

# Discover the Hidden Gems: Walking Tours of Towns Along Route 66 - Look Up America Series

Welcome to the Look Up America Series, where we explore the rich history, culture, and beauty of small towns along the iconic Route 66. In this edition, we will take you on a virtual journey through some amazing walking tours that will bring these towns to life. Strap on your walking shoes and join us!

## The Magic of Route 66

Route 66, also known as the Main Street of America, was one of the original highways in the U.S. Highway System. It connected Chicago, Illinois, to Los Angeles, California, covering a distance of 2,448 miles. Although it was officially decommissioned in 1985, Route 66 continues to captivate travelers with its nostalgic charm and historic significance.

One of the best ways to experience the small towns along Route 66 is by taking a walking tour. These tours allow you to immerse yourself in the local culture, interact with friendly residents, and discover hidden gems that you may not find through other means of transportation. From historic landmarks to quirky roadside attractions, each town has something unique to offer.



## Classic American Road Trips: Walking Tours of Towns along Route 66 (Look Up, America! Series)

by Julia Rios (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise	: Enabled
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Print length	: 200 pages



## Exploring the Towns

Our journey begins in the town of Pontiac, Illinois, which is home to the Pontiac Oakland Automobile Museum. As you stroll through the town's charming streets, you'll encounter elaborate murals depicting the history of Pontiac and its connection to the automobile industry. Don't forget to visit the Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum, where you can learn more about the road's significance.

Next, we head west to Tucumcari, New Mexico, a vibrant town known for its iconic neon signs and colorful murals. The Tucumcari Historical Museum is a must-visit, offering insights into the town's past. As you explore the streets, keep an eye out for vintage motels and cafes that have stood the test of time.

Amarillo, Texas, is our next stop, famous for the Cadillac Ranch, a unique sculpture installation that has become an art landmark. Take a leisurely walk through the Harrington Regional Medical Center Healing Garden, a peaceful oasis in the heart of the city. The Amarillo Museum of Art and the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame are also worth exploring.

Continuing west, we arrive in Seligman, Arizona, a town frozen in time. This small haven is filled with neon signs, classic cars, and retro motels. Take a stroll along the original Route 66 and immerse yourself in the vintage atmosphere. Don't miss a visit to the famous Snow Cap Drive-In for a taste of delicious nostalgia.

Our final destination is Santa Monica, California, the end of the road for Route 66. Enjoy a leisurely walk along the Santa Monica Pier, where you can soak up the sun and experience the iconic beach culture of Southern California. Stop by the Route 66 End of the Trail sign and snap a memorable photo to commemorate your journey.

## **Why Take a Walking Tour?**

Walking tours offer a unique perspective that cannot be replicated in any other form of travel. They allow you to slow down, take in the details, and truly connect with the places you visit. By exploring these towns on foot, you can appreciate the architecture, meet locals, and stumble upon hidden treasures that you might otherwise miss.

Additionally, walking tours provide excellent opportunities for photography enthusiasts. Capture the charm of small-town America through your lens, and create lasting memories of your journey. From quaint storefronts to breathtaking landscapes, there are endless photo-worthy moments waiting to be discovered.

## **The Look Up America Series**

The Look Up America Series aims to promote the exploration of small towns and hidden gems across the United States. By highlighting the unique aspects of each destination, we hope to inspire travelers to venture beyond the well-trodden path and discover the cultural richness that lies off the beaten track.

Whether you're a history lover, an adventure seeker, or simply someone looking for a new travel experience, the Look Up America Series has something for everyone. Stay tuned for more exciting journeys as we continue to unravel the beauty of towns along Route 66 and beyond.

Walking tours of towns along Route 66 allow you to step back in time and experience the nostalgia of this iconic highway. From neon signs to vintage motels, each town has its own unique charm waiting to be explored. So lace up your walking shoes, hit the road, and discover the hidden gems that make Route 66 a true American treasure.



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There were long-distance American highways before Route 66 but none has endured longer in the country's psyche. John Steinbeck first dubbed Route 66 the “Mother Road” to describe the promise the highway held when thousands of poor Oklahoma and Arkansas families were blown off their farms by the Dust Bowl drought conditions of the 1930s and forced to head to California. The 2,400-mile, dog bowl-shaped roadway from Chicago to Los Angeles inspired popular songs, movies and an iconic television show that lured millions of travelers to it two lanes of concrete. Route 66 was done in by the interstate system - some of which was laid on top of the old road - and doesn't appear on modern maps anymore but lives forever in the imaginations of any motorist with a hint of wanderlust.

Route 66 was never a static road, especially as paving was introduced. The original plan in the 1920s was to connect the main streets of rural and urban communities and over time the route shifted to eliminate sharp turns, bypass some smaller communities, eliminate railroad crossings, and to shift routings in major metropolitan areas to avoid traffic congestion. Nowhere is this more apparent than at its very start (if you're heading west) in Chicago. Originally, Route 66 kicked off on Jackson Boulevard at Michigan Avenue and later moved to Jackson at Lake Shore Drive. Wherever you begin to follow the essence of Historic Route 66, look for the brown markers and get your odyssey rolling through Illinois. Route 66 tackled the Mississippi River in two places, one went directly into St. Louis and the other slid around the northern edge of the city. This Route 66 Bypass crossed on the Chain of Rocks Bridge, a private toll bridge built in 1929 at the cost of \$3,000,000. The "chain of rocks" were a dangerous set of rocky shoals that were eliminated by dams and canals in the mid-20th century. The bridge itself was notable for a sharp 22-degree bend that slowed traffic and fostered pile-ups. For that reason the bridge was not used by the Interstate Highway System and was eventually closed in 1967. It sat decaying for 30 years, spared from demolition only by a crash in the market for scrap metal. In Missouri, "America's Main Street," ran through the wooded bluffs of the Meramec River valley.

Route 66 was born in Oklahoma. Cyrus Avery, a Tulsa businessman and Oklahoma's first highway commissioner, spearheaded the national committee that created the U.S. Highway System in 1926. He championed the Chicago-to-Los Angeles route (making sure it dropped south to his home state before turning west) and picked the now famous double sixes as the new road's official number. Oklahoma has about 400 miles of Route 66 and more drivable miles of the old highway than any other state, although in a pastiche of new route numbers that requires its own guidebook. Historic Route 66 through Oklahoma is studded with

the small towns and kitschy roadside buildings that came to define the Mother Road.

Upon reaching Amarillo, Texas the road is ready to sprint west on one of the flattest crossings of the Rocky Mountains possible. For that reason most of the road was co-opted for the interstate highways. Entering California, the end of your journey on old Route 66 is in sight. The old road survives intact for most of its 315 miles through the state. There is no better way to see the towns of Route 66 than on foot. And there is no better way to appreciate what you are looking at than with a walking tour. Whether you are visiting a new town or just out to look at your own town in a new way, a walking tour is ready to explore when you are. Each walking tour describes a mix of historical and architectural and ecclesiastical landmarks. A quick primer on identifying architectural styles seen on America's streets can be found at the end of the book.

Tour towns included:

Chicago

Springfield

St. Louis

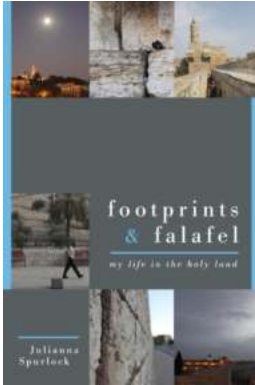
Tulsa

Oklahoma City

Albuquerque

Los Angeles

Hollywood



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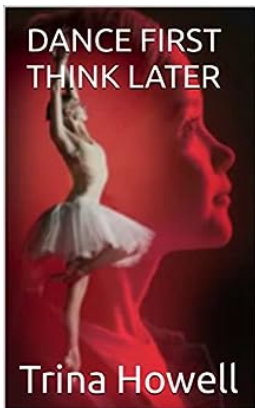
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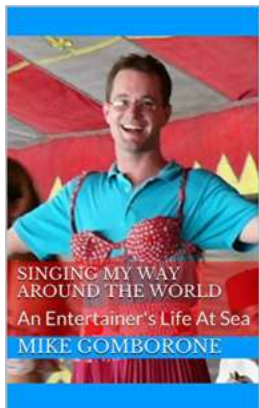
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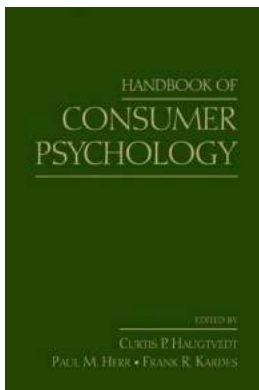
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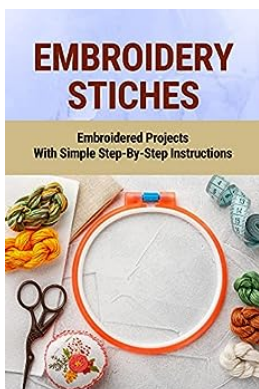
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