



ROADSIDE WONDERS

By Leah Wynalek

Who didn't beg Mom and Dad to revise a family road trip to include a detour past some offbeat guidebook spectacle—the world's largest pistachio nut, maybe, or a life-size moose made of chocolate? We've picked some of America's most beloved—and unusual—attractions. How many have you seen?



DINO FUN FACT

Dinny the Dinosaur (a more or less life-size replica of an apatosaurus) stands 45 feet tall and measures 150 feet from end to end. He's made of concrete and steel left over from the construction of nearby Interstate 10.

Arthur Meyerson/Getty

CABAZON DINOSAURS

WHERE: Cabazon, California

GET HERE: Take the Main St. exit off Interstate 10 in Cabazon, 13 miles west of Palm Springs.

BACKSTORY: Intended to lure drivers off the interstate and into the Wheel Inn cafe, the dinosaurs of Cabazon have become a destination in their own right, thanks in part to some memorable movie cameos. Dinny opened in 1964 and Mr. Rex (pictured in the Table of Contents) joined in 1981. Today they're the centerpieces of a creationist museum.

CONTACT: cabazondinosaurs.com





MERMAID FUN FACT

Weeki Wachee Springs served as a fitting backdrop for the 1948 romantic comedy Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid, starring William Powell and Ann Blyth.



Mermaid: Bloomberg via Getty Images • Twine: • Whale: • Shell: • Pump: Library of Congress

WEEKI WACHEE SPRINGS

WHERE: Spring Hill, Florida **GET HERE:** Find this Gulf Coast kitsch classic, a state park since 2008, at the intersection of S.R. 50 and Hwy. 19, 45 minutes north of Tampa and 2 hours west of Orlando. **BACKSTORY:** The water's a consistent 72 degrees in this crystalline natural spring, where the mermaids of Weeki Wachee have been putting on shows since 1947. **CONTACT:** weekiwachee.com

THE BLUE WHALE OF ROUTE 66

WHERE: Catoosa, Oklahoma

GET HERE: Drive just west of the twin steel bridges over the Verdigris River on old Route 66.

BACKSTORY: Lifelong Catoosa resident Hugh Davis built this aquatic oddity in 1972 as an anniversary gift to his wife, Zelta, an avid collector of all things related to whales. Before the 80-foot-long structure even got its first coat of paint, people began stopping to cannonball off its tail fin, coast down its sides and peek through the holes in its head. Swimming is no longer allowed, but old Blue remains open to curious travelers.

CONTACT: bluewhaleroute66.com

BALL OF TWINE

WHERE: Cawker City, Kansas

GET HERE: Take Hwy. 24 through Cawker City, 17 miles west of Beloit.

BACKSTORY: The world's largest ball of sisal twine is more than 50 years old and still growing. Frank Stoeber got the ball rolling in 1953; in four years it weighed 5,000 pounds and contained 1,175,180 feet of twine. Now owned by Cawker City, the attraction weighs 9 tons, with close to 8 million feet of twine. Travelers can stop by to add more!



GAS

Antique Shell Station

WHERE: Winston-Salem, North Carolina

GET HERE: Take Exit 195 off Interstate 40, 25 miles west of Greensboro.

RUN DOWN:

Since



BACKSTORY:

In the 1930s, the Quality Oil Co. built eight clamshell-shaped stations based on the Shell Oil logo. The Winston-Salem structure is the only one still standing, now protected as a state landmark. Come with a full tank—the pumps are now dry—and don't forget your camera.

Tell Us About Your Silliest Side Trips

Have a roadside wonder in your hometown, or a favorite that you found on your last trip? Share your best snapshots with us online at [facebook.com/remiscemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/remiscemagazine).



FOOD

Bob's Big Boy

LOCATION:

Burbank, California

GET HERE:

Exit Hwy. 101 toward Burbank, 20 minutes north of Los Angeles.



BACKSTORY:

Built in 1949, this Bob's restaurant is the oldest one in the U.S. still serving customers. In recent years, owners added a patio and revived the car hop service on weekend nights. If you stop by for a double decker burger, visit the "Beatle Booth," which displays a plaque that pays tribute to a visit by the Fab Four in 1965.



FOLKLORE FACT

For many years Paul Bunyan kept his shotgun beside him. Over time, though, the wooden weapon deteriorated, so officials removed it. A replica of the original is now displayed in the Tourist Information Center.



PAUL BUNYAN & BABE THE BLUE OX

WHERE: Bemidji, Minnesota **GET HERE:** Find the statues along Lake Bemidji across from the Tourist Information Center, about 3 miles north of Rte. 2.

BACKSTORY: Although they were both constructed in 1937, the famous lumberjack and his big ox didn't stand together until years later. Bunyan's 18-foot-tall, 2.5-ton likeness was commissioned for the city's Paul Bunyan Carnival, while his 5-ton companion traveled by truck promoting Bemidji as a tourist destination. These days the duo attracts thousands of visitors a year to the city that calls itself the *real* birthplace of Paul Bunyan. **CONTACT:** visitbemidji.com



THE UFO MUSEUM & RESEARCH CENTER

WHERE: Roswell, New Mexico

GET HERE: Roswell is off Hwy. 70. The museum is on Main St.

BACKSTORY: In July 1947, a crash landing put Roswell on the map. A press release issued by officers at the Roswell Army Air Field referred to the recovery of "a flying disk," but the military later called the recovered object a weather balloon. UFO or no? The debate continues in the New Mexico town, where the curious flock for answers. You can do your own research at the museum, then buy an inflatable green alien in the gift shop.

CONTACT: roswellufomuseum.com



SAUCER SCOOP

Roswell hosts a UFO festival each summer, with an "alien chase" run, a costume contest for people and pets, an alien parade and more extraterrestrial zaniness.

UFO: Danita Delmont/Getty • Airstream: The Shady Dell • Trees: Eco Images/Julia/Getty • Sign: Visions of America/Joe Sohm/Getty



LODGING

The Shady Dell

WHERE:

Bisbee, Arizona

GET HERE:

Bisbee is off Hwy. 80, about 95 miles southeast of Tucson.



BACKSTORY:

Nine vintage aluminum trailers, including the 1949 Airstream you see here (featured in *Brides* magazine that year), transport guests back to the 1950s at this RV resort. The interiors have been restored and furnished in high midcentury modern style, from leopard carpets and breakfast booths to a hand-carved Polynesian-style tiki bar. Book ahead to spend the night in one of these retro rides.

CONTACT:

theshadydell.com



GENERAL SHERMAN TREE

WHERE: Sequoia National Park, California

GET HERE: The park is about 60 miles east of Fresno.

BACKSTORY: This tree dwarfs even its fellow sequoias in the famous Giant Forest. By volume, it's the largest tree in the world, measuring 275 feet tall and 102.6 feet in circumference at its base. A park trail leads directly to the General, making it easy to stare up at this natural wonder.

CONTACT: nps.gov

GRACELAND

WHERE: Memphis, Tennessee

GET HERE: Exit Interstate 55 toward Brooks Rd. & Elvis Presley, 10 minutes from downtown Memphis.

BACKSTORY: Walk in the footsteps of rock 'n' roll royalty on a guided tour of the King's 14-acre estate, which includes a final stop in the Meditation Garden where Elvis is buried. Inside the Graceland mansion, guests get a peek at the star's living room and kitchen, as well as the famous Jungle Room, a funky 1970s Hawaiian-style retreat designed as Presley's own little piece of paradise.

CONTACT:

elvis.com/graceland

