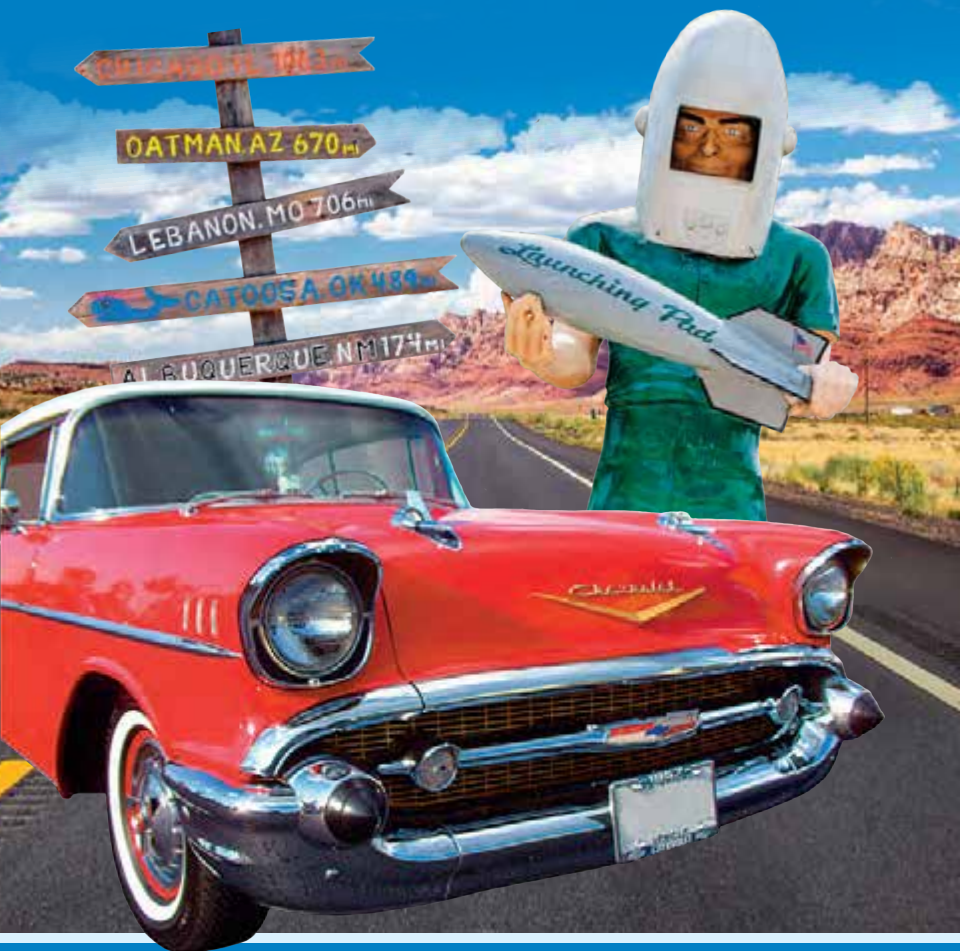


Roadtrippers

Route 66

Chicago to Santa Monica



GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIPS

Roadtrippers

Route 66

Chicago to Santa Monica



GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIPS

Roadtrippers Route 66: Chicago to Santa Monica

First edition, first printing

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Welcome to Roadtrippers.

We're so glad you're here.

What is Roadtrippers?

Roadtrippers is a road trip planner, a digital magazine, an app, and a travel resource—but above all else, we're a group of individuals with a shared love for the road. We live in different cities, come from different backgrounds, and drive different types of vehicles, but we all want to help you plan the best road trip possible.

Whether you're a motorcyclist looking for the most scenic roads, a family exploring the country's national parks in an RV, a recent graduate driving cross-country to relocate after college, or someone just looking for a fun weekend adventure, we've got you covered.

With the Roadtrippers Plus app, you can create a trip from point A to point B, and we'll give you suggestions on what to see and do along the route. You can also collaborate with friends, get live traffic updates, and receive exclusive offers and discounts. Our database includes millions of places, and we firmly believe that you're never more than 5 minutes from something amazing. Prove us wrong!

Need some inspiration before hitting the road? Check out *Roadtrippers Magazine* for stories about the most interesting people and places out there. We've covered everything from whimsical roadside attractions to abandoned theme parks to museums operated by religious cults.

Roadtrippers is the only trip-planning tool designed to make your trip longer.

BELOW Venice Canal Historic District (page 293)
wonderlustpicstravel/Shutterstock



**Take that
detour. We
promise
it'll be
worth it.**





Enhance your guidebook with the **Roadtrippers Plus** app



Learn more about Roadtrippers Plus:
rt.guide/HHAP



Why Roadtrippers Plus?

The #1 road trip planning app just got way better. With Roadtrippers Plus, you can build epically long trips, collaborate with friends, and get exclusive deals.

The absolute best road trip planning solution. Everything you'd expect from the best in travel tech with access to more advanced features. It's the ultimate companion for the most epic road trip.

Plan Longer Trips

No Ads

Offline Maps

Collaboration

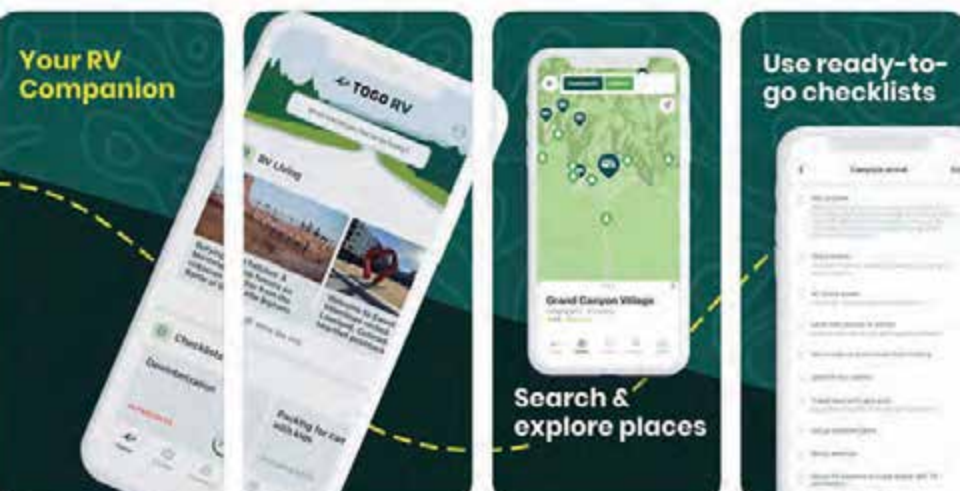
New Map Styles

Live Traffic

Amazing Deals

Roadtrippers Reviews

With Roadtrippers Plus, we're able to improve upon our already powerful product and offer cool new features and exclusive content to you, the road trip essentialist. Our free version will always be, well, **free**.



Get the premiere RV road trip app: **Togo RV**



Learn more about Togo RV:
rt.guide/CZHS



Togo RV is the ultimate app to keep RV owners organized, inspired, and on the move. Transform time spent on vehicle maintenance and trip preparations into time spent enjoying your RV and hitting the open road!

Navigate with directions specific to your RV

Find nearby RV service centers

Connect with mobile RV repair

Use our premade checklists

Discover what's around you

Get recall alerts for your RV



Planning a road trip



Read more road trip planning tips:

rt.guide/ZSTN

If you're jonesing to plan an epic road trip adventure but don't know where to start, the experts at Road-trippers have you covered. Here's everything you need to plan the perfect road trip.

STEP 1: Decide the basics

Figure out what you most want to see. Forget about what others recommend you *should* see, and decide what you *want* to see, whether it's mountains, beaches, deserts, farm country, national parks, cityscapes, or a little bit of everything.

Consider a theme. Some travelers like to pick a theme to tie a road trip together. Themes can inspire ideas and help you focus on the itinerary. Need some inspiration? Try spring training, historical sites, famous filming locations, outdoor adventures, architecture, theme parks, or culinary travel.

Embrace your roadtripping style. There is no one-size-fits-all itinerary for your dream road trip. Embracing the freedom of the open road and your own personal

ABOVE Rainbow Bridge in Baxter Springs, Kansas (page 103)
Chris Higgins Photography/Shutterstock

traveling style allows you to savor the experience. If it's all about getting to the destination and making only necessary pit stops, that's cool. If it's all about the journey, take shorter drives with lots of planned and unplanned stops. Do guided tours with new people rock your world, or do you like to take the reins and chart your own course? Trust your own traveling style and embrace what works for you.

Set a budget. Having a budget in mind will help steer you in the right direction. If your wallet is light, road trips offer many ways to control costs and still have fun, from staying in classic motels and eating at cheaper road-food joints to charting shorter routes to save on gas. Want to blow your bonus in style? Splurge on higher-end accommodations, fancy eateries, and private tours.

STEP 2: Create an itinerary

The Roadtrippers app and website make the planning process easy. While you're routing out your trip, explore the Roadtrippers map to get inspired. The Extraordinary Places icons highlight our favorite stops, and *Roadtrippers Magazine* offers up even more road trip inspiration. You can choose up to seven waypoints on the free version of the app, or more with Roadtrippers Plus. Layer in interesting things to see and do along your route, and sort by categories such as accommodations, entertainment, gas stations, restaurants, and more. Roadtrippers calculates the best route for you, including time and distance between stops and your destination. It will also calculate the approximate cost of gasoline for the whole journey.

As you get more experienced with roadtripping, you can find more tools with Roadtrippers Plus, which helps you plan longer trips and offers turn-by-turn directions.

STEP 3: Bypass potential roadblocks with a little planning

Some travelers glorify winging it, but no planning at all can lead to epic misadventures. Here are a few scenarios where you might want to plan ahead so your road trip doesn't come to a screeching halt.

Lodging: Book at least some of your lodging in advance, especially if it's peak tourist season or you're traveling with a pet, as your options may be scarce. If you'd still like to leave it all up to serendipity, look for off-the-beaten-path motels and campgrounds that are less likely to fill up in advance.

Hours of operation: Before you go, check the hours, days, and seasons of operation for places you want to see, since third-party apps and articles can easily become out of date.

Food and drink: If you're hungry for something local, don't settle for the lone fast-food restaurant you spotted after hours of driving. Using the Food & Drink category or search tool on the Roadtrippers app can help you find everything from celebrity eateries to burger joints and diners.

Routes: The Roadtrippers app will help you plan the basics while leaving plenty of room for kismet.

STEP 4: Brush up on your local knowledge

If the idea of living like a local for the day is appealing, bide your time between planning a road trip and hitting the road by following regional accounts and hashtags on social media. Read fiction and nonfiction books about the region or route. Watch movies and YouTube videos.

Check out *Roadtrippers Magazine* articles for great stories about famous (and infamous) points of interest.

If that's too much planning for your style, you can get advice while on the road by asking the proprietors of campgrounds, hotels, and Airbnbs along the way for their best local intel.

STEP 5: Stay flexible, always

Have a plan to make sure your road trip is everything you want it to be, but leave space for unexpected opportunities. Inexperienced travelers often get too ambitious with their first itinerary, finding themselves drained and stressed when things don't go exactly according to plan. A great roadtripper is always willing to veer from the plan for the right reason. A great way to find that balance is to download the Roadtrippers app and take it with you, so you can have all the information you need at your fingertips—from verifying driving distances between planned stops to getting ideas for charting a completely new course.

BELOW You'll want to stop at the James Beard award–winning Gioia's Deli on your way through St. Louis (page 69). *Courtesy of Gioia's Deli*





Before you hit the road



Read more about getting ready to hit the road:
rt.guide/GNXS

Preparing your home

When you're leaving for a road trip, the last thing you need is the sudden suspicion that you left the stove on or forgot to throw out that carton of leftover lo mein.

Deep-cleaning your home close to departure day will help keep you organized. Take out all the garbage, ditch any perishable food, and organize the things you've been putting off, like that stack of unopened mail. It's always kind of a bummer when a fun road trip comes to an end, but it's even more of a bummer if you're coming home to a bunch of chores.

Make a list of the things that need to be taken care of while you're gone. Ask a neighbor or friend to get your mail and water your plants, or have your mail put on hold to be picked up at the post office when you're back.

If your pet isn't coming with you, find someone to care for it. Plan a vet appointment well in advance of your trip to confirm your furry friends are all set for a little vacation—especially if they're going to a kennel.

ABOVE Magnolia gas station in Tucumcari, New Mexico (page 174)

Bringing a furry companion with you? There are lots of places that pets can't go, like certain hotels and national parks. Bringing a pet on a road trip can be a lot of fun, but you'll need to research your destinations and their pet policies. BringFido.com is a popular website for finding dog-friendly hotels, restaurants, parks, and more.

Securing your home

Installing a home security system before you leave can offer peace of mind. But there are cheaper options for keeping your home safe and sound. Leave a light or two on (or keep them on a timer), and maintain any house services, like lawn care or pool upkeep. An outdoor sensor light is an inexpensive and generally effective deterrent to would-be snoopers and thieves. Leave a key with a neighbor you trust, just in case someone needs to get in.

Packing your vehicle

An overpacked car can quickly turn into a disorganized mess, and you're likely to forget about half the stuff you brought if it's not easy to access. With that in mind, focus on accessibility and multifunctional items.

A small overnight bag should contain everything you need after a long day of driving—think sleepwear, toiletries, and a good book.

Your car should be packed according to what you'll need first. Items specific to a destination farther down the road, or gear for weather that might occur later in your trip, should be packed beneath items you'll need regularly or right away.

PACKING FOR A ROAD TRIP

Every packing list will be different, depending on where you're going, what you're doing, and how long you'll be gone. We'll get you started with the basics.

- **Camping supplies.** Tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, stove, and lantern.
- **Cash.** For highway tolls, campground fees, and unexpected cash-only stops.
- **Closed-toe, active shoes.** Bring hiking boots, sneakers, or both, depending on your preferred activities.
- **Comfortable driving clothes**
- **Duffel bags or packing cubes.** Soft-sided carriers will make it easier to separate your things for different legs of the trip, and they're easy to stack and smoosh together.
- **Garbage bags.** Keep all your waste in one place.
- **First aid kit.** Adhesive bandages, aspirin, anti-septic, Dramamine for car sickness, and any other medication you might need.
- **Hands-free cell phone holder**
- **Headlamp.** Even if you're not camping, this will help you find things in your car at night.
- **Medium-warmth coat.** Functional layers are the key to comfort when roadtripping.
- **Notebook and pen.** For recommendations, journaling, games, and more.

- **Phone chargers.** At least two—one should stay in your car so you always know where it is.
- **Pillow and extra blankets**
- **Road atlas.** A seasoned roadtripper always has a current one in the car.
- **Slip-on shoes.** Camping slippers or hiking sandals are great for midnight bathroom runs or driving.
- **Sunglasses.** Bring the cheap ones; you're bound to lose a pair or two.
- **Toiletries**
- **Towel.** For the beach, showers, sitting in the grass, the dog, etc.
- **Travel mug and reusable water bottles.** You'll save money and cut down on waste.
- **Water.** It's always a good idea to have an extra gallon or two on hand.

Last-minute reminders

You can experience such a range of conditions when driving long distances, and road trip experiences can be ruined by poor planning, weather changes, navigation snafus, and too many opinions from the backseat.

You can be better prepared for the challenges and mishaps of roadtripping by knowing what you want out of your trip. You might have lots of ideas for where to stop and what to see, but pick just one or two that can't be missed, and prioritize accordingly.

Weather can be tricky to track along a route, especially if you're driving long distances in one day. But

you definitely want to know if a snowstorm is brewing at mile 300 of your 600-mile day. Download an app like WeatherBUG, which lets you to track more than one location at once.

For entertainment, download playlists for offline use before you begin your trip. Ask for recommendations for music, podcasts, and audiobooks to keep things fresh on those less interesting stretches of flat highway.

Give yourself time to embrace the unexpected. You can't possibly anticipate everything the road has in store for you—and that's part of the fun.

BELOW Palo Duro Canyon State Park in Canyon, Texas (page 147)





Getting your car road-trip ready



Read more about getting your car ready for a road trip: rt.guide/TTNW

Even after you have the route planned and you know the major attractions you want to hit, there are still a few more logistics you need to consider. Specifically, you need to make sure your vehicle is up to the task.

In terms of the best car for a road trip, there's no universal solution, but there are some features to consider depending on your situation. If it's just you, then the smaller the better. You want something that can hold all of your gear, of course, but generally speaking, smaller vehicles get better gas mileage. A separate trunk is a bonus because it gives you more-secure storage. At the same time, if you think you might car camp from time to time, then a hatchback or wagon might be a better option.

For most people, a compact SUV is likely the best balance. If you know you'll be going down some rough roads, look into one that has four-wheel drive or all-wheel drive. That opens up a ton of possibilities for things to see and places to camp, and it should strike a nice balance between storage space, gas mileage, and mobility.

Your car's age isn't nearly as important as the question "How is it running?" Road trips put a lot of long,

ABOVE Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas (page 153)
Courtesy of Amarillo CVC



ABOVE Ariston Cafe in Litchfield, Illinois (page 57)

hard hours on all of your car's systems. Try to be as impartial as you can be when evaluating it. Have you been hearing sounds of grinding or rubbing? That can develop into a major problem when you're driving hundreds of miles at a time. Also consider the kind of terrain you're hoping to tackle. Are you wanting to get off the grid? If your car's suspension is getting old and tired, you may want to look into another solution. The best thing to do is take your car to a professional mechanic you trust and have them do a full inspection. If your car isn't up to it, don't despair: You might consider a rental (see sidebar on opposite page).

When preparing your vehicle for a trip, it's always good to bring a first aid kit and road flares. Consider keeping some extra nonperishable food and water in your vehicle just in case you get stranded for a bit. You'll also want flashlights, extra batteries, and an external USB charger to keep your gadgets running. Some spare warm, waterproof clothing and a blanket could also save your life in a pinch.

THE PROS AND CONS OF RENTING A CAR FOR YOUR ROAD TRIP

Pros:

- You can get a newer vehicle that runs better, gets better mileage, and has better features.
- You can get a vehicle specific to your task. If you want to off-road, you can get a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Or if you'll be traveling with a bunch of people, maybe a passenger van is the way to go.
- Generally speaking, if something goes wrong, rentals offer roadside assistance, and you won't be left footing the bill for mechanical problems.
- You won't be adding wear and tear to your daily driver.

Cons:

- The biggest con is the cost. Rentals typically aren't cheap, though you may be able to get a better deal from companies that rent older vehicles or vehicles with cosmetic issues.
- You can't modify the vehicle for your needs.
- Some rental companies will limit the places you can go and the types of roads you can go on.
- Any physical damage the car sustains may cost you, unless you pay for additional insurance.

Tips for traveling Route 66 by motorcycle



Read more about roadtripping by motorcycle:
rt.guide/CRAM

There's arguably no better way to travel across the United States than to do it *Easy Rider* style: by motorcycle. Being on two wheels means a much more up-close connection to your surroundings than what the confines of a car can offer. But it also comes with its unique challenges. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare for your epic adventure.

1. Choose the right bike

Whether you're riding your own trusty steed or renting one for the trip, it's important to make sure you have the correct motorcycle for your height and weight as well as the type of riding you're planning on doing. Can you sit comfortably in the same position for hours on end? Does the bike have enough built-in storage or room for added luggage? Are you planning on doing any off-roading or will you be sticking to paved roads? The answers to these questions should help you narrow down whether you need a touring bike, a cruiser, an adventure bike, or something completely different.

2. Pack for all-weather travel

Riding a motorcycle means being completely exposed to the elements. You'll feel every wind gust, rain drop, or temperature change in a way that someone in a car never will. Route 66 passes through eight states with widely varying climates. Depending on when you travel, you may need to prepare for everything from

snow to rainstorms to desert heat. Pack layers—that way you can easily bulk up or strip down as needed along the route. A rain suit, waterproof gloves, and boot covers will be lifesavers in the event of heavy rain. And if you're traveling during the winter months, consider investing in some heated gear.

3. Take frequent breaks

Spending long hours on a motorcycle tends to make everything hurt at the end of the day. One way to help combat the worst saddle sores is to take frequent breaks. Carry plenty of water and snacks to stave off dehydration or blood sugar drops. It's tempting to just gas up and keep going, but make a habit out of getting off the bike to stretch and have a snack every time you come to a stop. It will make the entire trip that much more enjoyable.

4. Bring tools

The most reliable thing about motorcycles is their unreliability. It's wise to hope for the best while preparing for the worst. Long-haul road trips require continuous maintenance—tires wear out, parts rattle loose, and oil may need to be refilled or replaced. It's a good idea to carry a basic tool kit for roadside fixes. Make sure you bring the correct tools for your bike (know whether it's metric or imperial). Other items that can come in handy in a pinch are zip ties, extra bungee cords, and electrical tape.

Tips for international travelers



Find information for international roadtrippers: **rt.guide/XYYL**

Passports and visas

When traveling to the United States, you're typically required to have a passport that is valid for six months beyond your intended stay. However, if your home country is among 125 nations exempt from this rule, your passport needs to be valid only for the time of your visit. Check the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website (cbp.gov) for a current list.

Generally, you must obtain a nonimmigrant visa, but if your home country is part of the Visa Waiver Program, you can travel without a visa. However, you still need prior approval through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). For details, consult the U.S. Department of State website (travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/tourism-visit/visitor.html).

Driver's license requirements

Bring your valid driver's license from your own country. In addition, some states and rental companies require an International Driving Permit (IDP), which you can obtain from your motor vehicle department.

And remember, you'll be driving on the right-hand side of the road.

Car rental

Most car rental companies require that the driver be at least 20 or 21 years old. However, drivers younger than 25 may be charged an additional surcharge.

The cost depends on several factors: the size of the car, rental location, trip length, and time of year. You'll most likely pay more for a one-way rental.

Major car rental companies include Avis, Alamo, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz, National, Sixt, and Thrifty.

RV rental

A recreational vehicle (RV) is a popular choice for road trips. While you'll save money on hotel expenses and dining out, you'll pay more for fuel and the rental itself. In the end, your overall costs are likely to be about the same. The real advantages? You need to unpack only once, and you'll be closer to nature.

The minimum age to rent an RV is 21 or 25 years old, depending on the rental company and the state where you're renting. Again, extra fees may apply for young drivers. You don't need a special license to drive an RV.

For international visitors, we recommend a Class B (think camper van) or Class C RV. The average gas mileage for a Class B is 18 to 25 miles per gallon (about 7 to 10 kilometers per liter); for a Class C, it's 14 to 18 miles per gallon (about 6 to 7 kilometers per liter).

Some nationwide rental companies include Cruise America, El Monte RV, and Road Bear RV. You also can rent a privately owned RV through peer-to-peer rental platforms. Or look for an independent RV dealer in your departure city.

Vehicle insurance

Check to see if your personal car insurance, credit card insurance, or traveler's insurance will cover your vehicle rental. If not, you'll be given the option to purchase coverage from the rental company.

Tolls

A few major highways are toll roads. Some toll collectors accept credit cards; others don't. Make sure to have cash on hand.

Fuel

Most gas stations will allow you to pay by credit card at the pump, but this option is available only if you have a U.S.-issued credit card with a zip code. Instead, plan to pay inside before you pump. You can pump your own gas in every state except New Jersey and Oregon.

Types of accommodations

If you're driving:

Bed-and-breakfast inns: Typically large homes that have been converted into inns, B&Bs have free breakfast.

Hostels: You're more likely to find hostels in large cities. Make sure to note whether the rooms and bathrooms are shared with other guests.

Hotels: Hotels can vary from affordable chain brands to five-star luxury splurges. Several chains include a complimentary breakfast in your stay.

Motels: These affordable, roadside accommodations have rooms with outside-facing doors and are common along Route 66.

Privately owned rooms, apartments, or homes: Look for short-term rentals on websites like Airbnb, FlipKey, HomeAway, Vacasa, and VRBO.

If you're RVing:

State parks: These affordable campgrounds typically offer hookups for water and sometimes electricity but rarely sewage. Tent sites and cabins may be available.

National parks: Similar to state parks, national park campgrounds are in high demand and should be reserved six to nine months in advance.

Commercial campgrounds: Privately owned campgrounds normally offer full hookups, including water, electricity, sewage, and cable television. They may have additional amenities like kids' programs, camp stores, and swimming pools.

Money

Credit cards are widely accepted.

If you need cash, ATMs can be found at banks, shopping malls, grocery stores, convenience stores, and gas stations. Check with your local bank to ensure that your debit or credit card will work in the United States. Also, ask about fees charged for withdrawing money.

You can exchange money at airport kiosks and at some banks.

Tipping

At sit-down restaurants and bars, it's customary to tip your waiter 15 to 20 percent of the pretax cost of your meal or drinks. You don't tip at fast-food restaurants. Tipping is optional at coffee houses and food carts.

Cell phones

Because most international phones use GSM technology, you'll want to purchase a U.S.-based SIM card from either a T-Mobile or AT&T store; prepaid SIM cards aren't always available at U.S. airports. If your road trip will take you through rural areas, you're better off with AT&T's wider coverage. Make sure your phone is unlocked, and activate the SIM card while you're still in the store to avoid any problems.

Alternatively, you could use your home-based SIM card and pay the often-expensive international roaming fees. Check with your provider for details.

For emergencies (police, fire, ambulance), dial 911.

Internet access

Nearly every hotel will offer complimentary WiFi. You'll also find free internet access at most cafés. Some cities offer free WiFi in public spaces.

Choosing your route

Will you go from Chicago to Los Angeles, or vice versa? Travelers often choose the east-to-west direction, as that's the route originally taken by families escaping the Dust Bowl in the 1920s. Either way, you'll find ample international flights in and out of Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

Determining the duration of your trip

Typically, travelers will plan no less than two weeks for the entire Mother Road road trip. In that amount of time, you'll be able to visit the major sites. But if you want to savor the entire experience—strolling historic downtowns, sipping a root beer float at a soda fountain, and sleeping at a retro motel with a blinking neon sign—you could spend up to a month or longer.



An introduction to Route 66

To drive Route 66 in its entirety is to feel the American landscape in high fidelity, just as a record player's needle finds the scratches on a well-loved album. It is one of the final places to experience the U.S. as an endless frontier, a snapshot of an era of unprecedented change and progress. And in a society that always seems so focused on the next big thing, the Mother Road's enduring appeal is its roadside treasures and stories of human hope.

Although it existed as a unified, legally codified road only for 59 years—from 1926 until 1985, when the interstate system officially superseded it—Route 66 became a great symbolic trailway of human civilization. It will live forever as a route whose traffic reshaped the world of its time, transporting generations of adventurers, migrants, grifters, and dreamers toward untold opportunities.

Route 66 gave rise to new towns, new industries, and a new vernacular architecture. A great deal of it was lost when most cross-country travel migrated to the interstates, but today a thriving community of people who live along the road—travelers, well-wishers, and preservationists—share news and stories, raise money to protect landmarks, maintain museums, and otherwise work hard to protect its legacy. The route's future, thanks to roadtrippers like you, looks bright.

The Mother Road has been firmly embedded in the American mythos for decades. In the 1940s, Bobby Troup pounded out “(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66,” a catchy and enduring standard that has been covered by dozens of artists, from Nat King Cole to The Cramps. In the 1960s, CBS notched a major hit with *Route 66*, a series whose plot mostly amounted to two handsome guys rambling around the country in a Corvette roadster. Very few of the show’s episodes were actually set in towns anywhere near the road it was named for, making it clear that Route 66 had already become shorthand for the adventuresome American spirit, and for the open road itself. And since the Mother Road disappeared from official maps and its signage was removed in 1985, its mystique has only grown.

Route 66’s most powerful symbols—the buzzing neon motel sign, the diner with its tar-black coffee and surly but endearing waitresses, the kitschy tourist trap—have all become part of the basic vocabulary of the American road in literature, film, and art. From Steinbeck to Disney’s *Cars*, it seems that every great road story is somehow connected to Route 66. We’re no exception: For Roadtrippers, this iconic route is foundational for our love of road trips and how we tell stories.

Throughout the journey from Chicago to Santa Monica, you’ll discover sections where the original route diverges, seemingly shooting off in two directions and yet nowhere at once. It is a prime lesson in the art of the road trip: A sudden change in direction, an abrupt end to the pavement, and a few wrong turns are all welcome parts of the adventure rather than an inconvenience.

The road advances gently from its easternmost beginning under the gilded towers of Chicago’s Michigan Avenue through the flat, fertile farmlands of Illinois and Missouri. The west seems to begin in earnest somewhere

around the big Blue Whale of Catoosa in Oklahoma, and has totally set in by the time you reach Cadillac Ranch and the gut-busting portions at Amarillo's Big Texan Steak Ranch. And just before you reach the sparkling Pacific, there is still a treasure trove of roadside gems along the route just east of Los Angeles: the western-most remaining Wigwam Motel, the Magic Lamp Inn with vinyl booths and a copper-hooded fire pit, and the resplendent Streamline Moderne racetrack at Santa Anita, among at least a dozen others.

Route 66 is the quintessential embodiment of the road and all its greatest promises: freedom and serendipity, kitsch and living history, and a case study of the very particular way Americans have moved and multiplied. You can certainly travel eastward on Route 66 (in fact, we highly recommend it), but there's no denying the symbolic strength of at least one westward journey along its patchwork of asphalt. Hop in!

Best time to travel

The best time to drive Route 66 is from late April to early October. Be prepared for remnants of ice and snow during the early spring and thunderstorms in late spring and early summer. During July and August—peak travel months—expect sometimes-sweltering temperatures, overcrowded attractions, and higher rates for lodging.

Come late October and into November, you might see snowfall on parts of the route. Winter is considered the off-season, and some places may be closed until spring, so it's always best to call ahead if you're venturing out onto Route 66 between late November and early April. Whatever time you travel, expect variations in climate, as you'll be traversing many different states and terrains.

How to use this guide



Find up-to-date digital content for this Route 66 guide: **rt.guide/route66**

This book has everything you need to plan an epic Route 66 roadtripping adventure, with an awesome digital bonus. At rt.guide/route66 you will find interactive trip guides and maps that include every single roadside attraction, museum, photo op, and restaurant listed in this book. Use our online trip planner to customize the route, adding or deleting waypoints to create a personalized plan. Once you hit the road, use the Roadtrippers app to navigate and discover even more interesting stops along the way.

Westbound versus eastbound travel

Use this guidebook for either westbound (Chicago to Santa Monica) or eastbound (Santa Monica to Chicago) travel along Route 66. For simplicity, the book is organized from east to west, as that's the most popular way to experience the route. Should you venture from California to Illinois, just read this book in reverse, starting with leg 6.

SIDEBAR CATEGORIES



Route highlights: There's a lot to see on the Mother Road. We'll give you a selection of must-see places at the beginning of every route section.



Playlists: For each leg of the trip, we've curated some great tunes for your listening pleasure. Each playlist corresponds with where you'll be and provides a cool reflection of each area's unique culture.



Fun random factoids: Learn some fun facts about the places you'll be passing through.



Weirdville: This is where you'll learn more about cryptids, urban legends, and UFOs. We'll also include some ghost guides for the haunted hotels you can stay in along the road.



Spotlight: These are expanded descriptions of unique places along the route that will provide a deeper understanding of iconic spots.



Detours: Interesting places that are slightly off the main route, but where we think it's worth going the extra mile. We'll also suggest fun side trips if you've got extra time.



48-Hour guides: Some of our favorite things to do if you have a little extra time to spend in certain cities.



URLs: Find expanded information, fascinating magazine stories, and digital trip guides.

CLASSIC ROAD TRIP MOVIE INSPIRATION


Bagdad Cafe (1987) is based on an actual restaurant that was located on Route 66 until it was abandoned. The film is a love letter to those service stations, cafés, and motels that brought together road-weary travelers.

Disney Pixar's ***Cars*** (2006) is the ultimate Route 66 road trip movie. It follows Lightning McQueen, a race car who disappears in the town of Radiator Springs. The town is reflective of places such as Galena, Kansas; Shamrock, Texas; Holbrook, Arizona; and Tucumcari, New Mexico.

Easy Rider (1969) is the story of two biker hippies who take a road trip and reflect on America.

Little Miss Sunshine (2006) follows a dysfunctional and quirky family of six who are roadtripping to a beauty pageant in a 1971 Volkswagen bus.

Thelma and Louise (1991) is about two best friends who roadtrip from Arkansas to Arizona and seriously take their trip too far.

The background features several thick, wavy yellow lines on a light blue background, creating a sense of movement and travel.

**Inspired to start
planning your epic
Route 66 road trip?**

**Get ready to head to the
Windy City, where
your first leg of the
adventure begins.**





**Elmer's Bottle
Tree Ranch**
Oro Grande, CA

10



Cadillac Ranch
Amarillo, TX

07



Flagstaff
Arizona

09

08



Albuquerque
New Mexico



Santa Monica
California

11



Chicago
Illinois

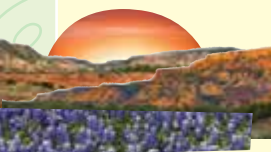
01



St. Louis
Missouri

03

02



Amarillo
Texas

05



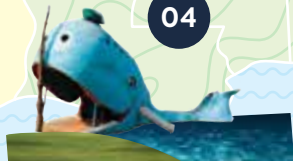
**World's Largest
Catsup Bottle**
Collinsville, IL

04



Tulsa
Oklahoma

06



Blue Whale of Catoosa
Catoosa, OK



Leg 1: Chicago to St. Louis

 **316 Miles**

Find a complete **Online Trip Guide**
for leg 1:

rt.guide/AXKA





Chicago
Illinois

01



Standard Oil Station
Odell, IL

02

03



Gemini Giant
Wilmington, IL



Cozy Dog Drive-In
Springfield, IL

04

05



**World's Largest
Catsup Bottle**
Collinsville, IL

06



St. Louis
Missouri

Leg 1: Chicago to St. Louis

Route highlights

- 
- 01 Chicago
Gemini Giant 02
03 Standard Oil Station
Cozy Dog Drive In 04
05 World's Largest Catsup Bottle
St. Louis 06

Featured campgrounds

Indiana Dunes State Park

1600 N. County Road 25 E., Chesterton, IN

If you're planning on starting your Route 66 adventure in Chicago, this is the perfect campground for tenting, RVing, or cabin camping. The South Shore Line offers rail service directly from the state park to downtown Chicago.

St. Louis West/Historic Route 66 KOA

18475 Old US 66, Eureka, MO

This campground sits right on historic Route 66 and offers a heated pool, a playground, a jump pillow, and gem mining. Plus, it's located less than a mile from Six Flags.

Featured accommodation

The Pasfield House Inn

525 S. Pasfield St., Springfield, IL

This 1896 mansion has been converted into a bed-and-breakfast. It's located close to all the major attractions in Springfield. For more on The Pasfield House Inn, see page 56.



Playlist

Listen here: rt.guide/DLNT

Songs to get you in the mood while on the road . . .

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. "Route 66," Chuck Berry | 9. "Have a Good Time,"
Big Walter Horton |
| 2. "Illinois," Brett Eldredge | |
| 3. "Chicago," Sufjan Stevens | 10. "Little Boy Blue,"
Big Walter Horton |
| 4. "My Kind of Town,"
Frank Sinatra | 11. "I'm a Man," Bo Diddley |
| 5. "Lake Shore Drive,"
Aliotta Haynes Jeremiah | 12. "Mustang Sally,"
Buddy Guy |
| 6. "Illinois," The Everly Brothers | 13. "Going to Chicago,"
Fenton Robinson |
| 7. "Illinois Blues," Skip James | |
| 8. "Chicago Breakdown,"
Big Maceo | 14. "Highway Man Blues,"
Jimmy Dawkins |



On the road . . . Illinois

Chicago, Illinois, is the eastern terminus of the Mother Road—depending on which way you travel, you will either start or end your trip across from Grant Park and Lake Michigan. Over the years, various road realignments and improvements meant that the route was, and still is, ever-evolving. Today many of these iterations still exist in some capacity throughout the Land of Lincoln. After leaving the Windy City, the road takes you southwest through rural Midwestern towns full of classic motel neon, vintage filling stations, roadside giants, and historic bridges until you hit the Mississippi River and East St. Louis.



Illinois is known as the Land of Lincoln because the tall guy—and eventual president—spent most of his adult life in the state. So prepare to see plenty of Honest Abe–inspired roadside wonders on this stretch.

The stretch of Route 66 from Chicago to St. Louis is home to aluminum-and-chrome diners; historic, family-owned cafes; bizarre attractions; and other reminders of the route's charming past. You'll also see plenty of cornfields and flat prairie land between the bustling cities and sleepy towns along this first leg.

There are nearly 300 miles of Route 66 in Illinois. The state is also home to many of the country's most famous Muffler Men, those fiberglass titans of retro roadside kitsch (see Detour, page 46). A lot of the old

route has been gobbled up by modern highways, in particular I-55, but there's still plenty of neon, fiberglass, and chrome to keep any roadtripper happy. Traditionally, travelers begin their journey southwest near the shores of Lake Michigan, not spending too much time in Chicago. After all, the Mother Road is calling.

On the road . . .

Chicago

Start your epic journey at the route's original 1937 terminus at Lake Shore Drive and East Jackson Drive in downtown Chicago. Don't miss the ROUTE 66 STARTS HERE sign at the corner of South Michigan Avenue and East Adams Street. The sign (along with a handful of replica signs on the same block) is located in a busy section, so you may need to find parking elsewhere and walk to the sign for a photo.

Lou Mitchell's Restaurant & Bakery **565 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL**

Lou Mitchell's is the perfect place to get breakfast and a cup of the "world's finest coffee" before you leave the Windy City. The restaurant has been serving home-cooked comfort food to travelers since 1923, predating the designation of Route 66 by three years. Before sitting down, diners are handed a freshly made donut hole and a miniature box of candy. And because one donut hole is never enough, you can order some to go.



Extra stops

Buckingham Fountain *Photo Op*
301 S. Columbus Drive, Chicago, IL

Willis Tower *Attraction*
233 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL

The Berghoff *Restaurant*
17 W. Adams St., Chicago, IL

Lulu's Hot Dogs *Restaurant*
1000 S. Leavitt St., Chicago, IL

Castle Car Wash *Photo Op*
3801 W. Ogden Ave., Chicago, IL

Henry's Drive-In *Restaurant*
6031 W. Ogden Ave., Cicero, IL

Hofmann Tower *Photo Op*
3910 Barrypoint Road, Lyons, IL





Weirdville

Tinley Park Lights UFO Sighting

Date: August 21, 2004

Location: Chicago, IL

On a balmy August evening in 2004, Chicago residents reported seeing a series of red or white lights that formed a triangle shape. Several videos captured the light show, and it was even reported by local news outlets. The phenomenon occurred about 45 miles from O'Hare International Airport, but the lights moved too slowly to be a commercial plane. What makes this one of the more significant UFO sightings is that it was investigated by the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), a nonprofit with thousands of civilian volunteers. The mysterious occurrence was also featured on the History Channel's *UFO Hunters*.

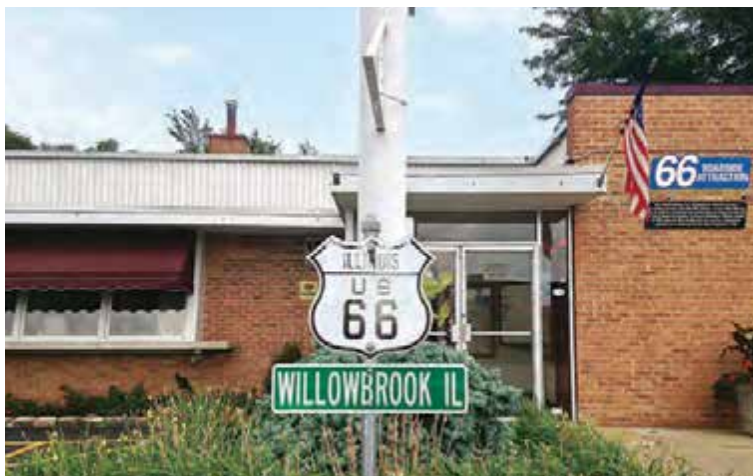


ABOVE AND BELOW Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket

Above: David Wilson/Flickr/CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket
645 Joliet Road (Historic Route 66),
Willowbrook, IL

Route 66 is renowned for its classic American cuisine. If you're not still full of donut holes (or even if you are), visit Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket, just outside Chicago, for some of the best fried chicken you'll ever taste. The roadhouse has been serving its home-cooked goodness since 1946. Even if you're not ready to eat just yet, the neon sign is a good photo op.





Extra stops

**Montana Charlie's
Little America Flea Market** *Shopping*
255 S. Joliet Road, Bolingbrook, IL
(open on Sundays, April–October)

Rich & Creamy *Restaurant*
920 N. Broadway St., Joliet, IL

**Joliet Area Historical Museum & Route 66
Visitors Center Gift Shop** *Attraction*
204 N. Ottawa St., Joliet, IL

Rialto Square Theatre *Photo Op*
102 N. Chicago St., Joliet, IL

Route 66 Raceway *Attraction*
500 Speedway Blvd., Joliet, IL

Gemini Giant

810 E. Baltimore St., Wilmington, IL

The Illinois stretch of Route 66 is home to several great roadside attractions, but nothing shouts retro kitsch louder than a massive Muffler Man. Snap a picture with the Gemini Giant at the newly reopened Launching Pad Drive-In in Wilmington. Named for the Gemini space program, he's one of many similar statues made by International Fiberglass. He stands guard over the drive-in, which also houses a gift shop, a restaurant, and the Mini Americana Museum.



The resurrected Launching Pad diner serves up hot-fudge sundaes with a side of grief counseling:
rt.guide/CJKZ



Studiofox/Public Domain



DETOUR

Meet the Muffler Men

If you took a road trip across the U.S. in the 1960s or 1970s, you probably saw more than a few Muffler Men. These tall statues often held objects like axes, swords, rifles, or tiny rocket ships. Almost all of these figures, which were created by International Fiberglass in Venice, California, had a body formed from the

ABOVE Muffler Man in Merced, California

same mold (arms out, right hand up, left hand down), but they are infinitely customizable by swapping out heads, clothes, and accessories.

These days, the term *Muffler Man* is used to describe almost any giant roadside statue advertising a business. The first Muffler Man created was a lumberjack statue produced for the Paul Bunyan Cafe off Route 66 in Flagstaff, Arizona. The statues were effective advertising tools: A Muffler Man used to cost \$1,000 to \$3,000 to purchase (today that number is closer to \$25,000), and the 18- to 25-foot-tall figures helped grab travelers' increasingly divided attention.

At one time, thousands of International Fiberglass creations lined U.S. highways, including Sinclair Oil's dinosaurs and Phillips Petroleum's cowboys. But as freeways began to bypass the smaller routes, these giant statues fell out of favor. The gas crisis of 1973, which made production of fiberglass more expensive, dealt the final blow to International Fiberglass, which closed in 1976.

There are a few hundred Muffler Men left today, and a small group of dedicated fans have taken to restoring and caring for those that remain, including Illinois' Gemini Giant, California's Chicken Boy, New Jersey's Nitro Girl, and South Dakota's Mr. Bendo.



These repurposed Muffler Men all over the country are proof that there's value in saving forgotten roadside attractions: **rt.guide/HSRP**



Extra stops

Polk-a-Dot Drive In Restaurant
222 N. Front St., Braidwood, IL

Old Route 66 Family Restaurant Restaurant
105 S. Old Route 66, Dwight, IL

Illinois Route 66 Mining Museum *150 S. Kankakee St., Godley, IL*

The Illinois Route 66 Mining Museum chronicles the significant role the coal industry played in the development of Route 66. Coal mining was the lifeblood of several small towns along the route, and this is a great place to learn how the industry affected the people and economy along what was once considered America's Main Street.



Ambler's Texaco Gas Station *W. Waupansie St., Dwight, IL*

The route is dotted with old service stations, many of which have been beautifully restored and repurposed as photo ops. The first one you'll encounter is Ambler's Texaco Gas Station in Dwight. In continuous use for 66 years, from 1933 until 1999, it was one of the longest-operating gas stations on the Mother Road. Today it serves as a visitor center.

Standard Oil Gas Station *400 S. West St., Odell, IL*

This station was a bustling rest stop throughout the heyday of Route 66 travel but fell into disrepair after going out of business in the late 1970s. After it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, locals rallied to raise the funds and restore the location to its former glory.

Route 66 Association Hall of Fame and Museum *110 W. Howard St., Pontiac, IL*

The Route 66 Association Hall of Fame and Museum is full of fascinating, family-friendly exhibits, and the staff's love of the route is infectious. Don't miss the wall art and wishing well in the museum's backyard.





Extra stops

Old Log Cabin *Restaurant*

18700 Historic US 66, Pontiac, IL

International Walldog Mural & Sign

Art Exhibit *Attraction*

110 W. Howard St., Pontiac, IL 61764

Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum *Attraction*

205 N. Mill St., Pontiac, IL

Ryburn Place (Sprague's Super Service) *Photo Op*

305 Pine St., Normal, IL

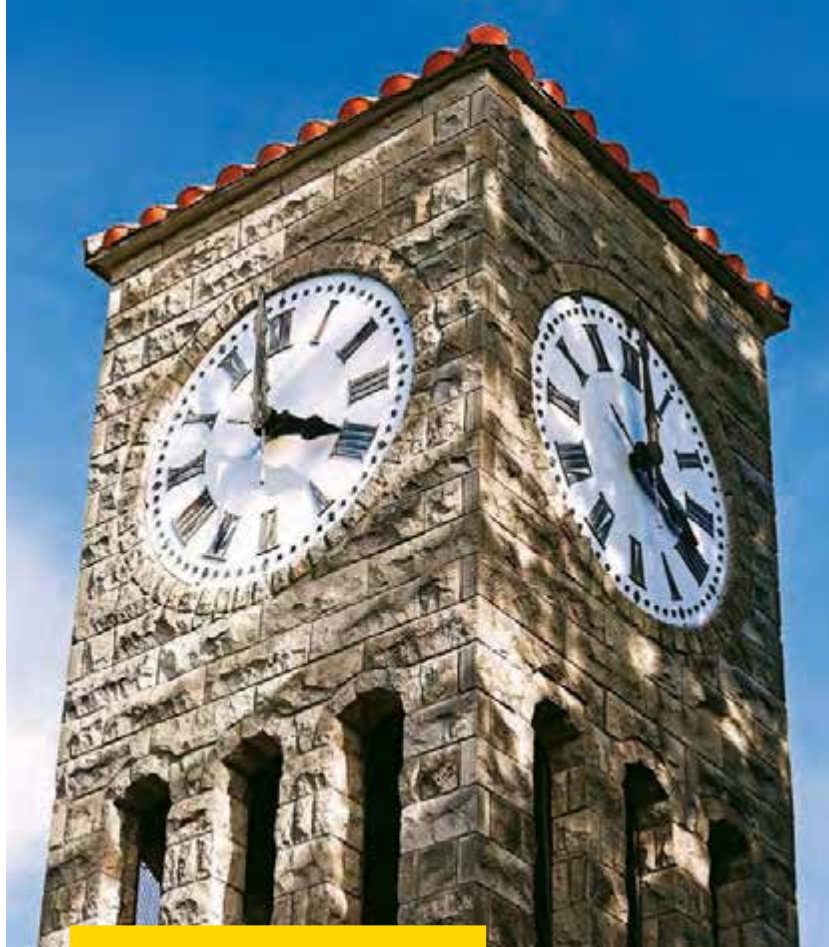
Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 *Attraction*

200 N. Main St., Bloomington, IL

Funks Grove Pure Maple Sirup

5257 Historic US 66, Shirley, IL

For travelers with a sweet tooth, Funks Grove Pure Maple Sirup in Shirley is a must-see (and must-taste). Funks Grove produces more than 2,000 gallons of maple syrup—or sirup—per year using old-fashioned sap-gathering techniques. The finished product comes in beautifully designed bottles.



On the road . . .

Atlanta

Next up is the adorable town of Atlanta (yes, Illinois has one, too). This charming place is full of classic Route 66 attractions. Visit the town's octagonal library, built in 1908. The 40-foot-tall clock tower next door is still wound by hand every eight days.

ABOVE Clock tower in Atlanta, Illinois
Henryk Sadura/Shutterstock



ABOVE Downtown Atlanta, Illinois

Route 66 Arcade Museum *108 SW Arch St., Atlanta, IL*

Atlanta is also home to the Route 66 Arcade Museum, a fantastic hidden gem. It features a collection of vintage arcade machines (made from 1934 to 1982) that you can still play for just a quarter.

Bunyon with a Hot Dog *110 SW Arch St., Atlanta, IL*

Atlanta is also where you'll find the iconic 19-foot-tall Paul Bunyan Muffler Man holding a hot dog, one of the most famous statues along Route 66. He's perpetually standing guard just across from The Palms Grill Cafe. In 1965, H. A. Stephens purchased a Paul Bunyan Muffler Man, swapped its original ax for a hotdog, and placed it in front of his restaurant in Cicero, Illinois. Stephens purposely misspelled the name of his business, Bunyon's, to avoid a trademark conflict with the Paul Bunyan Cafe, site of the original statue, in Flagstaff, Arizona. A legend was born, and over the years the Bunyon statue, now on loan to Atlanta, became a Route 66 landmark.

Lincoln Watermelon Monument

101 N. Chicago St., Lincoln, IL

After visiting Paul Bunyan and his hot dog, head over to the town of Lincoln to check out one of its more bizarre presidential monuments—a statue of a 2-foot-long watermelon. In 1853, before he was president, Abraham Lincoln visited the town during its naming celebration. He grabbed a watermelon from a nearby stand, juiced it, and then gave a speech. More than 100 years later, in 1964, the town erected this delicious piece of historic kitsch to commemorate the occasion.

Railsplitter Covered Wagon

1750 Fifth St., Lincoln, IL

As the name suggests, the town of Lincoln has a bit of an obsession with the 16th president, as evidenced by the almost 25-foot-tall Railsplitter Covered Wagon—the world's largest covered wagon—where Abe himself can be found reading a law book. The wagon sits on the front lawn of a Best Western hotel.



ABOVE Railsplitter Covered Wagon

On the road . . .

Springfield



Illinois claims to be the home of the corn dog. To the brilliant soul who first dreamed of putting a corn dog on a stick, we salute you.

In 1837, the Springfield Road was constructed to connect St. Louis with Springfield, Illinois. The route became a popular stagecoach line for the next 20 years, but with the rise of the railroad, roads like this fell into disuse and disrepair. The advent of the automobile provided a welcome comeback, and by 1920 there were tens of thousands of cars on the road.

In 1925, the American Association of State Highway Officials approved a marking system for interstate

BELOW AND OPPOSITE Cozy Dog Drive In



routes. East–west routes were designated with even numbers and all ended with a 0, with one exception. After some controversy, mainly on the part of delegates from Kentucky, the route from Chicago to Los Angeles was given the number 66.

Cozy Dog Drive In
2935 S. Sixth St.,
Springfield, IL

While the corn dog technically wasn't invented here, the Cozy Dog Drive In claims to be where it was first put on a stick. Stop by to taste the original Cozy Dog, and don't forget to take a photo of it in front of the vintage sign.



Obed & Isaac's Microbrewery and Eatery
500 S. Sixth St., Springfield, IL

At Obed & Isaac's you'll find one of the more bizarre culinary confections that Illinois has to offer. The Horseshoe Sandwich is made with two slices of toast (usually Texas style), piled high with two burger patties, fries, and cheese sauce. A side order of seasoned fries is a must.

The Chili Parlor
820 S. Ninth St., Springfield, IL

If you're in the mood for a food challenge, head over to Joe Rogers' Chili Parlour and partake in the Firebrand Chili Challenge. See how many bowls of the famous extra-spicy chili you can eat. The current record is five.



The Pasfield House Inn

SPOTLIGHT

525 S. Pasfield St., Springfield, IL

For the full Lincoln experience, spend the night at the Pasfield House Inn in Springfield. This gorgeous, six-suite bed-and-breakfast is a Springfield landmark and oozes style. Owned and operated by Tony Leone, a local historian who greets his guests with that famous Prairie State hospitality, the inn sees quite a lot of visitors, especially history buffs on Lincoln-inspired pilgrimages. The Georgian-style home was built in 1896 and has been lovingly preserved under the care of Leone since 1996.

The inn's namesake, George Pasfield, was a banker who met Lincoln when they both lived in Springfield,

and the two were involved in establishing the state capital in Springfield. As the patriarch of one of the wealthiest families in the city, Pasfield owned acres upon acres of land around the Illinois State Capitol.

The inn is within walking distance of the capitol and downtown Springfield. It is also close to the Cozy Dog (corn dogs and french fries are a totally acceptable breakfast). If you have time, reserve a spot on the spirited 90-minute, 10-block Lincoln Ghost Walk Tour. Springfield has a little something for everyone: History buffs, Route 66 aficionados, and foodies will all find something to love in the Land of Lincoln.

Our Lady of the Highways

22353 W. Frontage Road, Raymond, IL

The Shrine of Our Lady of the Highways has been watching over travelers since the 1950s. The I-55/Route 66 shrine was originally made as a high school project. Stop at this beautiful roadside destination to pay homage to our guardian of asphalt, represented here by a statue bearing the inscription “Mary, Loving Mother of Jesus, Protect Us on the Highway.”

Ariston Cafe

413 N. Old Route 66, Litchfield, IL

Thought to be one of the first restaurants on Route 66, Litchfield’s Ariston Cafe is a roadside icon. Founded by Greek immigrant Pete Adam in 1924 (and moved to its current location in 1935), the cafe was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006. The Adam family has been running the place for years, and the desserts are just as rich as the history.

Soulsby Service Station

710 W. First St., Mount Olive, IL

Located just 10 to 15 minutes down the road from Ariston Cafe, the Soulsby Station was designed and built in 1926 by Henry Soulsby. The building was designed to blend in with the surrounding residential area. Today, the station has been beautifully restored and is a popular stop for Route 66 travelers.

Henry's Rabbit Ranch

1107 Historic Old Route 66, Staunton, IL

Six miles south of Mount Olive, take a slight detour to Henry's Rabbit Ranch in Staunton. The ranch is full of Rabbits—both the Volkswagen kind (some stick out of the ground in a Stonehenge-like fashion) and the fluffy kind. If you're lucky, you might get to meet the owner and pet the real-life rabbits that spend their days hopping around the store. A short drive away is the St. Paul Lutheran Church with its large blue neon cross.

Pink Elephant Antique Mall

***908 Veterans
Memorial Drive,
Livingston, IL***

Pink Elephant Antiques is a treasure trove of quirky roadside attractions all in one place. Here you'll find vintage neon signage, fiberglass giants, and lots of other weird stuff. There's a cone-shaped ice-cream stand, a UFO-shaped 1960s Futuro

RIGHT Ice-cream stand at Pink Elephant Antique Mall



House, and, fittingly, a huge pink elephant. While there, stop at the on-site flea market, where you could easily spend several hours. For a bite to eat, hit up Weezy's Bar and Grill in nearby Hamel.

Luna Cafe

201 E. Chain of Rocks Road, Granite City, IL

Your last food-and-drink stop in Illinois should be Luna Cafe. Built in 1924, this Route 66 roadside joint was a favorite hangout and hideout for Al Capone. The neon sign alone is worth a visit, but the cold beer and good food make Luna the perfect place to stop before continuing into Missouri. The Luna Cafe is nothing fancy, but that's part of its appeal.

World's Largest Catsup Bottle

800 S. Morrison, Collinsville, IL

But wait—there are two more essential roadside stops before you leave Illinois: the World's Largest Catsup Bottle and the Cahokia Mounds. Originally built in 1949, the catsup bottle is an excellent example of roadside Americana, and thanks to a preservation group, it stands as tall and vibrant today as it did 70 years ago.

Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site

30 Ramey Drive, Collinsville, IL

Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site was once a heavily populated city that covered 6 square miles. Today, it clocks in at nearly 3.5 square miles, with 80 of the original 120 mounds remaining. This was the largest pre-Columbian settlement north of Mexico, and no other North American city surpassed it in size until the 1800s. Visitors can see the resting place of an important ruler (housed in Mound 72); a Cahokian version of Stonehenge (but with wooden poles instead of giant stones); and the public plaza, where

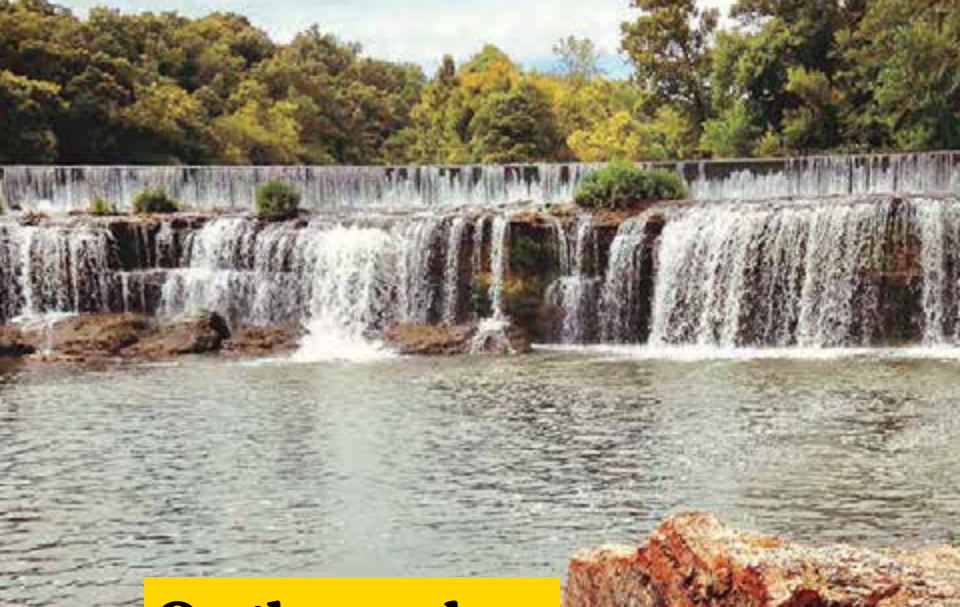
Cahokians played a highly competitive moving-target, spear-throwing game called Chunkey.

Pere Marquette State Park
13112 Visitor Center Lane, Grafton, IL

If you need one more outdoor adventure before heading into St. Louis, take a short hike around Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton. The park has 8,000 acres perfect for cycling, bird-watching, boating, picnicking, and camping.

BELOW Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site
RozenskiP/Shutterstock





On the road . . . Missouri

Many miles of Missouri's Route 66 have been replaced over the years by larger highways, so what remains of the original road is a patchwork, especially in and around St. Louis. The Show-Me State contains several abandoned stretches of the Mother Road, but it's still possible to travel on quite a bit of the original route. More than 300 miles of road takes you southwest from St. Louis to Joplin, a stretch packed with fantastic diners, classic roadside attractions, and classic photo ops.



Some say St. Louis deserves credit for inventing the ice-cream cone.

On the road . . .

St. Louis

Few cities are lucky enough to have an architectural icon like the Gateway Arch overlooking the mighty Mississippi River, but there's so much more to St. Louis. The city also has a booming craft brewery scene, a rich history, and top-notch cultural institutions.

Crown Candy Kitchen

1401 St. Louis Ave., St. Louis, MO

If you're in the mood for classic American grub, then stop by the historic Crown Candy Kitchen for some sweets and a classic counter lunch of sandwiches. The BLTs here are the stuff of legend, but the milkshakes are the real draw—you can't go wrong with a hot fudge or chocolate banana malted.

Gateway Arch National Park

11 N. Fourth St., St. Louis, MO

Gateway Arch National Park is so much more than just the iconic arch. There's also a free museum with exhibits detailing America's westward expansion and the building of the arch, which is a good place to start if you're waiting for your ride to the top (or if you're scared of heights but still want the arch experience). A trip to the top of the Eero Saarinen-designed monument—the world's tallest arch and the tallest man-made monument in the United States—offers great views of both sides of the Mississippi. Across the street is the Old Courthouse—site of the Dred Scott trial—which features an ornately decorated dome.



ABOVE The Gateway Arch
Oakley/Shutterstock



Weirdville

The Haunted Lemp Mansion
3322 DeMenil Place, St. Louis, MO

The Lemp family were once one of the most influential families in St. Louis. Prohibition, divorce, death, and depression hit them hard, but most of the really dark stuff happened in their stately home, known as Lemp Mansion.

William Lemp had been grooming his son Frederick to take control of the family grocery business, but Frederick died at 28 from health complications. Shortly after, William's friend Frederick Pabst (yes, that Pabst) died. Less than two months later, William himself was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the family mansion. Things only got worse from there: Two of William's remaining children also died by suicide and, because of Prohibition, the family's brewery closed.

William's son Charles continued to live in the house until the 1940s. He never married and was known for his strange behavior. He mailed

a letter to a St. Louis funeral home with very specific instructions to be carried out upon his death: He wanted his remains transported to a crematory by ambulance and cremated immediately, and he requested that his body not be bathed, clothed, or altered in any way. He wanted his ashes to be placed in a wicker box and buried on his farm, without a funeral or death notice printed in the papers. Eight years later, he shot his dog and then himself, leaving behind a note saying, “St. Louis Mo/ May 9, 1949, In case I am found dead blame it on no one but me. Ch. A. Lemp.”

Continued on next page



Chris Yunker/Flickr/CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)

The ghosts of the Lemp family reportedly still haunt the mansion, now a dinner theater and bed-and-breakfast. Patrons frequently report seeing William's ghost peeking into bathroom stalls in the downstairs women's restroom and claim to have seen a spirit running up the stairs. Others hear horses outside or find that items have mysteriously moved across the room. A doorway in the basement leading to the beer storage caves is referred to as The Gates of Hell.

Brave travelers can book a stay in the mansion. If you're lucky, you might get to meet one of the Lemps and knock back a cold one—with a cold one.



Ted Drewes Frozen Custard
6726 Chippewa St., St. Louis, MO

Ted Drewes Frozen Custard, a Route 66 icon, has been serving hot and hungry road travelers for more than 80 years. After opening his first successful custard store in Florida in 1929, Drewes opened a few more stores, including this stand located on Historic Route 66. Almost a century later, the stand is still a family-run business.

The Cheshire St. Louis
6300 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO

The Cheshire is a British-themed hotel that may look out of place in St. Louis, but it's been a fixture in the city for close to a century. Dating back to the 1920s, the Cheshire is a charming throwback to traditional British inns, complete with a cozy on-site pub. A massive mounted bear, dark wood furniture, and wall tapestries greet you when you first walk in. A hot tip is to book the James Bond Suite.



ABOVE The Cheshire St. Louis hotel



Missouri was once home to the largest shoe manufacturer in the world, The Hamilton-Brown Shoe Factory.



48 hours in St. Louis

Whether you're staying at a galactic-themed hotel or getting lost in a phantasmagorical wonderland, St. Louis is an excellent weekend destination.

Gioia's Deli

1934 Macklind Ave., St. Louis, MO

St. Louis' Italian neighborhood is known as The Hill, and one of the most popular spots in the area is the James Beard award-winning Gioia's Deli. It has been open since 1918 (with a storefront purported to have been built with brick and wood from the 1904 World's Fair), and people still line up out the door for the incredible sandwiches. Most of the people in line will probably be ordering the hot salami (or the Salam de Testa, as it's sometimes called). The salami—hot in temperature, not spice—is made fresh daily and is absolutely worth the wait. Make sure to top it with ooey-gooley, melted Provel cheese (a St. Louis specialty made of cheddar, Swiss, and provolone) and *giardiniera* (Italian relish).

ABOVE Stained glass at St. Louis Union Station (see page 70)
Mobilus In Mobili/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0)

Dressel's Public House

419 N. Euclid Ave., St. Louis, MO

Wash down your Gioia's Deli hot salami with a beer or two at Dressel's Public House. With an impressive selection of craft beers, wine, and cocktails, this Welsh pub is a cozy place featuring rustic-chic decor and farm-to-table bar bites.

St. Louis Union Station

1820 Market St., St. Louis, MO

St. Louis Union Station looks like a castle, but it's actually a converted rail station. The building is stunning, inside and out—seriously, the lobby is drool-worthy. Inside is an aquarium, a variety of dining options (including a soda fountain that makes over-the-top shakes), a minigolf course, and much more. If you're not ready to leave, you can book a room at the St. Louis Union Station Hotel. Don't miss the hourly light show, projected onto the 65-foot ceilings each night from 5 to 10.



Moonrise Hotel

6177 Delmar Blvd., St. Louis, MO

Alternatively, you could check into the Moonrise Hotel, a funky boutique hotel with a galactic theme that promises to take guests on "a journey through space and time."

Rooster

1104 Locust St., St. Louis, MO

Nothing like a hearty brunch to start your day. Rooster offers a little something for every kind of brunch lover: traditional scrambles, sweet and savory crepes, French toast topped with caramelized bananas and nuts, and even a brunch burger.

Anheuser-Busch St. Louis Brewery

1 Busch Place, St. Louis, MO

Whether or not Budweiser is your beer of choice, there's no denying that its operation is impressive. Stop by the Anheuser-Busch brewery and take a tour. You can enjoy the General Brewery Tour, Beermaster Tour, or Day Fresh Tour, where you'll meet the Budweiser Clydesdales. Or just grab a brew in the beer garden.

Kim Lewis Photography/Shutterstock



ABOVE A Clydesdale horse at the Anheuser-Busch St. Louis Brewery

Pappy's Smokehouse

3106 Olive St., St. Louis, MO

St. Louis loves its barbecue, and Pappy's Smokehouse is one of the city's most beloved barbecue joints. It serves food only until it runs out—and the wait might be long—but once you taste the ribs or burnt ends, you'll understand why. There's also Frito pie, which includes cheddar cheese, baked beans, your choice of meat, and onions over a pile of Fritos. Trust us, it's delicious.



Soldiers Memorial Military Museum **1315 Chestnut St., St. Louis, MO**

The St. Louis Soldiers Memorial Military Museum was originally built to honor local citizens who lost their lives in World War I. This sobering and well-thought-out museum includes uniforms, weapons, portraits, and art installations.



City Museum **750 N. 16th St., St. Louis, MO**

City Museum describes itself as a “phantasmagorical wonderland.” Opened in 1997, the museum, housed in an old shoe warehouse, contains found architectural and industrial objects, including a school bus, cranes, a fire engine, and two old Saber F-86F aircraft fuselages. There’s also an aquarium, a Ferris wheel, and a 10-story slide. But don’t expect to have an easy time finding any of it; the whole place is a maze of exhibits, and there are no maps. Visitors are encouraged to explore and discover on their own. You never

BELOW City Museum
Zak Littrell



know where a ladder or slide will take you—you could end up inside a life-size whale statue, at a giant skate park, in an enormous pit filled with balls, or in a tree house bar.



We toured the artsy and eccentric St. Louis playground and left more confused than when we arrived: [rt.guide/JFPU](#)

Schlafly Tap Room

2100 Locust St., St. Louis, MO

End your trip through St. Louis at one of the more famous craft breweries in town: the Schlafly Tap Room. In addition to pub food and delicious beers (try the grapefruit IPA or the oatmeal stout), the tap-room offers live music Thursday through Saturday.

BELOW Schlafly Tap Room

Flickr/Tom Bastin/CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)



Grant's Farm

10501 Gravois Road, St. Louis, MO

Grant's Farm was built by General Ulysses S. Grant in the late 1840s. The property was later purchased by the Busch family (yes, the beer guys), and today it's a landmark open to visitors who want a beautiful spot to spend the afternoon. Guests can feed baby goats, take a tram ride through a wildlife preserve, and sample some beer. Admission is free, but there is a fee to park.

Laumeier Sculpture Park

12580 Rott Road, St. Louis, MO

On your way out of St. Louis, hit up the sprawling Laumeier Sculpture Park and museum. Stretch your legs among the weird and wild outdoor art exhibits, including a gigantic eyeball in the middle of a field.

St. Louis West/Historic Route 66 KOA

18475 Old US Highway 66, Eureka, MO

Looking for a place to camp for the night? The St. Louis West/Historic Route 66 KOA campground in nearby Eureka is located right on historic Route 66, just 30 minutes outside the city. (Also see page 37.)

Congratulations!

You have reached the end of the Mother Road—and by now you know it's not the destination that matters; it's the journey. But whether the Santa Monica Pier is your ending or starting point, take some time to celebrate and reflect. With more than 2,000 miles of classic neon, motels, larger-than-life roadside attractions, museums, diners, and countless colorful characters, the allure of Route 66 is as strong as ever. The road may look different today than it did decades ago—or even yesterday—but that's all part of the fun.



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ABOVE Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton, Illinois (page 60)

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