



Route 66

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The road that became known as Route 66 holds a unique place in American popular culture. Unlike any other road in world history, this modest two-lane highway took on cult status, bound up with American nostalgia for a recent past in which life was far less complex and mechanized than it has now become. Inaugurated by a group of businessmen in the 1920s, at a time when the automobile was first asserting itself as one of the main preferences for family holiday travel, its life-span was short - less than fifty years - but its mythology goes on and on. While Freddy Langer's text tells the curious story of Route 66 in some detail, it is Gerd Kittel's extraordinary photographs that tell the story of the road as it is now. Wistful, brutal and beautiful at the same time, these documents of today show what has become a once powerful symbol of American hopes and pleasures: the wrecks of abandoned automobiles, the deserted diners and souvenir shops; the battered remnants of failed silos and warehouses; derelict towns; surviving personalities and buildings, as well as some of the views the road offers as it passes through seven states between Chicago and the Pacific Ocean. Before the advent of interstate superhighways, that was the main attraction of the road - its appeal to the American drive towards the West, where opportunity and success were believed to be waiting.

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