

# Route 66 Centennial (2026): Celebrating 100 Years of America's Iconic Highway

*The year 2026 marks the centennial anniversary of Route 66, America's most legendary highway—the Mother Road, a symbol of hope, travel, commerce, and culture.*

ATLANTA, IL, UNITED STATES,  
December 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/  
-- The year 2026 marks the centennial anniversary of Route 66, America's most legendary highway—the Mother Road, a symbol of hope, travel, commerce, and culture. The Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership, in partnership with the Route 66 Centennial Commission and communities across the eight states

the road traverses, is extending a special invitation to travelers, residents, businesses, and media to join a once-in-a-century journey of celebration, preservation, discovery, and economic revival with a Guide to the Yearlong Centennial Celebration.



“

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*Bill Thomas, Commissioner of  
the Route 66 Centennial  
Commission*

"From the heartland of Illinois across the plains and deserts to the Pacific in California, Route 66 has been more than pavement—it's been a pathway of hope, of travel, of commerce, of culture," said Bill Thomas, Chair of the Road Ahead Partnership and Commissioner of the Route 66 Centennial Commission.

This Centennial is a national moment—an invitation to millions of Americans who live, work, and travel along the route to not just recognize the road's past, but to actively engage its present and help shape its future. The Mother Road helped shape our country's sense of adventure, community, and possibility. As we mark 100 years, we

honor that legacy and open new opportunities for the next 100 years, opportunities that you, the audience, can help define.



## THE ROAD AHEAD PARTNERSHIP

The mission of the Road Ahead Partnership is to revitalize and sustain Route 66 as a national icon and international destination

Beginning January 1, 2026, the Centennial year will spotlight the historic 2,448-mile corridor from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California, via Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

**Key Milestones & Events:** The Centennial year is packed with a diverse range of major, officially designated events, ensuring there's something for everyone to enjoy.

### Launch & Caravan

January 3–12, 2026: The Drive Home VII: Route 66 – A Century of Adventure – A coast-to-coast rally beginning in Santa Monica, California, and finishing January 12, 2026, in Chicago, Illinois, with final display at the Detroit Auto Show, starting January 14.

"America's Automotive Trust is proud to be the first major event celebrating 100 years of our nation's most iconic highway the way it should be done: by driving its entire length in 10 vintage cars. Most importantly, we will be visiting and celebrating the towns, small businesses, and people who call Route 66 'home,'" said David Madeira, CEO.

"The Detroit Auto Show has long been where the world comes to celebrate both the history of cars and their future — a place where heritage and innovation meet. Welcoming The Drive Home VII caravan to Detroit is an extension of that spirit. These remarkable vehicles will be displayed at the 2026 Detroit Auto Show, giving the public a chance to see, up close, the machines that helped write America's automotive story as we continue shaping the next chapter," said Sam Klemet, Executive Director of the Detroit Auto Show and Detroit Auto Dealers Association.

April 2, 2026 - "Rediscover Route 66-One Miniature Mile at a Time" journey across Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica.

April 30 – May 2, 2026

Springfield, Missouri, the Birthplace of Route 66, is launching the [National Route 66 Centennial Kickoff Celebration](#) with fun for all ages.

- A multi-artist mega-concert at Missouri State University's Plaster Stadium
- A 100-year classic car show and the official National Kick-Off Parade
- The elegant National Telegraph Ball – a roaring '20s-inspired soiree at the Historic Shrine Mosque
- And a patriotic Celebrate America on 66 Festival

Plus, satellite cities — Joliet, St. Louis, Amarillo, Albuquerque, and Santa Monica — will join the coast-to-coast kickoff with their own celebrations and surprises.

“We are thrilled to have the National Route 66 Centennial Kickoff in Springfield, Missouri, known as the Birthplace,” said Governor Mike Kehoe. Missouri embodies the spirit of innovation, hospitality, and perseverance that made Route 66 an icon around the world. I’m excited for our state to welcome visitors from near and far as we celebrate a year of honoring this historic highway and the communities that continue to keep its story alive.”

June 5-24 – Main Street of America Route 66 Centennial Caravan from Santa Monica to Chicago - hosted by the eight Route 66 State Associations and The Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership.

June 20-28 - Route 66 Centennial Great Race - Chicago to Santa Monica.

September through December - Rolling Film Premier of "The Main Street of America" documentary, with screenings currently scheduled in Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California

### State-by-State Spotlights

□ Illinois – November 11, 2026: Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Statewide Conference & Centennial Celebration in Springfield, IL – A major conference and celebration marking the centennial.

□ Missouri – April 11: A spirited reenactment of the historic Bunion Derby 5K in Lebanon; May 29–31: Pacific’s Route 66 BBQ Battle & Bluegrass Festival; June 2-6: Joplin’s World Street Painting Festival and Rolla’s Route 66 Summerfest; September: Waynesville’s Hogs & Frogs Festival.

□ Kansas – June 3-6, 2026: Galena Days in Galena, KS - Annual festival, classic car show, parade, and more.

□ Oklahoma – June 27-28 - AAA Route 66 Road Fest - Tulsa, OK - hosted by AAA Insurance

□ Texas – June 4–13, 2026: Texas Route 66 Festival in Amarillo, with classic car shows, bus tours, and cattle drive parade.

□ New Mexico – April 30, 2026: Centennial Kick-Off celebration in Albuquerque at historic KiMo Theatre and augmented reality "Route 66 Remixed".

□ Arizona – May 1-3, 2026: Route 66 Fun Run - the oldest Route 66 Celebration in the U.S.

□ California – April 30, 2026: "Great Route 66 Centennial Convergence" at Santa Monica Pier, 5

pm – the symbolic end point of Route 66.

#### Key Partners & Projects

- Official Publishing Partner: Only In Your State – a digital storytelling and travel platform named by the Road Ahead Partnership as the exclusive Official Centennial Publishing Partner.
- Official Map Provider: Rand McNally Publishing – producing the Official Centennial Map of Route 66.
- Cruise America - Official RV Rental Sponsor.

Whether you're a lifelong Route 66 enthusiast or new to this iconic corridor, the Road Ahead Partnership is inviting the country to:

- Join the celebration by signing up for the [Route 66 Centennial Birthday Club](#).
- Follow the Centennial journey via [route66centennial.org](#) and social media channels for the latest itinerary.
- Enjoy the road; make stops along the route in 2026, support local Route 66 businesses, take and share pictures.
- Discover Centennial Events & Activities—Check out all that is happening along the route using the [Route 66 Centennial Events Calendar](#).
- Witness the revival—by celebrating the past, we energize communities for the future.

Finally, there is much more to come, including several major announcements at the beginning of January 2026 about upcoming Centennial events and projects. Stay tuned.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

#### About the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership

Established in 2016 with the support of the National Park Service and the World Monuments Fund, the Route 66 Road Ahead Partnership's mission is to revitalize and sustain Route 66 as a national and international icon through partnerships focused on promotion, preservation, research, education, and economic development. Only In Your State is the official Publishing Partner to the Route 66 Centennial. Founding Sponsors of the Route 66 Centennial include Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission, American Express, Route 66 Road Fest, Travel Oklahoma Route 66 Centennial Commission, Rand McNally Publishing and Cruise America. For more information, visit [route66centennial.org](#).

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