

Introduction

A trip down Route 66 very well may be the perfect family vacation. From the bustling streets of downtown Chicago, the old road runs south through the Illinois prairie, past cornfields and classic car lots, drive-in movie theaters and doughnut shops, on its way to the mighty Mississippi River, where it crosses the world's longest pedestrian bridge and heads west into Missouri's Ozark Mountains, passing tourist traps and wineries, cutting across the corner of Kansas and slipping quietly onto Oklahoma's red clay for the long run past pecan groves and cattle and Cherokee trading posts on its way into the Texas Panhandle, and across the open, windy Panhandle to the ghost town of Glenrio, where the flat Texas terrain suddenly gives way to the magical vistas of New Mexico, and billboards advertising steak dinners are replaced by signs touting "Tucumcari Tonite!" On it goes, across the aptly-named Land of Enchantment and into the colors of Arizona, through the Painted Desert and past motels shaped like tepees on its way to the vast Mojave -- John Steinbeck's "bright and terrible desert" -- and across the desert and into the green and prosperous land of palm trees and glitter where it finally runs out near the Pacific Ocean.

Along the way, the Mother Road offers her children a host of kid-friendly attractions: cowboys and Indians, frozen custard, fiberglass giants, amusement parks, dinosaurs, horses, neon signs, tacky souvenirs, and a thousand other delights no kid can resist.

This updated edition of *Route 66 for Kids* has been reformatted for ease of use. The original *Route 66 for Kids* was available only as a 5.5-by-8-inch, staple-bound book, which I sold for \$5.50 a copy at festivals and a few select roadside souvenir shops. The new version is available exclusively as a free download from my Web site, www.kidson66.com, and is designed to be printed out and slipped into a three-ring binder, which will allow it to lay flat in the car. To get the most out of your book, it is advised that you purchase the following items and add them to your binder:

- Economy-weight sheet protectors. Inexpensive and readily available at most discount stores, these are a must if you are using an inkjet printer, because they protect the ink from spills, rain and other damage. Insert a few extras into your binder to protect children's artwork, brochures collected along the road and other items you plan to keep to remember your trip.

- Business-card sheets. Business cards are among the best souvenirs you can find on Route 66, because they are small, free, and invaluable in settling family arguments later, when you're trying to remember exactly where you had those terrific hash browns for breakfast. (I wish we'd done this when I was a kid; my dad and I are *still* arguing about whether we actually ate at the World's Largest McDonald's -- back before it was the World's Largest McDonald's -- in 1980.) The only problem with business cards is that they tend to get left in pockets to be eaten by the washing machine, vanish under floor mats or disappear into that hole in the space-time continuum that seems to exist in the bottom of Mom's purse. Plastic sheets made for the purpose of storing business cards will help you keep track of these tiny souvenirs, which are especially useful if you want to stay in touch with the new friends you meet along the road.

- Small zippered storage pouch. Designed for organizing school supplies in a child's binder, these inexpensive plastic or nylon pouches are indispensable for carrying extra pencils and postcard stamps, not to mention storing small souvenirs such as matchbooks, ink pens, feathers, bottlecaps, pebbles and the like.

This book is intended to help you plan a memorable journey with your children, but it is in no way a complete list of all the activities available on Route 66, nor is its accuracy guaranteed. Phone numbers, Web addresses, hours and admission fees were accurate at press time, but things can change. If you find an error or discover a great roadside attraction not listed here, drop me a line at sundayjohn66@mac.com; I just might use your input in future editions.

Happy cruising.

Emily Priddy
Tulsa, OK

Key:

💰 = Free admission.

♥ = Located on Route 66.

Illinois

Chicago

Important note: You can save a bundle on admission to the first six attractions on this list (Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum, Adler Planetarium, Art Institute, Museum of Science and Industry and Hancock Observatory) if you purchase a \$49.50 City Pass (\$39 for kids ages 3 to 11) instead of paying for admission to each attraction separately. The pass, good for nine days, gets you into all six attractions. For more information, visit www.citypass.net.

John G. Shedd Aquarium

Built in 1929, Shedd Aquarium is one of the oldest public aquariums in the world. Admission isn't cheap (\$23 for adults and children 12 and up; \$16 for kids ages 3 to 11; bring extra for parking and souvenirs), but anyone with even a passing interest in aquatic animals will find it well worth the money. The exhibits are beautiful and fascinating, and there are plenty of interactive exhibits for kids to enjoy. Don't miss the magnificent seahorse exhibit or the underwater viewing gallery, where you can come face-to-face with whales and dolphins. Bonus: Next time the kids start complaining about changing the water in the goldfish bowl, you can break out the vacation pictures from Shedd and ask them how they'd like to change the water in those tanks. Hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekends, holidays and summer weekdays (Memorial Day through Labor Day); 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on winter weekdays (Labor Day through Memorial Day). Located at 1200 S. Lake Shore Drive in Grant Park (near the eastern terminus of Route 66). For more information, visit <http://sheddaquarium.org> or call (312) 939-2435. Web site includes driving directions and a special section just for kids.

Field Museum

Established in 1893 to house the biological and anthropological collections assembled for the World's Columbian Exposition, the museum has grown to more than 20 million specimens. One popular exhibit is Sue, the resident Tyrannosaurus Rex, who went on display in 2000 as part of the museum's permanent collection. According to the museum, Sue is the largest, most complete and best-preserved T. Rex fossil ever discovered. Admission starts at \$19 for adults and children 12 and up; \$9 for children ages 3 to 11; and \$14 for senior citizens and students with valid ID. Special rates available on certain days. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with last admission at 4 p.m. The Field Museum is open every day except Christmas. Located at 1400 S. Lake Shore Drive in Grant Park (near the eastern terminus of Route 66.) To learn more, visit www.fieldmuseum.org or call (312) 922-9410.

Adler Planetarium

Home of Doane Observatory, Chicago's largest public telescope; also features exhibits on the history of astronomy, current astronomical events and two theaters: the Sky Theater, which shows visitors a replica of the night sky projected on the planetarium's 68-foot dome, and the StarRider Theater, which allows visitors to participate in a computer-generated, interactive "journey to the stars" using controls built into the armrests of their seats. This was the kind of stuff I really dug when I was a kid. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily, with extended hours during the summer. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is \$13 for adults, \$11 for kids ages 4 to 17 and \$12 for senior citizens. Special discounts and free days offered periodically. Located at 1300 S. Lake Shore Drive in Grant Park (near the eastern terminus of Route 66). For more information, visit www.adlerplanetarium.org or call (312) 922-STAR.

Museum of Science and Industry

Permanent exhibits include actress Colleen Moore's elaborate "Fairy Castle" dollhouse; "The Great Train Story," which lets visitors learn about the role of rail shipping in industry by following a model freight train from Seattle Harbor to Chicago; and the U-505 exhibit, which allows visitors to tour an actual German submarine. The Museum of Science and Industry also has an Omnimax theater. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. Closed Christmas. Admission is \$9 for adults and children 12 and up, \$5 for children ages 3 to 11 and \$7.50 for senior citizens. Parking is \$12. Free admission days offered periodically. Located 10 minutes from downtown Chicago at the intersection of 57th Street and Lake Shore Drive in Hyde Park (near the eastern terminus of Route 66). For more information, visit www.msichicago.org or call (800) GO-TO-MSI. (Chicago-area residents should call (773) 684-1414.)

Hancock Observatory

Viewing area atop the famous Hancock Building allows visitors to see up to 80 miles away, with views of four states. Hours are 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily, with the last ticket sold at 10:45 p.m. Admission is \$9.75 for adults and kids 13 and up, \$6 for kids ages 5 to 12 and \$7.50 for senior citizens. Kids 4 and under get in free. Prices do not include amusement tax. Located seven blocks north of 66 at 875 N. Michigan Avenue. To learn more, visit www.hancockobservatory.com or call (888) 875-VIEW. Discounts and promotions offered on the Web site.

♥ Art Institute of Chicago

Collection includes just about everybody who is anybody in the art world, from Monet to Warhol. Of special interest for little girls who love dollhouses: The Thorne Rooms, 68 miniature rooms, elaborately decorated in European and American styles. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday; and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission is up to you, but everybody has to pay something; the recommended donation is \$10 for adults and \$6 for senior citizens and children 6 and up. Located at the intersection of Adams Street (Route 66) and Michigan Avenue. For more information, visit www.artic.edu or call (312) 443-3600.

♥ Sears Tower

Besides the magnificent view, the Skydeck at the tallest building in North America offers exhibits on Chicago and its history, including interactive, multilingual kiosks that give virtual tours of Chicago, “knee-high” Chicago exhibits for little kids, and telescopes to give visitors an even better view of the city. The Sears Tower’s Web site, www.searstower.com, has visitor information including tips on taking photos, a scavenger hunt and printable coloring book for kids and other features. Hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily May through September and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily October through April. Admission is \$9.95 for adults and children 12 and up, \$6.95 for kids ages 3 to 11 and \$7.95 for senior citizens. Kids under 3 get in free. Located at 233 S. Wacker Drive, at the corner of Wacker and Jackson (Route 66). For more information, visit the Web site or call (312) 875-9696.

\$ Navy Pier

Home to a Ferris wheel, carousel, miniature golf course, funhouse maze, children’s museum, IMAX theater, stained-glass museum and a host of other attractions, Navy Pier is a virtual wonderland for children. Located at 600 E. Grand Ave., not far from the eastern terminus of Route 66. Given the large number of vendors and the seasonal nature of some attractions, it’s best to do a little homework before you go; for information about hours and admission prices, visit www.navypier.com or call (800) 595-PIER.

Romeoville

♥ White Fence Farm

Famous fried chicken restaurant also includes a free museum and petting zoo children will enjoy. Open 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and noon to 8 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday. Located on Joliet Road (Route 66) in Romeoville, south of Interstate 55. For more information, call (630) 739-1720 or visit www.whitefencefarm.com.

Joliet

♥ Joliet Area Historical Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center

Located in the former Ottawa Street Methodist Church building at 204 Ottawa St. (Route 66), the museum has permanent exhibits on local history, including interactive video presentations, as well as touring exhibits. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children ages 4 to 17 and \$4 for senior citizens and full-time students with valid IDs. For more information, visit www.jolietmuseum.org or call (815) 723-5201.

♥ Route 66 Raceway and Chicagoland Speedway

Two auto racing facilities located at 500 Speedway Boulevard. The Route 66 Raceway offers NHRA racing, a dirt oval, a drag strip, test-and-tune days and other events and

services. The Chicagoland Speedway offers NASCAR, IROC, IRL and other major racing events. To learn more, visit www.route66raceway.com or call (815) 727-RACE.

♥🏠 Haunted Trails

Haunted-house-themed amusement park offers two miniature golf courses, go-karts, Naskarts, rides, games, batting cages, a restaurant and other amenities. Open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday. Located at 1423 N. Broadway. For more information, call (815) 722-7800.

Wilmington

♥🏠 Launching Pad Drive-In

Home of the “Gemini Giant,” an enormous fiberglass statue of an astronaut wearing a green suit and a space helmet and clutching a rocket in his hands. In addition to the fun of posing next to a giant spaceman, the Launching Pad offers inexpensive diner fare, including kid-friendly menu items such as hamburgers, popcorn chicken and grilled cheese sandwiches. Clean restrooms. Open from 9 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily. Located at 810 E. Baltimore St. (Route 66) in Wilmington. To learn more, call (815) 476-6535 or visit www.wilmingtonchamberofcommerce.com/launchingpad/

Braidwood

♥🏠 Polk-A-Dot Drive-In

Retro-themed restaurant located at 222 N. Front St. (Route 66) in Braidwood. Fun 1950s and 1960s décor, including life-size cutout photographs of Elvis, Marilyn Monroe and James Dean that you can pose with for pictures. Menu includes kid-friendly foods such as burgers, chili cheese fries and milkshakes. Open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. For more information, call (815) 458-3377 or visit www.polk-a-dot.com.

Gardner

♥💰 Trolley car diner

Located behind the historic Riviera roadhouse (a fun place itself, especially for grownups in search of dinner, a brew and a few good stories), the diner is no longer in operation but has been lovingly repaired by the Illinois Route 66 Association’s historic preservation committee. Originally a horse-drawn trolley car, the building later was adapted for use as a diner. For more information, call the Riviera (815) 237-2344.

Odell

♥💰 Standard Oil Station

Another example of the historic preservation committee’s handiwork is located on Route 66 in Odell. Once in serious danger of collapsing as a result of years of neglect, this classic Standard Oil station has been restored to its former glory and serves as a sort of

information center and monument to the way travel used to be. Show the kids the gravity-fed gas pumps in front and let them peek in the windows at the potbelly stove and old motor oil cans.

Funk's Grove

♥📍 Funk's Grove Maple Sirup

Driving down 66 between McLean and Towanda, you'll see a large sign at the side of the road advertising "MAPLE SIRUP." Follow the arrow to a little building in the middle of a stand of maple trees, where the Funk family produces its famous maple sirup. The spelling is correct: Maple "sirup," with a "y" in the middle, contains added sugar. Maple "syrup," with an "i," is pancake topping in its purest form, its sweetness the result of natural maple sugar, its flavor both rich and delicate. The shop is open whenever the Funks have sirup, maple cream or their exquisite chocolate-covered maple truffles to sell; when they run out, the shop closes. Come out in the early spring and buy some of that naturally sweet ambrosia before supplies run out. For more information, check online at www.route66.com/FunksGrove or call (309) 874-3360.

Atlanta

♥💰 Advertising murals

Buildings all over town have murals painted on them, advertising a variety of products. Before television or radio ads came along, a sign painted on the side of a building was an ideal way to advertise a business. Also planned for Atlanta: A small park featuring a fiberglass giant holding a hot dog. The giant, who served as the mascot for Bunyon's restaurant in Chicago until it closed in early 2003, is being relocated to Atlanta with help from the Illinois Route 66 Association's historic preservation committee.

Springfield

♥📍 Cozy Dog Diner

Springfield has two claims to fame: Abe Lincoln and corn dogs. The Cozy Dog is the birthplace of the corn dog; founder Ed Waldmire cooked up the notion of a corn dog on a stick while serving in the military in the 1940s. He called his creation a "crusty cur." When he came home, his bride, Virginia, suggested changing the name to "cozy dog," and a Springfield institution was born. Fun décor, great corn dogs and cheeseburgers, terrific "skin-on" French fries. Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Closed Sunday. Clean restrooms. Located at 2935 S. 6th St. For more information, visit www.cozydogdrivein.com or call (217) 525-1992.

💰 Abe's nose

Just outside the entrance to Abraham Lincoln's tomb is a large sculpture of Lincoln's head. Most of the bronze sculpture has turned black, but Abe's nose is gold. Why? It's kept polished to a shiny, gold patina by visitors who rub it for good luck. Kids will enjoy rubbing Abe's nose for luck; adults may appreciate the bit of levity offered by this action

in an otherwise somber setting. The 117-foot-tall granite tomb is open to the public and contains the bodies of Abe, his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, and three of their sons (a fourth is buried at Arlington National Cemetery). Admission is free. Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Located in Oak Ridge Cemetery. For more information, call (217) 782-2717.

\$ Abe's house

The Springfield home of the 16th president is located one block off Route 66 at 426 N. 7th St. Run by the National Park Service, it is open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Closed on major holidays. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. To get there from 66 (Sixth Street), turn right on Capitol Avenue and right again on Seventh Street. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/liho or call (217) 492-4241. Historical sites sometimes go over kids' heads, but they seem to enjoy visiting Springfield's Lincoln sites, perhaps because they've spent enough time studying Honest Abe to understand why it's cool that they're walking around in his house.

♥\$ Bill Shea's Gas Station Museum

Bill Shea operates a Route 66 and petroliana museum at 2075 Peoria Road. His building is small, but his collection and love for the road are enormous. Let him regale you with stories of the way things used to be while the kids get a look at the gas pumps, oil cans and gas station uniforms of yesteryear. One exhibit is an actual gas station — Mahan's Filling Station, once located in Middletown, Ill., but relocated to Bill's property to educate travelers about the past. Open from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays and from 7 a.m. to noon Saturday. Closed Sunday and Monday. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. For more information, call (217) 522-0475.

Mt. Olive

♥\$ Soulsby Station

Owned for years by the late brother-sister team of Russell and Ola Soulsby, this former Shell Oil station was renovated recently by a team of volunteers, led by the late Tom Teague, as part of a successful effort to get the property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Worth a stop.

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♥\$ Henry's Route 66 Rabbit Ranch

Located at the corner of Old Route 66 and Madison Avenue. Rich and Linda Henry and their pet bunnies welcome Route 66 travelers. Two Campbell's 66 Express tractor-trailers grace the property. Rich and Linda sell a variety of souvenirs, including plush toys fashioned after the Campbell's 66 Express mascot, "Snortin' Norton" the camel. Their souvenir shop doubles as an office for Rich, who sells insurance and license plate renewal stickers. In between clients, Rich is happy to visit with travelers. The rabbits often hang out in the shop with him; most of the bunnies are more than happy to let visitors pet them. Open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Other

times available by appointment. For more information, visit www.henrysroute66.com or call (618) 635-5655.

♥ **Country Classic Cars**

Located at 2149 E. Frontage Road (a.k.a. Route 66), this is a must-see. Literally hundreds of classic cars — most, if not all, for sale — grace the premises; the complex also includes an antique store and gift shop. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Admission is \$1. For more information, visit www.countryclassiccars.com or call (618) 635-7056.

Granite City

♥ **Debby's Route 66 Frozen Custard**

Located at 3241 W. Chain of Rocks Road, Debby's offers a variety of frozen treats, including sundaes, ice-cream cones and "concretes," a St. Louis-area specialty that involves soft-serve frozen custard blended with various add-ons. Depending on where you order your concrete, ingredients may include anything from chocolate syrup and peanut butter cups to entire slices of pie mixed with sweet frozen custard. Debby's is open noon to 9 p.m. during the summer. For more information, call (618) 797-0721.

Missouri

St. Louis

♥ **Old Chain of Rocks Bridge**

This old bridge, which once carried Route 66 across the Mississippi River from Illinois to Missouri, is now the world's longest pedestrian bridge. Open year 'round when grant money is available to staff it; open on weekends from spring to fall the rest of the time. Kids will like the Route 66 exhibits set up on the bridge and the castlelike water intake towers in the middle of the river, visible from the bridge. Open to pedestrians and bicyclists. For easiest access, travelers coming from Illinois should drive into Missouri on I-270, then take the Riverview Drive exit. Turn left on Riverview and pass under the interstate; the entrance to the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge is on the left, and free parking is available. For more information, visit www.trailnet.org.

♥ **Ted Drewes Frozen Custard**

Often imitated, never duplicated, Ted Drewes is the place to go for frozen custard on the west side of the Mississippi River. Open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. Open every month except January, Ted Drewes is a St. Louis landmark. Don't be deterred by the long lines in front of the building; the folks inside are well-equipped to handle the crowd, and the frozen custard is well worth the short wait. Excellent orange slushies are available for vegans, dieters or the lactose-intolerant. Located at 6726 Chippewa (a.k.a. Route 66). For more information, call (314) 481-2652 or visit <http://teddrewes.com>.

City Museum

Located a few blocks from 66 at 701 N. 15th St. in downtown St. Louis, the City Museum defies description; its permanent exhibits include everything from a giant, multi-level maze of tunnels and trails (complete with a giant “bird’s nest” fashioned from driftwood) to displays of architectural details from St. Louis-area buildings, a machine that makes shoelaces and a miniature train kids can actually ride. Outdoors, you’ll find the MonstroCity, a multi-story sculpture/jungle gym/obstacle course; recent additions indoors include an aquarium and the Enchanted Caves, a labyrinth of caves with concrete sculptures built into the walls. Many of the exhibits are made from found or discarded objects that have been recycled into sculptures, mosaics and other works of art. Creator Bob Cassilly is an artist, real-estate investor and one-man idea factory who clearly hasn’t forgotten what it’s like to be a kid. Under no circumstances should you leave St. Louis without taking a side trip to see this place. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday; closed Monday and Tuesday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Thursday; 9 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday; and 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday, with extended hours in the summer. Admission is \$7.50 for adults and children ages 2 and up, with special reduced rates during certain hours. For more information, visit www.citymuseum.org or call (314) 231-CITY.

\$ St. Louis Zoological Gardens

Located a few blocks from 66 in Forest Park, St. Louis’ zoo is regarded as one of the best zoological gardens in the United States, with a staggering number of specimens and a strong commitment to teaching children how humans and their actions affect other species. Set aside a whole day for this adventure; the zoo is both enormous and amazing, and the kids won’t want to leave. Watch the polar bears play at the bear pits, visit the sea lion pool during feeding time, and above all, make sure you walk through the 1904 Flight Cage, a huge outdoor aviary built for the 1904 World’s Fair. Admission is free, but get there early in the morning to find parking on the street; otherwise, you’ll have to park in one of the visitor parking lots, which will set you back \$9. Some special exhibits, such as the children’s zoo and the insectarium, require nominal admission fees (usually \$2 or \$3 per person). If you visit the children’s zoo during hot weather, buy the kids a few cups of nectar (\$1 each) to feed the lorikeets. From Chippewa (Route 66), take Hampton Avenue north to Forest Park, where the zoo is located. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with extended hours during the summer. Closed Christmas. For more information, visit www.stlzoo.org or call (314) 781-0900 or (800) 966-8877.

\$ St. Louis Science Center

Located at 5050 Oakland Ave., just off Interstate 64 near Forest Park. Free, but they charge admission for movies at the IMAX theater located in the Science Center. Tons of interactive exhibits; the Science Center stretches from one side of Interstate 64 to the other, with an elevated, glassed-in walkway above the interstate connecting its two buildings. Open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and Saturday; 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Friday; and 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, with extended hours during the summer. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas. For more information, visit www.slsc.org or call (800) 456-SLSC.

\$ Gateway Arch

Visible from Route 66 (and just about anywhere else in St. Louis), the Arch is the city's best-recognized landmark. The base of the Arch contains the Museum of Westward Expansion; the top of the Arch offers a truly spectacular view of the city. Admission to the Arch is free; tours to the top are \$10 for adults, \$7 for kids ages 13 to 16 and \$3 for kids ages 3 to 12. The Arch is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily during the winter and 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day). For more information, visit www.stlouisarch.com or call (877) 982-1410.

Busch Stadium

The home of the St. Louis Cardinals is a must-see for any baseball fan. Located at 250 Stadium Plaza, the stadium is within spitting distance of the Mother Road; to get there, take Tucker (Route 66) to Spruce, then turn left on Spruce; the stadium is about four blocks down, on the left side of the street. For more information or to order tickets to a game, visit www.stlcardinals.com or call (314) 421-3060. Order tickets well in advance if you're going to be in town when the Chicago Cubs are playing the Cardinals; the Cubs-Cards rivalry is the best in baseball, and fans of both teams converge on the city every time they get together. Tours of the stadium also are available; see the next entry for details.

International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame and Cardinals Hall of Fame

St. Louis is, as they say, definitely a baseball town ... but that doesn't mean other sports are ignored. In the same building that houses the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame, you'll find the International Bowling Hall of Fame, which has a variety of exhibits about bowling, including actual bowling lanes where the kids can try to knock down a few pins. The Hall of Fame is open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday during the winter and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day from April through September. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Admission is \$7.50 for adults, \$6 for children and \$7 for seniors without a tour of Busch Stadium, or \$12 for adults, \$10 for children and \$11 for seniors *with* a tour of the stadium, which is located right across the street. Stadium tours are given at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Tours are not available if the Cardinals have a day game scheduled. For more information, visit <http://bowlingmuseum.com> or call (800) 966-2695.

Museum of Transportation

Exhibits include a train engine kids can climb into and pretend to drive; numerous classic cars; old airplanes; and a great exhibit on Route 66 history that includes an actual cabin from the famous Coral Court Motel, which was torn down in 1995. Located at 3015 Barrett Station Road; to get there, take I-270 to the Dougherty Ferry Road exit, then proceed west one mile on Dougherty Ferry to Barrett Station Road. Turn left on Barrett Station Road; drive about a half-mile to reach the museum, which will be on your right. Open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday and closed Monday, with extended hours in the summer. Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is \$4 for adults and children 13 and up; \$2 for children ages 5 to 12 and senior citizens age 65 and up. For more information, call (314) 965-7998 or visit www.thetrainmuseum.org.

\$ Grant's Farm

Home of the famous Budweiser Clydesdales, the Dalmatians that accompany them, and a host of trained animals and petting zoo-type exhibits sure to delight kids of any age. Located not far from 66 at 10501 Gravois Road. Admission is free, but parking costs \$6. Open April through October; hours vary by season. For more information, visit www.grantsfarm.com or call (314) 843-1700. The kids will probably want a pet Clydesdale by the time you leave. Tell them you'll buy them one when they're old enough to drive.

Kirkwood

♥ The Magic House

Don't miss this children's museum full of hands-on exhibits for kids of all ages, including an electrostatically charged machine that makes kids' hair stand on end, a three-story sliding board, a special "babies-only" area for children under 2 and a variety of other interactive displays. We went to the Magic House during a St. Louis vacation when I was a kid, and I thought it was the neatest thing I'd ever seen. Nearly 20 years later, I still think it's pretty neat ... and it just gets better and better as they add exhibits. Located at 516 S. Kirkwood Road, which is part of an early alignment of Route 66. Admission is \$6.50 for everybody over 2; children under 2 get in free. Parking is free. During the school year, hours are noon to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; noon to 9 p.m. Friday; 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday during the school year. Summer hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday; 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday. For more information, visit www.magichouse.com or call (314) 822-8900.

Eureka

♥ Six Flags

One of the best-known amusement parks in the country, Six Flags offers a variety of roller coasters, a giant Ferris wheel, shows, music and entertainment. Located on 66 at I-44 and Allenton Road. (Special note: When driving through this area, please exercise caution; this is an unavoidable section of interstate that has seen more than its share of serious accidents, largely because the turnoff to Six Flags is a two-lane exit ramp that creates confusion among out-of-state drivers. Drive sensibly and be prepared to stop quickly.) Tickets are \$41.99 for adults, \$25.99 for kids (48 inches tall or less), \$25.99 for senior citizens, and kids under 3 get in free. Season passes also available. Hours vary. For more information, visit www.sixflags.com or call (636) 938-4800.

Gray Summit

\$ Purina Farms

Located at 200 Checkerboard Drive, about a mile from an old alignment of Route 66, Purina Farms offers a barn and play area where kids can learn about farm animals and a pet center where they can see dogs and cats and enjoy hands-on exhibits that teach them about pets and their care. Obedience demonstrations also offered. (Dog obedience, that is — they won't loan you a muzzle to keep your road-weary 2-year-old from biting his sister.) To get there from Missouri 100 (an early alignment of 66), turn right on Highway MM and go about one mile. The entrance to the farm will be on your left. Free admission. Reservations required except during special open house days; for more information, call (888) 688-PETS.

Union

♥ \$ Indian Harvest

Small trading post located in a wooden tepee on Route 66. (Fake tepees are going to be a major theme on this trip, so pay attention.) Indian Harvest offers a wide assortment of jewelry, moccasins and other Native American souvenirs; for a real treat, sample some buffalo sausage. Open 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 8:30 a.m. to sunset Friday; and sundown to 10 p.m. Saturday. Located at 1245 N. Service Road (Route 66). For more information, call (636) 629-2074.

Stanton

Meramec Caverns

Located about three miles off 66, this enormous cave, immortalized in signs painted on the sides of barns across the country, is a prime example of the marriage of natural beauty and entrepreneurial spirit that make Route 66 the world's greatest road trip. The cave, which is filled with fascinating rock formations illuminated by colored lights, naturally maintains a constant temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit (advertised on billboards as "60 Degrees WARM" or "60 Degrees COOL," depending on the season). A little expensive — admission is \$14 for adults and children 12 and up and \$7 for kids ages 5 to 11 — but worth the cost. This is one of the great classic roadside attractions. Hours vary by season. Open every day except Thanksgiving and Christmas. For more information, visit www.americascave.com or call (800) 676-6105. Note: Kids under 4 get in free, but no strollers are allowed on the tour, which lasts about an hour.

Riverside Reptile Ranch

Located on the road to Meramec Caverns, the Riverside Reptile Ranch is home to live alligators, snakes, iguanas and similar critters. Open daily from 10 a.m. until dark. Admission is \$4.50 for adults and \$3.50 for kids. For more information, call (573) 927-6253.

♥ Antique Toy Museum

Home to an assortment of antique and collectible toys. The appeal of a toy museum to children should be obvious, but this one is also fun for adults, who can wander down

Memory Lane as they look over the exhibits and rediscover old friends from the days of Chatty Cathy and Betsy Wetsy. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day; closed in the winter. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$2 for kids and \$4 for seniors. Located on Route 66 near the turnoff to Meramec Caverns. For more information, call (573) 927-5555.

♥ **Jesse James Museum**

Dedicated to the proprietor's firm belief that Jesse James did not die of a gunshot wound in 1882 but instead died of old age in 1952 in the small town of Granbury, Texas. Exhibits include photographs, a six-shooter and wax figures. Strange but oddly fascinating. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is \$5 for adults and children 12 and up and \$2.50 for children ages 5 to 11. Located on Route 66 near the turnoff to Meramec Caverns. For more information, call (573) 927-5233.

Cuba

♥ **Wagon Wheel Motel**

Classic motel. Attractive stone buildings and interesting neon sign. Clean and inexpensive (\$16 to \$18 a night.) Located at 901 E. Washington (Route 66.) For more information, call (573) 885-3411.

Rolla

♥ **\$ Route 66 Motors**

Purveyor of classic cars, old tin signs, antiques and a huge assortment of Route 66 souvenirs. We never fail to stop for a bottle of root beer from the old soda machine in the store. Located on the north side of Route 66 just east of Rolla. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. For more information, call (573) 265-5200.

♥ **\$ Totem Pole Trading Post**

One part antique store, one part souvenir shop, one part convenience store, the Totem Pole is a classic. Pick up some Ozark candy, salt-cured bacon or a root beer while you fill up the gas tank. Clean restrooms. Located at 1413 Martin Springs Drive (Route 66) off I-44 on the west side of Rolla. Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week, with longer hours during the summer. Closed major holidays. For more information, call (573) 364-3519. (NOTE: Parental supervision is recommended, as the gift shop has a few risqué gag gifts and some fragile items within children's reach. If you're concerned about either issue, veer to your right as soon as you get inside; the restrooms, candy and convenience-store-type items are to the right of the cash register, while the gift shop is located to the left.)

Lebanon

Barrels of Fun

Tour the world's largest barrel factory. Barrels of Fun is also home to the famous "WALNUT BOWLS" advertised in enormous letters on I-44 billboards across Missouri.

The factory makes wooden wine barrels; tours are offered every half-hour from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 12:05 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. daily during the summer. No tours are given during inclement weather, because much of the work is done outdoors. Admission is \$2 for adults and children 13 and up; kids 12 and under get in free. The factory is located at 1100 S. Jefferson. For more information, visit <http://www.barrelsoffunstore.com> or call (800) 532-0733.

Springfield

\$ Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World

Little campers, hunters and fishermen will love shopping at this outdoorsman's superstore. Located at 1935 S. Campbell, this outdoor-themed department store offers hunting, fishing, camping and boating equipment as well as special exhibits such as a saltwater aquarium, fish and wildlife museum, wildlife art gallery and more. Open 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday. Closed Christmas Day. For more information, visit www.basspro.com or call (417) 887-7334.

Carthage

\$ Red Oak II

Located a little north of 66 just outside Carthage, Red Oak II is a replica of the town of Red Oak, Texas. In addition to vintage buildings including houses, a gas station and a church, Red Oak II features interesting sculptures made of tractor parts. Definitely worth a side trip. To get there, turn north on County Road 130 (next to the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses). Stay on CR 130 about two miles, then turn east on Kafir Road. Red Oak II will be on your right, about a mile down Kafir Road. Watch for the distinctive, beautifully crafted metal signs set up to help you find your way. Similar signs designed by the same artist can be seen in front of businesses and attractions throughout Carthage.

♥ Route 66 Drive-In

Restored drive-in movie theater on U.S. 66. Classic neon sign, great chrome and glass brick ticket booth. Located at 17231 Old 66 Blvd. Open on summer weekends. For ticket prices and showtimes, call (417) 359-5959.

\$ Precious Moments Chapel

Artist Samuel J. Butcher, best known as the creator of the popular Precious Moments figurines, built the Precious Moments Chapel "as a gift of thanks to the Lord for all of his blessings," according to the company Web site, www.preciousmoments.com. The chapel features stained-glass windows, elaborate chandeliers and enormous murals depicting Precious Moments characters acting out scenes from the Bible. Admission to the chapel itself is free, but other attractions on the grounds require an entry fee. Hours vary by season. To get there, take highway 71 north to highway HH, then take HH to Chapel Road. For more information, visit the Web site or call (800) 543-7975.

Joplin

♥ 📍 **Route 66 Carousel Park**

Located at 3834 W. 7th Street (Route 66), the park features a Ferris wheel, vintage carousel, bumper cars, tilt-a-whirl, go-kart track, 66-themed mini-golf course, batting cages, arcade and more. Hours vary. For more information, call (866) 375-4FUN.

♥ 📍 **Museum Complex**

Includes the Everett J. Ritchie Tri-State Mineral Museum, which illustrates mining processes and methods from the 1870s to the 1960s (Joplin is in a major lead mining area), Empire District Electric Company Museum, Joplin Sports Authority Sports Hall of Fame, National Historic Cookie Cutter Museum and the Dorothea B. Hoover Historical Museum, which features a circus room, child's playhouse, 1927 fire engine, doll collection and more. The museums are open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday. Admission is \$2 per adult or \$5 per family except on Tuesday, when the admission fee is waived. Located in Schifferdecker Park on 7th Street (Route 66). The park also includes a pool, playgrounds and a golf course. For more information, visit www.joplinmuseum.org or call (417) 623-1180.

Kansas

Galena

♥ 💰 **Howard Litch Historical and Mining Museum**

Museum located in a historic train depot on Route 66 features mineral and fossil specimens. A train engine is parked next to the building, and a military tank is located nearby. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday; closed Sunday. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. Located at 319 W. 7th St. (Route 66). For more information, call (620) 783-2192.

Riverton

♥ **Eisler Bros. General Store**

General store selling everything from Route 66 souvenirs to garden seeds. Deli in the back sells excellent, inexpensive sandwiches; available beverages include root beer, Yoo-Hoo and small bottles of Coke. Large, clean restroom. Open 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday and noon to 7 p.m. Sunday. Located at 7109 SE Highway 66 in Riverton. For more information, call (620) 848-3330.

💰 **Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum**

Museum dedicated to Baxter Springs' history, with exhibits on mining, the Civil War, Native Americans, a log cabin, a farmhouse, farming tools, a replica fort, a replica

downtown boardwalk and many other offerings. Walking tours available. Located at 740 East Ave. in Baxter Springs. Open 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday in winter; summer hours are 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free; donations appreciated. For more information, visit <http://home.4state.com/~heritagectr/> or call (620) 856-2385.
Oklahoma

Miami

♥ The Coleman Theatre Beautiful

Located right on 66 in downtown Miami, this beautifully restored 1929 theater was once on the vaudeville circuit, playing host to such stars as Will Rogers, Tom Mix and fan dancer Sally Rand. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to noon Saturday. Closed Sunday and Monday. Tours are free. For more information, visit www.colemantheatre.org or call (918) 540-2425.

Afton

♥ \$ Afton Station/Route 66 Packards

This historic D-X gas station, which is undergoing renovations to restore it to its original glory, is owned by David and Laurel Kane. David's vintage Packard collection is located in the garage; Laurel, an avid postcard collector and Route 66 enthusiast, keeps some of her postcards and other "treasures" in the main station. Clean restrooms. Friendly owners, willing to answer questions. Hours vary; call (918) 382-9465 to arrange a tour. Visit www.postcardsfromtheroad.net/afton.shtml for more information.

Darryl Starbird's National Rod & Custom Car Hall of Fame Museum

If you've got a youngster who collects Hot Wheels cars, this is definitely worth a stop. Custom car builder and designer Darryl Starbird's lakefront museum is dedicated to the preservation and display of classic hot rods and custom cars. It features more than 40 custom-built vehicles, along with photographs and other memorabilia. Located at the intersection of highways 85a and 125, a few miles from 66. Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday from March to October. Open by appointment at other times. Admission is \$6 for adults and children 13 and up and \$3 for children ages 8 to 12. Group rates available. For more information, visit www.darrylstarbird.com or call (918) 257-4234 or (918) 257-8073.

Grove

\$ Har-Ber Village

One of the biggest antique museums in the country, Har-Ber Village is a reconstructed late 1800s-early 1900s village. Located at 4404 W. 20th St. near Grand Lake O' the Cherokees. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, with extended hours in the summer. Admission to Har-Ber Village is \$3.50 for

adults and children 14 and up and 42.50 for seniors. Kids under 14 get in free. For more information, visit www.har-bervillage.com or call (918) 786-3488 or (918) 786-6446.

Foyil

\$ World's Largest Totem Pole

Located about four miles south of Route 66, the World's Largest Totem Pole and surrounding park are a must-stop. Kids can sit on the giant turtle's head at the base of the totem pole and have their picture taken. Free; donations appreciated. For more information, call (918) 342-9149.

♥ Top Hat Dairy Bar

Great food. Located at the intersection of Route 66 and Highway 28A at the east end of town, near the turnoff for the Totem Pole Park. Fun décor; good hamburgers. Open 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. daily. For more information, call (918) 341-0477.

Claremore

\$ Will Rogers Museum

Museum dedicated to the beloved Route 66 humorist features nine galleries, three theaters, interactive television and a special children's museum. Located at 1720 W. Will Rogers Boulevard. Open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day of the year. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. For more information, visit <http://www.willrogers.org> or call (800) 324-9455. (Outside the U.S., dial (918) 341-0719.)

♥\$ J.M. Davis Arms & Historical Museum

Located at 333 Lynn Riggs Boulevard (Route 66), this museum houses a diverse collection of items including firearms, Western artifacts, Native American artifacts, Civil War artifacts, animal trophies, music boxes, steins, political buttons, World War I posters and other objects. Open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, call (918) 341-5707 or visit www.state.ok.us/~jmdavis/index.html.

Catoosa

♥\$ Blue Whale

Giant blue concrete whale located in a pond next to the road on 66. Beautifully restored, the Blue Whale has been a local landmark since it was built in the 1970s as a water park for local children. Swimming is no longer allowed, but visitors can walk out to the whale's tail or climb up a ladder and look out the portholes near the top of his head. Recently restored restrooms are open during summer months. Close supervision is recommended, especially for small children and those who do not know how to swim.

\$ Arkansas River Historical Society Museum

Learn about the history of the Arkansas River as far back as 1541, when Spanish explorers first came to the region. Museum has a collection of Native American artifacts gathered near the river and a motorized model of a lock and dam. Open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Admission is free; donations appreciated. Located at 5350 Cimarron Road. For more information, visit www.tulsaweb.com/port/museum.htm or call (918) 266-2291.

Tulsa

Tulsa Air and Space Museum

The center features an F14 Tomcat plane, a space shuttle replica that undergoes a mock “launch,” a wind tunnel, computer flight simulators, rare airplanes and more. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday; and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday. Closed on New Year’s Day, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is \$4.50 for adults and children 13 and up, \$3.50 for senior citizens, and \$2.50 for children ages 6 to 12. Kids under 6 get in free. Located at 7130 E. Apache St. For more information, call (918) 834-9900 or visit www.tulsaairandspacemuseum.com.

♥ Metro Diner

Truly a classic, the Metro features a sleek exterior, festooned with chrome and glass brick; a cool neon sign with a clock mounted on top; and a fun 1950s-themed interior. Kids will love the chocolate malts and the retro décor. Mom and Dad will love the chicken fried steak. Breakfast is available all day. Open 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 7 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Located at 3001 E. 11th St. For more information, call (918) 592-2616.

♥\$ Lyon’s Indian Store

Located in a cool old Art Deco building at 401 E. 11th St. (Route 66), Lyon’s sells authentic Indian arts and crafts made by more than 30 Oklahoma tribes. Merchandise includes feather headdresses, beadwork, rugs, jewelry and jewelrymaking supplies as well as art prints, postcards and greeting cards. Great for Christmas shopping — let the kids look around a bit for inspiration, then buy inexpensive beads, wire and jewelry findings so they can make their own works of art to give to friends, relatives or a favorite teacher. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Closed Sunday. For more information, call (918) 582-6372.

Oklahoma Aquarium

Located on the banks of the Arkansas River in Jenks, just south of Tulsa. Fishing tackle museum, coral reef, extensive collections of saltwater and freshwater fish, Oklahoma aquatic life and a huge tank with clear tunnels underneath that let you walk among the sharks. Almost as cool as Chicago’s Shedd Aquarium, and much more affordable. Light jacket or sweater recommended, as the building is air-conditioned. From 66, take Riverside Drive south to 96th Street, turn right on 96th, then turn right at the stoplight on

9th Street. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; open until 9 p.m. on Tuesdays. Last admission is one hour before closing time. Admission is \$12.95 for adults, \$10.95 for seniors and military personnel and \$8.95 for kids ages 3 to 12. Kids under 3 get in free. Major credit cards accepted. For more information, visit www.okaquarium.org or call (918) 296-FISH.

Ida Dennie Willis Museum of Miniatures, Dolls, and Toys

This museum, located in a 1910 Tudor-style mansion at 628 N. Country Club Drive, is home to several collections of toys, including Native American, ethnic, and advertising dolls, miniature houses, a miniature Gypsy caravan and more. Open 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; closed Sunday through Tuesday. Admission is \$3.50 for adults, \$3 for seniors and children ages 12 to 17 and \$2.50 for kids 11 and under. For more information, visit www.tulsaweb.com/doll.htm or call (918) 584-6654.

Discoveryland

Outdoor entertainment venue shows the musical *Oklahoma!* or *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* on summer evenings. Entertainment includes pre-show pony rides and other activities for kids, a Native American dance show at 7 p.m., a Western musical revue at 7:30 p.m. and *Oklahoma!* or *Seven Brides* at 8 p.m. Admission is \$16.95 for adults and children 11 and up; senior citizens pay \$15.95, and kids 10 and under get in free. A ranch dinner is also available; price is \$9.95 for adults and children 11 and up and \$6.95 for kids 10 and under and includes dinner, beverage and gratuity. Located at 19501 W. 41st St., 10 miles west of Tulsa. From 66, turn right on 41st Street in Tulsa (this is the stoplight immediately east of Ollie's Station Restaurant,) go over the overpass and around the curve and proceed west about 10 miles. For more information, call (918) 245-OKLA or visit <http://www.discoverylandusa.com>.

♥ Ollie's Station Restaurant

Enjoy homestyle cooking including fried chicken, okra, mashed potatoes, gravy, salad and a host of other goodies, all while watching model trains pass overhead and listening to the whistles of real trains on the tracks just behind the building. Save room for dessert; Ollie's is known as much for its famous cinnamon rolls as it is for its railroad-themed décor. Located right on 66 at 4070 Southwest Blvd. For more information, visit www.olliesstation.com or call (918) 446-0524.

Stroud

♥ \$ Shoe Tree

On the south side of Route 66, at the eastern edge of Stroud, stands a tree that has been decorated with all sorts of shoes. Why? Who knows? Who cares? Let the kids bring along that pair of outgrown sneakers to add to the collection. They'll think it's hilarious, and a tale about hanging old shoes from a tree in the middle of Oklahoma is bound to spice up that "How I Spent My Summer" essay next fall.

♥ Rock Café

Ever tried a bison burger? How about fried dill pickles? When was the last time you had a truly excellent bowl of chili or a big glass of sweet tea at a mom-and-pop café? The Rock Café (no relation to the Hard Rock Café) offers all of the above ... plus a host of other wonderful, made-from-scratch delicacies. Named for the native stone used to construct the walls, the Rock Café is a longtime Route 66 institution and a local favorite. Kids will like the eclectic décor, which includes an outdoor goldfish pond, and the gift shop next door, which offers a variety of items, from Route 66 shirts and hats to handmade crafts. Bring along a marker so the kids can write their initials on the graffiti-covered wall of the small but clean restroom. Located at 114 W. Main St. Open 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday; closed on major holidays. For more information, visit <http://www.rockcaferoute66.com> or call (918) 968-3990.

Chandler

♥ \$ Restored Phillips 66 station

At the corner of 7th and Manvel stands a Route 66 survivor: a 1930s, cottage-style Phillips 66 station that owner Bill Fernau bought several years ago and decided to restore. Fernau, whose efforts earned him the National Historic Route 66 Federation's prestigious Cyrus Avery Award in 2002, has gone to great lengths to make sure his project is 100 percent authentic — no reproduction pumps or replica signs here. Stop and take a look around. If you're lucky enough to catch Fernau and his dog, Baxter, at the station, they'll be happy to give you the grand tour.

♥ \$ Museum of Pioneer History and Children's Historical Resource Center

Located at 717-721 Manvel, the museum features an extensive collection of items, from an old telephone switchboard to a stagecoach, post office, photographs and marionette theater. Behind the building, you'll find a 1910 brick privy with a mechanical commode that was very advanced for its time. Mighty, mighty. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. For more information, call (405) 258-2425.

Read Ranch

Real working ranch offers an Old West film town, petting zoo, wagon collection, playground, roping dummies, picnic area, hiking and more. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for kids under 12. Children under 3 get in free. Pony rides, trail rides and some other attractions also available; prices vary. Located three miles off 66 west of Chandler. Open by reservation only in the winter; summer hours vary. Call (405) 258-2999 or visit www.readranch.com for directions and other information.

Warwick

♥💰 Seaba Station

Former gas station and automobile repair shop now houses an antique shop. Friendly, enthusiastic owner is willing to answer questions from curious children (and curious parents). Some Route 66 souvenirs, soft drinks and snacks available. (Not recommended for very young or active children due to the number of fragile, valuable objects on the premises.) Located on Route 66, 1 mile east of highway 177, between Chandler and Wellston. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, visit <http://hometown.aol.com/sonnysu/myhomepage/business.html> or call (405) 258-6700.

Arcadia

♥💰 Round Barn

Restored barn dating from the 1800s. Friendly caretakers will answer questions and joke with customers. Good souvenir selection. Round walls and domed ceiling give the second floor a natural parabola effect; kids will enjoy finding spots on opposite sides of the room where they can hear each other whisper or standing in the middle of the room and singing to everyone in the building without the aid of a microphone. Located right on Route 66. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily Tuesday through Sunday. Closed Monday. Admission is free; donations appreciated. For more information, visit www.arcadiaroundbarn.org or call (405) 396-0824.

♥ Hillbillee's Café and Bed and Breakfast

Features inexpensive, comfortable Old West-themed rooms such as "Miss Kitty's," "The Duke's Cabin" and "Doc's Room," along with a barbecue restaurant, live music, hayrides, dances and even a wedding chapel. Located at 206 E. Highway 66, across the road from the Round Barn. For more information, call (405) 396-2982 or visit <http://home.att.net/~nleebraxton/index.htm>.

Edmond

💰 Edmond Historical Society & Museum

Shows local history through artifacts, photos and special hands-on exhibits for children ages 5 to 12. Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Closed Sunday and Monday. Admission is free; donations are appreciated. Located at 431 S. Boulevard St. For more information, call (405) 340-0078 or visit <http://edmondhistory.org>.

Oklahoma City

♥🤠 National Cowboy Hall Of Fame & Western Heritage Museum

Sure, Waylon Jennings told you not to let your babies grow up to be cowboys. But would it hurt to let them dream a little bit? Fuel their rootin'-tootin' fantasies with a trip to the

Cowboy Hall of Fame. Exhibits include paintings by such noted artists as Frederic Remington; the famous “End of the Trail” statue by James Earle Fraser; and the Children’s Cowboy Corral, where kids can try on boots and chaps, build a campfire and fix some “grub” at a real chuckwagon and more. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s. Admission is \$8.50 for adults, \$7 for senior citizens and \$4 for kids ages 6 to 12; kids under 6 get in free. Free parking. Some strollers available. Located at 1700 NE 63rd St. For more information, visit www.nationalcowboymuseum.org or call (405) 478-2250.

♥ Frontier City

Another Six Flags amusement park, this one has a Wild West theme and a slightly lower price tag than its St. Louis counterpart. Admission is \$27.99 for adults and \$17.99 for kids and senior citizens. Located on I-35 between NE 122nd St. and Hefner Road, on a stretch of interstate that doubles as Oklahoma State Highway 66. For more information, visit www.sixflags.com or call (405) 478-2412.

Firefighters Museum

You’ve watched ’em race around the house in those red plastic fire helmets they got at school during Fire Prevention Week. They’ve colored pictures of Smokey the Bear and lectured you on how you can prevent forest fires. Maybe they’ve even dragged you around the house to check all the smoke alarms or stopped in the middle of playtime to practice that stop, drop and roll thing. Why? Because kids love firefighters. Firefighters are cool. They’re heroes, just like Superman or the X-Men ... but unlike the Man of Steel or Wolverine, firefighters actually show up at school once in a while to shake hands with the kids and tell them how to stay safe. Way cool. Here’s a place where the kids can worship their heroes a little bit. Exhibits include historic fire engines, uniforms, a replica of an old firehouse and more. Located at 2716 NE 50th St. Open 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Friday. Admission is \$4 for adults and children under 13, \$2 for kids ages 6 to 12 and \$3 for seniors. Kids under 6 get in free. For more information, visit www.osfa.info/ or call (405) 424-3440.

Oklahoma City Museum Of Art

Exhibits range from a 1779 portrait of President George Washington to Andy Warhol’s famous Campbell’s Soup cans, with a little of everything in between. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Monday. Admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for children and senior citizens. Kids under 5 get in free. Strollers available. Located at 415 Couch Drive. For more information, visit www.okcartmuseum.com or call (800) 579-9ART.

Omniplex

“Omni” means “all” — a fitting name for this museum, which seems to have a little of everything: a collection of parlor cars and toy trains, an art gallery, gardens, a greenhouse, a planetarium, and more than 350 hands-on science exhibits (“Omniplex has a ‘please-touch’ policy,” its Web site states). Of special interest: FAMILYSPACE, a family-oriented area featuring brainteasers, jigsaw puzzles, number games and special exhibits for babies and preschoolers. Located at 2100 NE 52nd St. Admission to the

complex is \$12.50 for adults and \$10.50 for seniors and kids. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday. For more information about Omniplex, call (405) 602-OMNI or visit www.omniplex.org.

Yukon

♥\$ Yukon's Best Flour Sign

This is the pride and joy of Yukon, and if you drive down 66 at night, you won't have to wonder why. This enormous sign, affixed to the side of a grain elevator, spells out "YUKON'S BEST FLOUR" in flashing white lights that can be seen for miles. The flour mill no longer operates, but thanks to the good people of Yukon, its sign lives on. Take a look.

\$ Express Clydesdales

If you like horses, you'll love Express Clydesdales, a working stable occupied by a herd of black and white Clydesdales who live in a restored barn built in 1936. Located at 12701 W. Wilshire, three miles north of I-40, off Exit 136 (Garth Brooks Boulevard.) Open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, visit www.expressclydesdales.com or call (405) 350-6404.

Hydro

Graffiti Grill

With a graffiti wall where they can write their names, paper and crayons on the tables so they can draw and a garden with a goldfish pond in the back for them to look at, the kids are bound to enjoy a trip to the Graffiti Grill. The menu includes such munchkin-friendly fare as pizza, burgers and shakes. Located about one mile north of Route 66 at 206 W. Main St. Open 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Closed Monday. For more information, call (405) 663-4242.

♥\$ Lucille's

On the north side of Route 66, between Hydro and Weatherford, is a two-story building with living quarters upstairs, a gas station downstairs and ivy growing all over the front. Until she passed away in 2000, Lucille Hamons — known to Route 66 enthusiasts as the "Mother of the Mother Road" — sold beer and souvenirs and regaled travelers with stories about her 50-plus years on America's Main Street. Lucille's heirs placed a picnic table under the canopy at her station so travelers can stop for a picnic lunch. A cross on the other side of 66 honors Lucille's memory, as do a set of Burma-Shave-style signs next to the driveway. Stop for a picnic. While you're here, think about Lucille, and think about why you brought the kids on this trip. The road is populated with Lucilles — hard-working mom-and-pop business owners who have been on 66 since they were young and will stay on 66 until they die, sharing their stories with the travelers who take the time to get off the interstate and listen to living history while they have the chance. These folks are a connection to another time, and they won't be around forever. Thank God you're giving your kids a chance to meet them and learn their stories before that link to the past

is lost forever. Leave Lucille a present if you like — a flower, a thank-you note from the kids, a small souvenir from your trip. I always do. Once or twice, I had the funny feeling she could see me, even if I couldn't see her.

Weatherford

♥ Gen. Thomas P. Stafford Airport Museum

Gen. Stafford was a Weatherford native who grew up to become an astronaut. This museum, named in his honor, features spacesuits, aircraft, a space shuttle tire, a replica of a rocket, a rocket booster engine, space mission videos and more. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Located at 3000 Logan Road, Building 2. Admission is \$5 for adults 19 and over; kids get in free. For more information, visit www.staffordairandspacemuseum.com or call the airport at (580) 772-5871.

Clinton

♥\$ McLain Rogers Park

If the kids are ready to blow off some steam, McLain Rogers Park on 10th Street (a historic alignment of Route 66) is a great place to do it. Besides an absolutely gorgeous Art Deco-style neon sign marking the entrance, the park features new playground equipment, picnic areas and a Route 66-themed miniature golf course. Worth a stop.

♥ Oklahoma Route 66 Museum

Great selection of Route 66 memorabilia, self-guided tour narrated by renowned Route 66 author Michael Wallis. Restored Valentine Diner on the premises was the recipient of the 2004 Cyrus Avery Award. Nice gift shop. One of the best museums on the road. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, with extended hours during the summer. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$2.50 for seniors and \$1 for kids ages 6 to 18. Children 5 and under get in free. Located at 2229 Gary Freeway (Route 66). For more information, visit www.route66.org or call (580) 323-7866.

Elk City

♥ National Route 66 Museum, Old Town and Farm and Ranch Museum

Museum complex includes a Route 66 museum featuring murals and artifacts that tell the story of Route 66; a replica of an Old West town; a museum displaying historic farm tools and implements; and what is quite possible the world's largest neon Route 66 shield. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Closed on some holidays. Admission to the whole complex is \$5 for adults or \$4 for students; admission to the Route 66 museum only is \$3. Discounts are available for senior citizens, families and large groups. Located at 2717 W. 3rd St. (Route 66). For more information, call (580) 225-6266.

Erick

\$ Sandhills Curiosity Shop

Proprietors Harley and Annabelle Russell, who refer to themselves as the “Mediocre Music Makers,” are accomplished singers, guitar players and natural clowns who will put on a free (and hilarious) show for anyone who cares to stop by. Most items in the shop are not for sale, although a few items — primarily Annabelle’s artwork and small musical instruments including mouth harps and harmonicas — are available for purchase, and Harley and Annabelle occasionally can be persuaded to open up their “Redneck Junk Shop” across the street, where visitors can shop for antiques. Open during summer months only. Free, but tips are appreciated. Located about a block south of Route 66 in the old City Meat Market. For more information, call (580) 526-3738.

Texola

\$ Texola Jail

A one-room, block building that once served as the city’s jail. No heat, no air conditioning, no glass covering the windows. Rumor has it that crime in Texola dropped significantly during the winter. Not that there’s anybody left in Texola to commit any crimes now, anyway ... this is one of several veritable ghost towns you’ll find along 66, victims of “progress” as the interstates bypassed 66, taking travelers — and their money — away from the towns that depended on their business. Located about a block off 66; great for photo ops. (Not bad for keeping unruly children in line, either: Imagine how quiet they’ll get when you say, “If you two don’t stop it back there, you’ll both be seeing the inside of the Texola Jail!” as you pull up in front of this eerie little building....)

Across Oklahoma

\$ For free Oklahoma travel guides and maps,

visit www.travelok.com.

Texas

Shamrock

♥\$ U-Drop Inn

Sometimes referred to as the “Tower Station,” the U-Drop Inn is one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture on Route 66. The glazed tile building, originally designed as a gas station and café, features two tall towers that once lured travelers off 66 and into the station to buy a tank of gas or a meal. The former Conoco station recently underwent a major restoration. Located at the intersection of Route 66 and U.S. 83 in Shamrock. For more information, visit www.shamrocktx.net/udropinn.html or call the Chamber of Commerce at (806) 256-2501.

McLean

♥\$ Devil's Rope Museum

Dedicated to the history of barbed wire — also known as “devil’s rope” — this museum features a massive collection of barbed wire and branding irons, along with a small Route 66 museum and a gift shop full of interesting items. (We purchased a boot-shaped wooden plaque covered with samples of various types of barbed wire, each identified by year and type, during a visit to the museum.) Located at 100 Kingsley Street, right between the eastbound and westbound alignments of 66 in McLean. Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday during the summer. Winter hours vary. Admission is free; donations are appreciated. For more information, visit www.barbwiremuseum.com or call (806) 779-2225.

♥\$ Restored Phillips 66 Station

Vintage gas station located on westbound 66 in McLean. Usually closed, but the exterior has been restored beautifully; gas pumps and a classic gas truck sit out front. Frequently photographed; stop and take a look.

Alanreed

♥\$ Super “66” Service Station

Restored Texaco station located on an older alignment of 66 in what used to be downtown Alanreed. Notice the old advertisement painted on the wall of the building next door and the historic gas pumps in front of the station.

Amarillo

Big Texan Steak Ranch

Formerly on 66, the Big Texan relocated when I-40 opened. Now located on I-40, the Big Texan offers a free 72-oz. steak dinner to anyone who can eat it all in an hour. (Be forewarned: Four and a half pounds is a lot of meat, and you also have to polish off a salad, shrimp cocktail, baked potato and roll; if your eyes are bigger than your stomach, the meal will set you back 50 clams.) The Big Texan complex includes a gift shop, special performances by the Big Texan Opry and a motel with a Texas-shaped swimming pool. To get there, take the Lakeside exit from the north frontage road. Open 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily. For more information, visit www.bigtexan.com or call (800) 657-7177.

\$ Cadillac Ranch

Not technically on 66, but often associated with it, the Cadillac Ranch — immortalized in the Bruce Springsteen song of the same name — is the work of local rancher Stanley Marsh III, who commissioned a group of artists known as the Ant Farm to bury 10 old Cadillacs nose-down in a cow pasture at the edge of town. What does it mean? Why is it there? Visitors can ponder the mysteries of the Cadillac Ranch or just bring along spray paint to leave their initials on the exhibit during daylight hours. To get there, take the

Arnot Road exit from I-40 and follow the south frontage road east until you see a lot of cars with out-of-state license plates parked along the side of the road. To learn more about this attraction, visit: www.libertysoftware.be/cml/cadillacranch/ranch/crabtr.htm.

American Quarter Horse Association Heritage Center and Museum

If your daughter is like most little girls, she probably wants a pony. If you're like most parents, you've probably given her a thousand reasons why she can't have one. Since you're too cheap to buy her a pony, the least you can do is take her to this museum full of interactive exhibits about horses, including a mock cattle drive and lessons from "Fella" and "Missy" about a day in the life of a quarter horse. Located at 2601 I-40 East (watch for the interstate exit sign). Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday during the summer. At \$4 for adults, \$2.50 for kids ages 6 to 18 and \$3.50 for seniors, admission is much less than monthly boarding fees at your local stable. Kids under 6 get in free. To learn more, visit www.aqha.com/foundation/museum/index.html or call (806) 376-5181.

Palo Duro Canyon

Actually located in Canyon, Texas, south of Amarillo, Palo Duro Canyon is a state park offering beautiful scenery, camping, bike trails, horseback riding, picnic areas and more. The canyon was formed by water erosion from the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River. Some cabins available for camping; rates vary. Admission: \$3 for adults and children 13 and up; kids 12 and under get in free. For more information, visit www.palodurocanyon.com or call (806) 488-2227.

Vega

♥\$ Dot's Mini-Museum

Run by longtime Vega resident Dot Leavitt, who has lived and worked on Route 66 since 1941, Dot's Mini-Museum features an assortment of items depicting the history of Route 66 and the meat locker owned by Dot's family, as well as various other odds and ends from Dot's extensive collection of Route 66 and Western memorabilia. Located at 105 N. 12th St., an alignment of Route 66. Free admission. Visit oldhamcofc.org/museums/html for more information.

Adrian

♥ Midpoint Café

The Midpoint gets its name from the fact that it is halfway between Chicago and L.A. on 66, but that's not its only claim to fame. Roadies from around the world come to the Midpoint to eat its famous "ugly crust" pie, widely regarded as the best on the road. I haven't eaten pie at all the restaurants on the Mother Road (though I'm working diligently toward that goal), but I've eaten a lot, and the Midpoint's is the best I've had. Open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday. Open later with prior arrangements. For more information, visit midpoint66.com or call (806) 538-6379.

New Mexico

Tucumcari

Mesalands Community College dinosaur museum

What kid doesn't love dinosaurs? Mesalands has plenty of them: Life-sized models, replicas of dinosaur skeletons, and lots of interactive exhibits to teach kids about prehistoric creatures. Excellent gift shop offers everything from make-your-own fossil kits to stuffed dinosaur toys. Lots of fun. Located just off 66 at 222 E. Laughlin Ave. Open 12 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday. Extended hours offered during the summer. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is \$5.50 for adults and children 12 and up, \$4.50 for senior citizens, \$3.50 for teachers and \$3 for children ages 5 to 11. Kids under 5 get in free. For more information, visit www.mesalands.edu/museum/museum.htm or call (505) 461-3466.

♥\$ Tucumcari Tonite!

The town's famous slogan for more than 50 years comes from the plethora of motel rooms available for travelers; the town advertised its presence with billboards along 66 that proclaimed, "Tucumcari Tonite!" and listed the mileage to Tucumcari, sometimes accompanied by the number of motel rooms available. Old Route 66, locally known as Tucumcari Boulevard, is a visual delight after dark, when the town's wide array of vintage mom-and-pop motels turn on their spectacular neon signs. Take a neon-lit cruise down 66 through Tucumcari. You won't be disappointed.

♥ Blue Swallow Motel

Generally recognized as the crown jewel of Tucumcari, this immaculate pink stucco motel, which dates to 1939 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a must-stop on your Route 66 trip. Located at 815 E. Tucumcari Boulevard. Visit www.blueswallowmotel.com or call (505) 461-9849 to make reservations.

♥ Tee Pee Curios

Located in a building shaped like a tepee, with a beautiful, recently restored neon sign out front, Tee Pee Curios offers a great assortment of knickknacks, jewelry, incense, posters, magnets, Native American souvenirs and other fascinating trinkets, including inexpensive ocarina flutes the kids can use to damage your hearing all the way to Santa Monica. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily during the summer. Winter hours vary. Located at 924 E. Tucumcari Boulevard (Route 66), within sight of the Blue Swallow. For more information, call (505) 461-3773.

Santa Fe

Santa Fe Children's Museum

Features all manner of hands-on exhibits on every imaginable topic from magnets to looms to animals. Also features a garden, a "make and take" program that allows kids to create their own artwork from recycled materials, a climbing wall and a special area

designed just for toddlers. Located at 1050 Old Pecos Trail. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$4. For more information, visit www.santafechildrensmuseum.org or call (505) 989-8359.

♥\$ Downtown Santa Fe

Take a walk around historic downtown Santa Fe, where vendors sell their wares and artists demonstrate their talents against a backdrop of beautiful, historic adobe buildings. This is a great way for the kids to stretch their legs while you take in the beauty of New Mexico's capital city.

Museum of New Mexico

Actually a collection of four museums: Palace of the Governors, Museum of International Folk Art, Museum of Fine Arts and Museum of Indian Arts and Culture. All four museums are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Admission is \$7 for adults and children 16 and over (one museum for one day) or \$15 (all four museums for four days). The Palace of the Governors and the Museum of Fine Arts also offer free tours from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. every Friday. Visit museumofnewmexico.org for more information.

Palace of the Governors, located at 10 SW Palace Ave. on the Plaza, features exhibits on ancient art, Santa Fe and New Mexico history, a collection of paintings on bison hides and more. For more information, call (505) 476-5100.

Museum of International Folk Art, located on Camino Lejo, off Old Santa Fe Trail, features traditional folk art including dolls, puppets, masks, textiles, ceramics and more, plus interactive exhibits on music, drama, dance and storytelling from more than 100 countries. For more information, call (505) 476-1200.

Museum of Fine Arts, located at 107 W. Palace Ave., just off the Plaza, includes a wide assortment of art from various eras, with a special emphasis on artists from the Southwest. For more information, call (505) 476-5072.

Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, located on Camino Lejo, off Old Santa Fe Trail, tells the history of the American Southwest through poetry, song, dance, artifacts and exhibits. For more information, call (505) 476-1250.

Edgewood

♥ Wildlife West Nature Park

Educational park full of native animal and plant life, including coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, elk and other critters that for one reason or another couldn't be returned to the wild. Features two miles of nature trails and special presentations that let kids interact with the animals. Animal habitats are constructed of up to 60 percent recycled materials. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$4 for students, seniors and

kids. Children under 5 get in free. Located on the north frontage road about three-fourths of a mile west of I-40 exit 187. For more information, visit www.wildlifewest.org or call (505) 281-7655 or (877) 981-9453.

Albuquerque

♥\$ Central Avenue

Historic Route 66 through Albuquerque — also known as Central Avenue — is home to literally dozens of restored neon signs. A nighttime cruise costs you nothing except a little gas. Of special interest: Garcia's restaurant, with a flashing bullseye at the top of its sign; the Dog House, which features an animated neon dachshund that wags its tail while eating a string of sausages; and the historic El Vado Motel, advertised by a proud neon Indian chief. The Nob Hill area is especially nice. Albuquerque is a virtual art gallery for neon work. Don't miss it!

♥ Albuquerque Biological Park

The Albuquerque Biological Park includes three parts: The Albuquerque Aquarium, Rio Grande Botanic Garden and Rio Grande Zoo. Admission to either the zoo or the aquarium and garden is \$7 for adults and \$3 for seniors and kids ages 3 to 12; kids under 3 get in free. Admission to all three attractions is \$10 for adults and \$5 for seniors and kids. The aquarium, garden and zoo are open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Sunday, with extended hours on summer weekends. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Strollers, lockers and kennels are available for rental at the aquarium and garden. Parking is free. Special zoo exhibits include a show featuring birds and endangered animals and two daily seal and sea lion feeding times. The aquarium and botanic garden are located at 2601 Central Ave. NW. The zoo is located at 903 N. 10th St. NW. For more information, visit www.cabq.gov/biopark/ or call (505) 764-6200.

National Atomic Museum

This museum, which focuses on nuclear science, includes exhibits on everything from Marie Curie to the Manhattan Project to "Waging Peace," a special exhibit about arms control. Kids will enjoy "ZOOMzone," an interactive program based on the PBS television show "ZOOM." Located at 1905 Mountain Road NW. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; closed New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$4 for seniors and kids ages 6 to 17. Kids under 6 get in free. For more information, visit www.atomicmuseum.com or call (505) 245-2137.

American International Rattlesnake Museum

Yeah, snakes look creepy ... but they play an important role in our planet's ecology. Just ask anybody at the American International Rattlesnake Museum, which houses the world's largest collection of different species of live rattlesnakes, along with a wide assortment of snake memorabilia. Located just a block from 66 at 202 San Felipe NW, Suite A, the museum has a conservationist bent as it seeks to show how rattlesnakes and other "less desirable" creatures influence humans' lives. Open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday; closed on major holidays.

Admission is \$3.50 for adults, \$2.50 for kids and \$3 for seniors, military personnel and students. For more information, visit www.rattlesnakes.com or call (505) 242-6569.

Sandia Peak Tramway

Scared of heights? You might want to pass on this one. Ride an aerial tram to the top of the 10,378-foot Sandia Peak for spectacular views. Located at 10 Tramway Loop NE. Tram rides are available 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday through Monday and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday during the winter and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day). Round-trip tram rides are \$15 for adults, \$10 for kids and \$12 for seniors. The tram closes for two-week periods during the spring and fall for routine maintenance and cleaning, so visit www.sandiapeak.com or call (505) 856-7325 before you plan your trip to make sure this attraction is running.

♥ 66 Diner

Route 66-themed diner located at 1405 Central Ave. NE (Route 66) offers chicken fried steak, green chile hamburgers, chocolate malts and other diner fare. Don't miss the historic jukebox. Great food, lots of fun. Open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to midnight Friday, 8 a.m. to midnight Saturday and 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday. For more information, visit www.66diner.com or call (505) 247-1421. Major credit cards accepted.

♥ \$ Giant Lumberjack

Another of those ubiquitous fiberglass giants you've been tracking down along Route 66. This goofy-looking specimen is located on top of the May Café, a Vietnamese restaurant near the intersection of Central Avenue (Route 66) and Louisiana Boulevard SE, behind a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant. Add his photograph to your collection.

Pueblo of Acoma

Acoma Sky City

The oldest continuously inhabited city in the United States, Acoma Sky City is located atop a sandstone mesa about 14 miles south of Route 66 between Albuquerque and Cubero. The city is home to San Esteban del Rey Mission, a Spanish mission built in 1629. Guided tours are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; the last tour departs at 4 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults and \$6 for kids ages 6 to 17. To get there, follow the signs from I-40 exit 102 south about 14 miles to the visitors' center. For more information, call (505) 552-6604.

Grants

♥ New Mexico Mining Museum

Walk through a mock mine to learn about the industry that put Grants on the map. The underground fun begins at 100 N. Iron Ave. Open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Closed Sunday. Admission is \$3 for adults and \$2 for senior citizens and

children ages 7 to 18. Kids under 7 get in free. For more information, visit www.grants.org/mining/mining.htm or call (800) 748-2142.

Gallup

♥ El Rancho Hotel

Billed as the “home of the stars,” this grand old hotel was a favorite hangout of Hollywood types who came to the area to film Westerns; rooms are named after the stars who stayed in them. Reasonable prices; beautiful old hotel. Located at 1000 E. Highway 66. For more information or to make reservations, visit www.elranchohotel.com or call (800) 543-6351 or (505) 863-9311.

♥ \$ Sightseeing

The El Rancho is one of many Gallup businesses graced by a vintage neon sign. Check in, then grab the camera, hop in the car and head out on 66 through town to see some more classic neon after dark. Also, don't miss getting a daytime shot of the giant cowboy mounted on top of John's Used Autos, just a block south of 66 on Fifth Street.

♥ Red Rock State Park

Archaeological digs at Red Rock have unearthed evidence of Anasazi people, a farming culture present in the area from 300 to 1200 A.D. Beautiful scenery, with striking red cliffs around the park. Offers camping and a museum. (The museum is located at 300 W. Historic 66 Ave.) For more information, call (505) 722-3839.

Arizona

Lupton

♥ Chief Yellowhorse's Trading Post

Located on 66, this historic Native American souvenir shop is one of the most kid-friendly attractions on the old road. The building is constructed on the New Mexico-Arizona state line, which is painted on the floor; kids can stand in two states at once for a great photo op. Live buffalo wander around in pens behind the trading post, and there's a petting zoo out back where kids can get up close and personal with ponies and other critters. During one visit, we were greeted by a burro who was wandering around the parking lot. If you're going to buy baja jackets, falsa blankets, dreamcatchers or Southwestern jewelry, you'll find good prices and a great selection here. The horsehair pottery is beautiful, too. What especially impressed me, though, was the kindness of the clerk on duty, who invited our rat terrier inside to shop with us so she wouldn't get too hot in the car. Plenty of folks wouldn't want a fidgety little dog pattering around their store, but here, Scout was treated like a little person in a fur coat. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday; closed Sunday. For more information, call (928) 688-2463.

Holbrook

♥ Petrified Forest National Park

National park through which 66 once passed. More than 20 miles of roads and walking paths wind through some of the country's most beautiful scenery, including the spectacular Painted Desert and the fascinating petrified forest — the fossilized remnants of prehistoric trees. Gift shop, restaurant, interpretive center available. Located on 66; to get there, take exit 311 from I-40, which swallowed 66 east of Holbrook. Park open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with extended hours during the summer. (Note: Arizona does not observe Daylight Savings Time.) Closed Christmas. Admission is \$10 per vehicle, good for 7 days. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/pefo. **(Special note about national parks:** A National Parks Pass, good for one year, is available for \$50 per vehicle. This gets you into any national park with an entry fee, including the Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest and others. If you're planning to visit other parks in the next year, this is an excellent buy. For more information about passes, visit www.nationalparks.org.)

♥ Wigwam Motel

“Have you slept in a wigwam lately?” the sign out front asks. Well ... have you? You might as well, especially considering the fact that these particular wigwams have all the modern conveniences: solid walls, doors that lock, heat and air conditioning, restroom, shower, nice soft beds, cable TV ... c'mon, Dad! Pleeeeeeease, can't we stay in the funny tepees? We promise to quit kicking the back of your seat. Please? Huh? Huh? Can we? At the Wigwam Motel, each guest room is actually a concrete tepee that looks small from the outside but has plenty of room inside. Located at 811 W. Hopi Drive (Route 66). For more information or to make reservations, visit www.galerie-kokopelli.com/wigwam or call (928) 524-3048.

Joseph City

♥ Jack Rabbit Trading Post

HERE IT IS: the most photographed billboard on Route 66. The Jack Rabbit advertises its presence with bright yellow billboards along 66 and I-40 emblazoned with a black silhouette of a jack rabbit and the mileage to the trading post. Upon reaching the business, visitors are greeted by a final billboard that proclaims, in large red letters, “HERE IT IS.” Besides its famous billboard, the trading post is known for its giant fiberglass jack rabbit wearing a saddle, which visitors can sit on for photo ops. Store offers a huge assortment of Route 66, Arizona and jack rabbit-themed souvenirs as well as snacks and gasoline. Open 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. daily during the summer; winter hours are 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Sunday. For more information, visit www.jackrabbit-tradingpost.com or call (928) 288-3230.

Winslow

♥\$ Standin' on a Corner...

You know the rest. Winslow has used its musical claim to fame as the inspiration for a small park on Route 66. Anyone who cares to stand on a corner in Winslow, Arizona can do so at the Standin' on a Corner Park, a brick-paved corner lot on eastbound Route 66 featuring a bronze statue of a guy with a guitar case at his feet and a mural painted on a nearby wall, depicting a large window in which we see the reflection of a girl (my Lord!) in a flatbed Ford slowing down to take a look at all the tourists who stop for this irresistible photo op. The only down side is that you end up humming "Take It Easy" all the way to Winona. But you'd probably do that anyway, right? Come on, baby....

Meteor City

♥\$ World's Longest Map of Route 66

Meteor City is a souvenir shop with four claims to fame: The building itself is a geodesic dome with a rainbow on top. There are tepees on the premises. And the property is home to both the World's Largest Dreamcatcher and the World's Longest Map of Route 66. The map was refurbished last year by Hampton Inns, through their Save-A-Landmark program. The souvenir selection is pretty good, and the map and dreamcatcher definitely make it worth a stop. Located on Route 66, 35 miles east of Flagstaff.

Meteor Crater

Huge crater formed 50,000 years ago by a meteor slamming into the ground, hence the name. Museum includes interactive exhibits. Gift shop, restaurant and RV park on the grounds. Located south of I-40 exit 233. Open daily 8 am. to 5 p.m. during the winter and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the summer, with guided rim tours available from 9:15 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. Closed on Christmas. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$6 for kids ages 6 to 17 and \$11 for seniors. For more information, visit www.meteorcrater.com or call (800) 289-5898.

Parks

♥\$ Route 66 walking trail

Route 66 passes through the Kaibab National Forest; the good folks at the Forest Service have set up a special walking trail through the woods on an old alignment of 66. Easy trail passes between stately pines; just lovely. Visit www.fs.fed.us/r3/kai/ for more information.

Williams

♥ Grand Canyon Deer Farm

Petting zoo and deer farm featuring four kinds of deer (including reindeer) that eat out of your hand; antelope; wallabies; llamas; a potbellied pig; chickens; turkeys; peacocks and

buffalo. Located on 66 at 6752 E. Deer Farm Road. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the winter, with extended summer hours. Admission is \$6.75 for adults, \$5.75 for seniors and \$3.95 for children ages 3 to 13. For more information, visit www.deerfarm.com or call (800) 926-DEER.

♥ **Grand Canyon Railway and Resort**

Take a vintage train from Williams to the Grand Canyon. Tour also includes a “wild West” shootout west of the depot. Train leaves Williams at 10 a.m. and returns to Williams at 5:45 p.m. daily. Closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Fare is \$60 to \$150 for adults and \$25 to \$85 for children, depending on the level of service purchased. For more information, visit www.thetrain.com or call (800) THE-TRAIN.

♥ **Twisters**

Williams is home to the last section of 66 to be decommissioned; its downtown is full of businesses that understand and appreciate their 66 heritage, including Twisters, a 1950s-style soda fountain at 417 E. Route. Open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily during the summer and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily during the winter. For more information about the restaurant, visit www.route66place.com/twisters.htm or call (928) 635-0266.

Grand Canyon

Grand Canyon National Park

Located about an hour north of Williams on U.S. 180, the Grand Canyon is one of those natural wonders everybody ought to see at least once. The drive up is nice, too, passing through wooded mountain areas. Admission is \$20 per vehicle. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/grca.

Seligman

♥ **Snow-Cap Drive-In and Angel's Barbershop**

A Route 66 institution, the Snow-Cap serves up “dead chicken” sandwiches, “cheeseburgers with cheese,” and plenty of good humor. Original owner Juan Delgadillo died last year, but his kids are carrying on his longstanding tradition of playing pranks on unsuspecting customers. The chiliburgers are fantastic. Outdoor seating allows pets to join in the fun; our rat terrier, Scout, learned quickly that a cute face and a few Letterman-worthy tricks can earn a dog a cheeseburger from a friendly stranger. Located right in the middle of town on Route 66; you can't miss it. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; closed Monday. For more information, call (928) 422-3291. Down the street, Juan's brother, Angel, (often referred to as the “Guardian Angel of Route 66” in recognition of his efforts to promote 66 as a tourist destination) operates a gift shop and mini-museum in his barbershop. Although Angel is retired, he occasionally can be persuaded to cut a traveler's hair, and he's always willing to stop and visit with tourists.

Peach Springs

♥📍Grand Canyon Caverns

Located on 66 about 22 miles west of Seligman, Grand Canyon Caverns is a natural limestone cave hidden 210 feet underground. A big, green Tyrannosaurus Rex statue greets you at the front entrance; surrounding businesses offer cookouts, camping, tours, river rafting and horseback riding. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily during the winter and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily during the summer. Closed Christmas. Admission is \$12.95 for adults and children 13 and up and \$9.95 for kids ages 4 to 12. For more information, visit www.gccaverns.com or call (928) 422-3223.

Hackberry

♥📍Hackberry General Store

Hackberry General Store is one of the best souvenir shops on the road, offering everything from Route 66 sundresses and camp shirts to Route 66 posters, fabrics, cards, gifts and postcard-sized packets of seeds from native flowers that can be mailed home to friends or planted in the garden to grow into lasting tributes to a great road trip. Check out the vintage signs and gas pumps in front of the store. Lots of fun. Located right on 66 in Hackberry.

Oatman

♥💰 Wild burros

The old gold mining town of Oatman is interesting for several reasons — great shopping on the boardwalk, a hotel rumored to be haunted, lots of “wild West” re-enactments — but its biggest claim to fame is its herd of four-legged inhabitants. Wild burros, the descendants of animals used to work in the nearby gold mine and released when their services were no longer needed, come down from the adjacent mountains every morning when the shops open up and spend their day wandering around 66, bumming food off friendly tourists. When the shops close for the day, the burros go back into the mountains for the evening. Just about every business in Oatman sells bunches of carrots visitors can feed to the burros, which will tolerate petting as long as you offer them treats. The drive up to Oatman on 66 is a bit harrowing, but it’s one of the most scenic stretches of the entire road, and drivers who exercise common sense generally find they have no problems. If you’re scared to tackle it, you can cheat and take I-40 west of Oatman, then double back from the next exit, but you miss some beautiful scenery and some fascinating history.

California

Goffs

♥ Goffs Schoolhouse Museum and Cultural Center

This 1914 schoolhouse that once served the families of Santa Fe Railroad employees working in the old railroad siding of Goffs was restored in 1998 through the efforts of the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association. Located about 30 miles west of Needles at the corner of Goffs Road (a pre-1931 alignment of Route 66) and Lanfair Road. Open by appointment. For more information, call (760) 733-4482.

Mojave Desert

♥\$ Rock graffiti

As you pass across the Mojave Desert, you'll notice a large berm on the north side of the road. It extends for miles and has been decorated with all sorts of graffiti made out of rocks. Before you back out of the driveway on your Route 66 adventure, scoop up a handful of gravel and bring it along so the kids can leave their own initials on the berm.

Amboy

Amboy Crater

Go hiking, backpacking or bird watching at Amboy crater, a 250-foot-high volcanic cinder cone. A footpath leads to the top of the cone; be sure to take sunscreen and plenty of water along, as the hike up and back can take two to three hours, and children (and grownups!) can wilt quickly in the desert heat. Located off 66 about two miles west of Amboy. Admission is free. To learn more, visit www.ca.blm.gov/needles/amboy.html or call (760) 326-7000.

Barstow

\$ Route 66 Mother Road Museum

This small but interesting museum features a variety of educational exhibits, including artifacts, photographs, an old car and a viewing area where visitors can watch videos about Route 66. Located in the historic Harvey House at 681 N. 1st Ave., just off Route 66. Open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday through Sunday or by appointment. Admission is free. For more information, visit www.barstow66museum.itgo.com or call (760) 255-1890.

Victorville

♥ California Route 66 Museum

Home to the artifacts remaining from the late Miles Mahan's "Hula Ville," a roadside attraction originally located in Hesperia, where Mahan — a retired carnival worker and a poet — camped while exhibiting his collection of oddities including "cactus" sculptures

made from wine bottles left behind by transients and a 12-foot-high metal sign depicting a dancing hula girl, which he rescued from a business that was being demolished. Other historic photos and artifacts also are on display at the museum. Located at 16825 D. St., between Fifth and Sixth Streets (Route 66). Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. For more information, visit www.califrt66museum.org or call (760) 951-0436.

Rancho Cucamonga

♥ The Deli

Hungry? Stop for lunch at The Deli, where you can dine on chicken strips, Italian sandwiches, steak sandwiches and other goodies while watching a model train circle around the restaurant above your table. Located at 9671 Foothill Blvd. Open 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday. For more information, call (909) 989-8122.

♥ \$ Bono's Historic Orange

California was once home to a plethora of buildings constructed to resemble the objects they sold. There were doughnut shops shaped like doughnuts and hot dog stands shaped like hot dogs. One of the best-known of these little structures is Bono's Historic Orange, located on 66 in Rancho Cucamonga. This old orange juice stand is shaped like — you guessed it — a big orange. You can't buy juice there any more, but it still makes a great photo for your scrapbook.

Rialto

♥ Wigwam Motel

Built in 1949, the Wigwam Motel was once part of the same small chain of motels that gave us the concrete tepees in Holbrook, Ariz. Beautifully restored, the motel offers rooms shaped like tepees and a sparkling swimming pool. Located at 2728 W. Foothill Blvd. in Rialto. For more information or to make reservations at this Route 66 classic, visit www.wigwammotel.com or call (909) 875-3005.

San Bernardino

♥ San Bernardino Route 66 Museum

Built on the site of the world's first McDonald's hamburger stand, this museum is home to historic Route 66 items and an enormous collection of McDonald's memorabilia, including every imaginable sort of Happy Meal toy and playground equipment from an old McDonald's Playland. Located at 1398 N. E Street. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is free. For more information, visit www.route-66.com/mcdonalds/ or call (909) 885-6324 and ask for information about the McDonald's museum.

Pasadena

♥ Norton Simon Museum

Private art collection featuring everything from Botticelli to Kandinsky. Located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. Closed Tuesday; open noon to 9 p.m. Friday and noon to 6 p.m. all other days. Admission is \$8 for adults and \$4 for seniors. Kids under 18 get in free. For more information, visit www.nortonsimon.org or call (626) 449-6840.

\$ The Bunny Museum

Married couple Candace Frazee and Steve Lubanski didn't set out to open a museum. Their collection of rabbit-themed collectibles — which topped 17,000 at last count — began as a gift from Steve to Candace. On Valentine's Day in 1992, Steve gave Candace a white plush rabbit. Candace reciprocated by giving Steve a ceramic bunny for Easter. Not content to limit their gift-giving to holidays, the couple began exchanging bunny-themed presents every day, and pretty soon their collection multiplied like ... well ... rabbits. Their home at 1933 Jefferson Drive now doubles as The Bunny Museum. Open by appointment only except during special open-house days; call (626) 798-8848 to schedule a visit any day of the year. Admission is free, although Steve and Candace accept bunny gifts. (No live rabbits, please!) For more information, visit www.thebunnymuseum.com.

South Pasadena

♥ Fair Oaks Pharmacy

Quite simply the best ice cream west of Ted Drewes. Sit down at the old-fashioned soda fountain and enjoy a chocolate malt or ice cream soda. Located on an early alignment of 66 at the corner of Mission and Fair Oaks. Open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday. For more information, visit www.fairoakspharmacy.net or call (626) 799-1414.

Los Angeles

♥ Heritage Square

Impressive collection of historic buildings that were rescued from demolition and brought here to be restored. Buildings include several Victorian homes, a church, a depot, an octagon-shaped house and a house full of ornate carvings made by its owner, carver John J. Ford. Located on a bypass alignment of Route 66; to get there, take the Avenue 43 exit from Arroyo Seco Parkway. Hours vary. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for kids ages 6 to 12. For more information, visit www.heritagesquare.org or call (626) 449-0193.

♥ Southwest Museum

Large collection of Native American artifacts and exhibits, including a replica of a Chumash Indian rock art site, an 18-foot tepee, baskets, prehistoric pottery and more.

Located at 234 Museum Drive, on an alternate alignment of Route 66. You can get there from Figueroa Street. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday; closed Monday. Closed for major holidays. Admission is \$7.50 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students and \$3 for kids ages 2 to 12. For more information, visit www.southwestmuseum.org or call (323) 221-2164.

Dodger Stadium

Take the kids out to the ballgame! Dodger Stadium is located at 1000 Elysian Park Ave. For more information or to order tickets, visit www.dodgers.com or call (866) DODGERS.

Union Station

This historic train station now houses shops, restaurants and a working Metrolink station, where you can catch a light-rail train that will take you around town. Located at 800 N. Alameda St.

♥ Historic Theater District

Los Angeles is home to a multitude of beautiful old movie palaces, most of them concentrated on South Broadway between Third and Ninth streets. These historic buildings will dazzle you with their marble lobbies, gilded ceilings and elaborate neon marquees. Among the jewels are the Arcade, Cameo, Lowe's, Los Angeles, Million Dollar, Orpheum, Palace, Rialto, Roxie, Tower, United Artists, Mayan and Belasco theaters. Los Angeles Conservancy provides walking tours of the area. For more information, visit www.ci.la.ca.us/tourist/movpalac.htm or call (213) 623-2489.

♥\$ Chinatown

Historic district features art galleries, bakeries, bookstores, gift shops, herb shops, jewelers, a farmer's market, grocery stores, restaurants, a museum and more, all with a Chinese flavor. Don't miss the interesting Asian-influenced architecture on many of the buildings. Located in the area bounded roughly by Bernard to the east, Cesar Chavez to the west, Alameda to the south and Yale to the north. For more information, visit www.chinatownla.com or call (213) 680-0243.

Santa Monica

Third Street Promenade

Pedestrian shopping promenade features street traders, entertainers, shops and restaurants in a carnival-like atmosphere. The promenade was developed during the late 1980s in an effort to revitalize downtown Santa Monica. It worked. Located on Third Street, between Wilshire and Broadway. For more information, visit www.thirdstreetpromenade.com or call (310) 393-8355.

\$ Santa Monica Pier and Pacific Ocean

A few blocks past the western terminus of Route 66, the Santa Monica Pier offers an arcade, carousel, amusement park, aquarium, restaurants, shops and other amenities right

on the beach. Admission is free, but parking generally runs from \$6 to \$8, depending on the season. For more information, visit www.santamonicapier.org or call (310) 458-8900.

Planning your trip

A friend of mine mentioned that he'd like to drive Route 66 in a few years. I offered to start buying him guidebooks and map sets for holiday occasions between now and then. He replied that he didn't think he needed that sort of thing, since he keeps a road atlas in his truck. He seemed genuinely surprised when I explained to him that Route 66 hasn't appeared in an atlas since it was decommissioned in 1984.

You will need special maps and guidebooks to find your way down Route 66. Some states have put up signs marking "Historic Route 66," but the signs are not always accurate, they do not always show all of the existing alignments of the old road (some of which are more interesting than the marked alignments), and dishonest people often steal the signs, which means it's easy to miss a turn somewhere and end up far off-course. Getting lost is part of the adventure, of course, but you still need to know where you're going — or at least have a guidebook or map available to help you find the path again if you get lost.

There are dozens of books about Route 66 out there, and hundreds of Web sites. Here are a few of the materials I've found useful in planning my trips down Route 66; most are available through online retailers such as Amazon.com:

Maps, directions and advice

Here It Is: The Map Series by Jim Ross and Jerry McClanahan. Ghost Town Press. This set of eight fold-out maps — one for each state on Route 66 — has turn-by-turn directions to help you find your way down the old highway. Available at many souvenir shops on 66; also available through the National Historic Route 66 Federation. To order a set, visit www.national66.com.

The Complete Guidebook to Route 66. Bob Moore and Rich Cunningham. Gives detailed directions on how to follow Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica and vice versa. Set your trip odometer to zero whenever the book tells you to do so, then watch for specific landmarks at specific mileages. This is a great resource to have in the car, especially when you get totally flummoxed about where you are. Bob is the editor of *Route 66 Magazine*; you can order a copy of his book at www.route66magazine.com. Also available through online booksellers. Comes with a companion publication, *The Complete Atlas of Route 66*, which features 270 full-color, high-resolution topographical maps, complete with Global Positioning System coordinates to help you find your way.

Route 66 Dining and Lodging Guide. Researched by volunteers from the National Historic Route 66 Federation, the *Route 66 Dining and Lodging Guide* is a great resource when you're trying to find good places to eat and sleep on the Mother Road. Updated every couple of years. I never hit the road without my copy. You can order one from the Federation's Web site, www.national66.org — which, incidentally, is a great place to learn about Route 66. The Federation's site features tons of photos and information about the history of the Mother Road.

Route 66 Adventure Handbook by Drew Knowles. ExitHere.net. Just in case you don't find enough places to visit in this book ... the *Route 66 Adventure Handbook* is 200-plus pages of advice, ideas, points of interest and ruminations on the advantages of Route 66 travel. A fun read, and chock-full of practical information, too, including tips on how to tell whether the road you're driving on used to be part of Route 66. Drew also has a Web site at www.exithere.net.

History and background

Route 66: The Mother Road by Michael Wallis. St. Martin's Press. Pretty much the book that started the whole Route 66 renaissance; Wallis is a Pulitzer-nominated author who knows the road the way most people know their own driveway. His love for the road is immense and obvious. This is a fascinating and utterly beautiful book. Read it before you hit the road; it's a great armchair trip.

Route 66 by Tim Steil. Motorbooks International. Steil is a Chicago-based journalist with a knack for finding interesting people and getting them to tell interesting stories about their lives. He has an eye for detail and a sense of adventure that suit him well as he takes his readers down the Mother Road in search of Americana. Another great read to help set the tone for your trip; beautifully illustrated with images by photographer Jim Luning.

Web sites

www.kidson66.com. My personal Web site. Links, information, and special kid-friendly features, including printable coloring pages, a special photo album and story about a little dog's trip down Route 66 and more. Be sure to check out the links to the state Route 66 organizations. Happy surfing!

www.route66motels.com. Another of my Web sites, this one has my personal reviews of the mom-and-pop motels on 66 that I've visited and found worthy of recommendation, with links to each.

www.route66news.org. A blog that provides updates on people, places and activities along 66. Includes an extensive list of links to help you plan your trip.

Route 66 Yahoo! group. At last count, we had more than 1,000 members. They don't all post, of course, but if you have a question about Route 66, this is the place to find an answer. The people in the group are very knowledgeable and very willing to share that knowledge. As a matter of fact, this guidebook is a direct result of a question I posted to that group. I started out with the intent of making a short list of places to take kids on the Mother Road and ended up with a book full of suggestions. This sort of thing tends to happen a lot with that group. Membership is free; to sign up, visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/route66>.

Roadside America. This is the name of a now out-of-print book about roadside attractions,

but more importantly, it's the name of an ever-evolving Web site that introduces you to literally thousands of strange and wonderful (OK, sometimes just strange) roadside attractions all across the country. Quite a few are on or within easy driving distance of Route 66. And if you want a copy of the book, you can order one by clicking on the "Tourist Hut" link and following the directions you find there. The Web address is www.roadsideamerica.com. This site is the main reason I fell in love with road trips.

Videos and DVDs

Return to Route 66 with Martin Milner. 1998. Pacific Communications. One of my two favorite Route 66 documentaries; Milner, the star of the television show route 66, cruises down 66 from Chicago to L.A. in a classic Corvette, stopping to visit the characters and places that make the road so special. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad, always educational, this is a good way to get psyched up for your trip.

Route 66: An American Odyssey. 1997. Goldhil Video. This is my other favorite Route 66 documentary. Narrated by Michael Wallis, this video gives a good overview of the history of Route 66 and how it's fared in the years since it was decommissioned. I never, ever cry at movies, but there's a section called "Beacons in the Darkness" that gets to me every single time I see it. Definitely worth a look.

A few good CDs for the road

Truckin' On. Various artists. Starday Music Inc. 1996. Excellent collection of truckin' songs; kids will love such classics as "Phantom 309," "Convoy," "Six Days on the Road" and "White Knight."

The Twangbangers: 26 Days on the Road. The Twangbangers. High tone Records. 2002. Concert album from the "Twangbangers" tour, a collaboration among Bill Kirchen (of Commander Cody fame), Redd Volkaert, Dallas Wayne, Joe Goldmark and Johnny & Jack. Notable primarily for Kirchen's live version of "Hot Rod Lincoln," in which he performs a musical tribute to virtually every artist who ever picked up a guitar, from Mother Maybelle Carter to Keith Richards. Lots of fun.

The Essential Johnny Cash. Johnny Cash. Sony Music Entertainment Inc. 2002. There's nothing quite like driving down Route 66 with "I Walk the Line" or "Ring of Fire" on the stereo. Kids will love "A Boy Named Sue."

Thunderstorms and Neon Signs. Wayne Hancock. Dejadisc. 1995. With lines like, "I've got a real nice room with a radio and TV/This here motel living is the only life for me," the title track captures the spirit of Route 66 about as well as anything that's ever been recorded. The rest of the album is pretty good stuff, too; Hancock's voice is reminiscent of the late Hank Williams Sr., and his classic-country feel is more 1955 than 1995.

The Songs of Route 66: Music from the All-American Highway. Lazy SOB Recordings. 1995. Spotty in places, but it's worth having just for the two versions of "(Get Your

Kicks on) Route 66” and Alan Rhody’s great tribute to the highway, “The Mother Road,” the chorus of which says, “Lord, I hope they got where they were going/All the children of the Mother Road.”

More Songs of Route 66: Roadside Attractions. Various artists. Lazy SOB Recordings. 2001. The sequel to “Music from the All-American Highway,” this collection of songs from artists such as Dale Watson (“Tucumcari Here I Come”) and Asleep at the Wheel (“Albuquerque”) is actually a better collection than its predecessor.

Elvis’ 30 #1 Hits. Elvis Presley. BMG Music. 2002. A collection of 31 Elvis hits, including “Teddy Bear,” “Hound Dog,” “Suspicious Minds” and “A Little Less Conversation,” which topped the British charts. Because no trip back in time is complete without a soundtrack provided by The King.

Family Music Party. Trout Fishing in America. Trout Records. 1998. Anyone unfamiliar with the folk-weirdo duo Trout Fishing in America is missing out on a real treat. Comprised of a stand-up bass player and an acoustic guitarist, Trout Fishing in America is known for its funny songs, many of which are geared toward children. Family Music Party is a live recording of some of the best, including “My Hair Had a Party Last Night,” “18 Wheels on a Big Rig,” and “Baby’s Got the Car Keys.” The kids will love it, and Mom and Dad will get a chuckle as well.

Odds and ends to consider

A few words on restrooms

Murphy’s First Law of Road Trips:

Children’s bladders will fill in direct proportion to the amount of filth in a given restroom, multiplied by the distance to an acceptably clean alternative; dire emergencies will always occur immediately after the nearest restroom has been visited by a herd of human swine infected with amoebic dysentery, typically in urban areas where stopping to pee by the side of the road is not a viable option.

Murphy’s Second Law of Road Trips:

The nastier a given restroom, the less soap will be available for washing children’s hands; if tacos, fries or other finger foods are to be eaten immediately after the restroom is visited, there will be no soap anywhere in the building.

Although restrooms on 66 tend, on the whole, to be fairly clean and well-kept, there are always exceptions, and you’ll usually find those exceptions when you reeeeeeeally don’t have time to drive down the road in search of better options. I make a point of keeping a bottle of Germ-X or similar hand sanitizer in the car for just such occasions; if the bathroom is a little icky, I cover the toilet seat with tissue and sanitize my hands when I leave. (If you’re really concerned, you can buy little packets of disposable toilet seat covers to carry in your pocket or purse, too.)

If you're looking for a clean place to "go" and have the luxury of spending a few minutes looking for somewhere acceptable, QuikTrip convenience stores, Voss Truck Ports, TA Travel Centers and Love's Travel Centers are ubiquitous on 66 and typically have decent restrooms. (QT is a bit more reliable than Love's, in my experience.) Any large truck stop, regardless of ownership, should be OK, and I've never had a problem with those interstate rest stops run by state highway departments. Museums also tend to be good.

Spills

Spills are inevitable. Be prepared to deal with them. If you printed out information from a cool Web site, store it in a plastic sheet protector so it's less vulnerable to spills; it's amazing how fast the words printed by your trusty inkjet will turn into an unreadable blur when exposed to liquid. Carry a packet of baby wipes to clean spilled drinks, ink from leaky pens or other messes off little fingers. Keep a roll of paper towels and maybe a tub of wet wipes in the car. Dress appropriately: Jeans will hide a multitude of stains, and dark or patterned shirts typically don't show dirt as much as lighter-colored clothing. If all else fails, carry a blanket in the car and use it as a tent to give spill victims a little privacy in case they need to change clothes on the fly.

Keeping kids busy

No matter how many times you stop to explore a roadside attraction, 2,448 miles is a long way to travel, and kids aren't known for their ability to sit still for long periods of time. Here are some ideas to help keep them entertained and comfortable on the trip:

- Bring along a couple of neck pillows and a blanket or two to encourage sleepy kids to take a nap. (Blankets also help resolve squabbles about the temperature inside the vehicle; when in doubt, keep the air conditioner turned up and hand out blankets to anybody who complains.)
- Keep a cooler in the car, stocked with bottled water and easy-to-eat snacks (fresh or dried fruit, trail mix, M&Ms and the like) in case somebody gets the munchies before you're ready to stop for lunch. Be sure to eat up the fruit before you get to the California state line, though; there are checkpoints set up to make sure people don't bring in out-of-state fruit that could be infested with insects that might harm California's crops. Keep a few large Ziploc bags handy to seal up apple cores, orange peels and banana peels; stash these in the cooler until you find a place to throw them away so they don't spoil in the car and smell weird.
- Bring along a selection of coloring books, Crayolas, picture books, portable video games (don't forget the batteries), car bingo cards and anything else that might amuse your child as you travel. Dole them out one by one so kids don't get everything out at once and get bored with all of it before you even make it out of Cook County.

- Play car games. There are as many games as there are families playing them, but these are a few my siblings and I enjoyed when we were kids and Dad used to drag us out for long Sunday drives into less-than-exotic locales:

Alphabet Game

Starting with A, players have to find each letter of the alphabet on signs, license plates, etc. We never made this a competition; the whole family just teamed up to try to find the letters. The first person who sees a white horse after you get to “Z” gets to make a wish.

The Zoo Game

One person starts the game by saying, “I went to the zoo, and I saw an alligator,” or some other animal beginning with the letter A. The next player says, “I went to the zoo, and I saw an alligator and a bear” or other animal beginning with the letter B. Play continues, with each player reciting all the previous responses before adding one of his own. Players are disqualified when they forget part of the list. Game ends when you reach the end of the alphabet or all but one player is disqualified, whichever comes first.

I See Something You Don’t See

This works best when you’re stopped — stuck in traffic, waiting to be served in a restaurant, etc. — but can be played while moving as long as you confine your subjects to things inside the car. One player starts the game by saying, “I see something you don’t see, and it’s blue” (or brown or green or yellow or black or whatever). The other players try to figure out what the person sees. Game ends when somebody guesses right or everybody gives up, whichever comes first.

Churchmouse

Somebody (usually a parent) holds up a prize such as a dollar bill, candy bar or other treasure and says, “One, two, three ... churchmouse!” Everybody in the car has to be as quiet as the proverbial churchmouse. Anybody who talks, giggles or otherwise makes noise is disqualified. Game continues until only one person is left; that person wins the prize. It’s amazing how long kids can be still if there’s money at stake.

License plates

Not really a game, but my best friend said his family used to look for out-of-state license plates and see how many they could find. This could be turned into a game by awarding one point for each state a player finds. Award five points for Canadian license plates.

A word about souvenirs

The beauty of a trip down Historic Route 66 is that you can make it as expensive or as cheap as you want. This rule applies to everything from attractions to lodging to souvenirs.

The rule of thumb on 66 is to “take only memories, leave only footprints,” and for the most part, you should follow that rule. If you happen across an abandoned gas station, for instance, and you really like the sign out front, it is not acceptable to load it up in the

back of your Country Squire and take off with it. True, the owner probably doesn't care what happens to it, but the sign was part of what made the scene so cool when you happened upon it, and it's unfair to other travelers for you to deprive them of the same experience. However, there are several souvenirs you can take with you without doing any harm to the historic surroundings. A few examples:

Business cards. Most places — and quite a few fellow travelers — have them. Ask for one each time you meet someone interesting on the road. For an extra-special keepsake, ask the person to autograph it. These tiny souvenirs store easily (you might even purchase a special Rolodex for your Route 66 cards) and come in handy later if you need to contact a business or individual on Route 66.

Postcards. Some motels give them away for free; other places charge a quarter or two for them. It's rare to find a postcard of anything that costs more than a dollar, unless it's an antique. Besides being small, cheap and portable, postcards are a great way of remembering your trip. A friend of mine buys a copy of Shellee Graham's *Return to Route 66* postcard book and a packet of stamps and takes them along on her 66 trips. When she reaches a site pictured on one of the postcards, she stops, writes a note on the postcard describing what she is thinking as she views the scene, dates it, and mails it back to her own address. When she gets home, she has a nice vacation journal — complete with illustrations — waiting for her. Another approach you might try: Carry stamps with you, and whenever you buy a postcard somewhere, address it to your child, put one of your stamps on it, then ask the clerk to write a note on it and mail it to your munchkin. This is even better if you can do it while your child isn't looking, so it will be a nice surprise for him when he gets home and finds umpteen postcards addressed to him.

Matchbooks. Also small, portable and highly collectible, Matchbooks are available for free at many places along the highway. A lot of collectors remove the staple from the bottom, discard the matches, and flatten out the cover for easy storage in a photo album. This is a great approach if you have kids, as it removes the temptation to play with matches but still allows them to keep a cool little souvenir from their trip.

Pebbles, feathers, leaves, tumbleweeds, etc. I have a seagull feather I picked up on the beach in Santa Monica and a pebble I found in the driveway at Lucille's in Oklahoma during my first trip down Route 66. I treasure both of these items, as they represent highlights of my first Mother Road adventure. Last winter, I grabbed a few tumbleweeds that were blowing across the road near Sayre, Okla.; they now hang in the living-room window, with white Christmas lights strung through them. I used to have a rubber tree leaf from a tree in California, but it got moldy and I had to throw it away. You can prevent this problem by saving the little packets of silica gel that come with new shoes, purses and the like and slipping one into a Ziploc bag along with your treasure. (Just make sure you keep the silica gel out of reach of young children who might be tempted to eat it.)

Dirt. Believe it or not, dirt makes a great souvenir. Route 66 passes across an incredible diversity of terrain — rich, black topsoil in northern Illinois, red clay in Oklahoma, sandy

beaches in California. If you have a 35mm camera, save the little plastic film canisters you get; they make perfect containers for collecting and storing soil samples. In each state, scoop up a little dirt in one of the canisters, snap the lid shut, and stash it in a bag. When you get home, layer the dirt in a baby-food jar to make a colorful sand painting the kids can show their geography teacher.

Seeds. Depending on when you travel, you may find flowers going to seed along the roadside. Take along some envelopes and a pen so you can collect seeds and label where you found them. (Please photograph the plant, and take the image and the seeds to your local agricultural extension service for identification before you plant it; one state's pretty wildflower is another state's noxious weed.) Wild sunflowers, black-eyed Susans and the like are common along 66; it's also acceptable to collect seeds from flowers planted at motels or restaurants you visit, though it's probably a good idea to ask permission before you harvest them. When you get home, you can literally keep your memories alive in your garden.

Hubcaps and telephone pole insulators. Both can be found lying on the ground next to 66, but it takes a sharp eye to spot them. We found some of each along the road in the Mojave Desert, where there was no vegetation to cover them up. (One caveat: When collecting insulators, never remove them from a pole that still has wires attached to it; if the wires happen to be live, you run the risk of electrocuting yourself.)

Rubbings. You can help your child take rubbings of historical markers and the like by laying a sheet of newsprint over them, then gently shading over it with a crayon. Newsprint is available by the roll from most newspapers (ask for an "end roll" — the leftovers from a press run, which are usually discarded, recycled or sold to the public for a dollar or two per roll). Buy Crayolas to reduce your risk of crayons melting in a hot car. The jumbo size they make for little kids is great for this project, as the crayons are bigger and cover more surface area at a time. Rubbings make neat posters for bedroom walls.

Bumper stickers. Often free; seldom more than \$2.50 apiece. Buy one wherever you can. If you believe — as I do — that your vehicle is an extension of your home, and as such, deserves a little decoration, you can let the kids pick out a spot on the back of the car to hold each sticker. If you don't want them on your car, you can always buy the kids a couple of big plastic tubs to use as toyboxes, then dole out a sticker for them to put on one of the tubs each time they clean their rooms.

Autographs. Make new friends on the road by collecting autographs at the businesses and tourist attractions you visit along the way. Some Route 66 travelers like to buy a copy of *Route 66: The Mother Road* and have the people featured in it autograph the pages where they are pictured. Other books about Route 66 are good for this purpose, too. Or let the kids make their own book about Route 66 — they can collect an autograph, draw a picture of the person next to it, and write something interesting about the person and the place where they met him. When they get home, help them bind their book by placing each page in a plastic sheet protector and putting it in a folder or binder. Then have them

draw a picture or make a collage to put on the cover of their book. The binders that come with clear slipcovers designed to hold a cover sheet are great for this purpose.

Newspapers. Often free, rarely more than 50 cents apiece, newspapers are neat souvenirs, because they give you a sense of the community you're in. I've picked up everything from big urban dailies to little Spanish-language weeklies. You can learn a lot about a place by reading the local paper, and not just the headlines — the choice and placement of Associated Press stories will tell you about the area's priorities and interests, while the ads will tell you what sorts of businesses are thriving there. If the whole paper is too bulky to carry around, just save the front page so you can remember when and where you visited and what was going on in the world while you were enjoying your vacation.

One more good way to save money is to buy the kids clothing or shoes — a T-shirt, a baja jacket, a pair of cowboy boots or Indian moccasins — and put them away until next fall. You'll still be spending money on souvenirs, but when it's time to shop for school clothes in a few months, you'll be ahead of the game. It's also good to shop with an eye toward the holidays. Jewelry, blankets and the like usually don't cost much at Native American trading posts, and they make great gifts for grandmas, teachers, Brownie troop leaders and other folks on your kid's Christmas list.