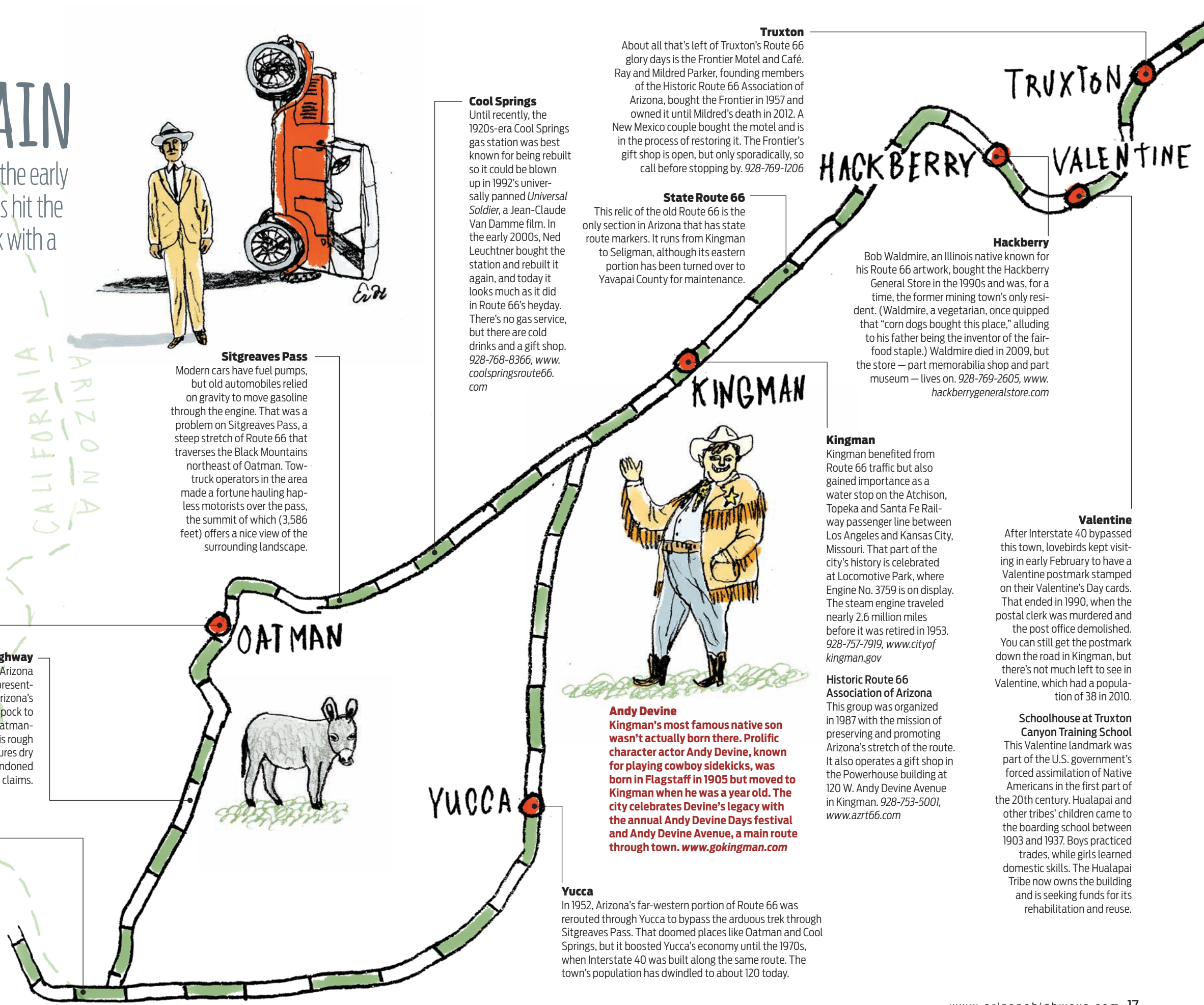


# ON THE ROAD AGAIN

We've been exploring Historic Route 66 since the early part of the last century, even before the Joads hit the Mother Road. This month, we're headed back with a new map and some old friends.

BY NOAH AUSTIN ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC HANSON



**Oatman**

Hungry, smelly reminders of the past are easy to find in Oatman, a former gold-mining boomtown. Wild burros often roam the town's streets, seeking handouts from tourists. The burros are descendants of pack animals owned by prospectors, who turned their animals loose after Oatman's mines went bust. [www.oatmangoldroad.com](http://www.oatmangoldroad.com)

**Durlin Hotel**

Now called the Oatman Hotel, this inn was a favorite of Clark Gable and Carole Lombard, who stopped there on their honeymoon in 1939. Originally constructed in 1902, the hotel was rebuilt following a 1921 fire that leveled most of Oatman. It no longer offers overnight accommodations but does have a bar and restaurant. 928-768-4408

**Oatman-Topock Highway**

While most of Route 66 in Arizona closely follows the path of present-day Interstate 40, Western Arizona's portion does not. From Topock to Oatman, it's known as the Oatman-Topock Highway, and this rough and little-used road features dry washes, sand dunes and abandoned mining claims.

**Old Trails Bridge**

This 800-foot bridge spans the Colorado River between Arizona and California, making it the westernmost point on Arizona's section of Route 66, which was also known as Will Rogers Highway. It's supported by a single 600-foot arch, and it carried automobile traffic from 1916 to 1948. Today, it supports a natural-gas pipeline. The Old Trails Bridge is the tiny town of Topock's main claim to fame — the Joad family ventured across it in the film adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

**Sitgreaves Pass**

Modern cars have fuel pumps, but old automobiles relied on gravity to move gasoline through the engine. That was a problem on Sitgreaves Pass, a steep stretch of Route 66 that traverses the Black Mountains northeast of Oatman. Tow-truck operators in the area made a fortune hauling hapless motorists over the pass, the summit of which (3,586 feet) offers a nice view of the surrounding landscape.

**Cool Springs**

Until recently, the 1920s-era Cool Springs gas station was best known for being rebuilt so it could be blown up in 1992's universally panned *Universal Soldier*, a Jean-Claude Van Damme film. In the early 2000s, Ned Leuchtner bought the station and rebuilt it again, and today it looks much as it did in Route 66's heyday. There's no gas service, but there are cold drinks and a gift shop. 928-768-8366, [www.coolspringsroute66.com](http://www.coolspringsroute66.com)

**State Route 66**

This relic of the old Route 66 is the only section in Arizona that has state route markers. It runs from Kingman to Seligman, although its eastern portion has been turned over to Yavapai County for maintenance.

**KINGMAN**



**Kingman**

Kingman benefited from Route 66 traffic but also gained importance as a water stop on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway passenger line between Los Angeles and Kansas City, Missouri. That part of the city's history is celebrated at Locomotive Park, where Engine No. 3759 is on display. The steam engine traveled nearly 2.6 million miles before it was retired in 1953. 928-757-7919, [www.cityofkingman.gov](http://www.cityofkingman.gov)

**Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona**

This group was organized in 1987 with the mission of preserving and promoting Arizona's stretch of the route. It also operates a gift shop in the Powerhouse building at 120 W. Andy Devine Avenue in Kingman. 928-753-5001, [www.azrt66.com](http://www.azrt66.com)

**Andy Devine**

Kingman's most famous native son wasn't actually born there. Prolific character actor Andy Devine, known for playing cowboy sidekicks, was born in Flagstaff in 1905 but moved to Kingman when he was a year old. The city celebrates Devine's legacy with the annual Andy Devine Days festival and Andy Devine Avenue, a main route through town. [www.gokingman.com](http://www.gokingman.com)

**Yucca**

In 1952, Arizona's far-western portion of Route 66 was rerouted through Yucca to bypass the arduous trek through Sitgreaves Pass. That doomed places like Oatman and Cool Springs, but it boosted Yucca's economy until the 1970s, when Interstate 40 was built along the same route. The town's population has dwindled to about 120 today.

**TRUXTON**

About all that's left of Truxton's Route 66 glory days is the Frontier Motel and Café. Ray and Mildred Parker, founding members of the Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona, bought the Frontier in 1957 and owned it until Mildred's death in 2012. A New Mexico couple bought the motel and is in the process of restoring it. The Frontier's gift shop is open, but only sporadically, so call before stopping by. 928-769-1206

**Hackberry**

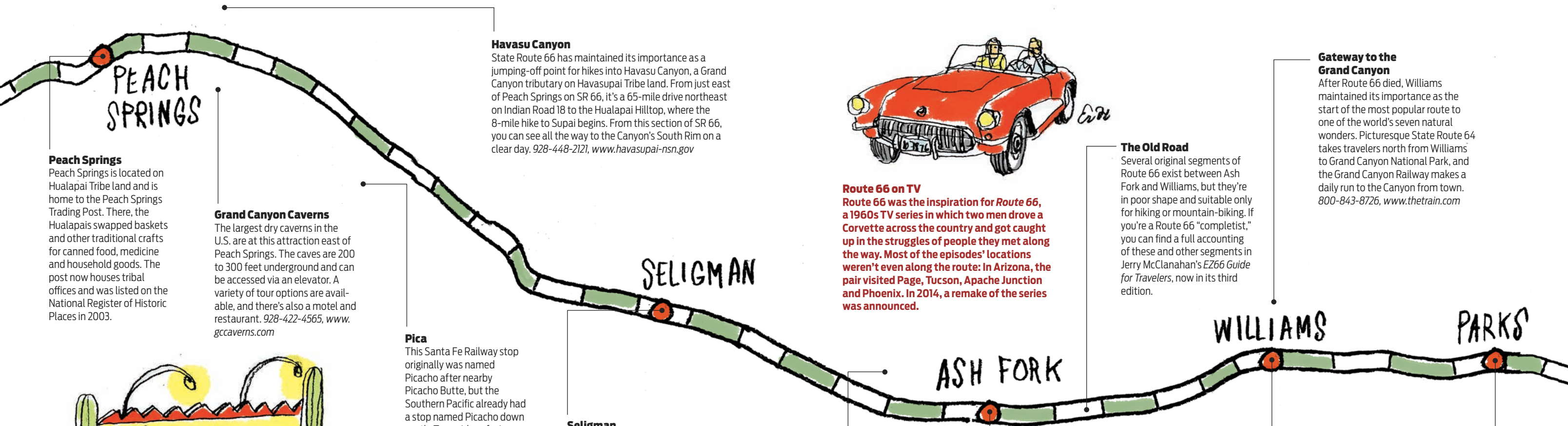
Bob Waldmire, an Illinois native known for his Route 66 artwork, bought the Hackberry General Store in the 1990s and was, for a time, the former mining town's only resident. (Waldmire, a vegetarian, once quipped that "corn dogs bought this place," alluding to his father being the inventor of the fair-food staple.) Waldmire died in 2009, but the store — part memorabilia shop and part museum — lives on. 928-769-2605, [www.hackberrygeneralstore.com](http://www.hackberrygeneralstore.com)

**Valentine**

After Interstate 40 bypassed this town, lovebirds kept visiting in early February to have a Valentine postmark stamped on their Valentine's Day cards. That ended in 1990, when the postal clerk was murdered and the post office demolished. You can still get the postmark down the road in Kingman, but there's not much left to see in Valentine, which had a population of 38 in 2010.

**Schoolhouse at Truxton Canyon Training School**

This Valentine landmark was part of the U.S. government's forced assimilation of Native Americans in the first part of the 20th century. Hualapai and other tribes' children came to the boarding school between 1903 and 1937. Boys practiced trades, while girls learned domestic skills. The Hualapai Tribe now owns the building and is seeking funds for its rehabilitation and reuse.



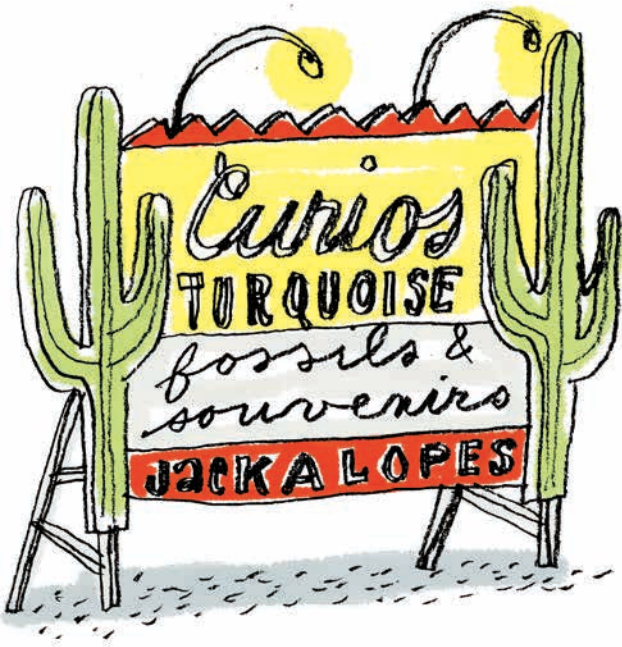
## PEACH SPRINGS

### Peach Springs

Peach Springs is located on Hualapai Tribe land and is home to the Peach Springs Trading Post. There, the Hualapais swapped baskets and other traditional crafts for canned food, medicine and household goods. The post now houses tribal offices and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

### Grand Canyon Caverns

The largest dry caverns in the U.S. are at this attraction east of Peach Springs. The caves are 200 to 300 feet underground and can be accessed via an elevator. A variety of tour options are available, and there's also a motel and restaurant. 928-422-4565, [www.gccaverns.com](http://www.gccaverns.com)



### Havasu Canyon

State Route 66 has maintained its importance as a jumping-off point for hikes into Havasu Canyon, a Grand Canyon tributary on Havasupai Tribe land. From just east of Peach Springs on SR 66, it's a 65-mile drive northeast on Indian Road 18 to the Hualapai Hilltop, where the 8-mile hike to Supai begins. From this section of SR 66, you can see all the way to the Canyon's South Rim on a clear day. 928-448-2121, [www.havasupai-nsn.gov](http://www.havasupai-nsn.gov)



### Route 66 on TV

Route 66 was the inspiration for *Route 66*, a 1960s TV series in which two men drove a Corvette across the country and got caught up in the struggles of people they met along the way. Most of the episodes' locations weren't even along the route: In Arizona, the pair visited Page, Tucson, Apache Junction and Phoenix. In 2014, a remake of the series was announced.

### The Old Road

Several original segments of Route 66 exist between Ash Fork and Williams, but they're in poor shape and suitable only for hiking or mountain-biking. If you're a Route 66 "completist," you can find a full accounting of these and other segments in Jerry McClanahan's *EZ66 Guide for Travelers*, now in its third edition.

### Gateway to the Grand Canyon

After Route 66 died, Williams maintained its importance as the start of the most popular route to one of the world's seven natural wonders. Picturesque State Route 64 takes travelers north from Williams to Grand Canyon National Park, and the Grand Canyon Railway makes a daily run to the Canyon from town. 800-843-8726, [www.thetrain.com](http://www.thetrain.com)

## SELIGMAN

### Pica

This Santa Fe Railway stop originally was named Picacho after nearby Picacho Butte, but the Southern Pacific already had a stop named Picacho down south. To avoid confusion, railroad officials matched coins (the old-days equivalent of Rock, Paper, Scissors) to see which name had to be changed. The Santa Fe lost, and Pica was born.

### Seligman

Seligman is the home of Angel Delgadillo, the longtime town barber and the "Mayor of Route 66." Delgadillo pushed Arizona to designate Route 66 a historic highway, which helped bring tourists back to Seligman and other towns after Interstate 40 bypassed them. He's retired now but still holds court at his barbershop, which is adjacent to Delgadillo's Route 66 Gift Shop and Visitors Center. 928-422-3352, [www.route66giftshop.com](http://www.route66giftshop.com)



### Delgadillo's Snow Cap Drive-In

This Seligman institution is known for its ice cream, milkshakes and root-beer floats. Juan Delgadillo (Angel's brother, see "Seligman" above) built the place in 1953 from scrap lumber he gathered while working for the railroad. Juan died in 2004, and his family runs the Snow Cap today. 928-422-3291

## ASH FORK

### Crookton Road

If you're traveling from east to west and looking for the authentic Route 66 experience, you'll want to take Interstate 40's Exit 139 (Crookton Road) between Ash Fork and Seligman. From here to the California border is the longest remaining unbroken stretch (158 miles) of the original route. East of here, you'll often find yourself on I-40 when following the route, though sections of the original road do still exist.

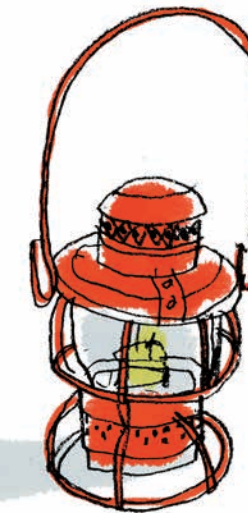
### Ash Fork

The tiny town of Ash Fork, which bills itself as the "Flagstone Capital of the World," was named for nearby Ash Creek, which itself was named for the ash trees in the area. In the old days, the town's "vigilance committee" hanged "malicious and contemptible people" from the limb of an ash tree. That was before Route 66 came to town; the route's history in Ash Fork is on display at the Ash Fork Route 66 Museum. 928-637-0204, [www.ashforkrt66museum.com](http://www.ashforkrt66museum.com)

## WILLIAMS

### Williams

Like most towns along the route, Williams wasn't ready to let go of Route 66. But Williams held off the inevitable the longest: In 1984, it became the last town to be bypassed by Interstate 40. Route 66 through Williams is known as Railroad Avenue and is split into eastbound and westbound sections. [www.williamschamber.org](http://www.williamschamber.org)



### Arizona State Railroad Museum

Williams was an important railroad stop, so it makes sense that a museum celebrating trains in Arizona would be located there. One problem: The long-awaited museum hasn't been built yet. The planned location of the 106,500-square-foot facility is near where the Grand Canyon Railway crosses Rodeo Road. Proponents are in the process of raising money for the project. [www.azstaterrmuseum.org](http://www.azstaterrmuseum.org)

## PARKS

### Parks

Parks' segment of Route 66 was built in 1931, replacing an older alignment to the south. A 1931 issue of *Arizona Highways* said the new road would "eliminate 18 miles of narrow, crooked, poorly surfaced road, which is particularly dangerous in dry weather due to raveling and innumerable potholes."

## ROUTE 66 MILEPOSTS

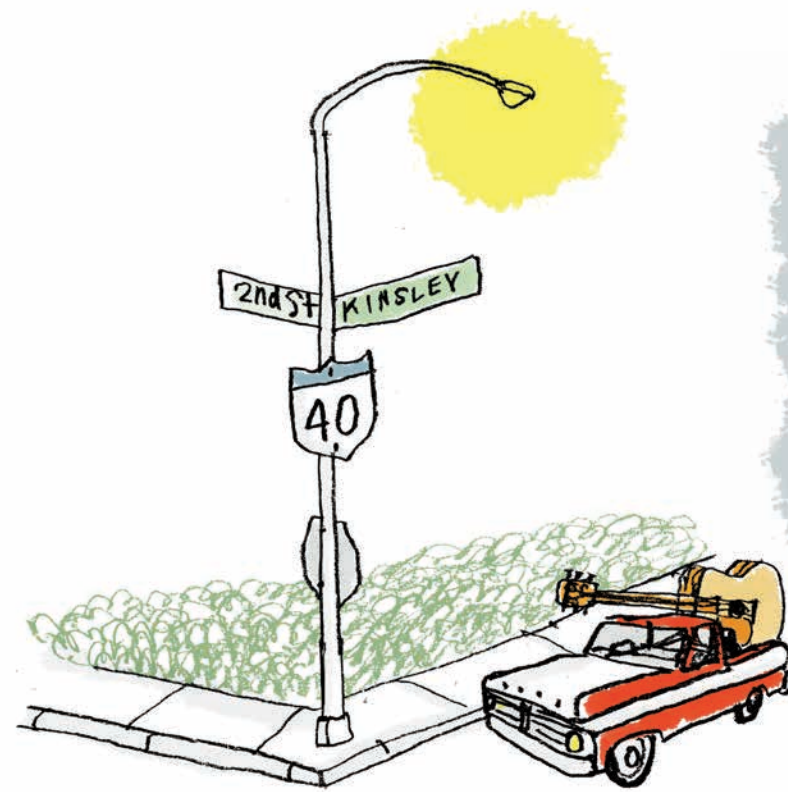
In its heyday, Route 66 ran for 401 miles through Arizona. The entire route, more than 2,400 miles, went from Lake Shore Drive in Chicago to the Pacific Coast Highway in Santa Monica, California, passing through Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona along the way.

Route 66 was "born" in 1926, but the Mother Road's roots are much deeper than that. In the 1850s, Lieutenant Edward Fitzgerald Beale built a wagon road from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to the Colorado River. Portions of the Beale Wagon Road are still visible today, and Route 66 in Arizona generally follows the road's course.

# ROUTE 66 MILEPOSTS

Early issues of *Arizona Highways* provided assessments of the state's highways, including Route 66. In August 1929, all sections of the route in Arizona were deemed "good" or "excellent," with the exception of Williams to Flagstaff ("fair") and Topock to Oatman ("poor"). The magazine estimated driving the entire Arizona stretch of Route 66 would take 14 hours.

Route 66 passed through five present-day Arizona counties: Mohave, Yavapai, Coconino, Navajo and Apache.



**Such a Fine Sight to See**  
 Feel like re-enacting a throwaway line from a 40-year-old song? Head to Standin' on the Corner Park, inspired by the 1972 Eagles hit *Take It Easy*. There, you, too, can be "standin' on a corner in Winslow, Arizona." There's even a flatbed Ford parked there, although you'll need to find a girl on your own. [www.winslowarizona.org](http://www.winslowarizona.org)

**Joseph City**  
 This town's claim to fame is the Jack Rabbit Trading Post, which features perhaps Route 66's most famous sign: a jack-rabbit and "HERE IT IS" in big, red letters. The convenience store and souvenir shop is also famous for its slogan: "If you haven't been to the Jack Rabbit, you haven't been to the Southwest."



JOSEPH CITY

**Penzance**  
 A place named Penzance, a sandstone quarry about 4 miles west of Holbrook, appears on most Arizona maps. It was named in 1888 by Santa Fe Railway officers. According to the book *Arizona Place Names*, the Gilbert & Sullivan comic opera *The Pirates of Penzance*, very popular at the time, inspired the name.



**Winslow**  
 Interstate 40 bypassed Winslow in the 1970s, but the town has maintained its importance as the home of Homolovi State Park and the gateway to the Navajo Nation's Painted Desert. Winslow's history, including its connection to Route 66, is on display at the Old Trails Museum. 928-289-5861, [www.oldtrailsmuseum.org](http://www.oldtrailsmuseum.org)

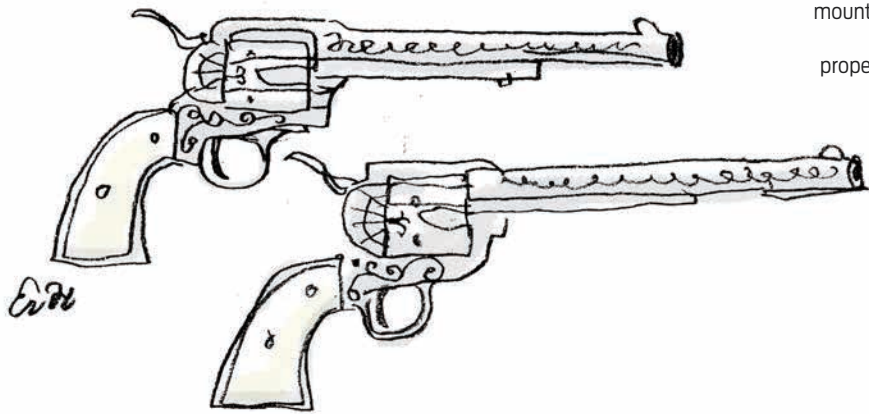
**La Posada**  
 Formerly a Harvey House, this Mary Colter-designed hotel opened in 1930 and operated until 1957. It then was gutted and turned into Santa Fe Railway offices. Finally, in the 1990s, local preservationists banded together to save it from demolition. Restoration efforts are ongoing, but the hotel — which Colter considered her masterpiece — is open for business again. 928-289-4366, [www.laposada.org](http://www.laposada.org)



**Meteor Crater**  
 This big hole was formed by a 150-foot-wide meteorite that slammed into the Earth about 50,000 years ago. Most of the 300,000-ton rock was vaporized on impact, but pieces have been found several miles away. The largest fragment is on display at the visitors center. 800-289-5898, [www.meteorcrater.com](http://www.meteorcrater.com)

**Two Guns**  
 Named after local resident Henry "Two Guns" Miller, Two Guns was mostly a tourist trap. Its proprietors tried to lure travelers off the highway with a "zoo" that included mountain lions and coyotes. Today, the Two Guns site is private property, but you can see the zoo's buildings from Interstate 40.

**Winona**  
 Don't forget this little town, which is close to where Route 66 crossed Walnut Creek on the Walnut Canyon Bridge. Completed in 1924 as part of a Bureau of Public Roads project, the riveted steel bridge has a single span of 101 feet. It's now closed to car traffic, but you can still walk on it.



WINONA  
 FLAGSTAFF

**Flagstaff**  
 A portion of old Route 66 runs through Flagstaff as an Interstate 40 business route. That, along with Interstate 17 from Phoenix, has helped the former lumber town weather Route 66's demise. The San Francisco Peaks and surrounding wilderness have helped, too. 928-213-2951, [www.flagstaffarizona.org](http://www.flagstaffarizona.org)

**Route 66 Mural**  
 In 2013, Prescott-based artists R.E. Wall and Margaret Dewar unveiled a new Route 66 mural in Flagstaff. The mural, which Dewar calls "an expression of what we as Americans have held Route 66 to symbolize," is on the south-facing wall of Lumberyard Brewing Co., 5 S. San Francisco Street.

**Lowell Observatory**  
 Just a few years after Route 66's designation, Clyde Tombaugh discovered Pluto from Lowell Observatory, located within walking distance of the road on Flagstaff's Mars Hill. The facility's centerpiece, a 24-inch Alvan Clark telescope, was dismantled for repairs in 2014 and will be back in action later this year. 928-774-3358, [www.lowell.edu](http://www.lowell.edu)

**Hotel Monte Vista**  
 The Monte Vista (then called the Community Hotel) opened on New Year's Day in 1927 and was publicly owned until it was sold in the 1960s. Its location just a block north of Route 66 made it a popular stop for motorists, and at various times, it also hosted Mary Costigan's radio show, a Prohibition speak-easy and a few slot machines. They're all long gone, but the hotel is going strong. 928-779-6971, [www.hotelmontevista.com](http://www.hotelmontevista.com)

**Bellemont**  
 With an elevation of 7,132 feet, Bellemont bills itself as the highest town on Route 66. It also was a railroad water stop, and during World War II, the Army built an ammunition-storage depot there. The depot now is known as Camp Navajo and is operated by the Arizona Army National Guard.

BELLEMONT

### Holbrook

Founded as a railroad stop, Holbrook is the home of the old Navajo County Courthouse, which now houses a museum, a visitors center and an original Old West jail. Rumor has it that the ghost of George Smiley, a murderer hanged there in 1900, still haunts the building. [www.ci.holbrook.az.us](http://www.ci.holbrook.az.us)

### Wigwam Motel

Why did the Indian wear feathers? To keep his wigwam. That's a joke. The Wigwam Motel in Holbrook is not, although the accommodations there are actually shaped like teepees, not wigwams. The 15 concrete-and-steel structures, arranged in a semicircle, include the original hickory furniture, along with full bathrooms. The motel closed in the 1970s but reopened in 1988, and it now features a museum of Route 66 collectibles and other artifacts. 928-524-3048, [www.sleepinawigwam.com](http://www.sleepinawigwam.com)



### Petrified Forest National Park

More than 13,000 years of human history is on display here, along with petrified wood that dates to the days of early dinosaurs. Petrified Forest is the only national park in the West that protects a section of old Route 66; a line of weathered telephone poles marks the roadbed within the park. 928-524-6228, [www.nps.gov/pefo](http://www.nps.gov/pefo)

### Painted Desert Inn

Located within Petrified Forest National Park, this Pueblo Revival-style inn catered to Route 66 travelers from 1940 to 1963. It was scheduled for demolition in 1975, but a public campaign helped save it, and now it's been designated a national historic landmark. It reopened in 2006 as a museum and bookstore, but it no longer offers overnight accommodations. 928-524-6228, [www.nps.gov/pefo](http://www.nps.gov/pefo)

### Chambers/Sanders

These two old railway stops (exits 333 and 339 from Interstate 40) are jumping-off points for the extraordinarily scenic U.S. Route 191. From Chambers, the route heads north through the Navajo Nation and continues into Utah and Wyoming. From Sanders, drivers can head south all the way to the U.S.-Mexico border — a route that includes the Coronado Trail Scenic Byway between Springerville and Morenci.

### Querino Canyon Bridge

Designed by the Arizona Highway Department and built in 1929, this bridge was part of a Route 66 relocation. You can still drive on it today, although part of the road leading to it is dirt. From Interstate 40, take Exit 341 (Ortega Road) and go east on the frontage road on the north side of I-40. After you cross the bridge, you can either backtrack or continue east to return to I-40 at Pine Springs Road (Exit 346).

### Lupton

The town of Lupton is the easternmost populated place on Arizona's stretch of Route 66. There are plenty of route-themed businesses to the north of Interstate 40, including one that's shaped like a giant teepee. From here, it's less than a mile to the New Mexico border. And that's a story for another day.



LUPTON

CHAMBERS

SANDERS

ARIZONA  
NEW MEXICO

## ROUTE 66 MILEPOSTS

Arizona had the third-longest section of Route 66, behind New Mexico and Oklahoma. In Kansas, meanwhile, only 13 miles of the route passed through the state.

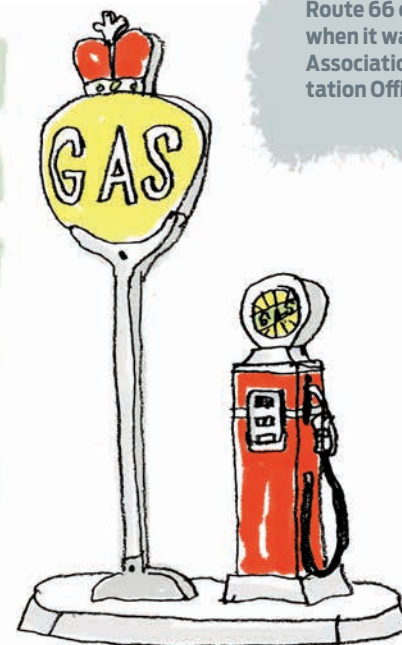
Speaking to the Associated Press in 1997, Angel Delgadillo described September 22, 1978 — the day Interstate 40 opened: "I stood out there [on Route 66 in Seligman] and saw nothing. We, the people of these towns, had been forgotten," Delgadillo said. "It's sad when the world forgets you."

Route 66 officially ceased to exist in 1985, when it was decertified by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. [AH](#)



### Get Your Kicks

Bobby Troup immortalized Route 66 when he wrote (*Get Your Kicks on Route 66*), a song first recorded by Nat King Cole in 1946. The song mentions three Arizona towns — Flagstaff, Winona and Kingman — and has been covered by artists ranging from Chuck Berry to Depeche Mode.



HOLBROOK

