

## Preserving Route 66 is a Good Investment

More than 85% of Route 66 travelers visit historic places and museums.

Tourists spend \$38 million dollars a year in the communities along Route 66.

Heritage preservation through main street revitalization programs and museums add another \$94 million in annual investments.

The resulting national impact is an annual gain of

- 2,400 jobs
- \$90 million in income
- \$262 million in overall output
- \$127 million in GDP
- \$37 million in tax revenues

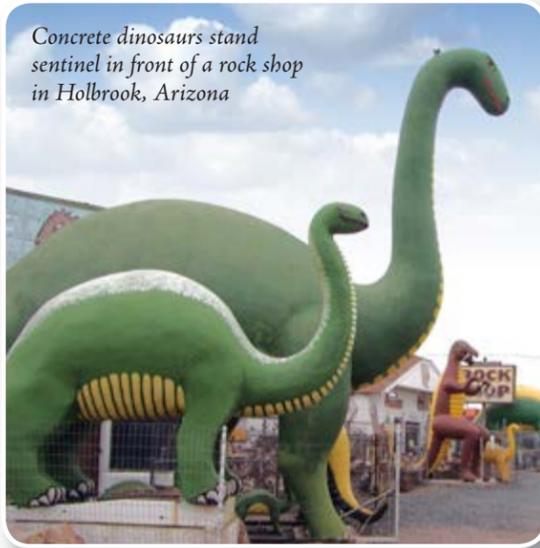


Restored 1932 gas station  
near Odell, Illinois

A mural in Cuba, Missouri,  
depicts the "gold star boys"  
going off to World War II



Concrete dinosaurs stand  
sentinel in front of a rock shop  
in Holbrook, Arizona



## Route 66 is a Road to a Better Future

While the national and state level benefits of Route 66 preservation and tourism activities are important, the more significant contribution is at the local level. In many municipalities along Route 66, tourism related to the Mother Road is one of the most important, if not the only, "economic game in town." The restored Route 66-themed motel, restaurant, and gift shop may not have a high-dollar business volume relative to the much larger regional and state economies, but they anchor the downtown in many small communities and capitalize on a Route 66-linked past and future.

Much is being done already to enhance investment in Route 66 and to further the economic contribution and place-remaking afforded by the Mother Road. But more is needed to protect this unique resource and the communities along its route. Opportunities for advancing historic preservation and sustainable tourism development are on the horizon. To learn more about preserving and promoting this fabled highway, visit [www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org).



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# Route 66

## Highlights from a Study

of the economic impacts of historic preservation and heritage tourism conducted by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, in collaboration with the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program and World Monuments Fund, with the support of American Express





Photographer Dorothea Lange documented the plight of migrants along Route 66 during the Great Depression.

## Route 66 is a Journey through Twentieth-Century History

**When it was commissioned in 1926**, it was promoted as the “shortest and most direct route between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Coast.”

**When the Great Depression hit**, Route 66 became a “road of flight” for farmers escaping the Dust Bowl and was dubbed “the Mother Road” in John Steinbeck’s epic novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*.

**During World War II**, Route 66 was a primary artery for the armed forces, transporting troops and supplies. After the war it was the path of ex-GIs and their families as they headed toward the booming California job market.

**In the recovery years**, as US automobile production increased from 65,000 cars in 1945 to 3.9 million in 1948, American families drove Route 66 to “get their kicks” on the open highway and experience the wonders of the West.

**In the 1960s**, Route 66 became an icon of the Beat Generation as thousands of the nation’s disenfranchised youth traveled west “on the road.”

**By the 1970s**, the federal highway program had created ribbons of interstate roadways, bypassing Route 66 and its communities.

**In 1985**, Route 66 was decommissioned. Shortly thereafter, nonprofits and government entities began efforts to preserve and commemorate the road, launching the current, ongoing era of revitalization.

## Route 66 Connects People and Places

More than 5 million people live and work along the highway. They are the lifeblood of America’s most famous artery.

While the interstates have bypassed entire towns and created economic hardship for many, others have capitalized on their Route 66 heritage as a catalyst for community revitalization. Through the preservation and adaptive use of historic resources, in particular, many communities have reinvigorated tourism along the route and realized the economic benefits.



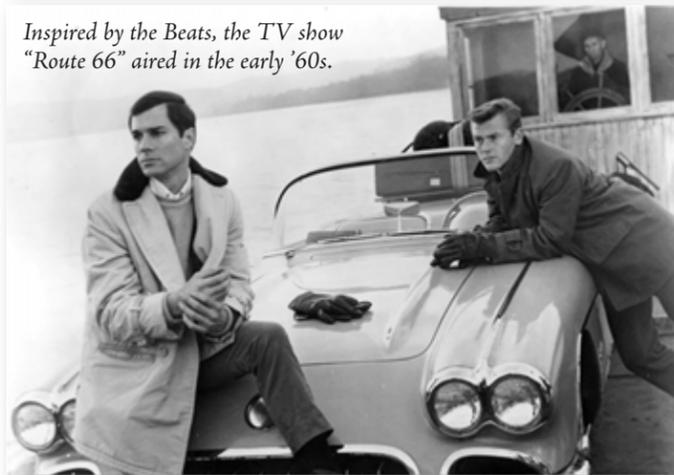
Tucumcari, New Mexico



Clinton, Oklahoma

To better understand and quantify the positive effects of these preservation and related tourism activities, an economic impact study was undertaken by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, in collaboration with the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program and World Monuments Fund, with the support of American Express. The study is available at [www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org).

Inspired by the Beats, the TV show “Route 66” aired in the early ‘60s.



1929 gas station in McLean, Texas

## Route 66 is a Unique American Landscape

- Its 2,400 miles of road run through
- 8 states
- 7 geological regions
- more than 300 communities

From the prairies, through the desert, to the great Pacific Ocean, Route 66 connected Chicago and Los Angeles and created “America’s Main Street.”



Check out some vintage wheels in San Bernardino, California



Sleep in a teepee at the Wigwam Hotel in Holbrook, Arizona.



See a show at the Kimo Theatre in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Check out the fabulous Cadillac Ranch near Amarillo, Texas.



Step inside the mouth of the Blue Whale in Catoosa, Oklahoma.



Drive across the Brush Creek Bridge in Cherokee County, Kansas.



Catch a movie at the 66 Drive-In Theatre in Carthage, Missouri.



Grab a bite and a slice of history at the Ariston Cafe in Litchfield, Illinois.