



Guest Senior Traveler, TVMcR, West Hollywood CA: I live in the Los Angeles area, just a city block from historic Route 66, as it proceeds westward along Santa Monica Boulevard. Every time I see the nearby street sign, I'm reminded of a long-ago popular tune, and the lyrics that declare Route 66 "winds from Chicago to L.A."

Those lyrics didn't go far enough. Route 66 actually continues past Los Angeles for another dozen miles to the coastal city of Santa Monica, where there's a final Route 66 sign just a few feet from the amusement pier, beach and Pacific Ocean. It's the actual end of the famed road's 2,451 miles.

I got my kicks on Route 66 way back in 1951, when I first drove it from Chicago in 1951. Recalled to active duty as a Navy reservist during the Korean War, I had to report to the San Diego Naval Station. I hit 66 again going back East when my two-year hitch was up.

Most recently I drove it last year when I moved from Arizona to Los Angeles, revisiting towns along the way I'd seen 60 years ago. These were mentioned in the lyrics: Flagstaff, Winona, Kingman, Barstow and San Bernardino.

Flagstaff AZ: Galaxy Diner, 931 W. Route 66, Flagstaff AZ 86001. This eatery wasn't there when I drove through in '51, but once inside, today's sparkling decor definitely reflects that era. With bright red and white plastic and a juke box playing Big Band music, I almost expected to see young couples jitterbugging. The Galaxy offers Saturday night dancing, and some of the music is from the 1940s and 1950s.

Flagstaff is a beautiful town, surrounded by stately Ponderosa Pine forests and the San Francisco Peaks. It's a favorite stop for tourists on their way 80 miles north to the Grand Canyon. (flagstaff.az.gov)

Winona AZ: Legend is that this old town was named in the lyrics of the song Route 66 only because it rhymes with Arizona. Hence, "don't forget Winona". It's about a dozen miles east of

Flagstaff, and mostly abandoned buildings these days. A legend is that singer Wynonna Judd (born Christina Claire Ciminella) changed her first name after driving through.

Kingman AZ: The desert town is about 180 miles south of the Grand Canyon, with the Route 66 Museum at 120 W. Andy Devine Av., Kingman AZ 86401. Among the relics is a 1950 Studebaker Champion, old Chevy truck and memorabilia from when Kingman was a travelers' stop during the 1930s Depression years. The Oakies drove west through Kingman to find work, as depicted in John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath". route66museum.com

Barstow CA: Route 66 runs right down Main Street of the Mojave Desert town, across the Arizona-California state line about 200 miles west of Kingman. The building that was a Harvey House at the Santa Fe railroad station is still there today. It displays historic artifacts and photos from when it was a restaurant stop for train travelers in the last century.

Are you old enough to remember the 1946 Judy Garland movie, "The Harvey Girls"? Of course, also her hit song, "On The Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe"? barstowca.org