



The Reel west newsletter

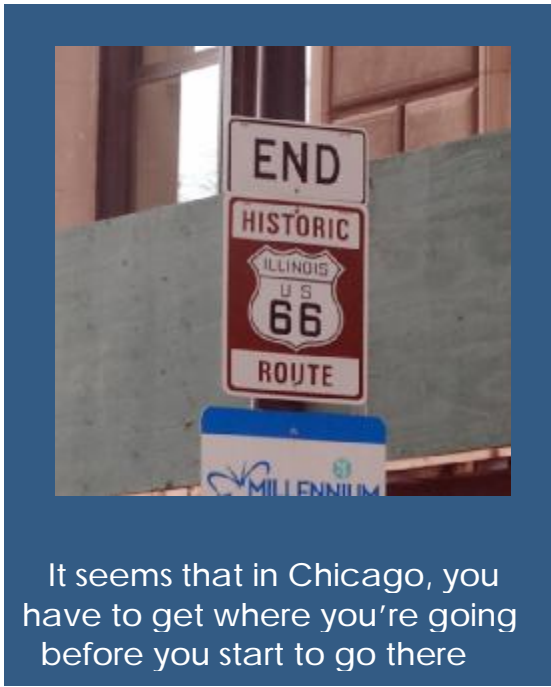


On the Road again.....
Just can't wait to get on
the road again!!

Thanks Willie!!

Well, I'm at it again. Since I had good feedback on my Monument Valley horseback riding trip newsletters, and I was encouraged to send them again for this trip, here it is.

As you might guess, this ride will entail putting my life at risk on a horse as well. Since this ride is also out west, and also organized by Great American Adventures, just as Monument Valley was, I was undecided as to how to get to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Should I fly and rent a car? Should I drive straight there and back? Decisions, decisions. As I was searching for sights to visit and share with all of you, I came across a classic trip - Route 66. That settled it. I would drive Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Fe, sharing my experiences along the way.



It seems that in Chicago, you have to get where you're going before you start to go there

Now, Route 66 today is not the Route 66 of yesteryear. The Route first mapped out in 1926 was pieced together from an existing network of promoted trails and unnamed roads. Supposedly, 85% of old 66 remains to be easily explored. Many areas have been replaced by the interstate. I was surprised to learn that much of it was just a dirt road back in the 20's and 30's.

Day 1
Friday
April 1st

Home
To
Pontiac, Illinois

Stats

475 miles
475 total miles this trip
Just over 9 hours on the road

Weather

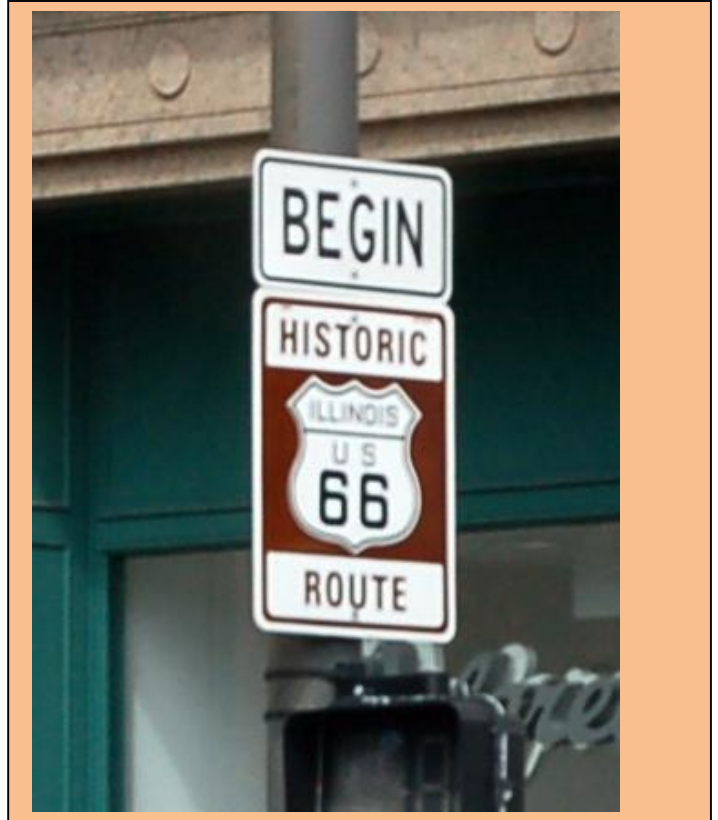
High Temp: 51
Low Temp: TBD
Conditions: Cloudy, sunny,
rainy



The resurging interest in Route 66

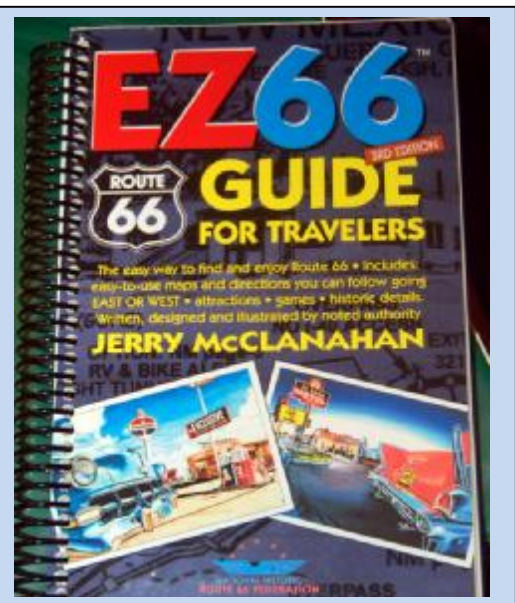
Has anyone read the book *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck? Written in 1939 it referenced Route 66 as "The Mother Road". In 1946 the Bobby Troup song; "Get Your Kicks, On Route 66," captured the hearts of America, especially when Nat King Cole recorded it later the same year. Then there was the TV series "Route 66," wherein Todd and Buzz traveled the country in a Corvette, seeking adventure (almost none of which actually happened on '66).

In 1984 Route 66 was officially decertified. That was after the completion of the final bypass. The end of Route 66? Not by a long shot. Volunteers formed state associations; books were published; maps were redrawn; bypassed towns and businesses changed hands and were remodeled to their former glory. What started 90 years ago as a means to get across the country is still going strong. Or at least that is what I have read. We will see what remains and what doesn't over the next few days. Who knows, I may follow it all the way to Los Angeles and become a movie star.



So stick with me if you want, and let's see if I really do "get my kicks, on Route 66".

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A little background first. My main reference for Route 66 is the guide to the left. It contains two topics that I will refer to:

GIANT ALERTS – Larger than life people, animals and things.

SCAVENGER HUNT – Questions that I will try to find the answers for.

I will skip the hassle of getting to downtown Chicago. Since Jackson Blvd, the original start of Route 66, is now a one way street going east, my first experience with Route 66 was the ending sign above, for those going west to east. I

had to take Adams St west which had the westbound starting sign, also above. In reality, Route 66 now starts at Grant Park, just off Lake Shore Drive.

Route 66 Fun Fact: Grant Park is the site of a monument to Abraham Lincoln, not Grant. A memorial to President Grant, on the other hand, is located in nearby Lincoln Park. What do you expect from Illinois?

SCAVENGER HUNT: What fierce creatures guard the Art Institute just north of Jackson on Michigan Ave?

The answer? Lions of course.



The concrete and steel canyons of Chicago

So, I started west on Adams St, took the detour, found Ogden and when I crossed Taylor St., there was Lu Lu's Hot Dogs.



It wouldn't be Chicago without a detour



A little further on is the Castle Car Wash. Best known for its unique architecture. Right now it looks abandoned.



Heading into Cicero, IL brought me to Henry's Drive In - "It's a Meal in Itself" and it's giant Hot Dog sign.

Henry's dates from the mid-fifties and was originally just a walk-up window and no indoor seating. A few years after opening they added a dining area.



Ok, I'll admit it. After stopping to grab a deli sandwich for lunch, I got lost. Well, not actually lost, I just missed the turn onto I55 and went straight to HWY 83. Either way I ended up at Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket. Ok, sounds weird, but I parked in the Dell Rhea's lot and ate my deli sandwich in the truck.



Dell supposedly has real good food and was even featured on the *Diners, Drive-ins and Dives* TV show. The neon sign, when lit up, is super. Unfortunately, being there during the day keeps me from taking a picture in all it's glory. Dell's has an interesting story. Irv Kolarik

started with a gas station and garage with a café and limited menu. One day, two women heard him complaining that he would rather sell food than gasoline. The two women offered to teach Irv to fry chicken with a special recipe, if he would buy all his chickens from them. Business soon had him converting the garage into a dining room and in 1946 he built the existing restaurant at its current location. The realignment of Route 66 in the early sixties sent Irv into bankruptcy. Then, in 1963, Dell Rhea and his wife reopened the restaurant. Dell and Grace's son, Patrick, now owns and operates the business.

One of the most recurring themes we will find on this trip is how many businesses, and even entire towns, were bypassed by either the realignment of Route 66 or the construction of the Interstate Highways. Some towns that had a population in the thousands are now only ghost towns or have residents numbering only in double digits.



So, I hopped on I55 for 4 miles. I55 has replaced much or the original Route 66 here in central Illinois. Exit on Joliet road to find Montana Charlie's and the White Fence Farm. Charlie's may be open this weekend, but it sure was empty as I drove past.



The White Fence Farm is HUGE!! It is a restaurant with banquet rooms, antique cars, machines, rides and games. As the sign says, they don't open today until 5 p.m.

SCAVENGER HUNT: The Illinois State Police Headquarters building is vintage. What District does it serve?





The Answer?

Check out the photo below.

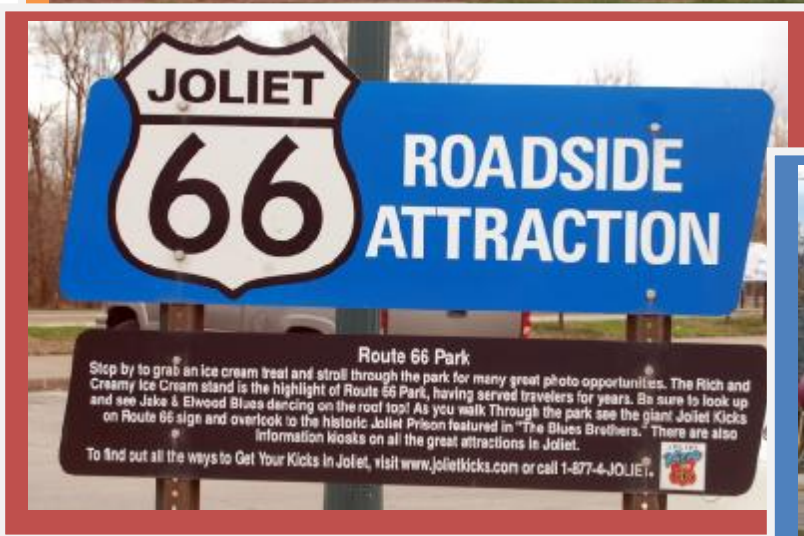
The following photos are from Joliet. If you saw it, *THE BLUES BROTHERS* was filmed here. They dance atop the Rich & Creamy ice cream stand; the Joliet Prison (where Jake is being released from at the start of the movie) can be seen from the "Kicks on 66 Park"; and they sit in the Route 66 Welcome Center and Gift Shop. I visited the Welcome Center which is also Joliet Museum. There are several pics from inside, below.




I become a little confused while writing this because the Welcome Center I toured does not have most of the displays described in my encyclopedia. Now I'm not sure if I missed another building or not.

Joliet has a walking tour with antique gas pumps as info kiosks and many murals painted on buildings that pertain to Route 66. Since it was a little chilly and rainy, I skipped the walking tours.

Joliet seems like a nice place to visit.




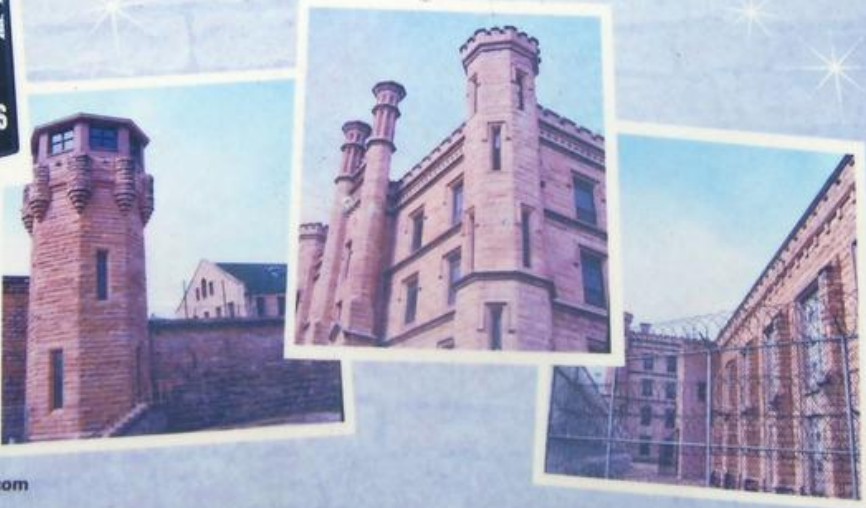


THE HISTORIC *Collins Street Prison* **ON** 

“ON A MISSION FROM GOD...”

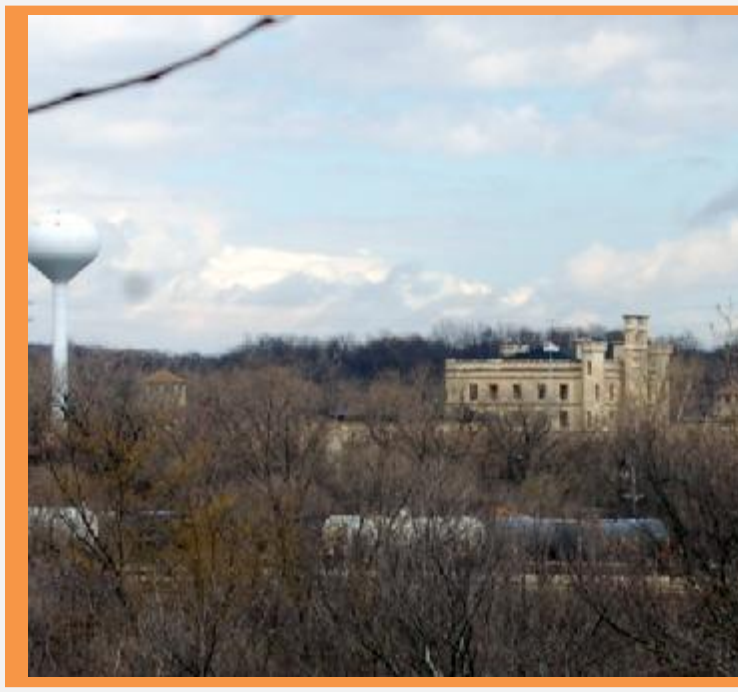
The Joliet Correction Facility is most noted for its appearance in the opening scenes of the 1980 classic *“The Blues Brothers.”* Starring John Belushi as Jake and Dan Aykroyd as Elwood, the Blues brothers also featured such noted celebrities as Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Ray Charles, John Candy and Carrie Fisher.

The noted plot of the film begins after the release of Jake Blues from prison, he and brother Elwood go to visit the old home where they were raised by nuns. They learn the church stopped its support and will sell the place to the education authority, and the only way to keep the place open is if the \$5,000 tax on the property is paid within 11 days. The brothers want to help and decide to put their blues band back together and raise the money by staging a big gig. As they set off on their “mission from God” they seem to make more enemies along the way. Will they manage to come up with the money in time?

JOLIET
Kicks
ON
66

To find out how Joliet Kicks on Route 66, visit www.jolietkicks.com or call 1-877-4-JOLIET



Joliet Museum, Route 66 Welcome Center and Gift Shop





The Mother Road

Commissioned in 1926, Route 66 was the first all-weather highway connecting Chicago to Los Angeles. Covering 2,448 miles, Route 66 passes through eight states and three time zones. Route 66 exemplifies the transition from dirt road to superhighway. Dubbed the "Mother Road" by John Steinbeck in his novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, Route 66 has symbolized the road to opportunity. The road carried an estimated 210,000 people migrating to California to escape the Dust Bowl. Later, military convoys traveled the road during World War II, as did many Americans after the war looking for a better lifestyle. Route 66 offered freedom and mobility for every American who owned a car. Although officially decommissioned in 1985, Route 66 continues to draw travelers with the promise of reliving the open road.



Welcome to Atlanta !! Atlanta, Illinois that is.



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