



Historic Route 66

16 Night Self Drive Tour

Set off on a Route 66 road trip, a journey through the heart of America, stretching over 2,400 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica. Known as the "Main Street of America" or the "Mother Road," this legendary highway winds through eight states, capturing the essence of the American spirit, offering a diverse tapestry of landscapes, cultures, and historic landmarks. Whether you're a history buff, a lover of classic Americana, or simply seeking an unforgettable adventure, a Route 66 road trip promises a nostalgic and enriching experience, celebrating the open road and the freedom it represents.

Over 17 days you will experience charming small towns, quirky roadside attractions, and breathtaking natural wonders.

Highlights:

- Kick off your Route 66 adventure in Chicago with deep-dish pizza and the iconic sights of Millennium Park.
- Spot the towering Muffler Men statues, iconic roadside giants that add quirky charm to your journey, like Gemini Giant and Buck Atom the Space Cowboy
- Explore vibrant cities such as St Louis, Tulsa and Oklahoma City
- Marvel at the vibrant, half-buried relics of Cadillac Ranch and the VW Slug Bug Ranch
- Experience Pueblo-style architecture, vibrant art scenes, and rich cultural heritage in Santa Fe and Albuquerque
- Discover the nostalgic charm of Williams and Seligman, where Route 66 history comes alive with classic diners, vintage motels, and retro memorabilia.

What's included:

- Getting there: Flights to Chicago, return from Los Angeles
- Transport: Car hire inclusive of GPS
- Accommodation: 16 nights total (including 1 night on the inbound flight) - 15 nights accommodation at different hotels along the route. In remote or less populated areas, such as near national parks or along scenic routes, hotels and lodges may be more basic in amenities and facilities. This could mean simpler rooms, limited dining options, or fewer services compared to urban centres.
- Meals included: as per accommodation booked, most hotels will only offer room only or breakfast

Not included:

- Any meals, drinks, tips, expenses of personal nature
- Anything not mentioned in the "What's Included" column

Full Itinerary

DAY 1 - UK TO CHICAGO

Fly to Chicago, Illinois then pick up your rental car and check in to your hotel in Chicago. Spend the afternoon at leisure before you start your road trip tomorrow. Head to Millennium Park to see the iconic Cloud Gate, and stroll through Grant Park and the nearby Buckingham Fountain. Explore the architectural wonders along the Chicago Riverwalk and take a river cruise for city views.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* The Ambassador, Chicago or similar



DAY 2 - CHICAGO TO SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

This morning you will begin your epic road trip along Route 66; the drive from Chicago to Springfield is a nostalgic journey through Americana.

Starting from the bustling streets of Chicago, you soon find yourself on the historic Mother Road. Pass through quaint towns like Joliet, home to the Rialto Square Theatre, and Wilmington, where the towering Gemini Giant beckons. In Pontiac, visit the Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum. The countryside is dotted with vintage gas stations and diners. In Atlanta, witness the Paul Bunyon statue holding a giant hot dog.

Finally, arrive in Springfield, rich with Abraham Lincoln history and Route 66 memorabilia, completing a picturesque drive through Illinois's heartland.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* President Abraham Lincoln Springfield, DoubleTree or similar

DRIVING TIME: 5 hrs / 215 mi



DAY 3 - SPRINGFIELD TO ST LOUIS

Before leaving Springfield, visit Oak Ridge Cemetery where you can see the Lincoln Tomb, the final resting place of President Abraham Lincoln and his family.

Stop in Litchfield to explore the Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Centre, and have lunch in the historic Ariston Café. In Staunton, the Henry's Rabbit Ranch offers quirky roadside charm and then the landscape transitions to rolling hills and lush forests. Stop in Edwardsville to explore its quaint downtown.

As you approach St. Louis, the iconic Gateway Arch rises on the horizon. Cross the Mississippi River, arriving in the vibrant city known for its blues music, barbecue, and rich history, perfectly blending the old Route 66 charm with urban excitement.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* The Pennywell St Louis Downtown or similar

DRIVING TIME: 2.5 hrs / 106 mi

DAY 4 - ST LOUIS

Start your day in St. Louis with a visit to the Gateway Arch for breathtaking views from the top. Next, explore the nearby Old Courthouse, rich in history. Head to the City Museum, an imaginative and interactive wonderland perfect for all ages. Enjoy lunch at a local eatery in the Delmar Loop, followed by a visit to the Missouri Botanical Garden for a peaceful stroll through its beautiful landscapes. Spend the afternoon at Forest Park, exploring the St. Louis Zoo and the St. Louis Art Museum. Conclude your day with dinner in the vibrant Soulard district, enjoying live music and local cuisine.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* The Pennywell St Louis Downtown or similar



DAY 5 - ST LOUIS TO SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

Today you will drive from St Louis to Springfield, through the heart of the Ozarks and small towns like Pacific and Cuba, where vintage murals and the World's Largest Rocking Chair await. Stop in Rolla to explore its Route 66 connections and picturesque scenery, and pick up some sweet treats at Uranus Fudge Factory and General Store in St Robert. Visit Lebanon's Route 66 Museum for a dose of nostalgia.

As you approach Springfield, MO, the landscape features rolling hills and lush forests. Springfield offers Route 66 landmarks like the Gillioz Theatre and the Birthplace of Route 66 Roadside Park.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven, Springfield or similar

DRIVING TIME: 5.5 hrs / 237 mi



DAY 6 - SPRINGFIELD TO TULSA

Spend the morning at the Route 66 Car Museum in Springfield before heading back on the road towards Tulsa.

Pass through charming towns like Carthage, known for its classic Route 66 attractions, including the Red Oak II art village and the 66 Drive-In Theatre. In Joplin, visit the Route 66 Mural Park, before stopping for lunch at the Old Riverton Store. Continue through the scenic Ozark landscape, then head into Oklahoma. Stop in Miami for a view of vintage Route 66 signs and the iconic Coleman Theatre, and then onto Ribbon Road, the narrowest and oldest segment of Route 66. Look out for the Blue Whale in Catoosa, just on the outskirts of Tulsa.

Arriving in Tulsa, enjoy the vibrant arts scene, explore the historic downtown, and visit the Route 66 Historic District, experiencing a rich tapestry of roadside history and culture.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Hyatt Place Tulsa Downtown or similar

DRIVING TIME: 5 hrs / 205 mi

DAY 7 - TULSA TO OKLAHOMA CITY

Take the morning to explore Tulsa further, including Buck Atom's Cosmic Curios and the iconic Cyrus Avery Route 66 Memorial Bridge.

In Arcadia, check out the historic Round Barn and pop into the old-fashioned Pops Soda Ranch for a refreshing treat, with over 600 choices of soda pop.

Arrive in Oklahoma City to experience its vibrant Bricktown district and rich Route 66 heritage. Visit the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, stroll through the Myriad Botanical Gardens and wrap up your day with dinner and entertainment in Bricktown, where you can savour diverse cuisine and lively nightlife, reflecting the city's dynamic spirit.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Best Western Plus Saddleback Inn & Conference Centre, Oklahoma City or similar

DRIVING TIME: 2.5 hrs / 115 mi



DAY 8 - OKLAHOMA CITY TO AMARILLO

Depart Oklahoma City and head west, passing through classic Route 66 towns like El Reno and Hydro. In Clinton, stop at the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum before crossing into Texas. Don't miss the Leaning Tower of Texas in Groom, and the VW Slug Bug Ranch in Conway.

Arriving in Amarillo, explore landmarks like the Cadillac Ranch, where colourful cars are buried in the desert, and the historic Big Texan Steak Ranch for a hearty meal. The drive blends rich history with striking landscapes, marking a memorable segment of Route 66.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Best Western Santa Fe, Amarillo or similar

DRIVING TIME: 4.5 hrs / 248 mi



DAY 9 - AMARILLO TO SANTA FE

Leaving Amarillo you will pass Midpoint Café in Adrian, the halfway point of Route 66 and as you approach New Mexico you will travel through the historic ghost town of Glenrio. Stop for lunch in Tucumcari, renowned for its vintage motels and neon signs. In Santa Rosa, explore the Blue Hole, a stunning natural swimming hole.

Arriving in Santa Fe, immerse yourself in its rich cultural heritage, from the historic Plaza to the vibrant art galleries and Pueblo-style architecture.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* The Lodge at Santa Fe or similar

DRIVING TIME: 4.5 hrs / 284 mi

DAY 10 - SANTA FE TO ALBUQUERQUE

Spend the morning in Santa Fe at leisure. Explore the Palace of the Governors, wander through the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and stroll along Canyon Road, famous for its art galleries and studios.

After lunch, depart Santa Fe and stop in the town of Madrid, known for its artistic community and quirky shops.

As you approach Albuquerque, explore the Sandia Mountains on the horizon. Enter the city and drive along Central Avenue, the heart of Albuquerque's Route 66 corridor, where you'll find classic diners, neon signs, and vintage motels. Visit the Albuquerque Old Town for a taste of history and culture. End your journey with a sunset ride on the Sandia Peak Tramway, offering breathtaking city views, and dinner in the vibrant Nob Hill district.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Best Western Plus Rio Grande Inn, Albuquerque or similar

DRIVING TIME: 1 hr / 64 mi



DAY 11 - ALBUQUERQUE TO GALLUP

After breakfast, visit the Indian Pueblo Cultural Centre to learn about Native American history and art before leaving Albuquerque.

Stop at the town of Grants to visit the Route 66 Museum, showcasing the area's rich history, and then continue to Thoreau, known for its Navajo roots, and home to a local trading centre for turquoise and silver jewellery, as well as artisan rugs.

Head toward Gallup, known for its vibrant Native American culture. In Gallup, explore historic Route 66 landmarks and the downtown area's unique shops and art galleries.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Best Western Plus Gallup Inn & Suites or similar

DRIVING TIME: 2.5 hrs / 140 mi

DAY 12 - GALLUP TO FLAGSTAFF

Driving from Gallup to Flagstaff, you'll experience a dramatic shift in scenery from New Mexico's desert to Arizona's high country. Depart Gallup and head west, detouring to the Petrified Forest National Park. Explore the park's stunning petrified wood and colourful landscapes at sites like Blue Mesa and the Painted Desert. Stop at the historic town of Holbrook to see the Wigwam Motel and the colourful Route 66 signs, and continue through Winslow, where you can visit the famous "Standin' on the Corner" Park and the La Posada Hotel, one of the most luxurious hotels in the southwest when it opened in 1930. Next, visit Meteor Crater, a colossal impact site and finally, arrive in Flagstaff to experience Route 66 landmarks and the city's vibrant atmosphere.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* High Country Motor Lodge, Flagstaff or similar

DRIVING TIME: 3.5 hrs / 199 mi



DAY 13 - FLAGSTAFF

Begin your day in Flagstaff with a visit to the Lowell Observatory for stunning views and astronomy exhibits. Stroll through the historic downtown area, checking out unique shops and galleries. Enjoy a hearty lunch at a local café.

In the afternoon, take a scenic drive to the Grand Canyon, about 1.5 hours away. Explore the South Rim's breathtaking viewpoints, such as Mather Point and Yavapai Observation Station. Return to Flagstaff in the evening and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant. Alternatively, if time permits, relax with a walk through the city's charming streets or visit the Museum of Northern Arizona before dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: 4* High Country Motor Lodge, Flagstaff or similar

DAY 14 - FLAGSTAFF TO BARSTOW

Depart Flagstaff, passing through scenic stretches of the Coconino Plateau. Stop in Williams for a taste of classic Route 66 charm and explore its historic downtown, and then continue to Seligman, where the vibrant murals and quirky shops celebrate the road's history. Visit Delgadillos' Snow Cap, a Guinness World Record Holder for the Largest Display of Milkshake Varieties. As you approach Kingman, the desert scenery intensifies, leading you to the city's Route 66 Museum, housed in the historic Powerhouse.

After lunch, pass through the Mojave Desert with its striking, arid scenery, and stop in the town of Oatman, known for its wild burros and nostalgic atmosphere. Continue through the desert to Needles, where you can explore Route 66 memorabilia.

As you approach Barstow, the route features iconic landmarks like the Route 66 Museum and the historic Harvey House. Your drive this morning between Flagstaff and Kingman has taken you along the longest segment of the original Route 66.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Best Western Desert Villa Inn, Barstow or similar

DRIVING TIME: 7.5 hrs / 393 mi



DAY 15 - BARSTOW TO SANTA MONICA

Embark on your last stretch of your Route 66 road trip, heading towards the end marker at Santa Monica Pier.

Pass through San Bernardino, and visit the First Original McDonald's Museum, the original McDonald's site and a nostalgic homage to fast-food history. Continue through Pasadena, where you can explore the charming Old Town and iconic architecture. As you enter downtown Los Angeles, take in the city's vibrant energy and historic landmarks, and stop for lunch at Grand Central Market.

Follow Sunset Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard through West Hollywood and Beverly Hills, arriving in Santa Monica, where Route 66 ends at the Pacific Ocean. Stroll along the Santa Monica Pier and enjoy the ocean views, celebrating the end of your adventure.

ACCOMMODATION: 3* Gateway Hotel Santa Monica or similar

DRIVING TIME: 4.5 hrs / 158 mi



DAY 16 - FLY BACK FROM LOS ANGELES TO UK

Today you fly back to the UK, dropping the car back at Los Angeles airport.

DAY 17 - ARRIVE HOME

Your overnight flight arrives back in the UK for you to make your journey home.

FAQs

BEST TIME TO TRAVEL

Route 66 traverses over 2,400 miles, across 8 states and 3 timezones, so you will experience a lot of different landscapes and climates. Spring and Autumn are the best times to travel for mild weather and quieter roads. Avoid the peak of summer as temperatures can get very hot and during winter, snow may close some portions of the road.

CAR HIRE

Please note to rent a car the lead driver must have a credit card on their name. Debit cards are only accepted in some cases. Please ensure a GPS and zero excess is included in the car rental, as well as multiple drivers, full tank of petrol should you wish to benefit from this. Many of the roads are so vast and straight in the national parks you'd be forgiven for thinking it's okay to drive a little faster than you actually should. There are, however, a lot of police cars and speed checks along the roads so do ensure you stick to the speed limit, which can often be 50 or 55 miles an hour. A one way fee may be applicable to the car rental, which will need to be paid on arrival. This will be confirmed at the time of booking.

MAPS

Your car hire will have a GPS included so you can find your way; physical driving instructions are not included, in order to give you the flexibility to stop and change route at any time.

However keep in mind that GPS devices often provide the quickest routes from A to B, which may not necessarily follow the original Route 66. You may wish to purchase an official Route 66 road map or download an app to your phone to help navigate.

ESSENTIALS

Some of the areas you'll be travelling are quiet remote, you may like to bring with you lots of water and snacks.

ACCOMMODATION

Around National Parks and near remote areas, the standard of accommodation is fairly basic. Treat them just as a place to sleep, as you won't be spending much time in them.

VISA

British citizens do not require a VISA to visit the US, but they do need to apply online for an electronic authorization (ESTA). <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>

NATIONAL PARK ENTRANCE FEES

Most National Parks charge a mandatory entrance fee, from around \$20-\$35 per vehicle. It is possible to purchase an 'America the Beautiful' Annual Pass locally, for around \$80 which allows access into most National Parks - <https://store.usgs.gov/2024-annual-pass>