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A TRAVEL GUIDE THROUGH MODERN DAY ROUTE 66

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Abstract

The subject of the thesis is a guide for 45-65 year old Finnish couples to use as a guide while driving along Route 66. The thesis looks into the history of Route 66, illuminating the changes the route has gone throughout the years. The significance of the route to American popular culture and to the history of American tourism will be looked at.

The purpose of this thesis is to offer a guide for travellers to use as an introduction to Route 66. The thesis will go through a short history of the route, how it shaped the American tourism sector and look more closely at the target audience who would use this thesis as a guide. The majority of the thesis will outline the route; suggest visiting places significant to Route 66 and culturally important to American history.

Due to the vastness of Route 66, everything cannot be added into the thesis. Further development possibilities are endless. The thesis resulted into a ready-to-use guide, where the route is fully planned.

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OPINNÄYTETYÖ
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Nimeke
Matkaopas nykyaikaiseen Route 66:een

Tiivistelmä

Opinnäytetyön aiheena on Route 66 -opas suomalaisille 45 – 65-vuotiaille pariskunnille. Työssä tarkastellaan Route 66 -reitin historiaa ja siinä tapahtuneita muutoksia. Opinnäytetyössä tarkastellaan myös tien merkitystä Amerikan populaarikulttuurissa ja matkailun näkökulmasta. Oppaan tarkoituksena on saada matkustajat kiinnostumaan tiestä.

Opinnäytetyössä tarkentuu oppaan kohderyhmä: millaisia matkailijoita 45 – 65-vuotiaat pariskunnat ovat, mistä he pitävät ja kuinka he voisivat käyttää tätä opasta matkallaan. Suurin osa opinnäytetyöstä on reittikuvaus; mitä kulttuurisia ja historiallisia paikkoja on nähtävillä Route 66:n varrella.

Route 66:n suuruuden takia on mahdotonta sisällyttää kaikkia asioita opinnäytetyöhön, joten jatkokehitystä olisi rajattomasti. Opinnäytetyön tuloksena syntyi opas, jossa reitti on valmiiksi suunniteltu.

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Appendix 1: Travel Destinations & Their Distances

1 Introduction

Route 66 is one of the most iconic roads in the world. It is famously driven on motorbikes or in old American cars. It is a historic route, connecting Chicago, Illinois with Santa Monica, California. It is currently idealized as a once in a lifetime drive, but it is much more than that. It has a vast history, filled with turmoil and suffering, ultimately rising up above its struggles and becoming once more an ideal to strive for something better.



Picture 1. Route 66. (Photo: El Rancho Photos).

This thesis will look into the history of the route, its ups and downs, including its untimely decommissioning as well as its revival. The purpose of this thesis is to encourage travelers to see and experience more than just the road, but to understand the struggles it has gone through to still be standing. The route is an open door to the United States and showcases the many faces of what America is. It is important to illuminate the cultural history of Route 66 to the traveler.

This thesis is an introduction guide for travelers interested in Route 66. It is impossible to fit everything significant and important along the route into this thesis, therefore those places and things to see that have been put into this thesis

have the target audience in mind. The target audience will be further expanded upon later in the thesis. This thesis is meant to encourage those interested in the route to get familiar with the road and use it as a stepping stone and guide to become familiar with it. The route has been planned out, looking at the specific places along the route to fully encompass the cultural and historical significance of the area and people living there.

2 Route 66 As A Part of American Cultural History

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2016) defines cultural heritage as “monuments, archaeological sites, paintings, sculptures, oral traditions, performance art, rituals or natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes”. UNESCO (2016) continues to expand on the term not solely referring to tangible objects or monuments. It includes a culture’s traditions and practices, which have been passed down generations. Once cultural heritage can be defined and understood, it is easier for the traveler to realize its importance.

Looking at the cultural heritage of Route 66, one can become overwhelmed by the vast amount of history and importance the road has had on the people living and working along it. This thesis will look at the history of Route 66 from the beginning, through the roaring 20s, the Great Depression of the 30s, surviving World War II, continuing through the Postwar Years, clashing with the new interstate, and finally the legitimacy of historical status and modern day use. How the different times in history have affected the significance of the road itself will be discussed.

2.1 Inception of Route 66

To start looking at the cultural heritage of Route 66, one must start from the beginning. In November 1926, after cooperation with Congress and different na-

tional programs of highway and road development, Route 66 officially united the nearly 4000 km (2500 mile) distance between Chicago with California. The project was aimed to allow small communities to connect with larger cities along the way. (National Historic Route 66 Federation 2016.)

The benefits of connecting the different small cities and towns together allowed for trade and prospects to flourish in the 20s. Having the possibility to visit different places strengthened local communities and their individual histories. Connecting small towns together also enhanced shipping from trains to trucks. This shift in shipping tactics created competition between the railroad industry and trucking industry. Having truckers move goods across the country to small places also legitimized the trucking industry. It solidified the importance of every small town having the ability to get goods and services from other places and to prosper. (Listokin et al. 2011.)

The cultural heritage significance to attain such a project was a daunting and impressive feat. Allowing these small areas to connect and benefit from each other allowed for them to strengthen their own community and create a sense of identity. As each community grew into towns, so did their own cultural heritage. Places began to create their own traditions, landmarks, foods and sights.

2.2 The Great Depression

With growth, comes adversity. As the Great Depression hit in the 30s, Route 66 allowed eager and desperate individuals and families to travel west in hopes of a better future. This strengthened the idealism of the American Dream. It is estimated that over 200 000 people migrated west during this time, and thus legitimizing the road as a symbol for prosperity. The constant flow of passengers allowed for further improvements of the road, and successfully allowed for the entire route to be paved by 1938. (National Historic Route 66 Federation 2016.)

It was during this time that John Steinbeck famously coined the term “The Mother Road” in his 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. The Mother Road is still

to this day the most commonly used and recognized term for Route 66. With the publication of the novel, and the film adaptation in the 40s, the idea of Route 66 spread to households throughout America. This strengthened the idealism of hope the road brings to people and the prospect for a better future. It is also during this time that the cultural significance and image of Route 66 became common knowledge, and thus beginning its importance in the fabric of American history. (Hinckley 2012.)

2.3 World War II

When the threat of World War II became much more relevant, the needs for stronger defenses were implemented and a new War Department was commissioned in California. This included new military training facilities, which would require manpower. The need for safe and quick travel across country became a national importance. The road was used by army officials to move war equipment, soldiers and work labor west. (National Historic Route 66 Federation 2016).

Even though the use of the road was mainly used by Armed Forces, businesses along the road were still able to serve and flourish due to the constant flow of manpower. The road allowed for large military convoys, supplies, and equipment to be moved safely. Businesses along the road housed (creating new accommodation services), fed (using household recipes), and serviced (creating new gas stations) the personnel and soldiers traveling across two thirds or the country. By relying on the hospitality of common individuals along the road, the sense of community strengthened.

2.4 The 50's

After the war, many continued their desire to move "Out West" in hopes of a better life. This included civilians as well as soldiers coming home from the war. It was during this time that the famous anthem of Route 66, "Get Your Kicks"

was coined by an ex-Marine Robert “Bobby” William Troup Jr. (Road Trip Journeys 2014-2016.) Numerous artists, such as Nat King Cole and the Rolling Stones, have covered this song. It is synonymous with the idea of having fun on a cross-country trip. As people began to prosper after the war, so did tourism. Route 66 became a road which families could drive across and see the country. Businesses along the road subsequently began to prosper as well. Drive-In’s, Mom-n-Pop’s, motels, gas stations, and sightseeing attractions became more common and accessible to wanderers along the road. It became much more accessible to travel just for fun, and the tradition to drive the Mother Road for one's own enjoyment began.

The tourism industry flourished during this time. Not only did small businesses along the road benefit from this new influx of visitors, but also so did National Parks and landmarks along the way, most famously the Grand Canyon (National Historic Route 66 Federation 2016). This is when the road itself became as much of an attraction as the sights along it.

2.5 Birth of the Interstate

With the increase in travel, President Eisenhower, impressed with the Autobahn of Germany, enacted the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1956. The new Interstate, which would travel alongside most of Route 66, would be a multilane interstate highway, bypassing all small towns along its path. The goal of the Interstate was to create fast-speed multi lane roads that would allow for faster travel times.

The Interstate ultimately overtook Route 66, subsequently killing Route 66 and all business along it. Even though it took nearly 30 years to completely implicate, small towns slowly turned into ghost towns. As the Interstate’s popularity grew, the need for faster and quicker services became more desirable as well. Chain restaurants and facilities were built along the Interstate, allowing for quick pit stops, ultimately making smaller family owned businesses harder to reach. In 1984, the last town in Arizona was bypassed, and in 1985 the route was official-

ly decommissioned and the last highway markers were taken down, therefore making Route 66 completely obsolete. (Listokin et al. 2011).

2.6 Modern Day Route 66

As the Interstate overtook the preferred travel method, private organizations refused to let the legend of Route 66 die. The cultural heritage and history of the road remained, and different government offices also began to see the value in it. So began the conservation of the road.

In 1987, The Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona was founded, which influenced other states to follow suite. Conservation programs were created and the restoration of Route 66 was underway. Landmarks, historic buildings, and different areas were listed under the National Registration of Historic Place. States began to register the road as “Historic and/or Scenic Routes”, signs and road markers were put up again and conservation programs were implicated.

With these strong conservation efforts, Route 66 was able to come back to life and become a staple in American tourism. Now it is thought of fondly by many nationally and internationally as a road trip of a lifetime. It is a reminder of the past and how the “Good Old Day’s” used to be.

Currently there are over 5 million people living along Route 66 (World Monuments Fund 2015). By creating a new generation of travel, restoring old monuments, buildings and updating sights, the economic impact and potential of Route 66 is staggering. Keeping the historical and cultural aspects of the road intact allows for a more personal and impactful experience for visitors. Challenges face the conservation programs, as each Association is state funded. There are areas of the Route that are in better condition, due to better state funding and grants. Cooperation is needed between states to help market and promote the Route.

3 Pop Culture

Route 66 has been a topic of consumption for over a century. The idea of moving out west for a better life, the hope of driving off into the sunset to fulfill one's dreams or experience a world once lost to the world is something many dream about. Even in its heyday, Route 66 relied on the influence of the public to stay in business. The importance of the American Automobile Association (AAA) directory highly dictated those traveling along the route where to stay and where to eat.

It is no wonder why the road itself has been such a grand topic in popular culture. From John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, to Pixar's *Cars*, Route 66 has been a topic of discussion and entertainment for households all around the world. John Steinbeck was able to grasp the dreary and isolated seclusion the road and circumstances could engulf people in. Whereas Pixar was able to reintroduce Route 66 to a new generation of travelers and quite possibly remind those who had long forgotten its importance of it. *Get Your Kicks* added a good feeling and hopefulness to the road. It allowed for the ideals of prosperity to encompass the minds of those listening. The *Route 66* TV-show in 1960 followed for the first time two travelers traveling along the route and showing viewers back home what the road truly was and instantly made the road itself a pop icon. The symbol of Route 66 has in itself throughout history become a pop culture item. With clothing sporting the old highway sign, it is instantly recognized and idealized as the road once driven.

4 Traveler Profile

Rutgers University made an economic impact study of Route 66 during June 2009 – June 2010 (Listokin et al. 2011). They did extensive research on who travels along the road, how much money is used, where they travel and what

interests these travelers along the way. They sent out over 100.000 surveys to businesses and travelers along the 4.000-km route. They were able to get over 4.000 surveys back.

The travelers consisted of over 80 % United States residents. However, of these residents, there were many who had origins from different countries. Of the American travelers, most live in neighboring states along the Route. The study does comment of the fact that the survey was only done in English, which they believe could have affected the number of responders to those educated in English, and of only English speaking areas. The remaining 20 %, who were not from the United States, came from over 40 different countries, mainly being European and Canadian (Listokin et al. 2011). But for the sake of this thesis, this source was used because it is still currently the most extensive survey done of the traveler persona.

The person visiting was overwhelmingly 97 % white, married, well educated, averaged 55 years of age and mainly traveling with their spouse (Listokin et al. 2011). These characteristics held true for the Americans as well as the foreign travelers. They found the most important part for travelers along the route is the history of the road. They experienced a sense of nostalgia and imagined what life would have been like when the road was at its best. They found the culture and history to be just as important as the road itself. One without the other would defeat the purpose of the trip.

The user persona for this thesis focuses on Finnish couples, aged 45-65. They are interested in culture and history. They want to know how people live in different countries. They enjoy staying in B&B's, Mom'n'Pop's, using local shops instead of chain places, and like to get to know the locals. These type of people care more about "getting the true experience" than staying in a luxury hotel. They want to feel they are experiencing the "true and authentic" side of the place they are visiting.

They will either not have kids, or their children are already out of the house. They do not mind spending money, because they believe the money they are

spending are going to the locals, and enriching the environment they are in. They are opposed to giving their money to large chain places, if possible.

They have a degree in higher education, and subsequently have a medium to high income. They enjoy researching the places they will visit beforehand and find a sense of fulfillment when they are able to check off lists of places they have been to. They enjoy going to the theater, eating at new restaurants, visiting cultural and historical sites in their home country. They enjoy spending money on experiences more than material things. They are northern European and have always wanted to experience “an authentic America”.

5 The Route

Due to the fact that this thesis focuses mainly on the cultural significance of the Route itself, it is detrimental to choose those stops that match its significance. Because the route is so vast, it is impossible to fit everything in it. The route is planned to be driven with a car. Using different experiences, sources and guidebooks as a reference, the route and stops were chosen with the intended users in mind. The foundation of the driven route has been provided by a truck driver, Heikki Simonen (2016). Simonen has driven in the United States for over 20 years, has driven in every continental state in the US, and has driven Route 66 personally. Simonen is profoundly knowledgeable of the route, what stops are significant to the route and knows what would interest the user persona.

The most common direction to drive Route 66 is east to west: so, Chicago, Illinois to Santa Monica, California. The approximately 4000-kilometers/2500-mile route covers eight states (Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California). The route is planned to take thirteen days. Most days consist of travel, but there are four full days in various cities where there is no travel. These days are designed for the traveler to be able to enjoy the place without time constraints and at one’s own leisure. The trip will begin and end from the original Route 66 location.

Throughout each travel day, the travel distances average around 450km/280mi. Some will be shorter, and subsequently some longer. Stop destinations are planned to allow for different cultural experiences, as well as a way to spend time outside the vehicle along Route 66. Appendix 1 lists the entire travel distance, with suggested stops.



Picture 2. Map of Planned Route. (Google Maps).

5.1 Day 1: Chicago, Illinois – St. Louis, Missouri

Chicago is the most typical starting point of Route 66, which is why there is a sign, reading Historic Route 66, BEGIN. Illinois is very fond of the history and significance of the road, even having an option for a specialized license plate, reading *Where the Road Begins*. Chicago is a city worth spending time in, due to its vast history and culture. (Simonen 2016.)

The first day of the trip starts in the Windy City, Chicago, Illinois. Chicago was officially founded in 1829, and the original road, from which the Route 66 road begins, started out as country roads in 1831 (Hinckley 2012). It was important for local business men to have access to different locations, and this is one of the main reasons the idea of the Route was started in the late 1800s. Even though Chicago started out as a small city, it rapidly grew into the skyscraper

city we know of it now. Illinois was also the first state to have the entire route paved, and subsequently the first state to have the road decommissioned (Route 66 Guide 2016).

With nearly three million residents, Chicago is the third largest city in the United States. The ability to walk around and be immersed by the towering concrete and glass truly encompass the idea of business in America. The most notorious building in Chicago is the Willis Tower (formerly known as the Sears Tower). This skyscraper is 108 stories tall and has the perfect view of the city below and of the path onward. Chicago should not be left before eating their signature deep dish pizza, visiting the Navy Pier, taking a selfie with The Bean in Millennium Park, and a walk along the riverfront. Other notable stops, if time persists, are the Lincoln Park Zoo, the Art Institute of Chicago, Grand Park and Buckingham Fountain, and if one happens to visit during baseball season, visiting the famous Wrigley Field and watching a Cubs game. (Eyewitness Travel 2012.)



Picture 3. Historic Route 66 BEGIN – sign (Photo: Stephen Hampton).

On the way to Pontiac, a must stop along the way is Ambler's Texaco station in Dwight, Illinois. This station, built in 1916, it is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It has been refurbished to look like the gas stations of the 50s and is currently being used as a visitor center (Hinckley 2012).

Pontiac, Illinois is filled with Route 66 history. One of the first main stops to visit is the Illinois Route 66 Association Hall of Fame and Museum. It chronicles the history of the route as well as holds a plethora of artifacts and other memorabilia. The museum was the first museum to begin preserving the history of Route 66. One of the most photographic spots is actually the mural painted at the back of the building (Route 66 Association of Illinois 2016).



Picture 4. Route 66 Shield. (Photo: nightrider_52).

For the automobile enthusiast, the Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum is a must stop. Filled with historic cars and personalized tours, the museum offers a nostalgic look into the history of the Pontiac Automobile (Pontiac-Oakland Museum 2016). For those who are interested in military history, the Livingston County War Museum (2016) is partially staffed by veterans, and showcase memorabilia from all the different wars since World War I.

Springfield, Illinois, the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. Near Route 66 lies the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Abraham Lincoln's own personal home, his former law office as well as his tomb (Hinckley 2012). The cultural and historical significance of these places are at the heart of the Ameri-

can people. Many consider Abraham Lincoln to be one of the best presidents in American history, and therefore his home and final resting place is a must see for those interested in Presidential history.

For those interested in architecture, the Dana-Thomas House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright contains collections of Wrights furniture as well other designs. Many experts consider this house to be the best kept out of all of his houses (Eyewitness Travel 2012).

5.2 Day 2: St. Louis, Missouri

A full day in St. Louis, Missouri allows the travelers to relax all day and see different historical sights and experience why St. Louis is referred to the “Gateway to the West”. The official route is particularly difficult to drive; due to that fact, the route has been changed and altered multiple times throughout history. With multiple different roads and bridges being used, it is hard to say what the “official” route is. The McKinley Bridge, built in 1910, was the first bridge used to cross the Mississippi river, but one of the more popular bridges to cross is the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge (Hinckley 2012).

Historical sites, such as the Gateway Arch, Laclede’s Landing, and the Old Courthouse are a great way to start the day. The Gateway Arch, or sometimes referred to as the St. Louis Arch, was designed by Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen. It is possible to take an elevator to the top of the arch, and see the whole city from above. Laclede’s Landing is a district within St. Louis that houses different restaurants, restored 1900’s factories, and entertainment spots. The Raeder Place Building is the most famous warehouse in Laclede’s Landing (Eyewitness Travel 2012). The Old Courthouse is one of the oldest buildings in the city and infamously hosted the Dred Scott case in 1857, which denied freed slaves citizenship (PBS 1998).



Picture 5. (Photo: Jorge.alonsodejuan).

For the beer enthusiast, the Anheuser-Busch Brewery is a fascinating look into the history of beer in America. It is the world's largest brewery, was founded in 1860, and brews the iconic Budweiser Beer (Anheuser-Busch 2016). They offer tours throughout the brewery, a visit to the Clydesdale horse stables as well as tastings. Other cultural sites to visit include the Missouri Civil War Museum, St. Louis Science Center, Missouri History Museum, and Ulysses S. Grant National Historical Site.

5.3 Day 3: St. Louis, Missouri – Joplin, Missouri

Springfield, Missouri is an essential part of Route 66 history, and one of the main reasons road side attractions became so popular along its route. Throughout the 40s and 50s, the AAA directory recommended different spots in Springfield, which aligned with Route 66, as must stop places. This expanded the need for more attractions and restaurants along the road. (Hinckley 2012). There are still motels that are operational, which have original signage from the 50s.

The first stop for the Route 66 experience is the Route 66 Springfield Visitor Center and Route 66 Car Museum. Other museum and history spots include the Springfield National Cemetery, the Springfield Art Museum, the Smallin Civil War Cave, Harry S. Truman's Birthplace State Historic Site, the Civil War Library at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield and the Air and Military Museum of the Ozarks. (Springfield Missouri Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). Spring-

field also offers a multitude of different wineries and breweries to choose from; 7C's Winery & Vineyard, Missouri Spirits, Lost Signal Brewing Company, as well as Mother's Brewing Company (Springfield Missouri Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016.)

The most popular attraction in Springfield, Missouri, is the Fantastic Caverns. This particular cavern allows for visitors to hop onto the jeep-drawn tour, to sit and enjoy the ride. The caves are filled with limestone and different rock formations to give the visitor a real escape from modern times. For a fun modern pit stop before leaving Springfield, one can swing by The World's Largest Fork statue.



Picture 6. Fantastic Caverns (Photo: Kathryn Decker).

Joplin, Missouri, is a staple in developing the service industry along Route 66. Just like Springfield, Joplin was popular with the AAA directory in 1946. They recommended multiple hotels, garages and restaurants. The influence of the AAA directory can be seen, especially after the 1954 edition. This edition impacted travelers in the postwar boom. (Hinckley 2012). Joplin's main stops include the Joplin 44 Truckstop and the Grand Falls. The Joplin 44 Truckstop is a chrome-filled oasis for all road hogs. It is a popular place to see some old cars and buy different chrome pieces (Iowa 80 Group 2016). The Grand Falls are the

largest waterfalls in Missouri, at 3.65 meters (12 feet) long and 50 meters (163 feet) wide, it is a nice place to enjoy the wonders of nature (Missouri Division of Tourism 2016).

5.4 Day 4: Joplin, Missouri – Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Oklahoma is rich in Native American history. With over 250,000 Native American residents, as well as over 60 different tribes, the state has the most Native American occupants than any other state (Eyewitness Travel 2012).

Tulsa, Oklahoma is a former railroad city, and prospered in the 1900s after oil was discovered there. It was mainly inhabited by Indians, due to the resettlement of them in the 1820s. The city began to see an influx of European Americans after the construction of the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad in 1882 (Hinckley 2012). The main attraction is the *Praying Hands* statue at Oral Roberts University (Eyewitness Travel 2012).

Oklahoma City was literally founded in one day, April 22, 1889 (Eyewitness Travel 2012). It was part of a massive land rush, with over 10,000 land claims being made in that single day. Just like Tulsa, it became rich in oil, and still operates many oil wells to this day. Just like St. Louis, Route 66 has been realigned multiple times, which makes it difficult to drive along the original paths (Hinckley 2012). Even with realignment of the road, original structures still line the road, even though more modern buildings have surfaced next to them.

5.5 Day 5: Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City is the capital of Oklahoma. It houses the State Capitol building, built in 1917, is the only capitol building in the world that is surrounded by working oil wells (Oklahoma House of Representatives 2015). Tours throughout the capitol building are possible. The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is quite possibly the most popular spot to visit. It commemorates those fallen

during the April 19th, 1995 bombing, which killed 168 people (Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum 2016). Other historical sites in Oklahoma City include the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, the American Banjo Museum, Oklahoma History Center, and Oklahoma Firefighters Museum.

For an outdoor trip, visiting the Will Rogers Park or for some horseracing, Remington Park is a good way to spend a beautiful afternoon (Eyewitness Travel 2012). The Overholser Mansion is the first mansion built in Oklahoma City in 1903 by Henry Overholser, known as the “Father of Oklahoma City” (Preservation Oklahoma 2013). The Bricktown Brewery is a fine way to end the day with local food and drink.



Picture 7. The Oklahoma City National Memorial (Photo: Evan Gearing).

5.6 Day 6: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – Amarillo, Texas

The journey from Oklahoma City to Amarillo has multiple Route 66 stops along the way. In Clinton, Oklahoma there is the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum. It is filled with historical memorabilia and personal journeys from individuals who have driven the route throughout history (Oklahoma History Society 2016). Near

the museum lies a Best Western Motel that Elvis Presley stayed at multiple times when he traveled along the route (Eyewitness Travel 2012). A smaller museum, The National Route 66 Museum, can be found further along the route in Elk City. Its pride and joy is a statue of a Delaware Indian, Johnny Grayfish, outside of the building (Hinckley 2012). Another fascinating artifact within the museum is a replica of a pickup truck, which was used in the film *The Grapes of Wrath*. Exiting Elk City, one definitely must drive through Timber Creek Bridge, one of the few existing bridges left of the original highway.

Amarillo, Texas is the almost half way point of Route 66, and subsequently is the trips halfway point time wise. When imagining Amarillo, the main stop of Cadillac Ranch comes to mind. This pop art installment, created by Stanley Marsh 3, consists of ten Cadillacs, buried nose-first into the wheat fields of Texas (Hinckley 2012). What makes this art instalment unique is the encouraged “tagging” of the cars by visitors. Visitors are allowed to paint over the cars, write or draw whatever they choose onto the cars for future visitors to see and change. This allows for each visit to be unique.



Picture 8. Cadillac Ranch (Photo: Drew Dawson).

For a more organized structured visit, the city offers many museums and sites for visitors to soak up the history of the place. With strong ties to transportation, one can choose between Jack Sisemore Traveland RV Museum, Bill’s Backyard Classics, or Texas Air & Space Museum (Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council 2016). For historical places, the Kwahadi Museum of the American Indian and the American Quarter Horse Heritage Center & Museum offer an in-

teresting look into the Native Americans of the area, as well as the culture of the cowboys (Amarillo Convention & Visitor Council 2016).

Spots that are distinctly Route 66 include the Adkinson/Baker Tire Company building, the Dutch Mill service station, Taylor's Texaco Station, and Martin's Phillips 66 Station. Amarillo is synonymous with Route 66, hosting military personnel during the war, as well as the construction of Amarillo Army Airfield. It was soon dismantled after the Second World War, and portions of the base were used anew. This caused portions of the official route to be blocked off, and still to this day is not accessible. (Hinckley 2012).

The Big Texan Steak Ranch and Microbrewery is one of the most famous American Steak Houses. Even though they opened up in the 60s, it has become a Route 66 legend of modern times. Their most famous meal, *The 72oz Steak*, is two kg of meat, a baked potato, a shrimp cocktail, salad and a bread roll. If one would finishes eating the entire meal within one hour, without the help of others, would get it for free (The Big Texan 2015).

5.7 Day 7: Amarillo, Texas – Albuquerque, New Mexico

Eighty-seven kilometers west of Amarillo, Texas, one will find themselves at Adrian, Texas, the geographical half way point of Route 66. There one will find the Midpoint Café and an out of service, but renovated Phillips 66 gas station commemorating the significance of the place (MidPoint Café and Gift Shop 2016).



Picture 9. Midpoint Café. (Photo: Andrea Moscato).

Tucumcari, New Mexico is home of the Comanche Tribe, with the Tucumcari Mountain being a prominent location to look afar of the surrounding area. The creation of the Conchas Dam and the integration of other ethnicities grew the city and made it a staple part of Route 66 history (Hinckley 2012). Tucumcari currently houses many Route 66 stops, including different murals throughout the city. Some other spots include the Route 66 Townhouse Welcome Center & Gift Shop, Tucumcari Historical Museum, New Mexico Route 66 Museum, the Route 66 Monument, The Tucumcari Railroad Historical Museum, and for the love birds, a Route 66 Wedding Chapel (Visit Tucumcari 2016).

Some local shops, selling Native American and Route 66 memorabilia include the Tee Pee Curious shop, the Tucumcari trading Post store. The Tee Pee Curious has been fully renovated to look as if it were out of the 60s (Hinckley 2012). For those interested in taking an old-time photo, the Mother Road Old Time Photos studio can create one to look as if they lived in the 1800 and 1900s.

The Blue Swallow Motel is one of the most iconic motels along Route 66, with its bright blue and red neon sign, and is still currently operating as a motel for

visitors along the route (New Mexico Digital 2015). The motel has been fully restored and allows for visitors to step into “the good old days”, as their slogan states.



Picture 10. Blue Swallows Motel. (Picture: Cliff Baise).

Santa Rosa is a quick stop along the road to Albuquerque. On a hot day, the Blue Hole is a great way to cool off or watch divers jump into the blue abyss. The Blue Hole is an open lake that is connected underground to seven different lakes, is an enticing sapphire shade, and is located in the middle of the red desert (Santa Rosa Blue Hole 2016). Continuing the theme for automotive lovers, the Route 66 Auto Museum is a great indoor stop to see some vintage cars. There are some available to see outside the museum, free of charge (Roadside America 2016).

Albuquerque is a culturally significant part of Route 66. It has long been occupied by Native Americans, with some areas of the Old Town hosting buildings as old as the 1790s (Eyewitness Travel 2012). They have also been cohabited with European Americans since the 16th century, which allows for an interesting mix between Indian and European design throughout the city.

5.8 Day 8: Albuquerque, New Mexico – Albuquerque, New Mexico

This is a unique day, where the starting and ending point will be Albuquerque. This is because the accommodation choices are vaster, and allows for the traveler to settle in one place for a few nights. The day trips are culturally significant to the area, even though it sidetracks from the original Route 66 path. This extra day to travel is worth the visit, to experience the culture of the Native Americans who have lived in the area for centuries. Those who also have hit travel fatigue can use this extra day to spend in Albuquerque and go at their own pace without missing anything essential to Route 66.

Santa Fe, the oldest capital city of any state, is engulfed in Spanish influence, since its inception of Spaniard Don Pedro de Peralta in 1610 (Eyewitness Travel 2012). The city is filled with a mix of Spanish and Indian design, with influences of Catholicism in its artwork and Navajo influence in its architecture.

The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum has the world's largest collection of O'Keeffe's pieces. O'Keeffe pieces are recognizable from her landscapes from her home in northern New Mexico, and are an integral part of modern day artwork showcasing the beauty of the desert (Georgia O'Keeffe Museum 2016). Other notable museums to visit are the Museum of International Folk Art, New Mexico History Museum, the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, Nedra Matteucci Galleries, Keshi, New Mexico Museum of Art, and El Rancho de las Golondrinas (Santa Fe Convention Center 2016). For the culture fan, the State Capitol Building, The Santa Fe Opera House, The Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Canyon Road, Loretto Chapel or the San Miguel Chapel are worth looking at (Eyewitness Travel 2012). The Loretto Chapel is an interesting architectural feat, as it houses a spiral staircase, which was constructed without the use of a single nail or adhesive. The impressive architecture goes along with the rest of the French design of the 1870s building.

Bandelier, New Mexico is a National Monument that preserves the homes of Ancestral Puebloans from the 1150s to 1600s. The monument is over 13,354 hectares (33,000 acres). The houses were carved into the side of the Jemez

Mountain and have over 113 km (70 miles) of wildlife trails (National Monument New Mexico 2016).



Picture 11. Bandelier National Park (Photo: Chod Hedinger).

A multitude of historic buildings related to Route 66 are still standing in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Among these are the Red Ball Café, a former Hudson dealership garage and a Magnolia Service Station (Hinckley 2012). Albuquerque was a fast adopter of the neon signs of the 50s and benefited greatly of the postwar boom. The route has also been changed multiple times, so different sources will site a variety of “official” Route 66 routes. For a retro place to lie down, the Enchanted Trails RV Park & Trading Post is a great way to end the day. It lies west of the city, is fully refurbished to have a vintage feel to the place and allows for visitors to “live off the grid” (Hinckley 2012).

5.9 Day 9: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Albuquerque is an interesting mix between Hispanic, European and Indian heritage. The Plaza, located in Old Town for over 200 years, is the best place to

start a tour of the city. The area is filled with adobe style buildings, restaurants and local shops (Eyewitness Travel 2012). The surrounding streets are filled with a mix of modern and traditional architecture, museums and a sea of turquoise items sold to tourists as souvenirs. The city is bursting with different museums to visit, such as the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, and the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History (Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). Near the city, one can find petroglyphs that have been carved into volcanic rock by Native Americans and Spaniards that can be as old as 700 years old (National Park Service 2016a). The Petroglyph National Monument protects this site and allows visitors to see these designs for years to come.

The city is encompassed with a strong cultural homogeneity. The cohabitation of the Native Americans and European settlers since the 1500s has allowed for a multitude of different cultural buildings to coexist together. The city is currently surrounded by nineteen different Indian Pueblos, with the largest being the Navajo (Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). The San Felipe de Neri Church, completed in 1793, is the most culturally significant Spanish church in Alamogordo today (Eyewitness Travel 2012).



Picture 12. Hot Air Balloons in Albuquerque (Picture: Rozanne Hakala).

A great way to end the day is a hot air balloon trip above the city. Alamogordo hosts the world's largest hot air balloon festival every year in October, where over 300 hot air balloons fly above the city (Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). It is, however, possible to go up for oneself and see the city from above, any day of the year. For those wanting a different aerial view of the city, the Sandia Peak Tramway is a fantastic way to soak in the desert sunset.

5.10 Day 10: Albuquerque, New Mexico – Flagstaff, Arizona

Gallup is a quick stop along the long travel day. It has a strong Native American history, with tribe selling their crafts and artwork for travelers passing through. The city was used as a railway stop and service center for travelers (Hinckley 2012). Still located off the beaten path, the main attractions are Route 66 related, most notably the White Café, which is now used as a Native American art gallery (Hinckley 2012).

Flagstaff provided troupes accommodation during the Second World War (Hinckley 2012). The city is covered in red brick, galleries and cafés and breathtaking views of the San Francisco Peaks. Flagstaff is the perfect stop for the outdoor enthusiast. It is surrounded by different outdoor places to visit, such as the Walnut Canyon National Monument, the Wupatki National Monument, the Coconino National Forest, Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument, Riordan Mansion State Historic Park, the Lava River Caves and the Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River (Flagstaff Arizona 2016).

5.11 Day 11: Flagstaff, Arizona – Las Vegas, Nevada

The Grand Canyon National Park, listed as a World Heritage Site, is one of the world's greatest natural wonders. The canyon is over 300 kilometers (over 200 miles) long, at its shortest 6 kilometers (4 miles) and at its widest 29 kilometers (18 miles) wide, and over 1.500 meters (5.000 feet) deep (National Park Service

2016b). It is no wonder it is something one must see for themselves to witness the vastness of the canyon.



Picture 13. Grand Canyon (Photo: Stephen Ball).

The Colorado River runs through the canyon, which allows for a possibility, to go water rafting in the middle of the canyon. These trips are vastly popular, so early booking is a must. It is also possible to do hiking trips, mule trips, cycling, and guided trips along the canyon.

After a full day at the Grand Canyon, the drive into Las Vegas, Nevada has to be done after sundown. The glistening lights of the city have to be first experienced at night to engulf the full effect of the beaming lights in the middle of the desert. Las Vegas is a city that will always have something different to offer every time it is visited. So for the sake of this thesis, the places suggested will be those considered of cultural or historical significance to the city.

The first night should be spent walking down *The Strip* and taking in all the lights. The 6-kilometer (3.5 mile) stretch of concrete is the iconic Las Vegas Boulevard that hosts the most notorious hotels and casinos in the nation.



Picture 14. Las Vegas (Photo: Joao Eduardo Figueiredo).

5.12 Day 12: Las Vegas, Nevada

Las Vegas, known for its multitude of casinos and clubs, it is truly the entertainment capital of the world. The architecture of the city is a glistening array of expenditure and luxury, filling the patrons with hopes of riches. The most famous hotels and casinos along the strip include New York New York, the MGM Grand, the Bellagio, Caesars Palace, the Flamingo, the Mirage, and the Venetian (Eyewitness Travel 2012). The legalization of gambling in Las Vegas allows for over 42 million visitors annually to come and try their luck with the odds and hope for that big win.

For those not interested in the casino life, the city hosts over forty different museums, including The Mob Museum, the Pinball Hall of Fame, The Neon Museum, and the Erotic Heritage Museum. There are national history museum and traditional art museums throughout the city as well. During the day, one of the most popular past times for visitors is to go see a show or performance at one of the hotels, ranging from concerts, live productions, comedy shows, magic, and most famously impressions. It is easy to get lost in the city of lights, so if

the interest to leave the city limits is interesting, the possibility to hire a pilot and fly over the Grand Canyon is an excellent way to spend an afternoon. The flights typically fly over the Hoover Dam, which was considered an engineering marvel of its time (Eyewitness Travel 2012).

5.13 Las Vegas, Nevada – Santa Monica, California

The final day of driving is a long one. There is mostly desert between Las Vegas and the official stop of Route 66 in Santa Monica, California. It is a nostalgic way to end the trip, with ideas of how the original migrants must have felt on their trip out west. Wondering what the future will hold and if the trip was worth it in the end. The Santa Monica Pier officially ends the Route 66 trip. It is the perfect way to end the monumental trek through eight states, over 4.000 kilometers (2.500 mile) and nostalgic expedition through the great American landscape. The Pacific Park Amusement Park, located at the Santa Monica Pier, is a joyous way to celebrate the end of such a journey. Surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and relaxed atmosphere of the coast, it is the best way to sooth the sore body and relax the engulfed mind. For those wanting to continue their journey onto Los Angeles, it is only a meager 26 kilometers (16 miles) away.



Picture 15. Santa Monica Route 66 – Sign (Photo: Giuseppe Milo).

6 Conclusion

Looking at the vast history Route 66 offers and what it has done for the American people, it is easy to see how significant the road was and has become. Struggling through adversity and rising from the ashes of greater completion, it truly shows how the heritage and culture of Route 66 is integrated into the American psyche. It is constantly growing and becoming an international travel destination for those travelers wanting to experience the “true America”. Examining its past and seeing how it has affected communities, and the people along it, allows one to truly grasp the significance of the road. With conservation efforts implemented, the legacy and history of the road can still continue to affect others and become a new version of itself. The route truly embraces the American dream; leaving the city, with all of its wonders, and going forth into the unknown and isolated, and ending up in the city of dreams.

7 Discussion

Due to Route 66’s popularity, it is impossible to create a perfect guide. There are numerous ways to drive the route, in pieces to its entirety. This thesis is a way to introduce travelers to the cultural and historical side of Route 66. It is a way for the reader to use as a travel guide. This thesis allowed me to become more familiar with the historical and cultural significance of Route 66, what it did for the people who lived along it and what it signifies for those who travel along it today. It is truly a trip of a lifetime.

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Travel Destinations & Their Distances

Day 1:

The total travel distance is 485 kilometers/300 miles

Chicago, Illinois – Pontiac, Illinois (160km/98mi)

Pontiac, Illinois – Springfield, Illinois (170km/106mi)

Springfield, Illinois – St. Louis, Missouri (155km/96mi)

Day 2:

St. Louis, Missouri (Full Day)

Day 3:

The total travel distance is 465 kilometers/287 miles

St Louis, Missouri – Springfield, Missouri (350km/216mi)

Springfield, Missouri – Joplin, Missouri (115km/71mi)

Day 4:

The total travel distance is 372 kilometers/229 miles

Joplin, Missouri – Tulsa, Oklahoma (200km/122mi)

Tulsa, Oklahoma – Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (172km/107mi)

Day 5:

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Full Day)

Day 6:

The total travel distance is 416 kilometers/259 miles

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – Elk City, Oklahoma (via Clinton) (178km/111mi)

Elk City, Oklahoma – Amarillo, Texas (238km/118mi)

Day 7:

The total travel distance is 461 kilometers/288 miles

Amarillo, Texas – Tucumcari, New Mexico (180km/113mi)

Tucumcari, New Mexico – Santa Rosa, New Mexico (96km/60mi)

Santa Rosa, New Mexico – Albuquerque, New Mexico (185km/115mi)

Travel Destinations & Their Distances

Day 8:

The total travel distance is 348 kilometers/216 miles

Albuquerque, New Mexico – Santa Fe, New Mexico (105km/65mi)

Santa Fe, New Mexico – Bandelier, New Mexico (71km/44mi)

Bandelier, New Mexico – Albuquerque, New Mexico (172km/107mi)

Day 9:

Albuquerque, New Mexico (Full Day)

Day 10:

The total travel distance is 525 kilometers/325 miles

Albuquerque, New Mexico – Gallup, New Mexico (225km/140mi)

Gallup, New Mexico – Flagstaff, Arizona (300km/185mi)

Day 11:

The total travel distance is 552 kilometers/343 miles

Flagstaff, Arizona – Grand Canyon, Arizona (117km/73mi)

Grand Canyon, Arizona – Las Vegas, Nevada (435km/270mi)

Day 12:

Las Vegas, Nevada (Full Day)

Day 13:

The total travel distance of the final day is 460 kilometers/286 miles

Las Vegas, Nevada – Santa Monica, California (460km/286mi)