BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

AMERICA THE BOUNDLESS: 50 WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THE SPIRIT OF THE OPEN ROAD

May 18, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 18, 2026) — There are few experiences more distinctly American than the road trip. It's woven into the country's identity through long stretches of highway cutting through desert landscapes, coastal roads hugging the Pacific, small towns marked by neon signs and roadside diners, and unexpected stops that become the stories travelers remember most.

"Road trips personify the very spirit of traveling in the USA. The open road gives travelers the freedom to experience the country at their own pace while discovering the people, landscapes, and local culture that make each place distinct and memorable," said Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA. "Our research continues to show that road trips remain one of the top reasons international travelers want to visit the USA. At a time when travelers are looking for meaningful, authentic experiences, the highways and byways of our country offer a powerful way to connect with the country and the communities that define it."

As the latest installment in a five-part series celebrating 250 years of the United States, this collection explores 50 ways to experience the country through the journey itself. From legendary drives like Route 66 and California's Highway 1 to lesser-known byways, scenic rail routes, and remote destinations far from the interstate, the collection highlights how travel across the USA can be just as memorable as the destinations along the way.

FROM ZERO TO ONE HUNDRED: CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF ROUTE 66

ROUTE 66 (EIGHT STATES BETWEEN CHICAGO TO SANTA MONICA)
Stretching nearly 2,500 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica, and traversing eight states in between, the Mother Road is an icon of freedom while continuing to shape roadside culture with neon signs, diners, motels, and the quirky charm of the many small towns along its route. Commemorate the 100th anniversary with a visit to the National Route 66 Museum in Elk City, Oklahoma, the Midpoint Cafe in Amarillo, TX, or the Route 66 postage stamps that will be released later this year.

ICONIC DRIVES: EPIC CROSS-COUNTRY AND INTRA-STATE JOURNEYS

PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY (California)
One of the most scenic road trips in the world, California's Pacific Coast Highway (California Highway 1) hugs jaw-dropping cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean, passing through McWay Falls, redwood forests, coastal towns, and hidden beaches. The route already connects San Francisco and Los Angeles through destinations like Big Sur, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo County; repairs at Regent's Slide promises even greater access later this year.

OVERSEAS HIGHWAY (Florida)
Drive the Overseas Highway (the southernmost portion of U.S. Highway 1), which connects mainland Florida to Key West through an extensive network that spans 113 miles and includes 42 bridges, the most famous of which is the iconic Seven Mile Bridge.

U.S. ROUTE 20 (Boston to Oregon)
As the longest highway in the United States, stretching more than 3,300 miles from Boston, Massachusetts to Newport, Oregon, the route showcases the country's geographic diversity through historic towns, plains, mountains, and deserts. It's a cross-country journey defined by constant change.

LINCOLN HIGHWAY (NYC to San Francisco)
America's first transcontinental highway stretches roughly 3,389 miles from New York City to San Francisco, and now weaves through destinations in 14 states, like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Omaha, Salt Lake City, and Reno.

GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD (Montana)
The crown jewel of Glacier National Park, spanning 50 miles across the Continental Divide and past glaciers, waterfalls, and jagged peaks. Engineering marvels include narrow cliffside sections and historic stone guardrails, with must-see stops like Logan Pass (the highest point, at 6,646 feet), Lake McDonald, and St. Mary Lake.

GREAT RIVER ROAD (10 States along the Mississippi River)
Following the Mississippi River from Minnesota to Louisiana, the Great River Road is a 3,000-mile cultural corridor that connects riverfront cities like St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Memphis, and New Orleans.

THE LONELIEST ROAD (US-50), Nevada
Known for ghost towns and vast emptiness, this 287-mile stretch along U.S. 50 has been nicknamed "The Loneliest Road in America." It demands preparation, but offers many rewards: 360-degree views of high desert landscapes, historic mining communities, and wide-open skies.

MILLION DOLLAR HIGHWAY (Colorado)
A legendary stretch of U.S. Highway 550, these 25 miles between Silverton and Ouray are known for its dramatic cliffside driving that is famously without guardrails, with high-elevation thrills and some of the most breathtaking scenery in the Rockies.

LAKE SHORES TO GULF SHORES (Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Indiana)
Connecting the shores of Lake Michigan near Chicago to the sunny Gulf coasts of Alabama and Louisiana, I-65 offers an epic 887-miles road trip through the heart of the Midwestern and Southeastern U.S., passing through highlights like the Bourbon Trail of Louisville (Kentucky), the music scene in Nashville (Tennessee), the history and heritage of Mobile (Alabama).

HIDDEN GEMS - LESSER-KNOWN ROUTES TO BEAUTIFUL DESTINATIONS

TAIL OF THE DRAGON (Tennessee / North Carolina)
Famous for 318 curves and zero stoplights in just 11 miles, this treacherous, high-adrenaline, bucket-list drive for motorcyclists and sports-car enthusiasts moves through twisty mountain roads, dense forest, and steep elevation changes against the Great Smoky Mountains. Expect some of the most technical driving in the Southeast.

SKYLINE DRIVE (Virginia)
Stretching 105 miles through the only public road in Shenandoah National Park, this drive follows the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains and offers sweeping overlooks, dense forest canopies, and seasonal wildflower displays while connecting 75 scenic overlooks.

BEACH BOULEVARD SCENIC DRIVE (Mississippi)
Slow down on the 13-mile Beach Boulevard Scenic Drive (US-90) while coasting past powder-white beaches, historic fishing villages, vibrant art districts, Buccaneer State Park, and nature trails along the Gulf Coast.

TALIMENA SCENIC BYWAY (Arkansas / Oklahoma)
Winding through 37 miles in the Ouachita National Forest and named for the two towns that it connects – Mena, Arkansas and Talina, Oklahoma – this quiet mountain drive showcases the beauty of Arkansas's mountains and Oklahoma's Choctaw County.

DALTON HIGHWAY (Alaska)
A 414-mile remote route is a master of multi-tasking, going from the Fairbanks area to the Arctic Ocean, crossing the Arctic Circle, and climbing over the Brooks Range. Views include spruce forests, tundra landscapes, and rugged, isolated wilderness.

HANA HIGHWAY (Maui, Hawaii)
Winding about 64 miles along Maui's northeastern shore, this road threads through lush rainforests, cascading waterfalls, and dramatic coastal cliffs, with stops like the Garden of Eden arboretum, the 80-foot roadside Wailua Falls, and black sand beaches at Wai??napanapa State Park.

STRIKING SCENERY

NORTH SHORE SCENIC DRIVE (Minnesota)
Follow the 150-mile path from Duluth to Grand Portage to see the forests, waterfalls, and shoreline overlooks along Lake Superior's rugged coastline. Highlights include the Gooseberry Falls, Split Rock Lighthouse, and the Sawtooth Mountains.

TRAIL RIDGE ROAD (Colorado)
This 48-mile long road is the highest continuous paved road in the U.S., rising above 12,000 feet through Rocky Mountain National Park. Stop by the Alpine Visitor Center and viewpoints that look down into the trees below.

COLORADO HOT SPRINGS LOOP (Colorado)
An 800-mile loop through the thermal hot springs in the western part of the state, this route connects 23 premier soaking destinations from Denver all the way to Steamboat Springs, from intimate private baths to the world's largest mineral hot springs pool.

AVENUE OF THE GIANTS (California)
This 31-mile stretch of Highway 254 runs through Humboldt Redwoods State Park, offering a slow-paced, immersive drive beneath some of the tallest trees on Earth.

LAKE TAHOE SCENIC LOOP (California / Nevada)
Rounding sapphire-blue waters of Lake Tahoe, this roughly 72-mile scenic loop delivers year-round beauty with a distinct personality in every season: serene lakeside views during the summer, and striking snowscapes in the winter.

TRAVEL THROUGH TIME: HISTORIC DRIVES ALONG QUAINT PATHS

ELFRETH'S ALLEY (Pennsylvania)
Often called America's oldest residential street, Elfreth's Alley in Philadelphia dates to 1702 and features preserved 18th-century homes and cobblestone lanes.

THE NATIONAL ROAD (also known as the Cumberland Road) (Maryland/Pennsylvania)
Though much of this is now U.S. Route 40, this was the first federally funded highway in the U.S., completed in the early 1800s to connect the East Coast to the western frontier, and still offers historic stone bridges and past preserved toll houses.

KING'S HIGHWAY (East Coast)
Not all portions remain in use, but this highway, which dates back to 1650 and is older than the country itself, linked early colonial settlements along the Atlantic seaboard.

ASHLEY RIVER ROAD (South Carolina)
Running through Charleston's historic Lowcountry, this colonial-era corridor is lined with live oaks and riverfront plantations and passes three National Historic Landmarks: Drayton Hall, Middleton Place, and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

AMERICA'S FIRST ROAD TRIP: PENSACOLA TO ST. AUGUSTINE (Florida)
This historic drive traces early European settlement along Florida's coast, connecting Pensacola, which was founded in 1559 as America's first European settlement, with St. Augustine, the nation's oldest continuously occupied European-established city (1565). The route follows coastal highways through heritage sites, Spanish colonial landmarks, and small towns.

MERIDIAN BRIDGE (South Dakota/Nebraska)
Nestled along U.S. 81, this 1924 lift bridge spans the Missouri River and connects South Dakota and Nebraska. A striking example of early 20th-century engineering, steel trusses and the innovative vertical lift design highlight the era's advancements in transportation.

HISTORIC COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY (Oregon)
Completed in 1915 as one of America's first scenic highways, this 70 mile road winds through the Columbia River Gorge, passing iconic waterfalls like Multnomah Falls and historic stone viaducts that were feats in engineering and conservation.

CULTURAL CROSSROADS

CREOLE NATURE TRAIL – ALL-AMERICAN ROAD (Louisiana)
Affectionately known as Louisiana's Outback. The 180-mile stretch courses through the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge, the Cameron Prairie Wildlife Refuge, Peveto Woods Sanctuary, and Gulf beaches. The Creole Nature Trail is one of several visitor centers along the route, though anyone can get closer to the action through birdwatching over 400 species in the marshlands or fishing, shelling, crabbing.

WISCONSIN FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT TRAIL (Wisconsin)
Different kinds of interiors await at The Wisconsin Frank Lloyd Wright Trail, a scenic 200-mile journey that begins in Milwaukee and continues through southern Wisconsin. Architecture aficionados pass nine wonders that include public tours, as well as Taliesin, Wright's home and estate and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

GULLAH GEECHEE CORRIDOR (South Carolina)
Trace hyperlocal and culture through South Carolina's Lowcountry. Start in Charleston, follow marsh-lined highways and oak-canopied backroads through McClellanville, Georgetown, and Beaufort, or detour through St. Helena Island, where shrimp docks, praise houses, and sweetgrass basket stands continue traditions that predate the nation.

NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY (Mississippi / Alabama / Tennessee)
A historic 444-mile route once used by Native Americans, European settlers, and early American traders, this relaxed drive through forests, rivers, historical markers and preserved sites. Highlights include the double-arched bridge at Birdsong Hollow, the well-worn dirt path near Sunken Trace, and Emerald Mound, one of the largest native American mounds in the country.

MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL (Mississippi)
The voices of B.B. King and Charlie Patton echo along a trail that honors a distinctly American musical genre. Explore the Delta Blues Museum, Dockery Farms, the birthplace of the Delta Blues, and the once-renowned Trumpet Records, while stopping in to hear music at local juke joints.

THE CROOKED ROAD (Virginia)
The town of Bristol is the official U.S. Congress–designated Birthplace of Country Music and is home to the Smithsonian-affiliated Birthplace of Country Music Museum. The self-drive trail also visits the Carter Family Fold—home of the first family of country music and the last place Johnny Cash performed—and the Blue Ridge Music Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

ENCHANTED HIGHWAY (North Dakota)
An outdoor art gallery as much as a mode of transportation, this 32-mile stretch between Gladstone and Regent features massive scrap-metal sculptures created by local artist Gary Greff against a backdrop of rural prairie landscapes. Spot the iconic "Geese in Flight," recognized as the world's largest scrap metal sculpture.

EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY (NV-375, Nevada)
The 98-mile highway near Area 51 crosses stark desert landscapes and is famous for UFO sightings, otherworldly scenery, and quirky roadside attractions. Expansive night skies make it a favorite among stargazers and UFO enthusiasts alike.

NATIVE AMERICAN SCENIC BYWAY (North Dakota and South Dakota)
A 350-mile route stretching through North and South Dakota, crossing the lands of four Lakota Sioux tribes: Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Cheyenne River, and Standing Rock. Along the way, experience historic pueblos, traditional arts, and landscapes that remain central to Native communities.

SIPS AND SNACKS

VERMONT CHEESE TRAIL (Vermont)
Visit 45 local cheesemakers to sample artisan cheeses in the heart of the state's dairy country, savoring scenic rural landscapes alongside farm-fresh fare.

DRIVE-THROUGH ORCHARDS (New York's Hudson Valley)
In the Hudson Valley, a handful of orchards turn harvest season into a uniquely accessible road trip. Masker Orchards in Warwick allows visitors to drive directly through rows of apple trees, stopping to pick fruit straight from the car windows. Farther north, Hurds Family Farm in Modena offers a guided "golf cart adventure" through its orchards, blending hands-on picking with a leisurely tour of the farm.

KENTUCKY BOURBON TRAIL (Kentucky)
Explore historic distillery towns that have produced legends, from Maker's Mark in Loretto and Woodford Reserve in Versailles to smaller craft distillers. Tour rickhouses, sample small-batch bourbons, and learn about the traditions that mix limestone water, charred oak barrels, and time.

TEXAS BBQ TRAIL (Central Texas)
Legendary barbecue towns like Lockhart, Taylor, and Austin offer their own spins of this southern smokehouse tradition. Don't miss Franklin Barbecue in Austin, which Bon Appetit Magazine called the best in the nation.

The town of Elgin bills itself the sausage capital of Texas: On the side of Highway 290, Southside Market has served their Original Hot Sausage for more than 125 years, while fourth-generation owners now run Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse, another local favorite.

LECHONERAS OF GUAVATE (Puerto Rico)
In the mountains beyond San Juan, the lechoneras of Guavate form one of Puerto Rico's most beloved culinary road trips. Along PR-184, family-run roadside restaurants specialize in lechón asado (whole pigs slow-roasted over wood fires) served with classic sides like arroz con gandules (yellow rice with pigeon peas), morcilla (sausage), and pasteles (meat-filled pastries). Especially lively for lunch on Saturday, this short but storied drive celebrates Puerto Rico's communal tradition as much as its culinary one.

IN SEASON

KANCAMAGUS HIGHWAY (New Hampshire)
This 34-mile route through the White Mountains is known for its forested scenery, waterfalls, and mountain overlooks. It is especially famous for fall foliage, when the road becomes one of New England's most photographed drives.

NEEDLES HIGHWAY (South Dakota)
What this lacks in distance, it makes up for in geological drama: Open from April to October, this 14-mile drive through Custer State Park winds through the Black Hills, with standouts like the hauntingly narrow Needle's Eye Tunnel and the graphite Cathedral Spires. Sharp curves and close-up rock formations make it one of the most distinctive drives in the Midwest.

WILLOW CITY LOOP (Texas Hill Country)
From March through April, this majestic thirteen-mile loop through Fredericksburg bursts into vivid displays of bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, and other native wildflowers that blanket the fields as far as the eye can see.

CRESTED BUTTE WILDFLOWERS (Colorado)
Late June and July bring lupine, columbine, paintbrush, and sunflowers in alpine meadows, turning Crested Butte and the Elk Mountains into the "Wildflower Capital of Colorado." The annual Wildflower Festival adds guided walks and workshops to this colorful season.

NEXT-GENERATION: ADVANCEMENTS IN LEGACY AND NEWER MODES OF TRAVEL

AMTRAK: THE ROAD TRIP GOES RAIL
Unveiled last year, the Mardi Gras Service reintroduces train trips at six stops between New Orleans and Mobile for the first time since Hurricane Katrina. This year, the company will introduce newer train models: next-generation high-speed Acelas, environmentally-friendly Airo trains, and new trains for the Cascades route along the Pacific Northwest.

WHITE PASS SCENIC BYWAY (U.S. ROUTE 12), WASHINGTON
Not only does this scenic byway offer stunning views of Mount Rainier, Mount St. Helens, and Mount Adams, the route is also one of the friendliest for electric vehicles (EVs), with a newly completed network of eight charging stations, including locations in Randle, Packwood, and at the White Pass Ski Area.

THE EXTRA MILE

See cars on display: View over 200 vehicles, from antique cars to fire trucks, at the Cole Land Transportation Museum in Bangor, Maine (now managed by fourth-generation family members!).

Discover what made Detroit the Motor City at the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation, which includes the bus where Rosa Parks took her seat, or the Ford Piquette Plant Museum, the birthplace of the model T.

In Los Angeles, California, the Petersen Automotive Museum showcases more than 100 years of automotive history through rare vehicles, Hollywood cars and immersive exhibits.

The Lane Motor Museum in Nashville, Tennessee features the largest collection of European cars and motorcycles in the United States.

A tram ride takes visitors through the American Treasure Tour Museum in Oaks, Pennsylvania, a sprawling 100,000-square-foot space filled with thousands of artifacts, including classic cars.

As a final stop, go where no cars are allowed: Mackinac Island (Michigan), Bald Head Island (South Carolina), and Governors Island (New York City) turn car-free streets into scenic shorelines. Trek to the bottom of the Grand Canyon to visit Supai, Arizona, an 800-year-old village of the Havasupai tribe reachable only by helicopter, on foot, or by mule and the most remote community in the U.S., and where dramatic canyon scenery and the Havasu waterfalls reward those who make the journey.

Start planning your next trip to the USA by visiting AmericaTheBeautiful.com.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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