

# ROUTE 66

## START/FINISH

Chicago, Illinois / Los Angeles, California

## DISTANCE

2,170 miles (3,490 km)

## DURATION

10–14 days

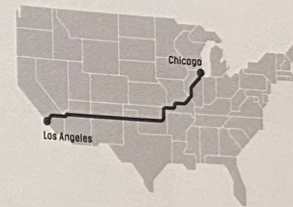
## ROAD CONDITIONS

Well-maintained paved roads

## THE BEST TIME TO GO

Spring and fall are the best times of year, to avoid Illinois' harsh winters and California's scorching summer season

OPPOSITE The Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico, an iconic overnight stop on Route 66



No other road symbolizes the spirit of America quite like Route 66. The hopes and dreams, struggles and triumphs of a nation have played out on this storied stretch of highway, which links Chicago to California and spans eight states.

Casually cruising along America's most celebrated highway, it soon becomes clear that Route 66 is about the journey as much as the destination. Throughout the twists and turns of its almost 100-year history, Route 66 has constantly shifted gears with the times. In the 1930s, it offered a pathway to a better life for migrants escaping the Dust Bowl. When the car became king during the post-war period, Route 66 again moved lanes, officially entering its golden era. During this heyday, families would pile into the Chevy to drive through cactus-studded landscapes, sipping root-beer floats over Formica tables at mom-and-pop diners along the way, before drifting off to sleep in flickering, neon-lit motels.

These days, Route 66 offers motorists the chance to experience the America of yesteryear, with glowing vintage signs, quirky supersized attractions, and nostalgic motels. And while it remains a beloved pathway for four-wheel enthusiasts, it's also a magnet for groups of leather-clad bikers on Harleys.

## RETRO WONDERS

The "Mother Road," as John Steinbeck called the route in his classic novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, starts at the "Route 66 BEGIN" sign on South Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago. After a quick photo op, rev the engine, pop Nat King Cole's "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" on the car stereo, and answer the siren call of the open road. As the city disappears in the rearview mirror, the scenery morphs to small-town America, and you'll pass by Wilmington's space-age

## WILMINGTON

This 30-ft (9-m) fiberglass astronaut is a survivor from Route 66's glory days.

81 MILES



## CHICAGO

Snap a selfie at the "Route 66 BEGIN" sign, right in front of the Art Institute of Chicago.

0 MILES

CHICAGO

START



ABOVE Route 66 Museum in Clinton, Oklahoma

OPPOSITE A roadside statue of a dinosaur in Holbrook, Arizona

Gemini Giant, looming over the curb. He's one of the route's remaining Muffler Men—enormous roadside statues, often cradling burgers or hot dogs, installed by savvy small business owners to lure ravenous motorists to their eateries.

Fields of swaying golden corn wave at passing cars as you head through rural Illinois, headlights facing southward toward the Missouri border. The drive is occasionally punctuated with weird and wonderful curiosities such as the world's largest covered wagon, an enormous pink elephant statue, and a drive-in housed within an ice-cream cone.

#### BURGERS AND BEATHIKS

A couple of hours into the journey, pull over for a pit stop at Motorheads Bar, Grill and Museum in Springfield, a

treasure trove of Americana collectables including several antique automobiles suspended from the ceiling. Pull up at a seat at the weathered bar and order the horseshoe sandwich, a signature dish that combines wedges of glistening Texas toast, meaty hamburger patties, and a mountain of fries smothered under a thick blanket of creamy cheese sauce.

Route 66 is dotted with such motor-enthusiast museums, but the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum in Clinton stands out from the pack with its interactive displays that bring the road's myths and legends to life. Before you leave, stop by the well-stocked souvenir shop to pick up a tin Route 66 number plate memento or a copy of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, a Beat Generation novel that includes a stretch of the highway.

#### LINCOLN

Ride the world's largest ralsplitter covered wagon in Lincoln, Illinois.

172 MILES



#### SPRINGFIELD

Feast on a horseshoe sandwich to a soundtrack of rock, at Motorheads Bar.

210 MILES



#### CLINTON

Brush up your knowledge of the Mother Road at the stylish Oklahoma Route 66 Museum.

886 MILES



1,088 MILES

#### AMARILLO

Leave a message on one of the tail-finned vintage beauties at the Cadillac Ranch.



1,548 MILES

#### PETRIFIED FOREST

This national park shelters trees that have turned to stone and a dazzling display of badlands.

#### EXTEND YOUR TRIP

Built up an appetite for retro architecture while on Route 66? Then extend your trip by powering south from Santa Monica to Palm Springs. The two-hour journey through the serene Mojave Desert ends at the stylish Californian desert town, with its host of mid-century design gems.

#### KITSCH CLASSICS

Follow the ribbon of asphalt as it gently unfurls through the flat, high plains of northern Texas, leading to the Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo. You really can't miss this stop—it's the row of ten vintage Cadillacs buried nose-first in the ground, decorated in a multicolored riot of graffiti. Originally installed in 1974 by a collective of postmodern artists as a comment on the American Dream, it's since become a pop-culture landmark. Join the throng of curious visitors and snap a surreal selfie against the apocalyptic backdrop.

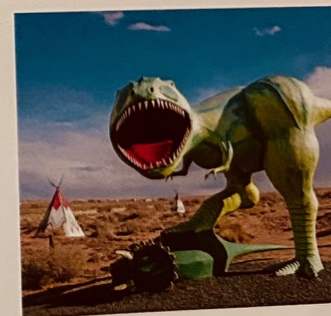
Another 100 miles (160 km) west, a pastel-blue classic car takes pride of place in front of the iconic, family-owned Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico. Beside it, a bedazzlement of neon signs promises potential visitors everything from a color TV to the cool breeze of in-room air conditioning, much needed in the heat of the sun-baked desert. Established in 1939, the motel is exactly the kind of place you would imagine Route 66 regular Marilyn Monroe parking her cherry-red Thunderbird outside, before checking in for the night.

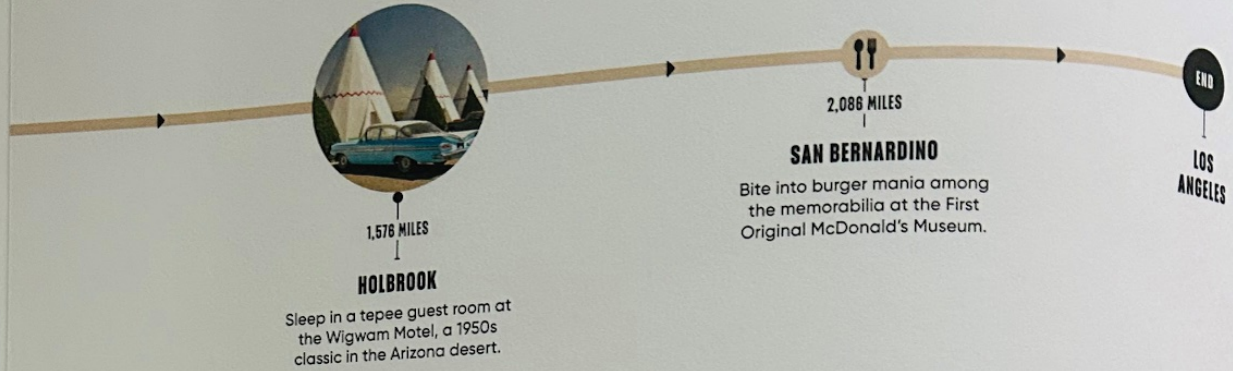
#### A BREAK IN THE DESERT

From New Mexico, it's into northern Arizona, where the Petrified Forest National Park is an atmospheric spot to get off the beaten track and spend

some time in the wilds of nature. The only national park in the country that protects a portion of Route 66, this otherworldly landscape of fossilized prehistoric trees and multicolored badlands is home to burrows of bouncy cottontail rabbits, free-roaming mule deer, and the occasional black bear. If there's time for a break from the route, follow the park's 28-mile (45-km) scenic drive, connecting roadside vistas to historic sites and hiking trails.

From the dramatic panoramas of Petrified Forest National Park, it's just a 30-minute drive through the arid desert, the air scented with the earthy smell of roadside saltbush shrubs, to the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook.





ABOVE The First Original McDonald's Museum in San Bernardino, California

A fascinating relic from a bygone era, this cluster of tepee-shaped guest rooms was once part of a thriving hotel chain. Only two of these villages still exist along Route 66 today, one in San Bernardino, California and this 15-lodge camp. When they originally opened, each tepee was fitted out with the latest mod-cons including coin-operated radios so guests could kick back and listen to Elvis crooning over the speakers. Adding to the nostalgic atmosphere, gleaming vintage motors are parked around the property. While in Holbrook, look out for the dinosaur statues around town, once used to advertise a long-closed museum.

### THE END OF THE ROAD

You might get the feeling that the best has been saved for last as you slowly roll across the border into California—and it's true, the Golden State has done an excellent job of maintaining its Route 66 attractions. Start with a visit to the birthplace of the Big Mac at the First Original McDonald's Museum in San Bernardino. This is the exact spot where the famous golden arches were first unveiled when the McDonald brothers opened their debut restaurant in 1940. It's since become a museum dedicated to the humble hamburger, where plastic Happy Meal toys and a prototype of a ketchup dispensing gun are displayed as if they were the *Mona Lisa*. There's even a dedicated McDonald's historian on hand to guide visitors through the collection, although sadly he's not dressed as Ronald McDonald.

The twinkling lights of Santa Monica Pier will appear joyfully on the horizon as you drive toward the finish line in Los Angeles. For the final leg of your journey, pull the car over and stroll along the wooden promenade of the pier, seagulls circling overhead as you pose for a commemorative photo beside the "Santa Monica: Route 66 end of the trail" sign. Finish on a high note with a celebratory spin on the retro Ferris wheel, just as previous generations of Route 66 road-trippers did before you.

# NEW ENGLAND LIGHTHOUSE TRAIL



## START/FINISH

Cape Neddick, Maine/Old Saybrook, Connecticut

## DISTANCE

355 miles (570 km)

## DURATION

7–8 days

## ROAD CONDITIONS

Well-maintained paved roads

## THE BEST TIME TO GO

May–October, as many lighthouses close in low season

Take an illuminating drive along New England's Lighthouse Trail, which connects the East Coast's most scenic coastal communities. Meet witch covens, delve into maritime history, and feast on lobster rolls along the way.

With its windswept wilderness and beaming lighthouses, it's easy to see how driving New England's Lighthouse Trail stirs the romantic core. This spectacular route strings together the rugged coastal edges of the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Lighting the way, you'll find almost 200 historic watchtowers dotting the shoreline, many of which have been reimagined as niche museums, upscale restaurants, and unique overnight stays.

## THE MAINE SHORE

Begin your adventure at the summer resort town of York at Cape Neddick, in New England's most northern state.

As one of the country's oldest English settlements, this sprawling town is filled with seaside homes loaded with period charm, along with a new wave of fashionable boutiques and coffee shops.

Take the coastal path a couple of miles east, past crisp, blue waters and creamy sand beaches. Perched atop a craggy islet at the north end of Long Sands Beach, Cape Neddick Light, known locally as Nubble Light, has been guiding boats to safety since 1879. It's no longer open to visitors but the proud tower crowned with an ornate iron balcony and red-roofed lightkeeper's cottage nestled next to it make for a perfect photo opportunity. Before leaving town be sure to pay a visit to the nearby Lobster Cove, where a bounty of fresh clams, scallops, and glistening lobster is served with a side order of Atlantic Ocean views.

OPPOSITE Pastel sunrise skies illuminate the Boston Light on Little Brewster Island

CAPE NEDDICK

START

## CAPE NEDDICK LIGHT

Enjoy the fresh ocean air and snap a selfie at Maine's most photogenic lighthouse.

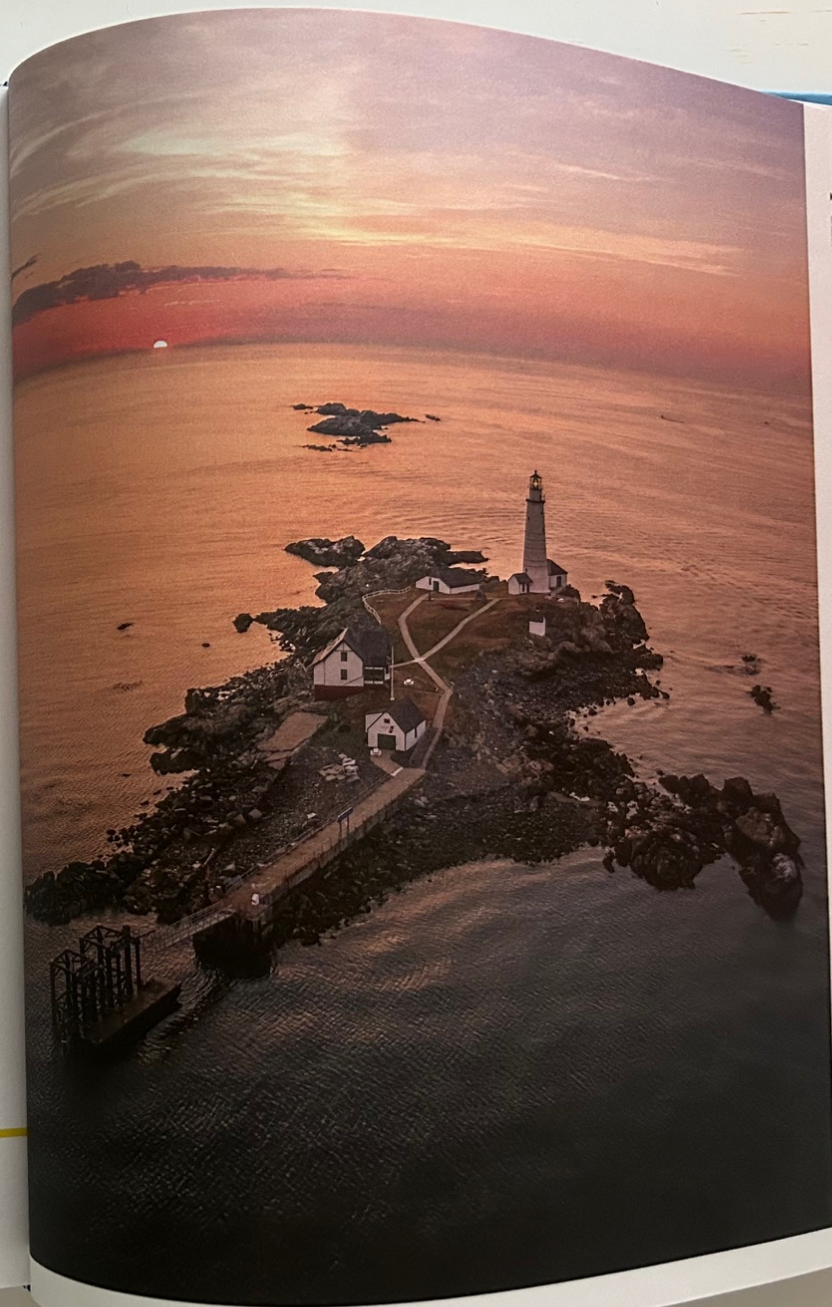


2 MILES

## LOBSTER COVE

Tuck into a buttery lobster roll or order the Captain's Platter to share—you won't leave hungry.

4 MILES



Kent



62 MILES

**SALEM**

Let the town cast its spell on you with a visit to the Salem Witch Museum.



84 MILES

**LITTLE BREWSTER ISLAND**

Located in Boston Harbor, the island is home to the first lighthouse in the U.S.

**BEWITCHED IN SALEM**

Driving an hour south on roads speckled with sun-bleached vintage motels, you may notice the mood shift as you arrive in Salem. This popular Massachusetts city is infamous for its role in the witch trials of 1692 in which 200 people were accused of witchcraft. Delve into this haunting chapter of New England history at the Salem Witch Museum, housed in a former church, before picking up some potions at the witch-themed shopping mall in Salem. Around Halloween, the spookiness is cranked up a notch with gardens and front porches decorated with increasingly extravagant displays. All-black costumes, pointy hats, and broomsticks can be spotted on the cobbled side streets, too.

Beyond the witch hunts, Salem also has a rich maritime history, best explored on a boat trip from the harbor. Cruising past protected coastlines, private islands, and the occasional seal, a 90-minute ride offers the opportunity to spot five working lighthouses in action, while sipping steaming mugs of hot chocolate from the blustery deck.

From Salem, follow the curve of land 20 miles (30 km) south to Boston Harbor. A stone's throw from the hustle and bustle of downtown Boston, Little Brewster Island is home to Boston Light—a 1783 replacement for the first

**You may notice the mood shift as you arrive in Salem. This popular Massachusetts city is infamous for its role in the witch trials of 1692.**



ABOVE Walking down historic Derby Street, Salem

RIGHT Holding a rare, freshly caught blue lobster

OPPOSITE The Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum



ever lighthouse built on U.S. soil, erected in 1716. As with many of New England's steadfast stations, Boston Light became automated in the 1990s, although a keeper still lives on the island to offer visitors guided tours in the summer months. Expect close-up views of Long Island Light, Graves Light, and Boston Light, three of the area's most beloved pioneering beacons.

No visit to the Massachusetts capital would be complete without diving into the revolutionary events that occurred here in 1773. At the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, a tour guide dressed head-to-toe in period costume steers visitors through the collection of historic artefacts and hands-on exhibits. Walk the creaking floorboards of a full-scale replica of an 18th-century sailing vessel, similar to the boats from which American colonist rebels hurled 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor as a caffeinated protest against imposed taxes.

**R&R IN RHODE ISLAND**

From Boston, inland roads speed 60 miles (100 km) south to Newport, Rhode Island, but set your compass for the leisurely route along the coast. Pause to soak up the glamorous seaside treats of Martha's Vineyard along the way, an upscale vacation island favored



NEW ENGLAND LIGHTHOUSE TRAIL

T. Kent

by the Kennedys and Clintons that's accessible via a short but rewarding ferry ride across choppy waters.

Arriving into Newport Harbor, you'll be greeted by the sound of masts jingling on the superyachts moored in Newport's ultra-exclusive harbor. You might notice a lonesome island set adrift on the horizon. Rose Island has no permanent residents but the keenest of lighthouse fans can book in a once-in-a-lifetime castaway experience by staying overnight in its lighthouse. After being whisked across in a tiny speed boat, you'll bed down for the evening in a cozy apartment, furnished with

**SHORTEN YOUR TRIP**

If time is of the essence, condense this trip into its star attractions. Start by admiring the Boston Light before heading 80 miles (130 km) south for an overnight stay at the lighthouse on Rose Island, remembering to pack your own food supplies as there's no catering on-site.

**BOSTON**

Take part in a seriously fun history lesson at the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum.

85 MILES



**MARTHA'S VINEYARD**

Hop on the ferry to Martha's Vineyard to admire the imposing Gay Head Light.

175 MILES



**ROSE ISLAND**

Sleep overnight in a working lighthouse, on your own castaway island.

270 MILES

**STONINGTON**

Delve into seafaring archives at the Stonington Lighthouse Museum.

318 MILES

**KATHARINE HEPBURN CULTURAL ARTS CENTER**

Catch a dance performance or comedy show while in town.

352 MILES



**SAYBROOK BREAKWATER LIGHT**

This beloved lighthouse is easily spotted on the horizon, and all across the town's merch.

**SAYBROOK POINT RESORT & MARINA**

Capture a romantic sunset over the beautiful marina.

**OLD SAYBROOK**

NEW ENGLAND LIGHTHOUSE TRAIL



antique oak floorboards and a timeworn typewriter. Life on the island is dictated by the ebb and flow of the tides, which roll back to reveal a pebbly beach covered in driftwood. Overnight lighthouse guests can haul a canoe into the icy waters, joining the fleet of sailboats floating past, or climb to the tip of the light-house tower for a bird's-eye view of the American oystercatchers, blue herons, and Canada geese that also call this sliver of paradise home.

**CRUISING INTO CONNECTICUT**

Back on the mainland, continue the scenic route south along the ocean road. The route snakes alongside the

rugged coastline, past remote archipelagoes and cutting through verdant nature reserves. An hour from Newport, a web of winding streets leads through the historic town of Stonington to Stonington Point, where the small but mighty Stonington Lighthouse Museum keeps watch. This mid-19th-century stone lighthouse saw off attacks from the British navy in 1775 and again in 1814, and has since been resurrected as a quirky museum that throws light on the area's seafaring history. Visitors today can also climb the 29 stone steps up the tower for picturesque harbor views.

Driving on, past colorful clapboard summer homes adorned with star-spangled banners and wooden picket fences, it's another 35 miles (55 km) along the Connecticut shore to Old Saybrook, where the small-town charm reaches its climax and the Connecticut River meets the Long Island Sound.

Jam-packed with quaint cottages, this is one of the oldest hubs in the state. As you glide through the quiet town, keep an eye out for the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center, a performance space dedicated to the Hollywood actress who spent many of her childhood summers here.

On the horizon you may also spot the Saybrook Breakwater Light, one of the few remaining spark-plug lighthouses.

**IDA WILSON LEWIS**

**New England's most famous female lighthouse keeper was the fearless Ida Wilson Lewis. Tending the Lime Rock Light near Newport, Lewis made her first rescue aged 12, coming to the aid of four men who capsized their small sailboat. She went on to save an estimated 18 people, plus one very lucky sheep, from an early watery grave. For her exploits she was dubbed "The Bravest Woman in America" by the press.**

LEFT Rose Island, an idyllic lighthouse retreat

**THE FINAL BEACON**

Saybrook Breakwater Light is far from the only beacon in these parts. Pulling into the car park at Saybrook Point Resort & Marina—once frequented by the high-rolling Rat Pack on gambling sprees—you can't miss the whimsical lighthouse situated in the heart of the marina complex. Overnight stays are offered in the lighthouse apartment, where a tiny balcony opens out onto fiery orange sunset views, reflected in the water below. It's also the perfect place to watch the moored boats bob gently with the tide, from luxury yachts to chartered fishing boats.

New England's seafood is the stuff of legends, so take a deep dive with a final supper by the crackling log fire at the resort's Fresh Salt restaurant. This local institution is renowned for its creamy clam chowder, oysters plucked straight from the sea, and indulgent lobster rolls smothered in warm butter. As you glance across the dock, your private lighthouse will wink back at you. It's offering you sanctuary, just as New England's lighthouses have done for generations.



TOP Saybrook Point Resort & Marina's lighthouse apartment  
ABOVE Maine oysters, a New England seafood specialty

# EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY



**START/FINISH**  
Tonopah, Nevada/  
Hiko, Nevada

**DISTANCE**  
150 miles (240 km)

**DURATION**  
2-3 days

**ROAD CONDITIONS**  
Well-maintained  
paved roads

**THE BEST TIME TO GO**  
Spring and fall; expect  
extreme temperatures  
in summer and winter

Wonderful weirdness awaits along Nevada's Extraterrestrial Highway. This peculiar road trip takes you deep into the beating heart of America's Alien Country, an otherworldly orbit that skirts the top-secret Area 51.

High-rolling casinos and epic canyons are to be expected in Nevada. Perhaps, too, a jumpsuited Elvis impersonator shaking his bejeweled legs outside a drive-through wedding chapel. But unless you've taken the road less traveled, you may not be aware that the state is also a hotspot with visitors from another planet entirely.

Nevada State Route 375, better known as the Extraterrestrial Highway, has more reported U.F.O. sightings than any other road in the country. Which makes sense when you consider its unique location, tucked into the remote reaches of south-central Nevada. This far-out highway skirts Area 51, a hush-hush military test site that some believe to

be a top-secret laboratory for captured alien spacecraft. What happens behind security fences remains a mystery, but quirky businesses and attractions have sprung up at the curbside of this eerily desolate highway, appealing to the alien-curious road tripper.

## GALAXIES AND GRAVESTONES

Begin your drive in Tonopah, one of the finest places in the country to gaze up at the Milky Way. On the edge of the town take the dirt road to Clair Blackburn Memorial Stargazing Park to marvel at a blanket of 7,000 twinkling stars lighting up the night's sky. During the summer, coincide your visit with Tonopah's monthly star parties, where budding astrophiles congregate to focus their telescopes on awe-inspiring meteor showers. Alternatively, explore the Old Tonopah Cemetery and its crumbling

## OLD TONOPAH CEMETERY

A spooky self-guided ghost walk around this cemetery's gravestones is a must.

OPPOSITE The decorated Extraterrestrial Highway road sign, near Warm Springs

**TONOPAH**  
Get ringside seats to some of the best stargazing in the country as night falls.

TONOPAH

START

0 MILES

1 MILE



RIGHT The Lunar Crater landmark, a volcanic caldera  
 OPPOSITE TOP Posing by the U.F.O. mural at E.T. Fresh Jerky  
 OPPOSITE BELOW Caribbean blue waters in Crystal Springs



headstones at night, many of which belonged to those who worked in the Nevada mines during the Gold Rush era.

**U.F.O. WORLD CAPITAL**

The minuscule town of Rachel, home to just 54 people, became the official U.F.O. capital of the world in 1996, after Nevada State Route 375 was officially designated the Extraterrestrial Highway by the state. The town was named Rachel in 1978 after the first baby born in this valley, Rachel Jones.

**ALIEN ENCOUNTERS**

At daybreak, hit the open road southwest toward Rachel, passing Lunar Crater volcanic fields along the way. Two asphalt lanes cut a path through the apocalyptic desert landscape, past rocky peaks, wide dusty plains, and bone-dry lakes. Keep a look out for the tiny ghost town of Warm Springs at the roadside, a blink-and-you'll-miss-it cluster of two rickety abandoned buildings that stands as a reminder of a once-thriving mining community.

The Extraterrestrial Highway is one of Nevada's loneliest roads, seeing a mere 200 cars per day. While the

solitude can certainly be blissful, just be sure to pack the trunk with supplies and top up the tank beforehand, as gas stations are spotted with less frequency than little green Martians around here. Approaching Rachel, as spiky Joshua trees sprout at the roadside, don't let the occasional sonic booms coming from nearby Area 51 distract you—it's just test planes blasting, nothing to be alarmed about.

A broken-down spaceship at the front of Little A'Le'Inn (pronounced Little Alien) in Rachel means that you can't miss your next pit stop. "Earthlings welcome" reads the handwritten sign at the doorway of the dining room, where alien burgers fly out of the kitchen's atomic hatch. Keen to prove that you've been to the mythical Area 51 site? Purchase a vial of

**WARM SPRINGS**

This small roadside ghost town is now home to just two abandoned buildings.



**EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY**

Take a photo with the Extraterrestrial Highway sign to show the folks back home.

51 MILES



**RACHEL**

Scoff an alien burger at Little A'Le'Inn before perusing the gift store for otherworldly souvenirs.

110 MILES



131 MILES

**BLACK MAILBOX**

This iconic mailbox near Crystal Springs is used to connect with extraterrestrial beings (maybe).



140 MILES

**ALIEN RESEARCH CENTER**

This shiny building sells some of the best alien tequila—a drinks cabinet staple—on this planet.

END

HIKO

dirt from Little A'Le'Inn's gift store. Collected from the patrolled borders of this highly classified United States Air Force facility within the Nevada Test and Training Range, this unusual souvenir will only set you back \$5.99.

Before blasting off from Rachel, take the highway to the outskirts of the town to visit the area's famous black mailbox. For decades this rusting old container on a stick has become a slightly bizarre meeting point for those hoping to communicate with life on other planets, or just connect with fellow alien appreciators traveling through.

**SHIMMERING HORIZONS**

After snapping a quick photo, continue toward Crystal Springs, watching the landscape outside the window transform from barren wasteland to lush marshes, thanks to a system of geothermal springs buried deep underground. Up ahead, the silver dome of the Alien Research Center hovers on the horizon, much like a shiny spaceship. Ease into the car park and pass the soaring scrap-metal Martian greeting guests at the entrance. Inside this giant tin can of a store, shelves are crammed with trippy curiosities and out-of-this-world merch. There's just enough time to pick up a bottle of



alien tequila before you are beamed to your final destination.

Round off your visit to the final frontier with a stop at the E.T. Fresh Jerky in nearby Hiko, a wacky spot serving up cured meat snacks in space-invader packaging. Stock up on a handful of lean beef jerky strips for the road, grab one last "I-come-in-peace" selfie before the green man mural, then head off into the mysteries of the pitch-black night, eyes scanning for saucers flying overhead. Because on Nevada's Extraterrestrial Highway, the truth is out there, somewhere.

