



## HISTORIC ROUTE 66

September 24, 2023 – 11 Days

*Travel from Chicago to Oklahoma City on America's most famous road!*

Route 66 was established in 1926 and became one of the most famous roads in the USA. It originally ran from Chicago, Illinois, through Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, terminating in Santa Monica and covering a total of 2,448 miles (3,940 km). It was recognized in popular culture by the 1946 hit song *Get Your Kicks on Route 66* and the Route 66 television series which aired on CBS from 1960 to 1964. In Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, the highway symbolized escape, loss, and the hope of a new beginning. He dubbed it the Mother Road, but its other nicknames are the Will Rogers Highway and Main Street of America. Interstate highways slowly replaced Route 66 and the number was retired in 1985.

This tour travels half the historic route from Chicago to Oklahoma City with many stops to see memorabilia at museums and attractions that still keep the popular name alive.

Activity Level: 2



20 Meals Included:

10 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 6 dinners

Fares per person:

\$6,395 double/twin; \$7,595 single; \$6,020 triple  
Please add 0.1% GST.

Early Bookers:

\$250 discount on first 12 seats; \$125 on next 8

Experience Points:

Earn 116 points on this tour.

Redeem 116 points if you book by July 18, 2023.

Departure from: BC Interior



## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Sunday, September 24

We fly on WestJet from Kelowna and Kamloops via Calgary to **Chicago**, arriving in late afternoon.

**Accommodation:** Hilton Garden Inn Central Loop

**Note:** When this tour was planned, WestJet schedules had an early flight to Calgary. If this does not change, transportation will be provided on September 23 from Vernon, Summerland, Penticton and points south and you will stay a night at the Hampton Inn Kelowna Airport.

### Day 2: Monday, September 25

A locally-guided tour of Chicago has a theme of **Historic Route 66** and there is a photo opportunity at the sign commemorating "Route 66 Begins". Explore the shopping mecca of Navy Pier. The afternoon features the **Chicago Architecture Cruise** on all three branches of the Chicago River. The guide explains the 130-year history behind the skyline and the city's legendary architecture.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hilton Garden Inn Central Loop

### Day 3: Tuesday, September 26

We leave Chicago, following Interstate 55 along the old Route 66. Some of the nostalgic stops are the Gemini Giant in Wilmington, the Two Cell Jail in Gardner, and two classic restored gas stations – Ambler Becker in Dwight and Standard Oil in Odell. In Pontiac, we visit the **Route 66 Hall of Fame & Museum** which features thousands of artifacts and memorabilia related to The Mother Road including artist and icon, Bob Waldmire's bus and van. The largest Route 66 shield mural is painted on the museum's back wall. We arrive in Springfield, Illinois, this afternoon and stop at the **Ace Sign Museum**. It has a collection of over 85 historic signs from Springfield and Route 66 including the giant "Sonrise Donut" sign with working neon. Opening in 1947, Sonrise founder Byron Figuera earned the title of Springfield's First Doughnut Shop with a Coffee Bar. Springfield is the capital of Illinois. Enjoy the "Kickback" at the Drury Inn with beer, wine and snacks.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Drury Inn Springfield

### Day 4: Wednesday, September 27

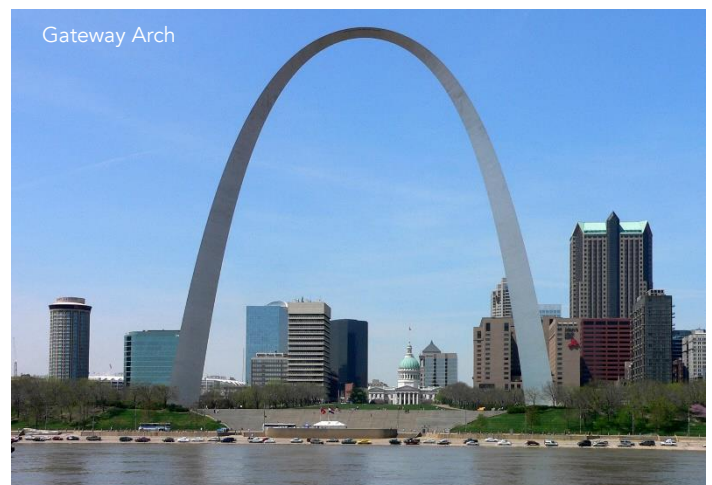
On the road again and soon we stop at **Henry's Rabbit Ranch** in Staunton. Rabbits and more rabbits are here – the hopping kind and the VW kind! It celebrates Route 66 and the people along the highway with its emporium of highway and trucking memorabilia, including a collection of Campbell's "humpin' to please" trailers next to a replica of a vintage gas station. The Visitor Center looks like a real classic filling station once found all along Route 66. Soon the mighty **Mississippi River** is in sight. The world's 4<sup>th</sup> longest river, it rises in Lake Itasca in Minnesota and flows 3,734 km to the Gulf of Mexico. At Grafton, we board the *Hakuna Matata* for a cruise on two rivers, Mississippi and Illinois, past majestic palisade bluffs. Afterwards, we cross the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers on long bridges and enter Missouri. Heading into **St. Louis**, we enjoy an afternoon treat at Ted Drewes Frozen Custard; Ted's has been a St. Louis landmark since 1929 and located on Route 66 since 1941. Our unique hotel is a Drury Inn, built inside the 1907 St. Louis Railroad YMCA and has many historic architectural features.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Drury Inn Union Station

### Day 5: Thursday, September 28

St. Louis is best known for its **Gateway Arch**. At 191 metres tall, it stands as the iconic symbol of the westward expansion of the United States. Our visit includes the tram ride to the top with a fabulous view, the new Museum at Gateway Arch, and the documentary movie, *Monument to the*





*Dream*. The afternoon is devoted to the wonderful **Missouri History Museum** with a guided tour. Back at the hotel, it's "Kickback" time.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Drury Inn Union Station

### Day 6: Friday, September 29

We journey south across Missouri with a stop at **Fantastic Caverns**. Discovered in 1862 by a farmer's dog, the cave is the only one in the USA that you can ride through on a tram. After lunch in Springfield (almost every state has a Springfield), it is a short drive into the hills of the Ozarks to reach **Branson**. Reuben Branson opened a general store here in 1882 and fame came in 1907 when Harold Bell Wright published his novel about the Ozarks, *The Shepherd of the Hills*. *The Baldknobbers Jamboree* opened the first live musical show in Branson in 1959, but the first theatre on Highway 76 was *Presley's Mountain Music Jubilee* in 1967 and the boom was on. Currently there are 40 theatres operating in Branson and it has more theatre seats than Broadway or Las Vegas. Branson's title today is the "Live Music Show Capital of the World." Wells Gray offers a week-long stay in Branson every fall with 13 shows and the one that is usually top-rated is *Presley's Country Jubilee*. That's where we go tonight for two memorable hours of music and comedy, still popular after 56 years and four generations of Presleys on the stage.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Fairfield Inn



### Day 7: Saturday, September 30

Our next stop is Joplin, Missouri, at the **Route 66 Mural Park** which includes two large tile murals: "Cruisin' into Joplin" and "The American

Ribbon". The murals cover the south side of Pearl Brothers, the iconic green hardware store of downtown Joplin. You can have your photo taken with a mock 1964 red Corvette which provides a whimsical photo backdrop for Route 66 tourists. The park sits near the old intersection where Route 66 shifts west and heads into Kansas, then Oklahoma. Next city is Miami whose centerpiece is the **Coleman Theatre**, a Route 66 jewel and home to the "Mighty Wurlitzer" pipe organ. Built in 1929, the theatre has a distinctive Spanish Colonial Revival exterior and an elaborate Louis XV interior. We have a guided tour and lunch served



on the stage. In Chelsea, Oklahoma, we view **Ed Galloway's Totem Pole Park**, a Route 66 attraction created by folk artist Galloway in 1937 as a tribute to American Indians. In Claremore, we visit the **Will Rogers Memorial Museum**. Cowboy philosopher Will Rogers is an American icon and one of Route 66's nicknames has long been the Will Rogers Highway. Learn about the beloved humorist's life and watch his movies, pay respects at his tomb, and see memorabilia from his career. Next is the **Blue Whale of Catoosa**, a beloved historic landmark along Route 66, created in 1972 by zoologist Hugh Davis. We stay two nights in Tulsa.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hard Rock Casino Hotel



## Day 8: Sunday, October 1

During a guided **Tulsa** city tour, hear the stories from its beginnings in 1828 through the oil-boom growth to today's diverse and beautiful city. We stop at the Center of the Universe, a mysterious acoustic phenomenon. Next is Buck Atom's Cosmic Curios on Route 66, a huge gift shop specializing in the magic of the Mother Road. In the afternoon, we are at the **Woody Guthrie Center** which gives a glimpse inside the life of one of America's greatest folksingers. Some of his hit songs were *This Land Is Your Land*, *Pastures of Plenty*, *Talking Dust Bowl Blues*, and *Do Re Mi*.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hard Rock Casino Hotel

## Day 9: Monday, October 2

In Pawhuska, we travel through Oklahoma's Western film history at the **Ben Johnson Cowboy Museum**. Dedicated to the Oscar-winning actor Ben Johnson, this amazing collection features notable Osage County cowboys, cowgirls, and western heritage. Check out the Paul Lee Foreman collection of championship buckles, exhibits about jockey G.R. Carter and the long-time Drummond ranching family, and the gallery of John Free paintings and bronzes. Lunch is at Food Network Star Ree Drummond's Pioneer Woman Mercantile with shopping time. Our last

night is in Oklahoma City with a farewell dinner and a guided tour at the **National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum**.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Holiday Inn Express



## Day 10: Tuesday, October 3

After a guided tour of highlights of **Oklahoma City**, we head to the airport for an afternoon flight to Seattle on Alaska Airlines.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Embassy Suites Sea-Tac

## Day 11: Wednesday, October 4

There are stops at Bellis Fair Mall in Bellingham and the Duty-Free Store, then we cross the border and travel home via the Coquihalla.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- WestJet flight from Kelowna or Kamloops via Calgary to Chicago
- Current air transport taxes and security fees
- Airline luggage fee for 1 suitcase per person
- Transfer from Chicago Airport to hotel
- Coach transportation for 10 days
- 10 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- Chicago Route 66 tour
- Chicago Architecture cruise
- Route 66 Hall of Fame & Museum
- Ace Sign Company Museum
- Henry's Rabbit Ranch
- Mississippi lunch cruise on *Hakuna Matata*
- Ted Drewes Frozen Custard
- Gateway Arch tram ride, museum and movie
- Missouri History Museum
- Fantastic Caverns underground tour by tram
- *Presley's Country Jubilee* show
- Route 66 Mural Park
- Coleman Theatre with tour and lunch on stage
- Ed Galloway's Totem Pole Park
- Will Rogers Memorial Museum
- Blue Whale of Catoosa
- Guided Tulsa tour
- Woody Guthrie Center
- Ben Johnson Cowboy Museum
- Pioneer Woman Mercantile
- National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum
- Guided tour of Oklahoma City
- Alaska Air flight from Oklahoma City to Seattle
- Knowledgeable tour director
- Gratuities for local guides
- Luggage handling at hotels
- **20 meals:** 10 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 6 dinners



**Activity Level 2:** Moderate activity with walking in museums and attractions and some stairs. Seeing everything mentioned in this itinerary requires participation at Activity Level 2. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the coach by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. The coach cannot carry a scooter or motorized wheelchair. There can be longer walks in the airports. **Everybody** participating in this tour is expected to be capable of handling Activity Level 2. The tour director and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some tour days.

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## TOUR POLICIES

**Payments:** A deposit of \$400 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due July 18, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking or cheque (1.5% discount on tour fare), or by Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person on credit cards).

**Discounts:** Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 12 seats and \$125 on next 8 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after July 18, 2023.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to June 17, 2023, the cancellation charge is \$100 per person. From June 18 to July 18, the cancellation charge is \$200 per person. From July 19 to August 18, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After August 18, there is no refund.

**Itinerary and Fare Changes:** As the world emerges from the pandemic, many of our suppliers such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, and transportation providers are struggling with shortage of staff, inflated costs, and supply line challenges. Sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a component of an extensive tour due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Fuel surcharges and changes to taxes or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up to departure.

**Flight seating:** We are unable to take requests for window or aisle seating on the planes. The airline will not accept them, as group seating is assigned as a block. If this is important to you, we suggest you take the "No Flight" option with a fare reduction of \$940 and book your own flight which allows seat selection.

**Food Allergies:** You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. This tour goes to some remote places where restaurants may not be able to satisfy all food allergies. Please do not tell us about your food preferences, as restaurants ignore these requests. An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not. For some allergies, please consider bringing your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

**Travel Insurance:** A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

**Photo Credits:** Flickr (page 1 top left), Wikimedia (page 1 right, Blue Whale, Gateway Arch, National Cowboy Museum), Presley's Jubilee, Travel Oklahoma (Coleman Theatre)

**Experience Points:** This tour earns 116 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until July 18, 2023.

**Consumer Protection BC Licences:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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