitors can famously "stand on a corner" immortalized by the Eagles, while **Oatman's** wandering burros create traffic jams of the most charming variety. Whether pursuing the neon-lit nostalgia of roadside attractions or seeking the rugged beauty of high desert vistas, Arizona's Route 66 presents a journey where each bend in the road reveals another facet of America's complex and vibrant heritage.



ON THIS DAY: APRIL 22, 1988

Arizona Gov. Rose Mofford and Grand Marshal Will Rogers Jr. presided over the inaugural Route 66 Fun Run dedication ceremony in **Seligman**, just months after the highway received its designation as a historic road. The ribbon-cutting event drew 152 classic car enthusiasts who cruised the Mother Road's celebrated pavement. Now in its fourth decade, the annual Fun Run holds the distinction of being America's oldest and longest-running Route 66 celebration, a rally that draws thousands of nostalgic travelers and vintage automobile aficionados to experience the historic corridor's enduring charm.

PHOTO OP

Beckoning travelers since 1949, Jack Rabbit Trading Post's yellow HERE IT IS billboard has become a quintessential Route 66 photo op. Located west of **Joseph City**, this roadside institution survived the interstate bypass that claimed many contemporaries. Inside, visitors discover a time capsule of Southwest curiosities, Native American crafts and Route 66 memorabilia. Most coveted is the chance to straddle the oversized fiberglass jackrabbit outside—a ritual dating back generations.

ESSENTIAL EATERY

Delgadillo's Snow Cap Drive-In serves up burgers, hot dogs, shakes and a heaping helping of nostalgia.



ASK A LOCAL

JOSH NOBLE

*Tourism services manager
and lifelong Kingmanite*

KINGMAN

Q: What does your perfect day in Kingman look like?

A: I think a perfect day in Kingman is when there is an event going on downtown. You have so many in the community show up to experience and participate in the small-town American atmosphere that we have on Beale Street, with all the restaurants, breweries and shops off Route 66 in our historic downtown.

Q: How do you like to explore Kingman?

A: On cool or overcast days, I like going out on the trails. Or in the spring, when you've got some of the plants coming back up after spring rains, seeing the desert flora come back to life. Just getting out and experiencing the hiking trails that are so close to town. That's what differentiates Kingman from bigger communities; you could just walk to the trailhead from downtown. You don't have to drive out of town.

Q: Do you have a favorite trail?

A: My two favorite trails are White Cliffs Wagon Trail—the original one with the tracks—and Monolith Garden Trail, because the landscape there is like a mini Monument Valley with all the monoliths and the bluffs. It's mystical.



DOWNTOWN FESTIVAL
Kingman



PHOTOGRAPHS: VISIT ARIZONA. (PORTRAIT) COURTESY JOSH NOBLE; (GIGANTICUS) SNEH PHOTO - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

TOP EATS **DESERT DELIGHTS**



DELGADILLO'S SNOW CAP DRIVE-IN *Seligman*

A playful spirit permeates this 1953 landmark, where the kitschy decor, generous portions and over-the-top milkshakes compete for top billing.



GIGANTICUS HEADICUS
Kingman

PHOTO OP

Standing 14 feet tall outside near **Kingman**, Giganticus Headicus has rapidly evolved from quirky roadside oddity to essential Route 66 Instagram material. Created in 2004 by artist Gregg Arnold, this moss-green Moai-inspired monolith pays homage to the highway's legacy of offbeat attractions, while creating a new tradition for modern travelers. The surrounding property enhances the experience with vintage gas pumps, weathered signage and an eclectic gift shop offering Route 66 kitsch. While relatively young compared to classic Mother Road landmarks, this tiki-esque titan has earned its place in contemporary road trip lore, offering a perfect bridge between Route 66's storied past and its vibrant present.

WILD AND WACKY

The Poozeum in **Williams** is the world's premier museum dedicated to fossilized dinosaur poop, also known as coprolites. Poozeum owner George Frandsen holds the Guinness World Record for the largest collection of coprolites, which includes the world's largest that came from a *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. And yes, visitors can see this giant specimen in person.

HISTORY LESSON

In the precarious early days of Route 66, the steep, winding mountain pass near **Golden Valley** presented a white-knuckle challenge that many travelers weren't equipped to handle. The notorious hairpin turns and precipitous drops of Sitgreaves Pass often proved too daunting for 1920s and 1930s automobiles with primitive braking systems and underpowered engines. Enterprising locals capitalized on

motorists' fears by offering their services as mountain pilots. For a fee, these skilled drivers would navigate vehicles—in reverse—up the treacherous incline. Driving backward was necessary in those days because early cars lacked fuel pumps; gravity was the only way to feed gasoline to the engine on the steep grade. Today's motorists will no doubt enjoy the epic views atop the pass, knowing they can point their vehicles forward the entire way.

DID YOU KNOW? ARIZONA IS HOME TO THE LONGEST STRETCH OF REMAINING ROUTE 66, WHICH IS 157.87 MILES FROM CROOKTON ROAD TO TOPOCK.



METEOR CRATER
Winslow

PARKS IN THE PINES GENERAL STORE AND DELI Parks

Savor house-specialty sandwiches made with locally sourced ingredients. Try to time your visit to coincide with one of the recurring Artisan Markets.

MOTHER ROAD BREWING COMPANY Flagstaff

After a long day of driving and exploring, pull into this Route 66-theme brewery and sample the Sunday Drive American Lager or the Daily Driver Juicy Pale Ale.

MR. D'Z ROUTE 66 DINER Kingman

This old-school diner serves all of the traditional fare you'd expect and is best-known for its homemade root beer and pizza. Oprah Winfrey is reportedly a big fan.

TURQUOISE ROOM Winslow

Housed within the historic La Posada Hotel, this upscale restaurant is led by chef Angel Soto and features entrees like the Three Way Churro Lamb Sampler and a bacon-wrapped filet mignon.



ICONIC
**SIGHTS
AND
STOPS**



**ANGEL AND VILMA DELGADILLO'S
ORIGINAL ROUTE 66 GIFT SHOP**

This colorful landmark isn't merely a store, but a shrine to America's most storied highway, created by Angel Delgadillo, affectionately known as the Guardian Angel of Route 66. As a barber who witnessed his town's decline after I-40 bypassed **Seligman** in 1978, Delgadillo spearheaded the movement that officially designated Route 66 as a historic highway in Arizona—ultimately sparking its international revival. Visitors can still take a seat in Delgadillo's original barbershop chair for a truly unique photo op.

ARIZONA ROUTE 66 MUSEUM

Housed within **Kingman's** historic Powerhouse building, the Arizona Route 66 Museum collection presents the highway's complete story—from

Native American trade routes to midcentury tourism boom. Visitors navigate chronologically through exhibits that include a glistening yellow 1950 Studebaker, period photography and interactive displays, including *The Guardian*

Angel of Route 66 exhibit, where travelers can engage with an AI-guided Angel Delgadillo and learn his story about helping save Route 66.

ASH FORK ROUTE 66 MUSEUM

This volunteer-run treasure presents Route 66 history through the lens of local experiences rather than commercialized nostalgia. The museum's exhibits showcase **Ash Fork's** unique identity as The Flagstone Capital of the World, with displays highlighting the quarrying industry that sustained the community after being bypassed by Interstate-40. Don't miss the remarkable collection of Santa Fe Railroad artifacts—a reminder of the town's crucial role as a division point on this legendary railway.

STANDING ON THE CORNER PARK

Immortalized by the Eagles' 1972 hit "Take It Easy," *Standin' on the Corner* Park in **Winslow** transforms musical lore into a tangible activity along Route 66. Created in 1999, this charming pocket park features a bronze statue of a man with a guitar alongside a vibrant mural depicting a storefront with a reflection of a girl in a flatbed Ford. Visitors queue for photos with these familiar elements while enjoying street musicians who often perform the celebrated tune. The park anchors Winslow's revitalized downtown district, where Route 66-theme shops and eateries have flourished in its wake.

HACKBERRY GENERAL STORE

This unassuming gem near **Kingman** has evolved from a functioning 1930s service station into a living museum celebrating the Mother Road. Outside, a collection of sun-faded vintage automobiles and antique gas pumps creates the perfect backdrop for photos, while inside, every square inch tells the highway's story through license plates, road signs and period advertisements.

SHAKE IT UP

Mr. D's Route 66 Diner in **Kingman** is famous for its over-the-top milkshakes.

PAINTED DESERT,
Petrified Forest National Park



CAN'T-MISS EXPERIENCES IN OATMAN

ENCOUNTER THE WILD BURROS

Descendants of miners' pack animals, these friendly donkeys roam Oatman's streets freely, approaching visitors for treats (available at local shops). Their gentle curiosity offers an authentic connection to the town's mining heritage.

PICK UP A CACTUS

Pinnacles is a cute-as-can-be shop where you can grab a Route 66 cactus to remind you of your journey.

EXPERIENCE A WILD WEST GUNFIGHT

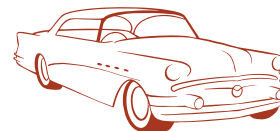
Daily staged shoot-outs bring the town's rowdy past to life as costumed performers re-create Oatman's gold rush excitement.

EXPLORE THE HISTORIC OATMAN HOTEL

The 1902 landmark, rebuilt in 1924 after a fire, houses a bar and restaurant on the ground level and a museum on the second floor—including the Clark Gable–Carole Lombard honeymoon suite. Join thousands of others by attaching a dollar bill to the saloon walls or ceiling.

WORTH A

DETOUR



PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Near Holbrook

This scenic park offers Route 66 travelers a mesmerizing journey through 225 million years of Earth's history. It's a 50,000-acre wonderland that showcases ancient fossilized logs transformed into rainbow-hue quartz crystals, their cellular structure perfectly preserved in stone. The kaleidoscopic badlands of the Painted Desert stretch northward, while prehistoric petroglyphs and pueblo ruins reveal human history spanning centuries. Visitors can explore via scenic drives, tackle backcountry hiking trails or participate in ranger-led programs.

METEOR CRATER

Winslow

Veer just 6 miles south of the route to witness the planet's best-preserved meteorite impact site. Nearly 1 mile across and 550 feet deep, Meteor Crater (also known as Barringer Crater) was formed more than 50,000 years ago when an iron-nickel meteorite, merely 150 feet wide, struck with the force of 2.5 million tons of TNT. The pristine depression offers visitors a profound celestial connection—Earth's vulnerability etched into the landscape. The visitors center delivers context through interactive exhibits, while the observation decks provide vistas of this remarkable cosmic scar.



WILD BURROS
Oatman

ON THIS DAY: SEPTEMBER 10, 2022

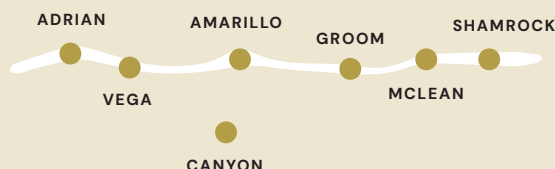
Delgadillo's Snow Cap Drive-In officially earned a Guinness World Record by offering an astounding 266 different milkshake flavors—the most extensive selection ever seen. This **Seligman** establishment, a fixture on Route 66 since 1953, was instantly transformed

from beloved roadside attraction to certified world champion. Each hand-spun creation, including classic vanilla (or perhaps something more adventurous), represents the same playful spirit that has made this family-run landmark a required stop for generations.



Texas

SLICING ACROSS THE PLAINS OF THE PANHANDLE, INTERSTATE-40 TRACES MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL MOTHER ROAD. YOU COULD BLAZE ACROSS IT IN A COUPLE OF HOURS, BUT THEN YOU'D BE MISSING A STELLAR LINEUP OF LONE STAR STATE WONDERS.



She traveled the road as a child. Wide-eyed and grinning, she never tired. Crank up “Wide Open Spaces” by Texas group The Chicks as you cruise across the expanses of the state’s panhandle. Whether approaching from the east or west, you’ll log a solid hour of driving among timeless landmarks before reaching an urban jewel deep in the heart of the route: **Amarillo**.

Studded with Spanish Revival and Art Deco architecture, the city’s U.S. Route 66–Sixth Street Historic District leans into nostalgia with 13 blocks of colorful diversions. Start your city tour by posing in front of the *Welcome to Amarillo, Texas* mural at the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center, then head west along Sixth Avenue (part of the original Route 66) for a parade of coffee shops, antiques stores, art galleries and restaurants—many of which include winks to the legendary road that once passed their front doors.

Once you’ve filled up on vintage vibes, head to the city’s downtown for an evening of modern luxury at The Barfield, Autograph Collection. While smart TVs and room service have largely replaced the age of motor courts touting color televisions and air-conditioning, guests seeking one last sip of a simpler era head

downstairs to the hotel’s Paramount Recreation Club, a Prohibition-style speakeasy pouring classics, such as the Sidecar and Bee’s Knees. It’s a perfect nightcap before another day (or more) of wide-eyed wandering past iconic Texas landscapes.



GET ORIENTED With its bright mural greeting, the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center provides a welcoming launch point to explore Amarillo’s U.S. Route 66–Sixth Street Historic District. Watch the *Two for the Road* documentary covering Route 66 highlights and peruse local artwork.

TAIL FINS UP
A psychedelic
rainbow of spray
paint greets
visitors at Cadillac
Ranch near
Amarillo.



PRESS PLAY

*Texas tunes for
the road.*

Deep in the
Heart of Texas
Moe Bandy

Miles and Miles of
Texas
Asleep at the Wheel

Texas Pride
Miranda Lambert

Wide Open Spaces
The Chicks

The Yellow Rose
Johnny Lee and
Lane Brody



PHOTO OP

Just west of **Amarillo**, 10 graffitied Cadillac cars stand partially submerged in the ground with their tail fins jutting out at an angle—as if they'd been tossed like darts from the sky. Welcome to the quirkiness of Cadillac Ranch, dreamed up in 1974 by a team of San Francisco artists known as the Ant Farm (with financial fuel from Amarillo millionaire Stanley Marsh III). The composition of the color-splashed clunkers is ever-evolving, as visitors are encouraged to bring their own spray paint and leave their mark.

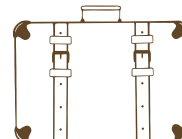
ICONIC STOP

Congratulations, you're halfway there! In 1928, what is now the MidPoint Cafe and Gift Shop opened as a one-room barbecue restaurant run by waitress Zella Crim. Located in **Adrian**, it's now the oldest continuously operating cafe between Amarillo and Tucumcari, New Mexico. True to its name, MidPoint stands at the approximate halfway mark of the route—it's about 1,100 miles from here to Chicago or to Santa Monica. The place has grown quite a bit from its 1928 opening, with license plates lining the walls and diners digging into breakfasts, stacked-high burgers and silky pies.



TOP STAYS

BRIMMING WITH CHARACTER



THE BIG TEXAN AIRBNB Amarillo

A stretch of facades resembling an old-school thoroughfare of Wild West establishments conceals modernized guest rooms with ranch-theme accents. Swim in the Texas-shape outdoor pool or indoor heated pool, then dive into dinner at The Big Texan Steak Ranch nearby.

DOVES REST CABINS Canyon

Just outside the entrance to Palo Duro Canyon State Park, enjoy rustic-chic overnights with panoramic views of striking rock formations, cliffs and mesas that form the "Grand Canyon of Texas." For the most remote experience, book the striking stone Goodnight cabin that has its own outdoor hot tub.

CACTUS INN McLean

If you're looking for the true retro experience, this is your spot. A towering cactus-shape sign marks your arrival to the simple-but-sparkling-clean motor court that opened in the 1950s. One of its best perks: You're located across the street from legendary Red River Steakhouse.



PHOTO OP

It's hard to miss the 85-foot-tall Leaning Water Tower when driving I-40 east of **Groom**. Dubbed The Leaning Tower of Britten, it tilts at an unsettling 10-degree angle, as if one stiff breeze will send it crashing to earth. While most passersby assume it's a product of old age or high winds, the off-kilter engineering is intentional. In the early 1980s, Ralph Britten towed the tower from Lefors (34 miles northeast) and used it to promote his former truck stop. Using a bulldozer, Britten elevated one side of the tower to grab the attention of freeway drivers.

HISTORY LESSONS

Get tangled up in tales of Texas ranching and the Mother Road at the Devil's Rope and Texas Route 66 Museum in **McLean**. On the sharper side of the former brasserie factory building, learn about the varied uses for barbed wire and see rare displays from private wire collectors. (Yep, they're a thing!) The Route 66 portion of the museum showcases more than 700 artifacts from the road, including the original steer sculpture that held court outside The Big Texan Steak Ranch in Amarillo.



TYLER'S
BARBEQUE
Amarillo



DID YOU KNOW? THE BIG TEXAN'S 72-OUNCE STEAK CHALLENGE CONSISTS OF STEAK, SHRIMP COCKTAIL, A BAKED POTATO, SALAD (FOR BALANCE) AND A DINNER ROLL WITH BUTTER. COMPLETE IT ALL WITHIN AN HOUR AND YOUR MEAL IS FREE.

ASK A LOCAL

BOBBY LEE
Co-owner
of The Big Texan
Steak Ranch
AMARILLO

Q: What's an early memory you have of The Big Texan—and your dad, as he ran the show?

A: In 1963, professional wrestler Klondike Bill ate two 72-ounce steaks in just 52 minutes. The newspaper was taking photos and Dad insisted I join him in the shot.

Q: Beyond your famous (and still popular) 72-ounce steak challenge, what are you and your brother—also a co-owner—proudest of?

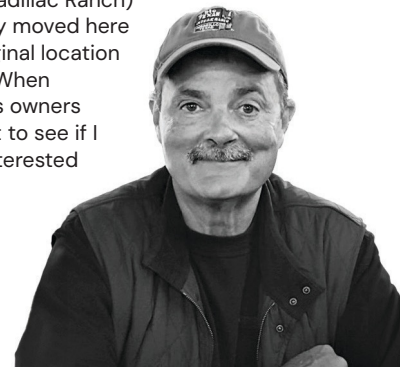
A: I love the synergy of attractions we've built here. Our restaurant, motel, RV resort, events center and gift shop all feed off each other and work in unison to create The Big Texan mystique.

Q: Does that mystique extend to Route 66?

A: Very much so. Texas is a true state of mind with its folklore, cattle and cowboys. Route 66 gave us the golden opportunity to show the world what Texas is all about.

Q: What's the latest addition to The Big Texan?

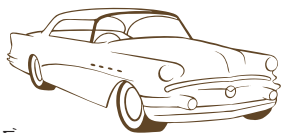
A: Slug Bug Ranch (an assortment of graffitied Volkswagens in the style of nearby Cadillac Ranch) was recently moved here from its original location in Conway. When the previous owners reached out to see if I would be interested in obtaining them, I said, "Absolutely!"





NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Shamrock locals and Route 66 travelers alike thanked their lucky stars when Lianne Halpern and her chef husband, Aldo, swooped in to revive the U-Drop Inn Cafe in early 2025. Part of the town's Conoco Tower Station building—a 1936 Art Deco showstopper with neon lighting—the cafe once hosted Elvis Presley on a cross-country tour. Elevated comfort-food classics anchor the refreshed menu (think meatloaf and brisket dinners), and the signature pulled pork salad with house-made buttermilk ranch dressing has already proven to be a crowd favorite. Don't miss the banana bread sundae, a dessert The King himself would certainly devour.



WORTH A DETOUR

Towering rust-color rock formations and rugged

DOUBLE DUTY The twin towers of Shamrock's Conoco Tower Station and U-Drop Inn Cafe are a unique feature you won't find anywhere else along Route 66. The exterior's restored and glazed ceramic tiles add shimmer.

valleys dotted with Rocky Mountain juniper trees offer a dramatic landscape shift at Palo Duro Canyon State Park. An easy half hour drive southeast from **Amarillo**, the state park contains just a sliver of the 120-mile-long Palo Duro Canyon, which reaches a width of 20 miles. Along 30 miles of hiking, biking and horseback riding trails, witness millions of years of history layered like a cake on massive rock faces. On your way to or from the park, pop into Creek House Honey Farm for tastes of the sweet stuff, as well as skin care products made from beeswax and other natural ingredients. On-site Honey Buzz Winery pours mead and honey lemonade, and a restaurant serves up sandwiches on house-made honey wheat bread.

BONUS DETOUR

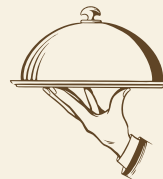
Infamous for its mud-caked thoroughfare that stranded vehicles and travelers, the 18-mile stretch of road known as Jericho Gap was a doozy—so much so that Route 66 was eventually rerouted north between **Groom** and **McLean**. Today's stretch of the original route is much smoother as it passes the ghost town of Jericho with its smattering of ruins. June's Jericho Gap 5K/10K Fun Run sends participants past the cemetery and a series of historical markers.



EPIC BACKDROP Chuck wagon dinners precede performances of *TEXAS Outdoor Musical* at Pioneer Amphitheater. Set in front of a 600-foot-tall cliff within Palo Duro Canyon State Park, the summer show honors the heritage of the Texas Panhandle with singing, dancing and heart.

TOP EATS

BOLD TEXAS FLAVORS



RED RIVER STEAKHOUSE

Amarillo and McLean

Score free cobbler with any entree purchase. Beyond signature steaks, the green chili-marinated chicken with sauteed onions is a hit.

THE GOLDENLIGHT CAFE AND CANTINA

Amarillo

Railroad Ralph's chili cheese fries topped with cheese and onions are legendary, as is the story behind Amarillo's oldest restaurant.

TYLER'S BARBEQUE

Amarillo

Southern comforts abound, with succulent brisket and ribs as well as Frito Pie sandwiches. Seal the deal with silky banana pudding.

CASK AND CORK

Amarillo

Pair surf or turf with a glass of fine wine. Standouts include lobster fettuccine with wild mushrooms and a mushroom cream sauce.

MAMA JO'S PIES AND SWEETS

Vega

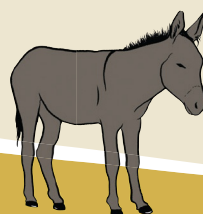
Gluten-friendly brownie bites—available in classic fudge or pecan praline—make for a perfect take-home treat. Don't miss the restored 1920s Magnolia Gas Station up the street.



CALIFORNIA



SANTA MONICA



FLAGSTAFF

ARIZONA



ALBUQUERQUE

NEW MEXICO



Go Get Your Kicks

NO MATTER WHICH DIRECTION YOU'RE HEADING, A ROUTE 66 ROAD TRIP PROMISES RETRO KITSCH, SPECTACULAR SIGHTS AND A LIFETIME OF MEMORIES.

ILLUSTRATIONS: EMMA ISENHART



ILLINOIS

It all begins in the
Land of Lincoln. **P. 2**

MISSOURI

Tour the highway's
official birthplace. **P. 10**

KANSAS

So many gems in a
short distance. **P. 18**

100 YEARS OF THE MOTHER ROAD

Route 66

175+
ROAD
TRIP
IDEAS

BEST BITES

DELIGHTFUL
DETOURS

PERFECT
PLAYLISTS

MUSEUMS
AND MORE!



LIVING HISTORY
The Standard Oil Gas Station in Odell, Illinois, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of many landmarks located on the Mother Road.



Travel Back in Time

ROUTE 66 TURNS 100 IN
2026, AND THERE'S NEVER
BEEN A BETTER TIME
TO VENTURE WEST AND
SEE AMERICA.

In 1926,

the first Route 66 travelers embarked on a genuine adventure, navigating a patchwork of paved and dirt roads in their Oldsmobiles and Model Ts. These pioneering motorists carried spare parts and tools, relied on paper maps and local wisdom, and rested at simple motor courts after dusty days of driving. Despite flat tires and breakdowns, they discovered America's diverse landscape in a revolutionary way—experiencing freedom via the open road.

As Route 66 approaches its centennial in 2026, its 2,278-mile ribbon from Chicago to Santa Monica, California, remains America's ultimate nostalgic highway. Today, the Mother Road offers a perfect blend of yesteryear charm and modern comfort—a living museum where the nation's love affair with automobile travel is preserved in chrome and neon.

Pack up and follow the tire tracks of history westward from Chicago's architectural splendor through Illinois' pastoral landscapes dotted with grain silos and red-painted barns. Marvel at Wilmington's Gemini Giant, explore Pontiac's treasured Route 66 memorabilia, and pedal or walk across the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge into St. Louis, where the Gateway Arch stands tall.

Your Route 66 journey isn't just a road trip—it's time travel with power steering, where each stop connects you to generations of dreamers who found America by driving straight through its heart.

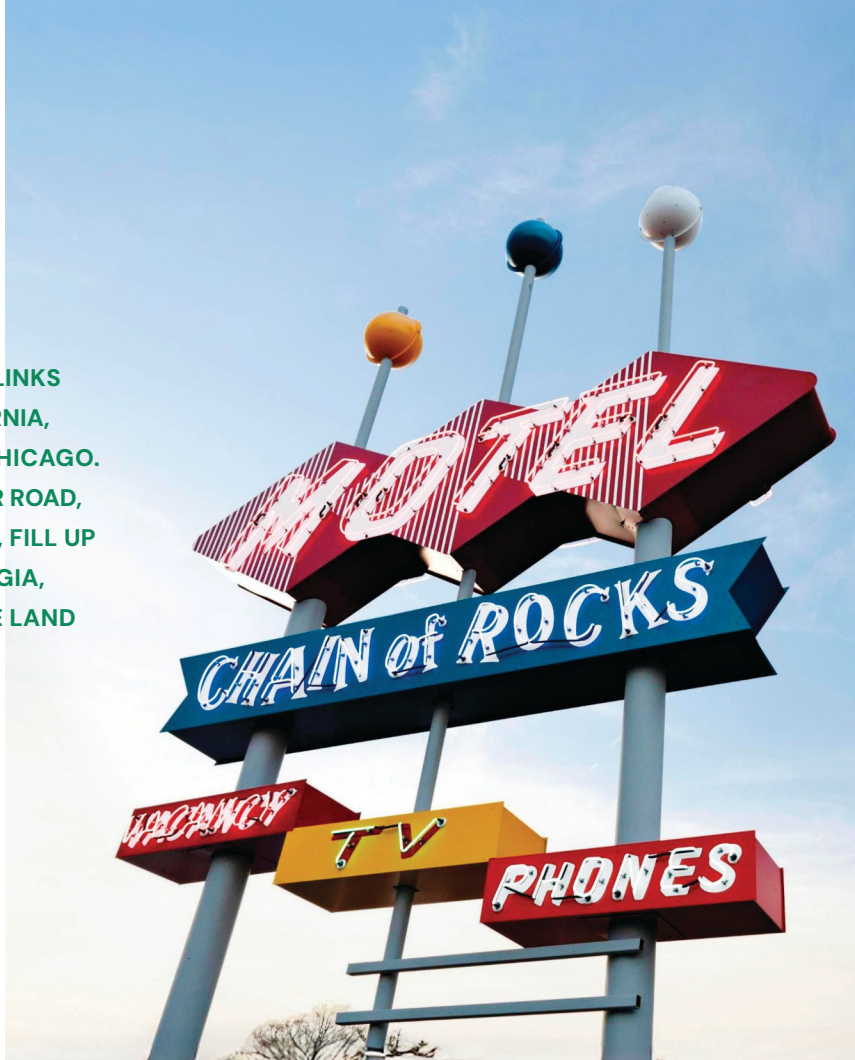
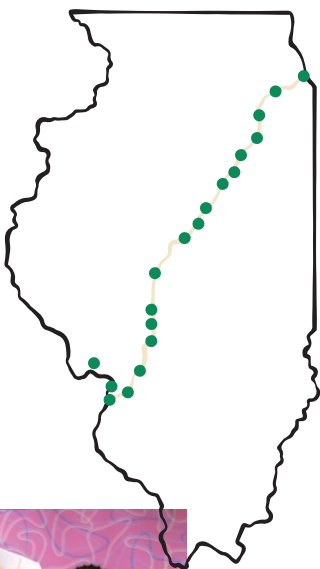
ON THE COVER

Pink Elephant Antique Mall
in Livingston, Illinois
Photographer: Ryan Donnell



Illinois

ROUTE 66, THE ROAD THAT LINKS THE WINDY CITY TO CALIFORNIA, BEGINS IN THE HEART OF CHICAGO. AS YOU TRAVEL THE MOTHER ROAD, YOU'LL MEET MUFLER MEN, FILL UP ON HOT DOGS AND NOSTALGIA, AND FALL IN LOVE WITH THE LAND OF LINCOLN.



Cozy Dog Drive In Springfield



The official start of Route 66 is at Adams Street between Michigan and Wabash avenues in downtown **Chicago**, in front of the Art Institute of Chicago. The 301-mile path slices diagonally through the state to the Mississippi River, where it crosses into St. Louis. Though Interstate-55 replaced much of the route, original portions of the brick road still exist. Along the way, you'll pass through urban areas, including **Joliet**, **Bloomington-Normal** and **Springfield**, the state capital and home to Abraham Lincoln prior to his presidency. Also in Springfield, a bearded fiberglass statue holding an American flag shares the parking lot of Lauterbach Tire and Auto Service. It's one of several roadside attractions known as Muffler Men, because they originally held car mufflers. A green Gemini Giant sits in a park in **Wilmington**, and a hot dog holding Paul Bunyon (the spelling is intentional) greets visitors in **Atlanta**. Find more statues like Big Boy (new in 2025) and Texaco Big Friend at the American Giants Museum. And more giants are outside the Pink Elephant Antique Mall in **Livingston**. While there, step inside an ice

PHOTOGRAPHS: RYAN DONNELL, (SIGNS) JOT

GLOW UP Open year-round, the Legends Neon Park shares space on the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield.

PRESS PLAY

Four great songs with Illinois roots.

Sweet Home Chicago
Robert Johnson

Route 66 Theme
Nelson Riddle

Route 66 Revisited
Jimmy LaFave

The Mother Road
Alan Rhody and Kevin Welch

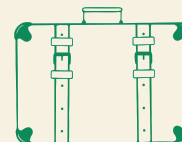
was realigned in 1945, the road was relocated to the west side of The Log Cabin. Not wanting to lose customers, the family hired a crew to use horsepower to hoist and turn the building 180 degrees. Today, the restaurant serves hearty breakfasts, sandwiches and burgers. Get there before they close at 2 p.m.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Six miles from St. Louis, **Granite City**, once known for its steel mills, is making a comeback with multiple selfie-friendly attractions on Route 66. The Larger than Life art installations feature three pieces: *Fork in the Road*, a 20-foot-tall metal fork; *Make it Toy*, a prototype for the Tinkertoy, which was produced in the city; and Granite Ware, enamel cookware from the former factory that shuttered in 1956. The city is also erecting two Route 66 Giants: Blue Collar Worker and Auto Mechanic. Both attractions open this June. While in town, visit It's Electric Neon Sign Park. The park has three restored neon signs (all from one-time local businesses), two murals and a model of the nearby Chain of Rocks Bridge.

TOP STAYS

CHECK IN TO CHECK OUT



HARRAH'S JOLIET CASINO; HOLLYWOOD CASINO AND HOTEL

Joliet

Stay and play slots, table games and more at these 24/7 gaming hotels.

PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN SPRINGFIELD

Springfield

Be in the heart of downtown at this DoubleTree by Hilton, with an indoor pool and on-site restaurant.

URBAN COLLECTIVE BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Edwardsville

In 2023, two women transformed this 1887 downtown building into a hotel with eight distinct suites, all with different vibes.

DID YOU KNOW? ILLINOIS WAS THE FIRST STATE TO REPLACE THE OLD ROUTE 66 ROAD WITH AN INTERSTATE.

cream cone-shape building for burgers, fries (and of course, ice cream) at the antique mall's original Twistee Treat shop. Need ketchup? The World's Largest Catsup Bottle, a 170-foot former water tower, stands in **Collinsville**. Motorists originally crossed the Mississippi River via the Chain of Rocks Bridge near **Madison**. Today, the bridge and its 30-degree bend is open only to pedestrians and bicyclists.

LOG CABIN FEVER

In 1926, Joe and Victor "Babe" Seloti built a gas station and a lunchroom dubbed The Log Cabin Inn on Route 66 in **Pontiac**. The brothers used cedar telephone poles to build the 45-seat restaurant. Joe's barbecue would lure customers to a small window, where they observed beef and pork cooking on a spit. Meanwhile, Babe filled gas tanks and fixed flats next door at the gas station. When Route 66





ASK A LOCAL

CHERYL EICHAR JETT

Route 66 historian and book author

📍 EDWARDSVILLE

Q: What's your earliest memory of Route 66?

A: From the back seat of the family car, a blur of neon signs all the way through Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Q: What's the most surprising thing you've learned about Route 66?

A: Route 66 is basically a microcosm for U.S. history. Many of our American events, such as the Great Depression, WWII, the 1950s economic boom, the 1960s social trends, happened in the last 100 years.

Q: What are some must-see stops in Illinois?

A: Pontiac is the darling of Route 66 as far as restoration, promotion and tourism, and Springfield has all of the wonderful Lincoln attractions. Carlinville is a 10-mile detour, but worth it to drive around the square and see the \$1 million courthouse. In Mt. Olive, visit the Mother Jones Museum. Upon her request, she's buried in the cemetery. There's also the Soulsby Service Station, one of the few restored gas stations and now a museum and visitors center. Weezy's, a Route 66 roadhouse that's popular, sits in Hamel. From there, it's a lovely curvy road from Hamel south to Edwardsville.



DELL RHEA'S CHICKEN BASKET
Willowbrook



LOCAL FAVES

Must-eats in the Land of Lincoln.

Chicago Dog

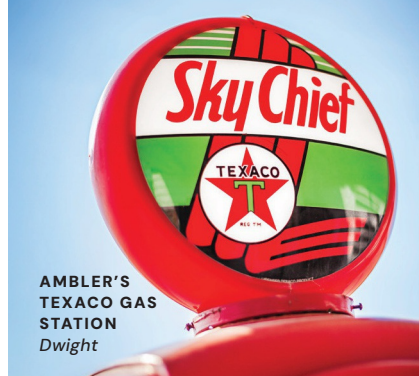
All beef dog on a poppy seed bun with yellow mustard, white onions, pickle relish, dill pickle spear, tomato wedges, sport peppers and a dash of celery salt.

Chicago-Style Pizza

Deep dish 'za with sauce on top.

Horseshoe

An open-face sandwich with cheese sauce-smothered fries atop a burger.



AMBLER'S
TEXACO GAS
STATION
Dwight



ROUTE 66
MOTORHEADS
BAR AND GRILL,
MUSEUM AND
ENTERTAINMENT
COMPLEX
Springfield

REMEMBER WHEN: SUMMER 1979

An auction-house police car driven by Elwood Blues (Dan Aykroyd) rolls to a stop across the street from the **Joliet** Correctional Center in the 1980 movie, *The Blues Brothers*. He's there to pick up his brother Jake (John Belushi), who served three years of a five-year sentence for armed robbery. The movie's opening scene was filmed at Old Joliet Prison, built by inmates who quarried on-site limestone. At its height, the 1858 prison housed 1,300 inmates, including notorious gangsters like Baby Face Nelson and John Dillinger. The prison closed in 2002. Fans of the film can take a self-guided tour of the prison grounds and select buildings. (Open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, check the website for other weekday hours.)

HISTORY LESSON

In the early 20th century, oil companies built gas stations with a homey, domestic look and feel to better blend with suburbia. Two examples, both on the National Register of Historic Places, now welcome visitors. In **Dwight**, residential windows, shutters and flower boxes adorn the 1933 Ambler's Texaco Gas Station, one of the oldest continuously operated gas stations on Route 66. In **Normal**, William W. Sprague, a building contractor, constructed Sprague's Super Service, a full-service station with a restaurant in the early 1930s.

PHOTOGRAPHS: RYAN DONNELL, (SIGN) BOB STEFKO, (PORTRAIT) STEVE RENSBERY

TOP EATS

MEAT-ING SPOTS



LOU MITCHELL'S

Chicago

Order the "World's Finest Coffee" and a fluffy jumbo omelet. Choose from 23 types, like the Greek Sausage Special with tomato, green pepper and onion.

DELL RHEA'S CHICKEN BASKET

Willowbrook

The famous fried chicken basket comes with four pieces of fresh chicken that's breaded and deep-fried, plus french fries and homemade coleslaw.

ROUTE 66 MOTORHEADS BAR AND GRILL, MUSEUM AND ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX

Springfield

The Standard includes black Angus beef, lettuce, tomato, onion and a pickle on a brioche bun with a side of house-made potato chips.

COZY DOG DRIVE IN

Springfield

The everyday special comes with two Cozy Dogs and medium fries.

THE ARISTON CAFE

Litchfield

The Ariston pork tenderloin starts with a slice of pork loin that's hand-breaded and made to order.



ABRAHAM
LINCOLN
PRESIDENTIAL
LIBRARY
AND MUSEUM
Springfield

ICONIC TOWNS AND CITIES



JOLIET

For an overview of the area's history, plan to visit the Joliet Area Historical Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center. The museum, formerly a church, has exhibits on the I&M Canal (which links Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River); the Joliet Steel and Limestone industries; the logistical importance of railroads and highways; the Joliet Arsenal; and Joliet's connection to the Apollo missions. The Illinois Rock and Roll Museum on Route 66 spotlights nationally known musicians and bands with state ties. The 1926 Rialto Square Theater ranks as one of the nation's most beautiful theaters. Check the schedule for upcoming plays, concerts and musicals.

PONTIAC

Murals adorn numerous downtown buildings, including the Route 66 Association of Illinois Hall of Fame and Museum. The iconic Route 66 shield, the largest painted one in the world, covers the outside wall of the Pontiac Museum Complex, the former city hall and fire station built in 1900. Inside, the museum traces the historic route's history with artifacts and memorabilia. Behind the museum, Bob Waldmire's 1966 school bus sits on the Centennial Plaza. Dubbed the Road Yacht, the bus was retrofitted as his studio. The artist drew his inspiration from Route 66. The Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum features classic and antique cars.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (MURAL) RYAN DONNELL, (MUSEUM) JOT,
(WATER TOWER) GETTY



ATLANTA

As a circuit-riding attorney for the 8th Judicial Circuit, Abraham Lincoln traveled extensively, often stopping in Atlanta to visit friends. Learn more about the town's history at the Atlanta Public Museum, home to the Route 66 Arcade Museum. Vintage games from the '80s are free to play with a \$5 donation. Pop in next door to Missy's Sweet Shoppe for delectable cookies, cupcakes and cinnamon rolls. The shop sits across the street from the hot dog-hugging Bunyon Giant. On the next block, the American Giants Museum has a collection of roadside giants on display—perfect for selfies.

SPRINGFIELD

The Lincoln legacy shines in the capital city, where Lincoln lived for more than two decades prior to becoming the 16th president. The interactive Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum takes visitors from Abe's birth (see a re-creation of the one-room, dirt-floor cabin he was born in) through his campaign for president and death. The museum sits close to the Old State Capitol and the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. Free daily tours delve into Abe's life at home, where he and Mary Todd raised their boys. Lincoln, his wife and three of their children are buried at the Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site in Oak Ridge Cemetery.

WORLD'S LARGEST
CATSUP BOTTLE
Collinsville



BY THE NUMBERS

Four attractions along the Illinois portion of Route 66 hold six world records.

1. LARGEST PAINTED ROUTE 66 SHIELD IN THE U.S.

This 22-foot-wide by 74-foot-tall mural on the backside of the Route 66 Association of Illinois Hall of Fame and Museum in Pontiac makes the perfect selfie backdrop.

2. LARGEST RAIL-SPLITTER COVERED WAGON

Abraham Lincoln sits atop a 25-foot-tall wagon reading a law book in Lincoln. The covered wagon, built out of Illinois steel and 5 tons of oak, is 40 feet long.

3-5. TALLEST MAN, LARGEST FEET AND LARGEST HANDS

Robert Wadlow's statue stands tall in Alton.

He grew to a height of 8 feet, 11 inches before his death at the age of 22 in 1940. He also had the world's largest hands (12.75 inches) and feet (18.5 inches).

6. LARGEST CATSUP BOTTLE

The 170-foot-tall water tower was built for nearby Brook's Catsup in 1949 in Collinsville.

CATCH UP

The World's Largest Catsup Bottle has the capacity to hold 100,000 gallons of water, or about 12,800,000 one-ounce servings of the popular condiment.



NIGHT FLICKS

Catch a double feature on Friday and Saturday nights at the Skyview Drive-In theater in **Litchfield**. It's the only original drive-in still operating on Route 66. The 1950s spot retains a classic feel with car speakers tuned into FM for stereo sound. The concession stand sells popcorn, candy, snacks and grilled foods, such as hot dogs and cheeseburgers. The theater is open from early April until mid-October (\$7 per person). Another option: The **Springfield** Route 66 Drive-In shows double features Wednesdays through Sundays with classic food options at the concession stand.

ROCKIN' EATS

A 9-foot-tall, guitar-strumming Elvis Presley welcomes diners to **Braidwood's** 1956 Polk-a-Dot Drive In. Listen to music from tableside jukeboxes while eating

chili cheese fries and fried chicken, two local favorites. Afterward, snap selfies with other life-size statues, including Superman, Betty Boop and Marilyn Monroe. In **Joliet**, Jake and Elwood from *The Blues Brothers* dance atop Rich and Creamy, an ice cream shop. The former office building became an ice cream destination in 1977. The seasonal shop is known for its banana splits, turtle and brownie sundaes, and nine flavors of Flurries, plus Eli's cheesecake on a stick.

ROAD SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Legends Neon Park shares space with the Illinois State Fairgrounds in **Springfield**. Open year-round, the park houses restored and replica signs from longtime Route 66 businesses, such as A. Lincoln Motel, the Coliseum Ballroom, Chain of Rocks Motel, and the Bel-Air Drive-In theater.



LEGENDS
NEON SIGN
PARK
Springfield



SCOOP

THERE IT IS
Get a cone from the walk-up window at Rich and Creamy before wandering the adjacent Route 66 Park in Joliet.

DID YOU KNOW? THE ILLINOIS ROUTE 66 TRAIL FOR BIKES MIRRORS THE ORIGINAL ROUTE, DIVERTING CYCLISTS TO RURAL BYWAYS, OFF-ROAD PATHS AND CITY STREETS.

WORTH A

DETOUR



Explore a trio of state parks—all are about an hour's drive from Route 66.

STARVED ROCK STATE PARK

Between Utica and Oglesby

Stand in awe at the base of a canyon with eight rain-fed waterfalls. The park's 13 miles of trails begin at the visitors center, a great resource for learning about the area's history, geology and ecology. Check into the new Treehouses at Starved Rock with a full-size kitchen and multilevel decks next to the trails. Starved Rock State Park Lodge, or one of its historic log cabins, are also steps from the trails. Refuel at the Lodge Restaurant, Back Door Lounge, or The Veranda with incredible views of Starved Rock and the Illinois River Valley.

MATTHIESSEN STATE PARK

Oglesby

Though smaller in size, this park boasts three waterfalls hidden among the Upper and Lower Dells. The 11 miles of hiking trails tend to be a bit more rugged, with stream crossings, skinny paths, cliffs and canyons.

BUFFALO ROCK STATE PARK

Ottawa

Rent an e-bike from Adventur-E-Bike to explore the 298-acre park that's home to three bison (Cocoa, Pebbles and Hope). Hikers can follow the 3-mile River Bluff Trail, with lovely views of the Illinois River.

TRAIL TIME

*Recreation
meets history on
these paths.*

Constitution Trail
60-plus miles;
Chenoa to McLean

**McLean County
Historic Route 66**
37.2 miles;
Funks Grove to
Chenoa

**I & M Canal
State Trail**
61.5 miles;
Rockdale to
LaSalle

STARVED
ROCK STATE
PARK
Between Utica
and Oglesby

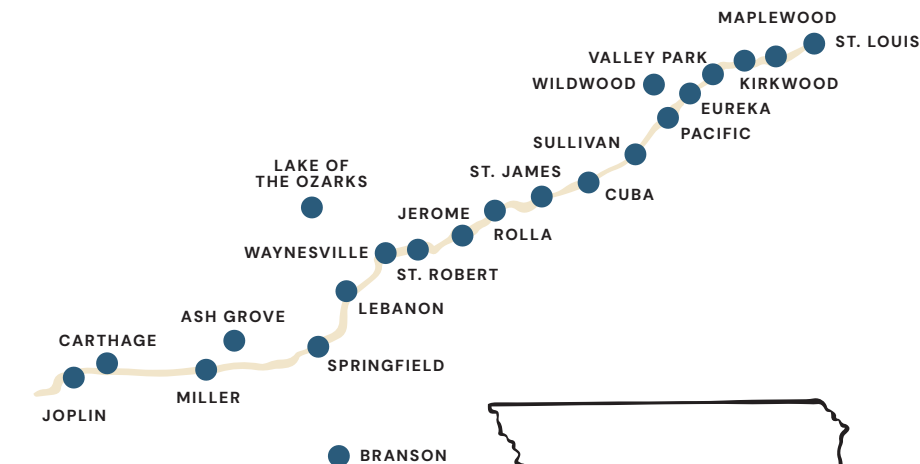


BRIDGE BEND
Walk or pedal
across the Chain
of Rocks Bridge,
which features a
22-degree bend.

Missouri

THE SHOW-ME STATE SHOWS YOU A LOT ON ITS 300-PLUS MILES OF ROUTE 66,
INCLUDING THE HIGHWAY'S OFFICIAL BIRTHPLACE OF SPRINGFIELD.
MISSOURI'S MOTHER ROAD STRETCH BEGINS IN ST. LOUIS, PROVIDING A GATEWAY
TO THE WEST DECADES BEFORE THE GATEWAY ARCH OPENED.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (BRIDGE) STOCKPHOTOASTUR - STOCK.ADOBE.COM, (STREET SCENE) STARBOARD AND PORT



You might say Missouri is the mother of the Mother Road—it gave birth to Route 66 on April 30, 1926, in **Springfield**, when Missouri State Highway Commission Chief Engineer A.H. Piepmeier, and Chairman of the Oklahoma Department of Highways Cyrus Avery, sent a telegram to federal officials saying they would accept “U.S. 66” as the highway’s name. In 1992, the route’s 66th anniversary, Springfield unveiled an official birth certificate: a placard displayed on the east side of Park Central Square.

Missouri’s portion of Route 66 began on the north edge of **St. Louis**, where the historic Old Chain of Rocks Bridge carried westbound vehicles from Illinois across the Mississippi River. From there, it continued for 317 miles to **Joplin**, following much of a Native American trail that later became known as Old Wire Road. As in other states, the route evolved over the years, but it kept rolling through the towns of **Cuba**, **Rolla**, **Lebanon** and **Carthage**. Though the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge has been closed to vehicles for decades, you can still cross it on foot to start a Route 66 journey through Missouri. Others head down the river to begin at the Gateway Arch monument in St. Louis.



PRESS PLAY

Load up your playlist with Show-Me State classics.

Everyday Is a Winding Road
Sheryl Crow

Meet Me in St. Louis
Judy Garland

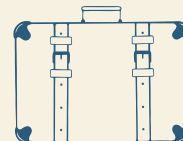
Route 66 Missouri
The Ozark Mountain Daredevils

Back in the U.S.A.
Chuck Berry

The Entertainer
Scott Joplin

TOP STAYS

RETRO ROOM OPTIONS



WAGON WHEEL MOTEL

Cuba

Opened in 1936, it’s believed to be the oldest continuously operating motel on Route 66. Restored stone buildings feature original hardwood floors and glass doorknobs.

BEST WESTERN ROUTE 66 RAIL HAVEN

Springfield

Fully restored and full of charm, the Rail Haven serves up retro roadside vibes with modern comforts to match.

ROCKWOOD MOTOR COURT

Springfield

It’s a Route 66 eras tour—each room is themed to a different chapter of the Mother Road’s history. Experience authentic motor court lodging in six sandstone cabins original to the 1929 property, as well as outdoor spaces.

BOOTS COURT

Carthage

The Streamline Moderne-style building, recently renovated, opened in 1939 and offered a radio in every room and carport parking—all for \$2.50 per night. Hollywood legend Clark Gable stayed here in the 1940s.



TOP EATS

SAVOR ST. LOUIS



TED DREWES FROZEN CUSTARD

Over the course of four generations and nearly 100 years, Ted Drewes has cemented its place in Route 66 history by making malts and shakes so thick that they're called concretes.

GIOIA'S DELI

More than a century ago, Charlie Gioia opened a grocery store and butcher shop that made sandwiches, like the Hot Salami, on Saturdays. Today, the deli lets customers choose their bread, cheese, garnish and condiments, or go with the original: homemade salami, cheese, onion and peppers between a toasted garlic bun.

GOOEY LOUIE GOOEY BUTTER CAKES

Sometime in the 1930s, a baker inadvertently swapped flour and butter ratios, accidentally creating a gooey butter cake. Now, almost every St. Louis bakery makes the serendipitous sweet treat. Try one here.

CHARLIE GITTO'S

In the 1940s, one chef dropped ravioli into oil instead of water, resulting in crispy pillows of goodness that eventually made toasted ravioli a staple on most Italian menus, including this one.

NATURAL WONDERS

Meramec Caverns, the state's largest commercial cave and a reputed Jesse James hideout, lies underground near **Sullivan**. Discovered in the 18th century, the caverns contain stalactites, stalagmites and mineral deposits. Saltpeter, a key ingredient in making gun powder, was mined for 144 years until Confederate troops destroyed the production facility during the Civil War. The cavern was purchased in the 1930s and opened to the public. Visitors can explore the cool caverns on an 80-minute guided walking tour along a well-lit walkway. The tour covers 1.25 miles of the cave that's as tall as a seven-story building. Highlights include the Wine Table, the world's rarest cave structure, which was formed underwater.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

Your mind will be spinning after a visit to the Museum of Illusions St. Louis. The Insta-fun, reality-altering museum made its **St. Louis** debut in 2024 at City Foundry STL, an entertainment, shopping and dining venue. The optical illusions, installations and images make you wonder—is seeing believing? Guess who's taller in the Ames Room or bigger in the Beuchet Chair. The museum's 65 exhibits also share the science behind the illusions.



BRAKE FOR FLAVORS

Fuel up on classic diner fare, plus local favorites.

CROWN CANDY KITCHEN

St. Louis

It's been a sweet tradition since 1913. Drink five shakes in 30 minutes and get them free, plus a T-shirt.

ST. JAMES WINERY

St. James

Opened in 1970, it brought back a century-old Italian winemaking tradition in the grape-friendly Meramec Highlands.

ON THIS DAY: MAY 17, 1956

Elvis Presley played at the Abou Ben Adhem Shrine Mosque in **Springfield**. The 21-year-old's "Heartbreak Hotel" was No. 1 on the Billboard charts for most-played songs in jukeboxes. Tickets to the 3,200-seat venue, the largest auditorium west of the Mississippi, cost between \$1.50 and \$2.50. On the afternoon of the concert, Presley snuck out to the Gillioz Theatre to watch Glenn Ford's Western movie *Jubal*. The Jordanares, a gospel quartet from the area, were Presley's backup singers. After his concert, Presley spent the night at the five-story Kentwood Arms Hotel, now Kentwood Hall on Missouri State University's campus.

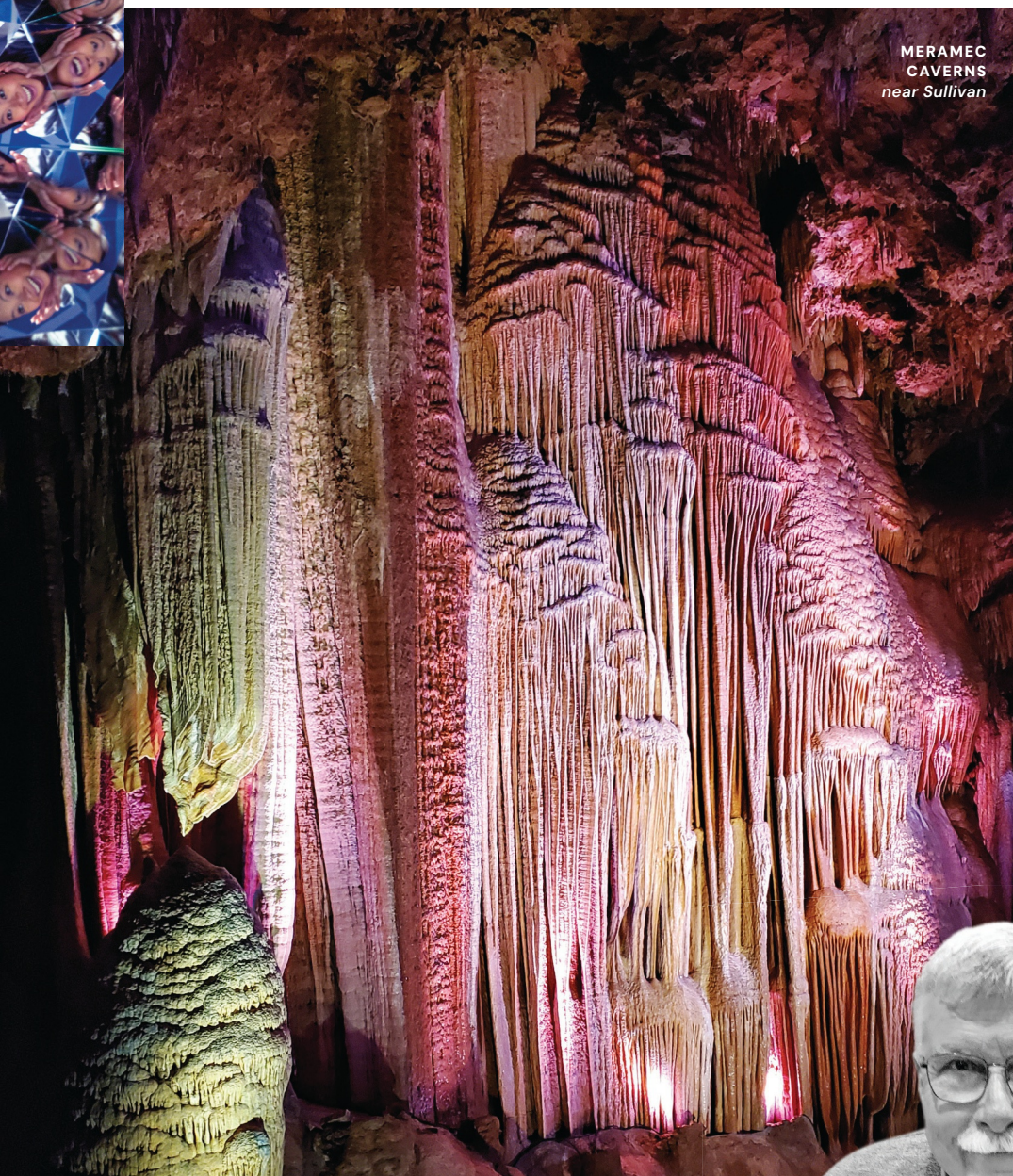
HISTORY LESSONS

The 66 Drive-In Theatre in **Carthage** is one of the few historically intact drive-in theaters looking much like it did when it opened for business after sunset on September 22, 1949.

The Meramec River U.S. 66 Bridge, part of Route 66 State Park in **Eureka**, was completed in 1932 using a rare Warren deck truss design. The bridge closed to traffic in 2009 and had its road deck removed, but the truss structure remains. Plans are underway to use the existing piers and replace the bridge with a new structure for bikes and pedestrians.

The Trail of Tears Memorial in **Jerome** is the late Larry Baggett's garden-based tribute to Native Americans who died on the trail. His successor, Marie "M.J." Ryberg, has restored it and built upon Baggett's vision.





MERAMEC
CAVERNS
near Sullivan

ASK A LOCAL

JOHN SELLARS

*Executive director
emeritus, History
Museum on the Square*
📍 **SPRINGFIELD**

Q: How has Route 66 changed over the years?

A: I grew up on St. Louis Street, where Route 66 came through Springfield. Before the interstates bypassed the towns, people came into the community and saw the local establishments.

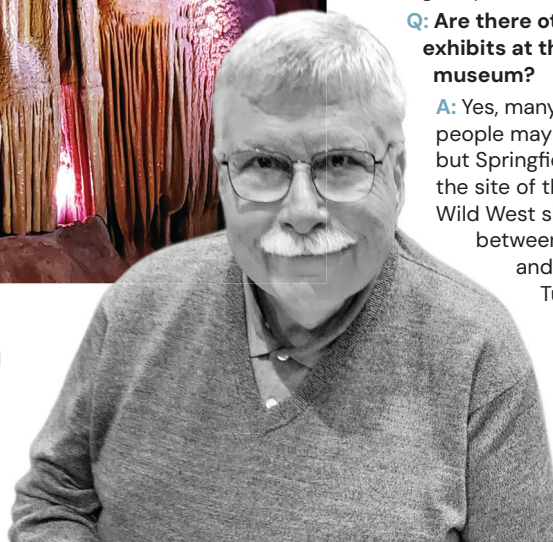
Q: What's your favorite Route 66 exhibit at the museum?

A: There are four neon signs—those were the genre of advertising at the time—and they caught your attention as you drove into town. Each sign has a touchscreen that allows visitors to travel a portion of Route 66 and see the buildings as they originally looked.

Q: Are there other exhibits at the museum?

A: Yes, many! Most people may not know, but Springfield was the site of the first Wild West shootout between Bill Hickok and Davis Tutt on the town's square.

DID YOU KNOW? ST. LOUIS-BASED ANHEUSER-BUSCH BEGAN AS A BREWERY IN THE 1850S. LESS THAN TWO DECADES LATER, BUDWEISER BECAME THE FIRST NATIONALLY DISTRIBUTED BEER.



A SLICE OF PIE *Rolla*

Home to a 40-year bake sale—fruit and cream pies, plus cheesecake. If you save room, they also serve quiche and potpies.

STEAK 'N SHAKE *Springfield*

Opened in 1962, the chrome-and-neon steak burger stalwart is on the National Register of Historic Places.

WHISLER'S DRIVE-UP *Carthage*

This old-fashioned hamburger stand looks like a little barn. Make sure to get a burger with bacon and ham.

RED ONION CAFE *Joplin*

Come for craft burgers, pasta, Key lime cheesecake and keto options. (Yes, you can go low-carb on Route 66!)



MUSIC MECCA

Route 66 through Missouri begins in an often unrecognized music city—**St. Louis**. Rock pioneer Chuck Berry (a St. Louis native) and ragtime king Scott Joplin (who lived in Sedalia and St. Louis) head a lineup of legends rooted in the Gateway City. The list includes Ike and Tina Turner, Nelly, and Josephine Baker. You can learn about these and other artists at the Missouri History Museum, where a continuing hallway installation features content from the museum's original *St. Louis Sound* exhibit.

One music expert says that St. Louis belongs on the Mount Rushmore of musical cities. And why not? Rising from America's midsection, near the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, St. Louis was a popular destination for African Americans moving north during the Great Migration. They contributed to a mash-up of musical styles and techniques that produced sounds never heard before.

Composer W.C. Handy arrived in St. Louis in 1892 with dreams of making it big. Instead, he wound up penniless. Two decades later, his "St. Louis Blues," inspired by six months on the city's streets, became a hit—one of the first blues tunes to succeed as a pop song.

St. Louis still offers a rich music mix. Hear accessible classical at Powell Hall; world-class jazz at Jazz St. Louis; and pop/rock at The Sheldon, all within a few blocks of each other in the Grand Center Arts District. In The Delmar Loop neighborhood, stroll the St. Louis Walk of Fame, where brass stars honor St. Louis musicians, and shop Vintage Vinyl, one of the country's best record shops. At the National Blues Museum, learn how that melancholy genre impacted American culture. One interactive exhibit lets you record your own blues track, a way to become a part of the St. Louis music legacy.

HEAR! HERE!

Find more St. Louis music venues.

**1860 Saloon,
Game Room and
Hardshell Cafe**
Soulard

Blueberry Hill
Delmar Loop

**Broadway
Oyster Bar**
Downtown

**Chesterfield
Amphitheater**
Chesterfield

Hammerstone's
Soulard

**National
Blues Museum**
Downtown

**DOWNTOWN
ST. LOUIS**

ICONIC SIGHTS AND STOPS



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF TRANSPORTATION *Kirkwood*

If you like planes, trains and automobiles, one of the world's largest collections of transportation vehicles awaits. Highlights include a Douglas military aircraft believed to have flown on D-Day, and the Union Pacific #4006 (Big Boy), the largest steam locomotive ever built.

ROUTE 66 STATE PARK *near Eureka*

A 1935 roadhouse serves as the visitors center for this state park, which contains a section of the original route. The roadhouse opened as the Bridgehead Inn and was later known as Steiny's Inn. Now it's filled with Route 66 artifacts. The park makes for a great place to stop and stretch your legs on trails or have a picnic.



GRAND FALLS
Joplin



ALL ABOARD More than 70 one-of-a-kind locomotives call the National Museum of Transportation in Kirkwood home.

GARY'S GAY PARITA
Ash Grove

A sign advertising gas for 15 cents a gallon catches your eye at this re-creation of a 1930s Sinclair gas station. The site includes vintage pumps and a full tank of mementos from the heyday of Route 66.

SPENCER STATION
Miller

You could say this general store built in 1926 is Route 66's first strip mall. It's attached to a service station-garage, cafe, and barber shop. And the original Route 66 ran right by it. A 100 percent original concrete section of the road remains out front.

JASPER COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Carthage

This is said to be Missouri's second-most photographed structure (after the Gateway Arch). Built in the late 1890s, it features Romanesque Revival-style turrets, towers and arches reminiscent of a medieval castle. Inside, there's a working wrought-iron cage elevator and a display on Route 66 history.

GRAND FALLS
Joplin

The largest continuously flowing natural waterfall in Missouri beckons from Shoal Creek. It features a 163-foot-wide wall of water that cascades 12 feet off a rock ledge before crashing into jaggy crags and flowing serenely southward. The flowing photo op is just a few minutes downstream from Wildcat Park.



ROUTE 66
CAR MUSEUM
Springfield

ROUTE ROOTS

Just outside **St. Louis**, in **Maplewood**, Route 66 sidewalk plaques honor legendary local landmarks—some long gone, some still thriving—on the original route. On the town square in **Waynesville**, a giant Route 66 shield weighing more than 1,000 pounds begs for selfies and group pics. Boswell Park in **Lebanon** is home to three large Route 66 murals, each depicting an aspect of the area's Route 66 history. You can also see the last remaining cabin of Camp Joy, a former Route 66 tourist camp. The Route 66 Car Museum in **Springfield** takes you on a century-long trip through automotive history. Its collection of more than 75 classic cars includes the kind of models that motored down the Mother Road in its heyday, as well as speedy sports cars and movie rides—think *Days of Thunder*, *Batman*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Back to the Future*. The recently opened open-air Route 66 Neon Park in **St. Robert** features restored, orphaned Route 66 neon signs, plus storyboards explaining each one's history.

FOR TIME TRAVELERS

The Red Cedar Inn Museum and Visitor Center in **Pacific** occupies the former Red Cedar Inn Restaurant, built in 1934 out of wood logs that were sealed with chinking, like in the pioneer days. The restaurant was famous for fried chicken.

In 1931, the newly opened Hotel Edwin Long in **Rolla** hosted a celebration for the completion of Route 66 across Missouri. The hotel closed in 1971 and now houses Phelps County Bank.

Near **Springfield's** Park Central Square, discover three historic buildings. Ornate yet intimate, the Gillioz Theatre is as old as Route 66, opening in 1926 as a venue for vaudeville and films. It closed its doors in 1980, but was later restored and reopened for movies, concerts, theater and opera. The eight-story Heer's Department Store Building, built in 1915, was one of southwest Missouri's largest and most prominent department stores. It's now home to luxury loft apartments. The Calaboose, a jail built in 1891, is the oldest existing structure owned by the city of Springfield. It's been preserved and restored for use as a police substation and police museum.

The 1903 Pulaski County Courthouse in downtown **Waynesville** boasts Romanesque Revival architectural details on its two-story brick exterior, now a museum. Inside, see an original courtroom with a wooden jury box. What's now called the Big Chief Roadhouse in **Wildwood** is one of the last surviving full-service restaurants on Missouri Route 66. It opened in 1929 as a hotel and has experienced many transformations. The two-story building features striking Spanish Mission Revival styling: white stucco walls, terra-cotta tile roof, exposed rafter ends and a porte cochere. A faux bell tower was removed in the '50s.

The Battle of Carthage Civil War Museum in **Carthage** recalls one of the war's earliest engagements. See a diorama, artifacts and a mural depicting the battle. The Battle of Carthage State Historic Site, where the fighting took place, is about a mile away.

DID YOU KNOW? *OZARK JUBILEE*, A NATIONALLY BROADCAST VARIETY SHOW, BEGAN IN 1954 AT THE JEWELL THEATER IN SPRINGFIELD. THE THEATER STOOD AT WHAT IS NOW JUBILEE PARK.



DOWNTOWN
BRANSON

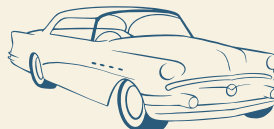


BUILT TO LAST
M.E. Gillioz, a road and bridge contractor, used steel and concrete to build his namesake 1,000-plus seat theater in Springfield.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (CAR MUSEUM) COURTESY OF ROUTE 66 CAR MUSEUM, (BRANSON) JEREMY MASON MCGRAW.COM/
GETTY, (THEATER) COURTESY OF GILLIOZ CENTER FOR ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

WORTH A DETOUR



BRANSON

In the 1960s, road crews dynamited through the limestone hills between Springfield and Branson, clearing the way for Route 66 travelers to detour 44 miles south to downtown Branson and its nascent live-entertainment district. The town's first music show, *Baldknobbers Jamboree*, began playing in the late 1950s. Today, Branson is known around the world for theater venues like Dolly Parton's Stampede, plus it has Silver Dollar City amusement park and the Aquarium at the Boardwalk. The historic downtown also boasts two theaters: Hot Hits Theatre, where guests can groove to the sounds of Motown, and the Historic Owen Theatre, where amateur and professional Broadway musicals perform in the 1930s space. Retro and antiques stores, plus gifts and collectibles shops, line downtown. Use the free trolley to get around. Along the waterfront, Branson Landing boasts brand-name stores and restaurants. On the hour, the Fountains' water, light and music show dazzles crowds. Overnight at the Hilton Branson Convention Center Hotel, pet-friendly Best Western Plus, or choose one of 11 rooms at The Branson Hotel.

TABLE ROCK LAKE

Formed by an impressive dam, Table Rock Lake epitomizes Branson's outdoor orientation. It's a hub of hiking, boating, fishing and camping. Top of the Rock, a bluff-top destination in the Big Cedar Lodge development, includes a wine cellar, golf courses, restaurants, an Ozarks natural-history museum, and Lost Canyon Cave and Nature Trail.

LAKE OF THE OZARKS

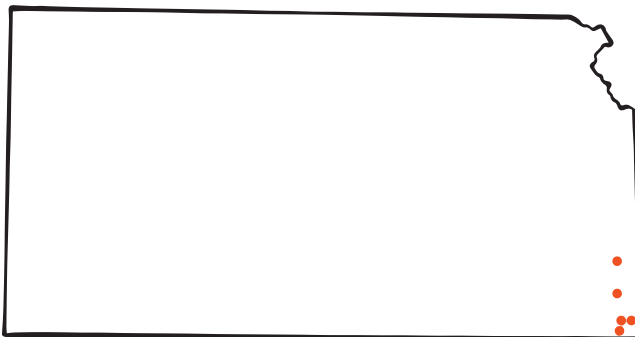
Every year, millions of visitors come to play in the Lake of the Ozarks, 35 miles north of **Lebanon**. Dine at dockside eateries, cruise the Bagnell Dam Strip, walk down the aisles of Bridal Cave, and explore small towns like **Osage Beach** and **Lake Ozark**.

RED OAK II

Artist Lowell Davis, born and raised in the abandoned town of Red Oak, bought the remaining buildings there, moved them to his family's land near **Carthage**, and called his creation Red Oak II. You'll find a collection of early 20th-century buildings, including a general store and schoolhouse.

VALLEY PARK

The World Bird Sanctuary protects injured and endangered birds of prey. During the 30-minute Amazing Animal Show, birds of prey fly over your head. You can also handle an exotic raptor.



FORT SCOTT ●

PITTSBURG ●

RIVERTON ●
BAXTER SPRINGS ● ● ● GALENA

CARS ON THE ROUTE
Galena



PRESS PLAY

*Five Kansas-
flavored songs.*

Carry On
Wayward Son
Kansas

Home on the Range
Gene Autry

Wichita Lineman
Glen Campbell

Over the Rainbow
Judy Garland

Sunflowers
Logan Mize

Kansas

THE SUNFLOWER STATE MAY CLAIM THE SMALLEST SHARE OF THE MOTHER ROAD—JUST 13.2 MILES DIP IN AND OUT OF ITS SOUTHEAST CORNER—BUT YOU'D BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND MORE GPMS (GEMS PER MILE) ON ANY OTHER STRETCH.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF KANSAS TOURISM, (BRIDGE) ZACH BAUMAN

A rusty tow truck at a former Kan-O-Tex service station caught the eye of the late Disney-Pixar animator Joe Ranft as he cruised through **Galena**, Kansas, seeking inspiration for the 2006 movie *Cars*. There was something about that 1951 International Harvester—once used to haul equipment out of Galena’s lead mines—as if it were itching to twist its grill into a toothy grin. That truck evolved into the inspiration for Tow Mater, the lovable if slightly rough-around-the-edges *Cars* character voiced by Larry the Cable Guy.

Visitors passing that same service station, now a souvenir shop called *Cars* on the Route, snap pics with the OG Mater (named Tow Tater for copyright reasons) along with other vehicles donning cartoon-like eyes to resemble more of the beloved characters from the film. If you’re approaching Route 66 from the east, it’s the perfect first stop on Kansas’ breezy and treasure-lined stretch, which crosses the Spring River in **Riverton** before bending at the Rainbow Bridge (the last fixed Marsh Arch bridge on the route). Cap things off with a comfort-food parade of wood-fired pizzas, mile-high pie slices and milkshakes in **Baxter Springs**.

ICONIC STOP

Nelson’s Old Riverton Store debuted in 1925, beating the official premiere of Route 66 by a year. In business continuously for a century, the prized **Riverton** pit stop brims to the top of its pressed-metal ceiling with groceries, souvenirs, handicrafts and made-to-order deli sandwiches. There’s also a vintage Coca-Cola cooler with a bottle opener for grabbing a cold one to go.



RAINBOW
BRIDGE
Baxter Springs

ON THIS DAY: JUNE 21, 1922

Local mining baron Edgar Schermerhorn donated 22 acres of **Galena** land that would become today’s Schermerhorn Park. Today’s visitors bring an inner tube for floating on Shoal Creek while admiring the park’s terraced stone walls built as part of the Works Progress Administration. Atop one of the park’s hills, learn about native wildlife at the Southeast Kansas Nature Center.

HISTORY LESSONS

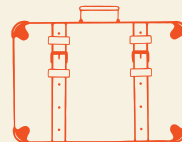
The Kansas Route 66 Visitors Center in **Baxter Springs** occupies a Tudor-style gas station built in 1930. Check out the old-school gas pumps outside and sign your name on the wall inside. More stories unfold at the Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum, where you can learn about the Osage people who called this region home for centuries. Unearth more ore lore at the **Galena** Mining and Historical Museum: Its collections include oil paintings that were originally displayed in the Smithsonian Institution.



AHEAD BY A YEAR
Nelson’s Old Riverton
Store celebrated its
centennial in 2025.

TOP STAYS

HOME ON THE ROUTE



THE MOLLIE RETREAT

Galena

Surround yourself with splashes of midcentury-modern decor in the heart of Galena. The marble-tile shower offers an elevated way to unwind after a long day on the road, as does the gamer’s loft, complete with a Ms. Pac-Man arcade game.

THE OLD RIVERTON POST

Riverton

This 1860s-era clapboard post office in Riverton delivers when it comes to interior surprises. Black-and-white-checkered tile floors lend a diner vibe to a modernized loft tastefully accented by license plates and ‘50s-era memorabilia.

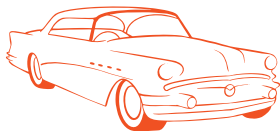
LITTLE BRICK INN

Baxter Springs

Seven of the property’s 24 spacious rooms overlook Route 66 in downtown Baxter Springs. Live large with 65-inch TVs in the 1870 building’s modernized spaces, and pop into the new Lion Rojo restaurant next door for fajitas and fried ice cream.

**PHOTO OP**

Get a double dose of Insta-perfect moments in downtown **Galena**. At Miners Park, pop your head into a new sculpture displaying the Mother Road's iconic signage. Then take a selfie in front of the adjacent *Greetings from Galena* mural. Made of more than 400 satin-finished porcelain tiles, the mural by Chris Auckerman and Jon White shows a blue 1957 Chevrolet passing replicas of *Cars* characters and other local landmarks.

**WORTH A
DETOUR**

Head 23 miles north from Riverton to celebrate

another major milestone in 2026: the 150th anniversary of **Pittsburg**. Special events are planned for the town's May 20 anniversary as well as their annual 620 Day (June 20) and July 4 celebration, which will also commemorate America's 250th birthday. No matter which season you visit, toast the town at TOAST (serving artisan slices in a chic setting), or order the Nutella, banana and marshmallow-stuffed Gorilla crepe (honoring Pittsburg State University's mascot) at The Balkan. On PSU's campus, take a moment for reflection at the Vietnam Memorial Wall, a half-scale replica of the monument in Washington, D.C. And don't leave town without trying the region's legendary fried chicken. Chicken Mary's and Chicken Annie's stand just 600 feet apart from

each other and have been engaged in a rivalry for more than 80 years. (It's best to try both to settle the debate once and for all.)

ROAM NORTH

Thirty miles north of Pittsburg, **Fort Scott** is perhaps best known for Fort Scott National Historic Site, which was established to protect settlers migrating west in the 1840s. Just a block away, hear stirring accounts of ordinary people who had a profound impact on history at the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes. At The Gordon Parks Museum, learn about the first African American photographer and writer for *Life* magazine. Parks was also the first African American to write and direct a major feature film, *The Learning Tree*, which was based on his autobiographical novel and shot at locations around town.

**GEARHEAD
CURIOS**
Galena**TOP EATS****TASTES OF
BAXTER
SPRINGS****WESTON'S
ROUTE 66 CAFE**

The savory comfort food is great, but you could also make a meal out of the slices of chocolate cream pie topped with a mountain of meringue.

**BRICKS AND
BREWS WOODFIRE
GRILL AND PUB**

Go traditional or try Puck's Original pizza—topped with bacon, bell peppers, roasted chicken and a peach barbecue sauce.

**MONARCH
PHARMACY AND
SODA FOUNTAIN**

Choose a chocolate or vanilla base for the peanut buttery Skye's the Limit shake, served in a chocolate-drizzled glass.

PUNKINS PLACE

Seeking a boost for the rest of your journey? The Miner is a refreshing plant-based energy drink flavored with amaretto, lemon, lime and cherry.



ASK A LOCAL

AARON PERRY

Owner of Gearhead Curios

GALENA

Q: What compelled you to purchase Galena's 1939 Texaco station?

A: Route 66 has been part of my life since birth. I grew up in Southern California and every family trip we took east was on Route 66. On a 2018 road trip, I took some pics of my 1958 Ford in front of this station and noticed it was for sale. I've been working on renovations ever since.

Q: Gearhead Curios is full of treasures, but what are some visitor favorites?

A: We've become very famous for our restroom. (No spoilers.) Our latest addition is Big A, a 23-foot-tall statue in the spirit of the Texaco Big Friend, but with a Gearhead twist.

Q: What's a favorite hidden gem along Route 66?

A: I'm really excited about Brian Haden's new Hotrod Hangout Speed Shop and Diner in town. He rescued a vintage, prefabricated Valentine Diner from becoming scrap and has transformed it into a six-seat jewel serving burgers and bierocks (stuffed sandwiches with Eastern

European roots that have become a Kansas staple).

Q: What's been the most rewarding part of owning Gearhead?

A: Sharing stories. I have travelers tell me this is the type of place they were hoping to experience on Route 66.

DID YOU KNOW? THE KANSAS STRETCH OF ROUTE 66 WAS THE FIRST TO BE FULLY PAVED. IT'S ALSO THE ONLY SECTION WHERE YOU CAN TRAVEL THE FULL ROUTE WITHOUT HOPPING ONTO AN INTERSTATE HIGHWAY.

MADE FOR MEMORIES

An American flag crafted from license plates (top left), neon lighting (top right) and Sky Chief gas pumps are just some of the cool settings at Gearhead Curios.



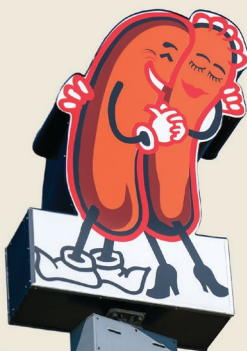


Sign Off

FRANKFURTER FRIENDS

Springfield, Illinois

This midcentury charmer was replaced in 2022 with a cuddly new version.



ENTERPRISING BUSINESS OWNERS ALONG ROUTE 66 HAVE LONG RELIED ON EYE-CATCHING SIGNS TO COMPEL MOTORISTS TO PULL OVER FOR A QUICK BITE OR A RESTFUL SLEEP. HERE ARE A FEW FAVORITES.



COWBOY UP

Amarillo, Texas

This massive sign stood along Route 66 in the 1960s and was later moved to The Big Texan's current location off I-40.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (COZY) RYAN DONNELL; (BIG TEXAN) GETTY IMAGES/TRAVELER116; (MKT DEPOT) JONBLOUS; STOCKADORE.COM; (ROY'S) VISIT CALIFORNIA; (DONUT) COURTESY OF EXPLORE ST. LOUIS; MARK HERMES; (ROUTE 66 MOTEL) GETTY IMAGES/AURORE KEROVERN

OFF THE RAILS

Galena, Kansas

Formerly a Missouri-Kansas-Texas train depot, this building now houses the Galena Mining and Historical Museum.



NO VACANCY

PRECIOUS PRESERVE

Seligman, Arizona

The Historic Route 66 Motel honors the town's role in saving the Mother Road.



NO VACANCY



GOOGIE GREATNESS

Amboy, California
Erected in 1959, this 50-foot neon sign is a retro-futurism icon.



OLD-FASHIONED BEACON

St. Louis
The Donut Drive-In debuted in 1953 and is still serving up tasty treats.