



Great American Roads 2023

Byways 70

Gate 2 entrance to the Illinois State Fair in Springfield

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Exploring

 **WIGWAM M**
Have You Slept in a Wigwam?



**Wigwam Motel on U.S. Route 66 in Arizona.
Photo courtesy Johnathan Ciarrocca on Unsplash.**

ng the History of Route 66

MOTEL

wam Lately?

VACANCY

OFFICE



Byways 13



The Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, Illinois. Photo courtesy Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Route 66, also known as the “Mother Road” is one of the most famous highways in the United States. Spanning over 2,500 miles, it runs from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California, and was one of the original U.S. highways.

The road was established in 1926 and was in use until 1985, when it was officially decommissioned. However, the historical and cultural significance of the road has made it a popular tourist destination and a symbol of Americana.

History

Route 66 was one of the first highways in the United States to connect rural and urban areas, making it an important transportation corridor for the country’s growing population. The highway played a crucial role in the economic development of the American West, as it facilitated the movement of people and goods, and helped to spur the growth of small towns and businesses along the way.

One of the most significant historical events

associated with Route 66 is the Great Migration of the 1930s. During this period, thousands of African Americans from the South moved to the North and West in search of better economic opportunities and to escape the poverty and racial discrimination of the South. Route 66 was one of the major routes used by these migrants, and it became known as the “Negro



Photo courtesy Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum.



**Beginning of Route 66 in Chicago.
Photo courtesy Marlin Keesler and CC 2.0.**

trip, inspiring songs, movies, and television shows.

In the 1960s, Route 66 gained renewed popularity thanks to the television show “Route 66”, which followed the adventures of two young men as they traveled the highway in their Corvette. The show was a hit and helped to bring Route 66 back into the public consciousness.

Despite its cultural significance, Route 66 was officially decommissioned in 1985, and many sections of the road were replaced by newer and more efficient highways. However, a movement to preserve the road as a historical and cultural resource emerged, and in 1989, Route 66 was designated as a National Scenic Byway.

Traveling Route 66 Today

Today, Route 66 is a popular tourist destination, and many people still travel the road in search of a glimpse of the America of the past. Along the way, visitors can find a variety of roadside attractions, including vintage gas stations, diners, and motels. Some of the most famous landmarks along Route 66 include the Route 66 Museum in Clinton, Oklahoma, the Wigwam Motel in Rialto, California, and the Route 66 Drive-In Theatre in Carthage, Missouri.

Motorist Green Book” after a guidebook of the same name that was published to help African American travelers find safe and welcoming places to stay along the way.

During the Second World War, Route 66 played a vital role in the transportation of troops and supplies to the West Coast. Many military bases were established along the road, and it became an important route for the movement of military personnel and equipment.

After the war, Route 66 experienced a decline in popularity as the rise of the automobile industry led to the construction of faster and more efficient highways. However, the road’s cultural significance remained strong, and it became a symbol of the American road

Starting your journey in Chicago, you’ll be able to explore the vibrant city before hitting the open road. The Art Institute of Chicago is a must-visit for art lovers, while the Navy Pier offers plenty of entertainment options, including an amusement park, restaurants, and theaters.



**Route 66 in downtown Tulsa.
Photo courtesy Mick Haupt on Unsplash.**



Mid Point, Adrian, Texas. Photo courtesy CC 2.0.



El Reno, Oklahoma mural. Photo courtesy Mathieu Brossais and CC 4.0.



Martin Milner (left) and George Maharis in this 1966 Route 66 promotion. Photo courtesy CBS.



Westbound on New Mexico Route 66, Mount Taylor in background. Photo courtesy Marcin Wichary and CC 2.0.

Once you're ready to start your journey, you can pick up Route 66 at the corner of Adams Street and Michigan Avenue.

The first stop on your journey should be in the charming town of Pontiac, Illinois. Here, you can visit the Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum, which celebrates the history of the road and its impact on American culture. You'll also be able to see the world's largest Route 66 shield mural and a collection of vintage cars that were popular during the road's heyday.

As you continue westward, you'll come across the town of Springfield, Illinois, the capital of the state and the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. You can visit the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, where you can learn about the life and legacy of the 16th president. The Old State Capitol building is also worth a visit, as it was the site of Lincoln's famous "House Divided" speech in 1858.

Further west, you'll come across the iconic Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri. This 630-foot-tall arch is the tallest monument in the United States and offers incredible views of the city and the Mississippi River. You can take a tram to the top of the arch or explore the museum at the base of the arch to learn about its construction and significance.



66 Drive-In at Carthage, Missouri. Photo courtesy Mathieu Brossais and CC 4.0.



The St. Louis Gateway Arch. Photo courtesy Chris Hardy on Unsplash.

Next up on your journey is the state of Kansas, which is known for its vast wheat fields and small towns. In Baxter Springs, you can visit the Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum, which tells the story of the town’s history and its importance as a stop along Route 66. The town is also home to the Rainbow Bridge, a historic bridge that was built in 1923 and is still in use today.

As you cross into Oklahoma, you’ll come to Tulsa, which was once known as the “Oil Capital of the World”. You can visit the Philbrook Museum of Art, which features a stunning collection of art from around the world, or take a stroll through the Tulsa Garden Center, which features beautiful gardens and a historic mansion.

Continuing westward, you’ll come across the Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas. This public art installation features 10 Cadillacs that have been buried nose-first in the ground, and visitors are encouraged to spray paint them with graffiti. It’s a unique and quirky attraction that you won’t want to miss.

As you enter New Mexico, you’ll come across the town of Santa Rosa, which is known for its beautiful Blue Hole. This natural swimming hole is fed by an



Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas. Photo courtesy Andy Staver on Unsplash.

underground spring and features crystal-clear water that is perfect for swimming and snorkeling. The town is also home to the Route 66 Auto Museum, which showcases classic cars and memorabilia from the road's golden era.

Finally, your journey will come to an end in Santa Monica, California, where you can dip your toes in the Pacific Ocean and watch the sunset over the water. The Santa Monica Pier is a popular attraction that features an amusement park, restaurants, and an aquarium.

Route 66 also has a few stretches that are considered as "Ghost Towns" which are towns that were once thriving but have been deserted, abandoned and left to decay. These towns are now considered as landmarks and are visited by tourists and history enthusiasts.

Many of the small towns along Route 66 have also worked to preserve their historic downtown areas, and there are many opportunities to explore the rich history and culture of the road. Visitors can also experience the natural beauty of the American West, as the road passes through a variety of landscapes, including deserts, mountains, and forests.



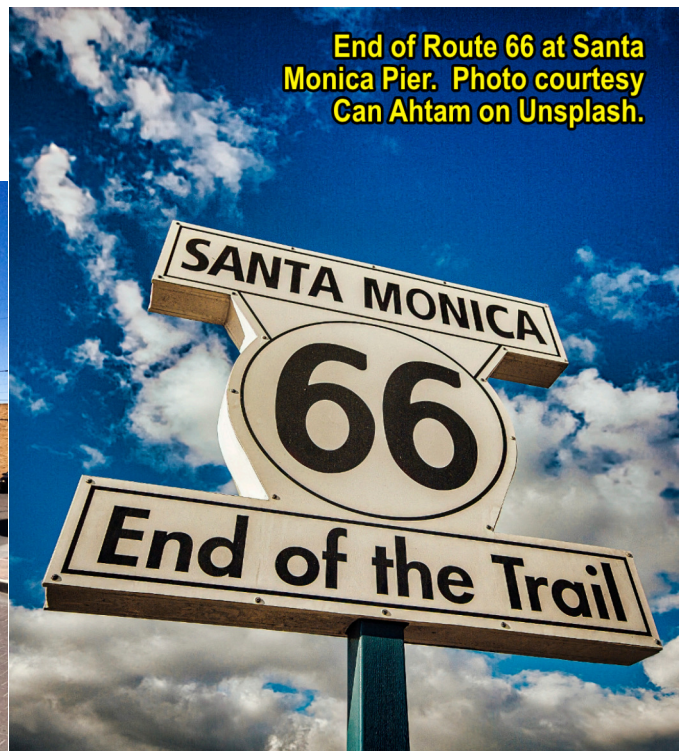
Mr. D's Route 66 Diner, Kingman, Arizona. Photo courtesy Heidi Kaden on Unsplash.

Today, Route 66 is one of the most famous highways in the United States and has played a significant role in the country's history.

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/route-66-important-links.htm>



Winslow, Arizona logo in street. Photo courtesy TimothyMN and CC. 4.0.



End of Route 66 at Santa Monica Pier. Photo courtesy Can Ahtam on Unsplash.