7-Day Route 66 Essentials Itinerary with Times and Overnight Stays (Table Format)

Day 1: Chicago -> St. Louis (~300 miles, ~5-6 hrs)

Time	Activity/Stop	Notes
08:00 AM	Breakfast at Lou Mitchell's, Chicago	Classic Route 66 start
09:00 AM	Depart Chicago	Stop in Pontiac around 11:00 AM
01:00 PM	Lunch en route	Continue toward St. Louis
04:00 PM	Chain of Rocks Bridge	Photo stop
05:00 PM	Arrive St. Louis	Visit Gateway Arch

Overnight: Holiday Inn Route 66, La Quinta Inn, Wayside Motel

Day 2: St. Louis -> Tulsa (~350 miles, ~6-7 hrs)

Time	Activity/Stop	Notes
08:00 AM	Depart St. Louis	Stop at Meramec Caverns (~09:30 AM)
12:00 PM	Lunch in Cuba, MO	Murals + Wagon Wheel Motel
03:00 PM	Springfield Route 66 Car Museum	Explore classic cars
05:00 PM	Blue Whale of Catoosa	Iconic roadside stop
06:00 PM	Arrive Tulsa	Check into vintage motel

Overnight: Campbell Hotel, Route 66 Vintage Motel options

Day 3: Tulsa -> Oklahoma City (~120 miles, ~2-3 hrs)

Time	Activity/Stop	Notes
09:00 AM	Depart Tulsa	Route 66 Historical Village
11:00 AM	Lunch at Rock Café, Stroud	Classic diner
01:00 PM	Round Barn, Arcadia	Historic landmark
02:00 PM	Pops Soda Ranch	Try unique sodas
03:00 PM	Arrive Oklahoma City	Explore Cowboy Museum

Overnight: Skirvin Hilton, Route 66 themed motels near Arcadia

Day 4: Oklahoma City -> Amarillo (~260 miles, ~4-5 hrs)

Time	Activity/Stop	Notes
08:00 AM	Depart OKC	Stop at Lucille's Gas Station (~09:30 AM)
11:00 AM	Clinton Route 66 Museum	Explore exhibits
01:00 PM	Lunch en route	Continue west

04:00 PM	Cadillac Ranch	Bring spray paint
05:00 PM	Arrive Amarillo	Overnight stay

Overnight: Big Texan Motel, Courtyard by Marriott

Day 5: Amarillo -> Albuquerque (~290 miles, ~5 hrs)

Time	Activity/Stop	Notes
08:00 AM	Depart Amarillo	Stop at Midpoint Café (~09:30 AM)
12:00 PM	Lunch in Tucumcari	Visit Blue Swallow Motel + Tee Pee Curios
03:00 PM	Continue to Albuquerque	Enjoy neon signs
05:00 PM	Arrive Albuquerque	Overnight stay

Overnight: Blue Swallow Motel, Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town

Day 6: Albuquerque -> Flagstaff (~320 miles, ~5-6 hrs)

Time	Activity/Stop	Notes
08:00 AM	Breakfast at Route 66 Diner	Albuquerque classic
10:00 AM	Gallup murals stop	Local art
12:00 PM	Drive through Petrified Forest	Scenic views
02:00 PM	Wigwam Motel, Holbrook	Retro stay
05:00 PM	Arrive Flagstaff	Overnight stay

Overnight: Wigwam Motel, Little America Hotel

Day 7: Flagstaff -> Santa Monica (~460 miles, ~7-8 hrs)

Time	Activity/Stop	Notes
07:00 AM	Depart Flagstaff	Stop at Meteor Crater (~08:00 AM)
10:00 AM	Seligman	Burger + Route 66 revival town
12:00 PM	Hackberry General Store	Roadside charm
02:00 PM	Oatman burros	Wild burros experience
06:00 PM	Arrive Santa Monica Pier	Route 66 End Sign

Overnight: Fairmont Miramar Hotel, Sea Shore Motel

Notes

Times are approximate and assume moderate driving pace with short sightseeing stops. Adjust based on group style and daylight hours.

Insider Tips

- Mix retro motels with modern hotels for balance.
- Book iconic spots early.
- Use overnight stays as part of the experience.