



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



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Historic Route 66 Needles to Barstow Scenic Byway

Historic Route 66 is significant as it was the nation's first all-weather highway linking Chicago to Los Angeles. Known at the time of its establishment in November 1926 as U.S. Highway 66, the route was part of the first nationally designated highway system. Route 66 represents an outstanding example of the transition from dirt track to superhighway. Not only does Route 66 underscore the importance of the automobile as a technological achievement, but, perhaps equally important to the American psyche, it symbolized unprecedented freedom and mobility for every citizen who could afford to own and operate a car.

The byway is 178 miles through the Mojave Desert section of California



Route 66 and follows segments of the National Old Trails Highway and the Santa Fe Trail. The byway connects with Arizona Route 66 All American Road at the Colorado River, 14 miles east of the town of Needles. The byway route heads west through 150 miles of virtually undeveloped land that today appears much like it did when Route 66 was commissioned in 1926. The national scenic byway passes through the desert towns of Needles, Goffs, Amboy, Ludlow, Newberry Springs, Daggett, and ends in Barstow and encompasses many historic sites including two Harvey Houses, a 1914 schoolhouse, museums, mining areas, motels, restaurants and gas stations. The route also includes three WWII Desert Training Center

camp and bisects the Mojave Trails National Monument. Many activities on public lands can be accessed from Route 66.

1. Harvey House and Route 66 Mother Road Museum

2. Desert Discovery Center

3. Mojave National Preserve

4. Wilderness

5. Mojave Trails National Monument

6. Goffs Cultural Center

7. Desert Training Center (DTC)

8. 5 Mile Exit

History/cultural significance

Evolution of an American Icon

For thousands of years, Native Americans developed a network of trails from spring to spring across the High Desert to trade with tribes along the Pacific Coast. By the 1850s, the U.S.

Army was building roads over/near the trails to support westward expansion. Railroads followed the trails where feasible to get access to water and supplies. New wagon roads were built to follow the railroads, and many of these roads would become routes for automobiles.



The first car crossed the High Desert in 1903, however, the desert's sandy roads and steep grades were difficult for cars and in 1911, San Bernardino County built the first road for cars to cross the Mojave Desert.

In 1912, the Old Trails Road, later named National Old Trails Road, was built and by 1918, it was the preferred transcontinental auto route from New York to Los Angeles.

Between 1910 and 1920, vehicle ownership grew from 500,000 to almost 10 million and a national highway system was needed to replace America's disjointed network of badly maintained roads and trails.

Congress first introduced legislation for public highways in 1916 (Federal Aid Highway Act). The Act was revised in 1921 and again in 1925, which finally authorized construction of a national highway system.

On November 11, 1926, the Chicago to Los Angeles route, was officially designated U.S. Highway 66, more popularly known as Route 66. The route extended 2,448 miles across eight states beginning in Chicago, Illinois and ending in Santa Monica, California. The "Mother Road" was born.

From the outset, highway officials intended U.S. 66 to connect the main streets of rural and urban communities as many small towns did not have access to a major national thoroughfare.

Route 66 became one of the nation's principal east-west arteries and has undergone many improvements over its lifetime. During the late 1920s and 1930s, work progressed to realign and straighten the highway and the road was fully paved by 1938.

Route 66 was a major path for those who migrated west, especially during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

Many families from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas and Texas headed west for agricultural jobs in California. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* nicknamed Route 66 as the "Mother Road".

Route 66 provided some relief to communities located along the highway during the Great Depression. It passed through numerous small towns and, with the growing traffic on the highway, helped create the rise of mom-and-pop businesses, such as service stations, restaurants, hotels, motels and motor courts.

During World War II, the fully paved highway was one of the main roads used to move equipment, troops, and supplies to support military training operations for the Desert Training Center and other war-related industries in California.

Route 66 experienced its greatest post-war popularity during the 1950s and 1960s, as it became the main highway for vacationers headed to California. Route 66 became an icon of free-spirited independence, linking the United States across the Rocky Mountain Divide to the Pacific Ocean.

The romance and nostalgia of Route 66 is immortalized in popular culture in movies, songs such as Bobby Troup's 1946 hit *Get Your Kicks on Route 66*, and the 1960s Route 66 television show.

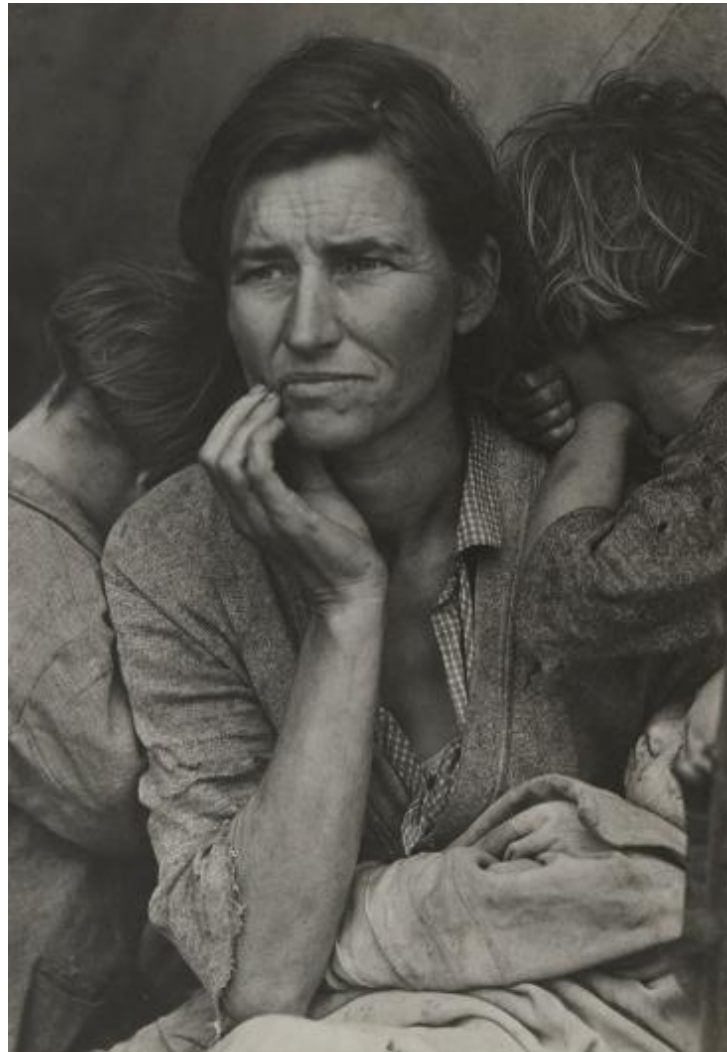
End of an Era

While many improvements had been done to roads within the National Highway System, including Route 66, President Dwight Eisenhower supported construction of a national Interstate System to efficiently move troops across the country and on June 29, 1956, he signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act/ National Interstate and Defense Highways Act into law. Interstate 40 was completed in 1979 and Route 66 was removed from the U.S. Highway System in June 1985.

Protection for a Historic Symbol

Although U.S. Highway 66 was decommissioned, memories of Route 66 live on through shared adventures and challenges of traveling on the Mother Road. Advocates have formed coalitions throughout the country to promote and preserve the history of our beloved Mother Road. Their actions continue to protect the significant structures, features and artifacts along Route 66.

On February 24, 2021, the Federal Highway Administration's **National Scenic Byways Program** designated the section California Historic Route 66 between Needles and Barstow a National Scenic Byway, following eight years of outreach and collaboration, lead by the



California Historic Route 66
Association (CHR66A) and the
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
California Desert District's Barstow
and Needles.





Designation Information

- [Designation Announcement](#)
- Date Designated: February 12, 2021
- Length: 178 Miles

Quick Links

- [Mojave Trails National Monument](#)
- [Amboy Crater Web Page](#)
- [Barstow Field Office](#)
- [Needles Field Office](#)

Plan Your Visit

- [Route 66 Brochure](#)
- [Mojave Trails National Monument Map](#)

Partners

- [The California Historic Route 66 Association](#)
- [Friends of El Mirage](#)
- [Desert Discovery Center](#)
- [Route 66 Main Street Murals](#)
- [Route 66 Museum](#)
- [City Of Twentynine Palms \(Gateway Community\)](#)
- [Twentynine Palms Tourism Business Improvement District](#)
- [Mojave Desert Land Trust](#)
- [Conservation Lands Foundation](#)
- [Mojave National Preserve](#)
- [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
- [Twenty Nine Palms Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center](#)

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Sands of War



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