**Day 1: 2017.05.27**

Marshfield – Chicago: 4 h 9 min (284.7 mi) via I-39 S and I-90 E 4 -9 am

Time: 4-9am

Chicago – Springfield, IL: 2 h 58 min (201.9 mi) via I-55 S

Time: 10am-5pm

1. **Route 66 Across Chicagoland:**

Eating: Breastfast at **Lou Mitchell’s** for coffee

**Grand Old Art Institute of Chicago in Grant Park along the lakeshore: Symbolic starting point**

The last US-66 Shield used to be hanged from a streetlight just south of the gallery, but where is it now???

Drive west via Adams street, and then angling southwest along Ogden Avenue, which reveal a lot of about the places it passes through.

**Cicero:**

--located south of Frank Lloyd Wright’s hometown of Oak Park

--connect to **mobster Al Capone**, which is another local legend

**Henry’s Drive-In:** (6031 W. Ogden Ave., 708/656/9344)

--Cicero’s main Route 66 connection is the fine sign marking **Henry’s Drive-In**, where we can snack on excellent **Polish hot dogs** smothered with a pile of **French fries**.

**Berwyn**:

-- bounded by the I-55 freeway, **Berwyn** effectively marks one end of this first or last stretch of Route 66 with the unusual **Chicago Portage National Historic Site.**

**Chicago Portage National Historic Site:**

This is a 100-acre semi-wilderness, surrounded by decrepit and abandoned industrial lands, preserves the place where early explorers learned to carry their canoes and boats between the Chicago and Des Plaines watersheds, linking the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico via the Great Lakes and Mississippi River. (Today, Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal serves a similar role, running via Lockport and Joliet.)

**Dell Rhea’s Chicken Basket** (645 Joliet Rd. 630/325-0780):

One longstanding Route 66 landmark stands about 20 miles outside Chicago in Willowbrook, off Hwy-83 on the north side of I-55. It is a welcoming old roadside tavern, with famously **fabulous chicken dinners** and frequent **live music.**

1. **Joliet** : Cicero, IL to Joliet IL, 44 min (41.0 mi) via I-55 S and I-355 S

Joliet: the “City of Steel and Stone” has a rough reputation that doesn’t really reflect its status as the fastest growing city in Illinois. It is a feast for fans of post-industrial scenery.

Loads of old **warehouses** and **commercial buildings** like the lovely **Rialto Theater** on Chicago Street line the route.

**Stalwart bridges** cross the **Des Plaines River** and **historic Illinois & Michigan Canal**, which, beginning in the 1840s, connected Chicago with the Mississippi River before being replaced by the less salubrious Sanitary and Ship Canal.

**Harrah’s Joliet Casino** (151 N. Joliet St. , 815/740-7800)

Chicagoland Speedway and the Route 66 Raceway (888/629-7223)

Where NHRA drag races, NASCAR stock car races, and occassoinal pop music concerts are held.

1. **Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Preserve** (815/423-6370. Trails open daily, welcome center open Mon-Sat in summer, Mon-Fri in winter)

19,000 acres of the old Joliet ammunition factory are being converted into the 3. Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.

-- offers more than 20 miles of hiking and biking trails on both sides of Hwy-53 (old Route 66).

-- Midewin is a native Potawatomi word meaning “healthy balance”, and a visit here gives a good feeling for the flora and fauna that would have existed naturally in places like this all over the Midwest.

1. Hwy-53: Wilmington and Dwight

**Wilmington**: is a semi-famous for its photogenic 30-foot-tall, bright green Gemini Giant statue, which stands in front of the former launching Pad Drive-In (810 E. Baltimore St.).

Town of **Braidwood**: has the popular, retro-1950s Polk-A-Dot Drive-in (222 N. Front St. 815/458-3377)

**Dwight**: is leafy and quaint, well known a century ago for its Keeley Institute treatment center for alcoholics.

-- and now is famous for its fine **old Texaco station**, which stands at the main crossroads (near the reliable Old Route 66 Family Restaurant), and earns a reputation as the oldest surviving gas station on the Mother Road.

-- The station now serves as Dwight’s welcome center.

-- **Odel**l: an even more old Standard Oil gas station stands just down Hwy-53 in the next Route 66 town.

1. **Pontiac: route 66 Hall of Fame**

**Route 66 Association Hall of Fame Museum** (110 W. Howard St, 815/844-4566, daily, free)

-- old main fire station

-- gas pump, enamel and neon advertising signs, old photos documenting the road’s heritage,

-- The Pontiac museum is worth a look for its tribute to iconic Route 66 artist Bob Waldmire, whose delicate line drawings were instrumental in nurturing national enthusiasm for preserving and protecting the unique legacy of Route 66.

**Pontiac-Oakland Museum** (815-842-2345, daily, free)

--displays immaculately preserved Firebirds and Bonnevilles amidst a Smithsonian-worthy array of advertising and related memorabilia

Wall Dogs Sign and Mural Museum (815-842-1848, daily, free)

-- an international collective who get together in places around the world to paint large signs and murals, including most of those adoring the walls of Pontiac buildings.

**Old Log Cabin Inn** ( 18700 Old Route 66, 815-842-2908)

-- on the north edge of town.

-- the old, old road, which dates from 1918, is still there, behind the café along the railroad tracks.

1. **Bloomington-Normal**

-- middle of Illinois

-- surrounded by five different Interstate freeways and miles of cornfields.

-- is the only place in the world where that classic bar snack, **Beer Nuts**, is made

-- for a free sample, stop by the factory ( 103 N. Robinson St. 800/BEER-NUTS or 309-827-8580 ext 324)

-- The “twin cities” are also the corporate home of insurance company **State Farm** -- and birthplace of another all-American icon, the Midwest-based burger chain **Steak’n Shake**, which started here in 1934.

-- Good food is available downtown at **Lucca Grill** (116E. Market St. 309-828-7521), which has been **serving** pizza and pasta dishes since the 1930s

1. **Funks Grove**

-- Follow the old Route 66 along the west side of the freeway for just over four miles past the delightful anachronism of **Funks Grove (309-874-3360),** where the friendly **Funk family** has been tapping trees and selling delicious maple sirup ( that is how they spell it) since 1891.

-- if you are here in late winter or early spring, you can **watch them tap the trees and hammer in the spouts**; each tree can produce up to 4 gallons of sap a day, but it takes 50 gallons of sap for each gallon of the final product.

1. **Lincoln** (pop 14,504)

-- Honest Abe

-- As a young lawyer, Abraham Lincoln drew up the legal documents for founding the town but warned developers that the “nerve knew of anything named Lincoln that amounted to much”. At the dedication ceremonies, Lincoln supposedly “baptized” the place by spitting out a mouthful of watermelon seeds—hence the **Plaster watermelon** and **historical plaque** remembering the great event, next to the **Amtrak-serviced train station** at Broadway and Chicago streets in the center of town.

-- Lincoln was also home to Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes, who was elected Class Poet while in the 8th grade here.

1. **Springfield ( Stay for the night)**

-- Illinois state capital (pop. 118,033)

-- rural small town character

-- three-plus-hour drive from Chicago

-- is the place that takes the “Land of Lincoln” state’s obsession with Abraham Lincoln to its greatest extreme. Lincoln worked and lived here from 1837 to 1861. He left Springfield after being elected president and was buried here after his assassination at the end of the Civil War.

**Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum** ( 212 N. 6th st. 217-558-8934, daily, $15)

-- across from the old State Capital

-- $100 million, 200,000-square-foot complex

Other sights:

-- the only home Lincoln ever owned,

-- his law offices,

-- and **tomb**: located in Oak Ridge Cemetery, two miles north of downtown, also includes the remains of his wife and three of four children.

-- Legend has it that if you touch the nose on the bronze bust of Lincoln, good luck will follow.

**Dana-Thomas House** (301 E. Lawrence Ave. 217-78206776, Wed-Sun. $10)

-- a half mile south of the state capital

-- designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1902, for socialite Susan Dana, who lived here until the late 1940S, it is the most luxurious, best preserved, and most fully furnished of his house

**Shea’s Gas Station** (2075 Peoria Rd., 217-522-0475)

-- The ever-engaging owner Bill Shea curated a photogenic collection of vintage gasoline pumps, signs, shields, and anything else related to the sale and use of our favorite fossil fuel.

-- Sadly, Shea passed away in 2013. While the collection’s future is uncertain, it still offers amazing photo-ops, even from the outside.

**Cozy Dog Drive-in** (2935 S. 6th St. 217-525-1992)

-- a favorite Route 66 Watering hole in Srpingfield

-- on the old road south of downtown

-- the birthplace of the **corn dog**, which here goes by the nicer name “**Cozy”,** was founded in 1949 by Ed Waldmire, father of noted Route 66 artist Bob Waldmire.

-- so come on in and chow down – **two Cozy Dogs, a cold drink, and a big basket of fries cost around $9**

**Route 66 Twin Drive-in** (1700 Recreation Dr., 217-698-0066)

-- Complete your Route 66 Americana tour by taking in a flick or two at the Route 66 Twin Drive-in, west of six street southwest of the I-72/I -55 junction.

Pasfield House Film (525 S. Pasfield St., 217-525-3663, $125 and up)

**DAY 2: From Springfield to St. Louis**

1. **Litchfiled an Mount Olive**

**Litchfield :**

-- an old coal-mining center

-- that is home to one of the best and most stylish Route 66 restaurants, the **Ariston Café** (413 N. Old Route 66, 217-324-2023, Tues.-Sun.), right in the heart of the town at the junction of old Route 55 and Hwy 16.

-- (Breakfast here) the food is a step or two up from the usual road-side fare, and the white linen and refined décor have earned it a spot in the Route 66 Hall of Fame.

**Sky View Drive-in**

-- The rest of Litchfield reeks of the old road, with cafes, motor courts, and old billboards aplenty, plus another old “ozoner”, the **Sky View Drive-in** (217-324-4451) on old Route 66 one mile north of town.

**Mount Olive** (pop. 2052)

-- a bustling coal-mining center in early 20th century.

-- is now a sleepy little community, where the only signs of its mining past are in the Union Miners Cemetery, along old Route 66 at the northwest edge of town

-- near the rear is a granite shaft rising from an elaborate pedestal

-- for old-road fans, Mount Olive is also home to the oldest surviving service station on Route 66, Shell Station downtown

1. **Litchfiled an Mount Olive**

**Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site**

-- are the remains of the largest prehistoric Indian city north of Mexico.

-- over 100 earthen mounds of various sizes were built here by the indigenous Mississippian culture while Europe was in the Dark Ages.

-- The largest covers 14 acres -- more ground than the Great Pyramid of Cheops

-- Symmetrical, grass-covered hills sitting in flat , lightly wooded bottomlands are what you’ll find here.

-- The view of the **Gateway Arch in distant St.Louis** from the 100-foot top of Monks Mound lends an odd sense of grandeur to the site.

--A sophisticated **Interpretive Center** (618-346-5160) is a recommended first stop for its exhibits, award-winning multimedia orientation show, and guided and self-guided tours.

**Collinsville:**

-- the nearest town to the Cahokia Mounds

-- a pleasant little place that’s nearly world-famous for its 170-foot-high World’s **Largest Catsup Bottle**. Which rises high above Hwy-159 a half mile south of Main Street, on the grounds of what used to be the **Brooks of Catsup Company** (800 S. Morrison Ave.)

1. **Chain of Rocks Bridge**

**Chain of Rocks Bridge:**

-- instead of following the 75-mph I-270 freeway, you can cross the Mississippi between Illinois and Missouri on the historic Chain of Rocks Bridge.

-- The best parking is on the Illinois side of the bridge

-- but cyclists or energetic walkers can cross the surprisingly narrow bridge and continue all the way to the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, following an 11-mile Riverfront Trail that snakes between the food walls, the river, and acres of heavy industry.

**Mitchell**:

-- a nearby Route 66 town of Mitchell

-- holds one more Route 66 landmark: 85-year-old Luna Café (201 E. Chain of Rocks Rd., 618-931-3152), a one-time casino, speakeasy, and brothel that’s now a pretty seedy but very “atmosphere” bar, north of the I-270 freeway exit 6, along old Route 66.

1. **Stay in St. Louis see attraction in St. Louis**

**Day 3: Back from St. Louis to Marshfield,**

**Stop at Iowa**