

Blazing Down Route 66

Mother Road, Main Street of America, Will Rogers Highway, different names for the same path; the legendary Route 66. Constructed in 1926, stretching from California to Illinois, this highway is the most iconic and popular route since the Silk Road. Its storied path has inspired songs, movies, and TV shows, while its roadsides are bedecked with attractions. The Texas run of Route 66, cutting across the Panhandle, extends only 177 miles but packs a continent's worth of action—including the historic highway's middle point.

MidPoint Cafe

[MidPoint Cafe](#), located in the town of Adrian, celebrates the momentous median with a sign bearing two arrows—one pointing to the left, toward the words “Los Angeles 1139 miles,” and one pointing to the right, toward “Chicago 1139 miles.” The '50s-era ambience and Americana menu transport visitors to another time, and the homemade “ugly” pies are not to be missed. In fact, the “ugly pies” are anything but ugly, the term was coined by Midpoint Café's pastry chef Joann Harwell, who creates tasty, freshly-baked pies from her grandmother's recipe, only to lament that the crust looked better when her grandmother made them.

Amarillo: History and Steak

Amarillo, the largest Texas city on Route 66, has maintained a bygone era's charm in 13 blocks touched by the road. The [U.S. Route 66–Sixth Street Historic District](#) offer hours of shopping, eating, and sightseeing, from the Gothic Revival [Natatorium](#) to the Art Moderne detailing of [Borden's Heap-O-Cream](#).

Also in Amarillo is the [Big Texan Steak Ranch](#), famous for its 72-ounce steak, free if you can finish all of it, plus sides, in an hour or less. This challenge is not for the faint of heart and few have conquered the leviathan hunk of meat and sides, which include shrimp cocktail, a baked potato, salad and a roll.

West of Amarillo lies [Cadillac Ranch](#), an iconic public art installation made up of 10 Cadillacs half-buried in a field. Cadillac Ranch was created in 1974 by architects Chip Lord and Doug Michels and art student Hudson Marquez, who were a part of an art group called Ant Farm. The installation consists of various evolutions of the Cadillac car line from 1949 to 1963, half-buried nose-first in the ground at an angle corresponding to that of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. Visitors are encouraged to leave their mark with graffiti or spray paint, and the aging vehicles reflect this practice.

Roadside Groom

Route 66 casts a giant shadow in the popular imagination, but perhaps not as big as some of the literal shadows cast by its roadside structures. Consider the gleaming white cross erected outside of [Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ Ministries](#) in the town of Groom. Standing 19 stories tall, the cross is surrounded at its base by biblical statues. Visible from miles away, it leaves visitors awed by its magnitude.

Also in the area, the [Leaning Water Tower of Groom](#) spoofs the Leaning Tower of Pisa with a visual gag that merits a quick stop for a photo.

U-Drop Inn

Fans of Pixar films will find a small thrill in the town of [Shamrock](#), just east of Groom. Holding court on the roadside is a gorgeous building with Art Deco detailing, known as the [Tower Station and U-Drop Inn Café](#). Dating back to 1936, the once-bustling service station has been fully restored as a visitor center.

The station's biggest claim to fame? It's the inspiration for Ramone's Body Shop in Pixar's *Cars*, a film strewn with nostalgic nods to Route 66.

Glenrio Ghost Town

Once a monument along Route 66, [Glenrio](#) straddles the border between Texas and New Mexico and is now a ghost town remaining home to only the critters and the blowing tumble weeds of the prairie. While the town's population never rose above 30 people, its location as a midpoint between Amarillo, Texas and Tucumcari, New Mexico made it a popular stopping place for Route 66 travelers, and a 'welcome station' greeted visitors as they drove into town. Local lore claims the welcome station even served as the film location of *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1940. When Interstate 40 was built in the 1970s it bypassed the town completely, decreasing its visitors and hurting local businesses. By 1985 only two residents remained, and today the town is only visited by travelers reliving the history of Route 66.

For iconic attractions and some serious eats, make the drive along Route 66 to experience a slice of American history.