



Illinois
Department of Commerce

& Economic Opportunity

OFFICE OF TOURISM

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Illinois Marks 90th Anniversary of Iconic U.S. Route 66 with a Pop-up Experience in London

Illinois Office of Tourism brings a taste of 'The Mother Road' to the UK with a Route 66-themed experience

LONDON – Illinois Office of Tourism today celebrated the 90th Anniversary of Route 66 with a special celebration in Central London to inspire travel along 'The Mother Road of America' and drive awareness that it starts in Illinois. Route 66 is a major draw for international travelers – especially from the UK – so to celebrate this milestone in the route's history, Illinois put the road front-and-center, commissioning a 52-foot-tall mural by a prominent British street artist to highlight the amazing Route 66 assets in Illinois. The mural will be on display through April 23.

The artist took inspiration from the famous Walldog paintings along Route 66 when creating the Illinois mural on display on the side of Hat & Feathers Bar & Restaurant in London's Clerkenwell Road. The four-day mural painting ended with a pop-up event complete with a blues band and Chicago-style hot dog food truck.

Route 66 opened in 1926 as one of the original U.S. highways, starting from Chicago and heading out across the U.S. to the West Coast. It obtained popular culture status as one of the world's most famous roads, with 1940s rhythm and blues standard (Get Your Kicks on) Route 66, one of many songs celebrating its legend. Although officially removed from the U.S. Highway System in 1985, much of the original route is still drivable – including a 300-mile stretch in the heart of America through Illinois.

When describing the Mother Road's significance, Route 66 author and expert Jim Hinckley said, "Over the last 90 years, Route 66 has come to be perceived as the main street of America. The journey through the heartland starts in Chicago, one of America's most dynamic cities. The Route 66 experience brings together the people who ride it to form a type of family. It is the crossroads representing both America's past and future – a living, breathing time capsule where times blend seamlessly."

Cory Jobe, Director of Tourism for Illinois, added: “The start of a great road trip is an inspiring moment, and that’s been the case for 90 years in Illinois – it can mean so much more than simply wheels on a road. In 2016, it’s great to see the spirit of Route 66 alive and well.”

The Illinois stretch of Route 66 boasts the highest density of kitschy attractions on the Mother Road, from murals and diners to classic cars and remarkable history. For more information visit EnjoyIllinois.com.

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.