BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

Route 66 Turns 100: Brand USA Invites Travelers to Discover the Mother Road's Iconic Attractions, Flavors, and Stays

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Featured Image: *Tulsa, Oklahoma | Buck Atom's Cosmic Curios on 66*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 16, 2025) — With just over a year until the centennial celebration of Route 66 on November 11, 2026, travelers are encouraged to rediscover the plethora of museums and roadside attractions that line the historic Mother Road. From nostalgic diners and retro soda fountains to a cutting-edge food hall, the Route offers something to satisfy every curiosity and appetite.

According to a recent study conducted by Brand USA, road trips rank among the top three most in-demand travel experiences driving international interest in visiting the United States. In support of this growing demand, Brand USA partnered with Secretary Sean Duffy and the U.S. Department of Transportation on the Great American Road Trip initiative, which highlights more than 250 sites of interest along iconic routes across the country—including the legendary Route 66.

"Route 66 is integral to the American travel story. For nearly a century, it has connected travelers to the people, places, and experiences that define so much of the United States," said **Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA.** "As we approach its 100th anniversary, we're reminded of the road's iconic landmarks and quirky charm and its ongoing legacy as a symbol of possibility and exploration. We invite visitors from around the world to experience the next chapter of Route 66 and discover how the spirit of the open road continues to shape travel across the USA."

"Route 66 is more than a highway – it's a living symbol of America's pioneering spirit," said **Caroline Beteta, president & CEO of Visit California and chair of the Route 66 Centennial Commission**. "From the bustling Chicago gateway to Santa Monica's epic Pacific sunsets, this legendary road connects people not just across miles, but through generations of shared discovery. Intrepid travelers should hit the road this year to soak in the nostalgia, diversity and open-hearted welcome that make Route 66 – and the American road trip – so unforgettable."

MUST VISIT MUSEUMS & ATTRACTIONS

Among the must-see museums and attractions along the highway are the Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum in Pontiac, Illinois, where visitors can see memorabilia and snap a photo with the largest Route 66 shield mural.

With all the french fries served at eateries along Route 66, it's a good thing The World's Largest Catsup Bottle stands in Collinsville, Illinois. Actually, it's a 170-foot one-time water tower built in 1949 for the makers of Brooks catsup. You may or may not see bunnies hopping at Henry's Rabbit Ranch in Staunton, Illinois, but you will see VW Rabbits popping out of the ground and other Route 66 relics. How do you know you've found the Pink Elephant Antique Mall in Livingston? You'll see—spoiler alert—an enormous pink elephant, as well as other fiberglass giants. Shop 30,000 square feet of vintage treasures in the town's former high school. A refurbished neon sign—Vic Suhling Gas For Less—glows as a beacon drawing visitors to the Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center in Litchfield. Browse Route 66 memorabilia and check out an 1883 hand-drawn fire wagon.

Missouri may best be known for its many large attractions along the roadside of Route 66. A quintessential part of Route 66 and Americana, the state has no shortage of quirky items to see. From the "World's Largest Rocking Chair" near Cuba to the "World's Second-Largest Fork" in Springfield, Missouri, the state is full of the offbeat. In St. Louis, Missouri, the Gateway Arch stands as the tallest monument in the U.S., and the Neon Museum preserves the history of neon.

Although relatively short at just 13 miles, the Kansas stretch of the famed road also includes some interesting landmarks for the history buff, including the Marsh Arch Bridge (Rainbow Bridge), Baxter Springs Heritage Center & Museum and the Galena Mining & Historical Museum.

The Oklahoma Route 66 Museum in Clinton, Oklahoma, meanwhile, tells the history of the road, its founding and the time period. Be transported back in time during the Dust Bowl and see how people used the road on their quest to find new homes and prosperity. No visit to the historic Route would be complete without stopping at the well-known and visited Blue Whale of Catoosa in Catoosa, Oklahoma. The Blue Whale and the surrounding park are currently undergoing renovations ahead of the Centennial. In Luther, history comes alive at the Threatt Filling Station. Built in 1915, the station was a haven for Black travelers along the Mother Road. The station was named to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's List of Most Endangered Places in 2021 and has experienced a resurgence in visibility and renewal since then.

Cars are on display at Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas, a well-documented, famous art installation. In Santa Rosa, New Mexico, the Route 66 Auto Museum features a collection of vintage cars and memorabilia.

Newly erected, Albuquerque's West Central Route 66 Visitor Center is a 21,000-square-foot multipurpose venue featuring a neon sign collection, museum, amphitheater, conference hall, gift shop, community office space and more. The outdoor market areas will be utilized for a makeshift drive-in theater, car shows, artisan pop-ups and other events. An official opening date is coming soon. Albuquerque's forthcoming "Route 66 Remixed" public art series is set to become a signature attraction. The initiative transforms Central Avenue into an "art-fueled road trip" featuring large-scale art installations and digital experiences that reflect local stories and traditions in partnership with Meow Wolf, Refract Studio and local artists.

The installations include augmented reality experiences at locations such as the Guild Theater and Albuquerque Museum Sculpture Garden, as well as physical artworks, including sculptures and an Albuquerque Rapid Transit bus wrap. Visitors will experience individual sites or follow a curated route via a web interface. Hakim Bellamy, Albuquerque's inaugural Poet Laureate, will serve as narrator and storyteller for the road trip experience.

In the western state of Arizona, there is the Petrified Forest National Park. The park is the only one in the National Park System containing a section of the historic Mother Road. Arizona also has its quirky roadside attractions. At Jack Rabbit Trading Post in Joseph City, visitors can see a large fiberglass rabbit. Other famous sites include the city of Winslow, commemorated in the well-known Eagles song "Take It Easy," and Kingman, home to the Arizona Route 66 Museum and the Route 66 Electric Vehicle Museum.

Just before the end of the Route, be sure to check out the Original McDonald's Site and Museum just off Route 66 in San Bernardino and Elmer's Bottle Tree Ranch in the Mojave Desert.

At the end, in Santa Monica, California, visitors can see the "End of the Trail" sign on the legendary Santa Monica Pier, marking the symbolic end of the Route. One of the city's most popular photo destinations, the sign welcomes road trippers with sweeping ocean views and fresh coastal air steps away from Pacific Park's Route 66-themed "West Coaster."

THE QUIRKIEST AND MOST LUXURIOUS STAYS IN ROUTE 66 LODGING

In Holbrook, Arizona, the Wigwam Motel is one of the most iconic landmarks along Main Street USA. For decades, the teepee-inspired motel has been welcoming guests for its vintage charm. The motel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Also in Arizona, the Americana Motor Hotel is located along Route 66 and is a 1.5-hour drive from both the Grand Canyon and Petrified Forest National Park. The retro-futuristic property features 89 artful rooms with thoughtful design touches like 1970s skiwear-inspired headboards, plus amenities including a year-round heated pool, expansive Backyard with firepits, telescopes for stargazing, rentable bikes to venture around town, EV chargers, a fenced-in "Barkyard" for travelers with pets, and Sinaloa-style Mexican cuisine at Baja Mar.

In Oklahoma, the Colcord Hotel is a historic Hilton property in downtown Oklahoma City. Housed in the city's first skyscraper—a 1910 landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it was reopened in 2006 by Coury Hospitality. The hotel blends early 20th-century elegance with modern comfort and personalized service. Mrs. Colcord's iconic neon signature atop the building reflects its refined, independent spirit. Guests enjoy stylish rooms and suites with contemporary décor, complimentary Wi-Fi, and upscale amenities.

Also in Oklahoma City, The National, Autograph Collection is a storied hotel housed in the iconic 1931 First National Bank building—one of the city's most treasured architectural landmarks. Following an extraordinary restoration, the hotel combines the grandeur of the past with the elegance of modern hospitality, featuring 150 luxurious guest rooms and 2,499 square feet of event space. Original features such as murals, vault doors, stone columns, and teller windows are preserved throughout, bringing Oklahoma's history of oil, banking, and ambition vividly to life.

Up the road in Tulsa, Oklahoma, The Campbell Hotel has distinct themes for each room. Whether staying in the Leon Russell Room, Art Deco Room, Oil Barons Room or another room, guests will enjoy luxurious amenities in this restored Spanish Colonial revival building. If you make a pit-stop for the night, be sure to check out Buck Atom's Cosmic Curious on 66, located in a former 1950's gas station, for t-shirts, postcards, and other souvenirs.

The Barfield, Autograph Collection, meanwhile, is located just steps from historic Route 66 in Amarillo, Texas. Housed in the century-old Oliver–Eakle–Barfield Building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the hotel effortlessly marries storied architecture with sophisticated Southern hospitality. Its 112 guest rooms and suites feature custom furnishings, rich leather and cowhide accents, SMART TVs, blackout curtains, designer bathrobes and bath amenities, and complete soundproofing for uninterrupted comfort.

In California, the iconic Route 66 Motel, located in Barstow, features retro and vintage memorabilia. Near the end of the famed road is the Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows in Santa Monica, which offers guests a luxurious stay just near the Santa Monica pier.

DINING ALONG MAIN STREET USA

Roadside diners are ubiquitous along the Mother Road. Starting in Chicago, Lou Mitchell's is at the start of the famed highway. Breakfast is served all day, and baked goods come from family recipes. The restaurant opened before Route 66 – in 1923, to be exact. When it opened, it was the first restaurant in Chicago to serve breakfast all day. Donut holes are a trademark of the diner. Every visitor receives some when they arrive.

Shake off hunger at Docs Just Off 66 in Girard, Illinois, an old-fashioned soda fountain that also serves lunch and dinner. The building long housed Deck's Drug Store, which opened in 1884, and big doses of pharmacy décor remain. The Ariston Cafe in Litchfield may be the oldest restaurant anywhere along Route 66; its 1924 launch predates the Mother Road. The menu fare is as diverse as the driving public—offering Midwestern, Southern, Italian, and Greek cuisine. If you're ready for the Mother Road Burger Challenge (a cheeseburger tower of six patties, fries and a large shake—with a time record to beat), head to Route 66 Creamery in Hamel. Furry friends always get free pup cups.

For a taste of world cuisines, check out Mother Road Market along Route 66 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The only nonprofit food hall in the state, Mother Road Market features a variety of stalls with vendors as varied as African, Japanese, Brazilian and Cajun, among others. Further along the road sits The Rock Cafe in Stroud, Oklahoma. Owned by Dawn Welch, she is the inspiration for the character Sally in the Pixar film "Cars." The Cafe opened in 1939, but a fire in 2008 caused it to close so repairs could be made. It reopened the following year.

In Arizona, roadtrippers can enjoy an old-school attraction at Delgadillo's Snow Cap Drive-In in Seligman. With simple foods like a chicken sandwich, a shake or a snow cone, guests can't go wrong at this long-standing eatery.

Emma Jean's Holland Burger Café in Victorville, California, meanwhile, features recipes from Emma Jean now prepared by her son and daughter. The simple menu is a favorite among many.

For those looking to visit the official end of the Route, head to Mel's Drive-In at Lincoln and Olympic Boulevards for a view of the official Route 66 end street signs while savoring American diner favorites. A nostalgic dining destination housed in a historic 1950s building, Mel's Drive-In captures the essence of Route 66 diner culture with a colorful California 66 mural in its parking lot, a host of road trip memorabilia, and a Route 66 mosaic at the restaurant's entrance.

To start planning your next road trip across the USA, visit AmericaTheBeautiful.com/road-trips.

Note to the Editor:
Accompanying high-resolution images can be found here.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing

current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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