



Route 66 Terrain¹

State boundaries, cities and the interstates dominate most highway maps. It is only when those details are stripped away, leaving the rivers and landforms, that the problems facing early highway builders becomes clear.

From the low flatlands of the Midwest, Route 66 arcs south and west, crossing the Mississippi at St. Louis, and skirting the northern slopes of the Ozark Mountains. The highway continues on through the rolling hills of Oklahoma and up onto the high plains of the Texas Panhandle.

From there, it snakes into the Rockies and continues climbing through New Mexico toward the highest point on the road (7,000 feet) near the San Francisco Peaks in Arizona. After that, it's all downhill—but straight into the heat and hardpan and mountains of the Great Mojave Desert, gateway to the highway's end on the shores of the Pacific.

Imagine facing all these barriers—rivers, mountains and deserts—while trying to build a road with early horse-drawn equipment. These are some of the reasons it took eight state highway departments more than a decade to complete and pave old Route 66.

¹Thanks to Raven Maps & Images for allowing us to use their large United States map. For further information on the extraordinary maps they offer, visit their website at www.ravenmaps.com. The US map is available from Raven, and tracing the route yourself makes a great project in itself.



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