Seasonal Route 66 Itineraries - Winter Highlights (10 Days, December-February)

Experience Route 66 in its winter charm with this 10-day itinerary. From Chicago's frosty mornings to Santa Monica's mild coastal evenings, the journey blends iconic roadside stops with seasonal highlights - holiday lights, hearty comfort food, and historic motels that feel especially welcoming in colder months. This winter adventure captures the quiet beauty and festive spirit of America's most legendary highway.

Day 1: Chicago, IL -> Springfield, IL (~200 miles, ~4.5 hrs)

- 08:00 AM - Route 66 Begin Sign, Chicago (Start of the journey)
- 09:00 AM - Joliet Route 66 Welcome Center (Photo ops)
- 11:00 AM - Pontiac Route 66 Museum (Winter exhibits)
- 12:30 PM - Lunch: Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket (Warm comfort food)
- 02:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Lincoln (Top off fuel)
- 06:00 PM - Dinner: Cozy Dog Drive-In (Classic Route 66 diner)

Overnight Stay: Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center, Springfield

Seasonal Note: Frosty mornings, festive lights in town squares.

Day 2: Springfield, IL -> St. Louis, MO (~100 miles, ~2 hrs)

- 09:30 AM - Lincoln Library (Historic exhibits)
- 11:00 AM - Gateway Arch (Iconic landmark, winter skyline)
- 12:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Litchfield (Top off fuel)
- 12:30 PM - Lunch: Ariston Cafe (Hearty winter menu)
- 01:00 PM - Forest Park (Holiday lights, brisk stroll)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: Pappy's Smokehouse (Famous BBQ)

Overnight Stay: Red Roof Inn, St. Louis

Seasonal Note: December evenings glow with holiday displays.

Day 3: St. Louis, MO -> Springfield, MO (~215 miles, ~4.5 hrs)

- 09:00 AM - Missouri Botanical Garden (Winter conservatory)
- 11:00 AM - Route 66 State Park (Quiet winter scenery)
- 12:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Rolla (Top off fuel)
- 12:30 PM - Lunch: Ted Drewes Frozen Custard (Holiday flavors)
- 01:30 PM - Fantastic Caverns (Underground warmth)

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- 03:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Lebanon (Top off fuel)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: The Order (Modern American cuisine)

Overnight Stay: Best Western Route 66 Rail Haven, Springfield

Seasonal Note: Cozy indoor stops balance chilly rides.

Day 4: Springfield, MO -> Tulsa, OK (~180 miles, ~4 hrs)

- 09:00 AM - Vintage Iron Motorcycle Museum (Classic bikes indoors)
- 12:30 PM - Fuel Stop: Miami (Top off fuel)
- 01:00 PM - Lunch: Burn Co BBQ (Warm BBQ comfort)
- 02:30 PM - Fuel Stop: Claremore (Top off fuel)
- 03:00 PM - Tulsa Art Deco District (Winter architecture walk)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: The Tavern (Gastropub fare)

Overnight Stay: Route 66 Harley Motel, Tulsa

Seasonal Note: January evenings feature local winter festivals.

Day 5: Tulsa, OK -> Oklahoma City, OK (~105 miles, ~2.5 hrs)

- 09:00 AM - OKC National Memorial (Reflective winter visit)
- 11:00 AM - Bricktown Entertainment District (Shops & lights)
- 12:30 PM - Fuel Stop: Chandler (Top off fuel)
- 01:00 PM - Lunch: Empire Slice House (Creative pizza)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: Cattlemen's Steakhouse (Historic steakhouse)

Overnight Stay: Skirvin Hilton, Oklahoma City

Seasonal Note: Cozy winter nights in Bricktown.

Day 6: Oklahoma City, OK -> Amarillo, TX (~260 miles, ~5 hrs)

- 09:00 AM - Cadillac Ranch (Snow-dusted roadside art)
- 11:00 AM - Fuel Stop: Elk City (Top off fuel)
- 11:30 AM - Amarillo Historic District (Explore downtown indoors)
- 01:00 PM - Lunch: Big Texan Steak Ranch (Route 66 classic)
- 02:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Shamrock (Top off fuel)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: Tyler's Barbecue (Local favorite)

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Overnight Stay: Big Texan Motel, Amarillo

Seasonal Note: Winter sunsets glow over Cadillac Ranch.

Day 7: Amarillo, TX -> Santa Fe, NM (~280 miles, ~5 hrs)

- 09:00 AM - Midpoint Cafe, Adrian (Halfway point of Route 66)
- 11:30 AM - Fuel Stop: Tucumcari (Top off fuel)
- 12:30 PM - Lunch: Watson's BBQ, Santa Rosa (Local favorite)
- 02:30 PM - Santa Fe Plaza (Holiday markets)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: The Shed (New Mexican cuisine)

Overnight Stay: Inn of the Governors, Santa Fe

Seasonal Note: Snow-kissed adobe architecture and festive lights.

Day 8: Santa Fe, NM -> Gallup, NM (~200 miles, ~4 hrs)

- 09:00 AM - Santa Fe Art Stroll (Indoor galleries)
- 12:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Grants (Top off fuel)
- 12:30 PM - Lunch: Local Cafe (Quick bite)
- 01:00 PM - El Rancho Hotel (Historic Route 66 stop)
- 03:00 PM - Red Rock Park (Winter hikes)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: Jerry's Cafe (Local favorite)

Overnight Stay: El Rancho Hotel, Gallup

Seasonal Note: Crisp winter evenings at Red Rock Park.

Day 9: Gallup, NM -> Flagstaff, AZ (~185 miles, ~3.5 hrs)

- 09:00 AM - Petrified Forest National Park (Winter landscapes)
- 12:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Holbrook (Top off fuel)
- 12:30 PM - Lunch: Joe & Aggie's Cafe (Route 66 classic)
- 01:00 PM - Wigwam Motel (Photo stop)
- 03:00 PM - Flagstaff Downtown (Shops & winter charm)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: Beaver Street Brewery (Local brews & food)

Overnight Stay: Little America Hotel, Flagstaff

Seasonal Note: Snow-capped pines and cozy lodges.

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Day 10: Flagstaff, AZ -> Santa Monica, CA (~470 miles, ~7.5 hrs)

- 08:00 AM - Grand Canyon Detour (Optional, winter vistas)
- 12:00 PM - Oatman Ghost Town (Historic mining town)
- 12:30 PM - Lunch: Oatman Hotel (Western-style meal)
- 01:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Kingman (Top off fuel)
- 03:00 PM - Fuel Stop: Barstow (Top off fuel)
- 04:00 PM - Route 66 End Sign, Santa Monica Pier (Photo finish)
- 07:00 PM - Dinner: The Albright (Seafood by the ocean)

Overnight Stay: Ocean View Hotel, Santa Monica

Seasonal Note: Mild coastal evenings contrast with winter's crisp inland air.

Why Winter Works on Route 66

- Festive lights and holiday markets add charm to towns along the route.
- Historic motels and diners feel especially cozy in colder months.
- Snow-dusted landscapes and crisp desert skies offer unique photo ops.
- Fewer crowds mean quieter roads and easier access to iconic stops.
- Seasonal flavors like stews, BBQ, and holiday treats enrich the ride.