



## Amarillo

This classic Route 66 stop draws travelers with good food, historic neighborhoods, and unique art installations

By Cynthia J. Drake

The charm of Amarillo is both unexpected and infectious. Located in the Texas Panhandle and closer to five other state capitals than to Austin (“and we kind of like it that way,” says one local), Amarillo continues to lure throngs of Route 66 travelers. The town maintains a sort of unpretentious cowboy swagger, but even so, there are signs of sophistication. A new jazz club, a wine bar, and sushi restaurants have opened in downtown—and if all goes according to plan, a new minor league baseball stadium will be constructed next year.

## THE PERFECT DAY

**9 A.M.** Start with breakfast at **THE DONUT STOP**, a local chain since 1974. [thedonutstop.com](http://thedonutstop.com).

**9:30 A.M.** Head to **CADILLAC RANCH** west of town on Route 66. Grab some spray paint and leave your mark on the 10 old Cadillacs buried nose-down in a field, an art installation commissioned in 1974 (pictured, opposite page).

**10 A.M.** Visit the **JACK SISEMORE TRAVELAND RV MUSEUM** to see vintage RVs. You're welcome to climb on board most of them. *Admission is free; enter through an RV showroom.* (888) 702-0337; [rvmuseum.net](http://rvmuseum.net).

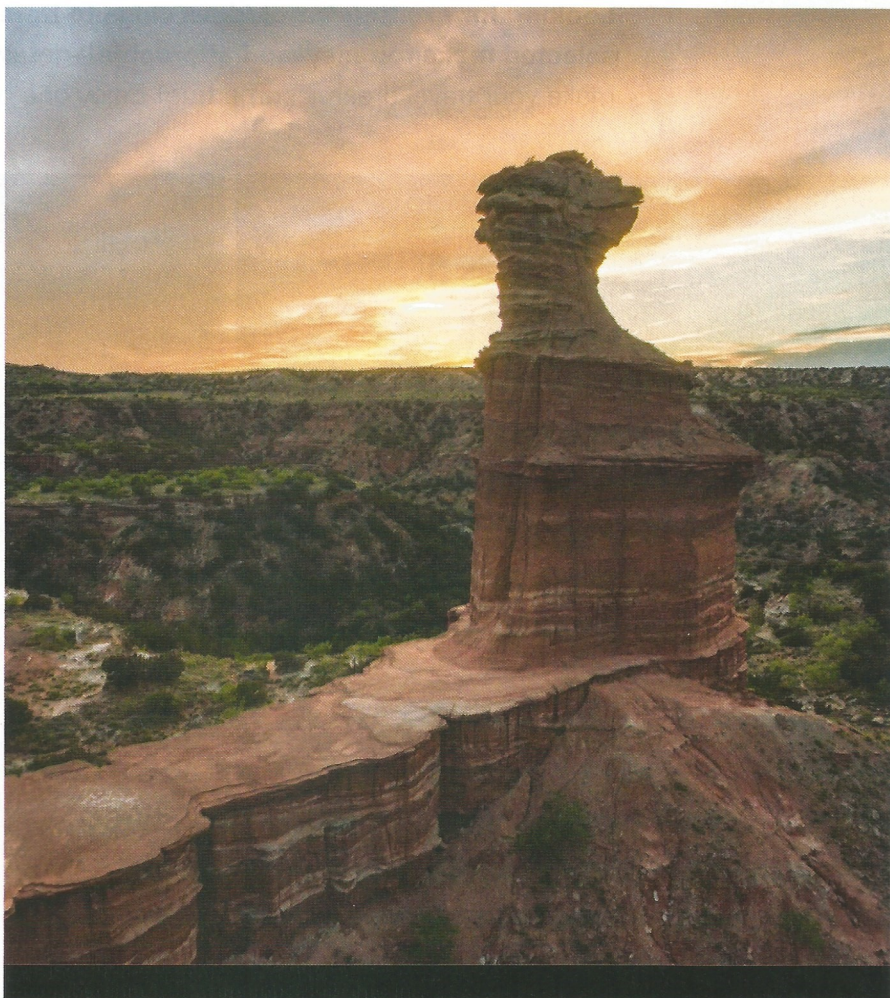
**11 A.M.** Make your way to the state's best-known stretch of Route 66: the historic **SAN JACINTO** neighborhood of Sixth Avenue, between Georgia and Western streets. You'll find shops packed with Route 66 memorabilia. Check out **LILE ART GALLERY**, with jewelry made using chipped spray paint from Cadillac Ranch. (806) 664-3089; [ffb.com/cadilite](http://ffb.com/cadilite).

**1 P.M.** Stop in for a hamburger at **GOLDENLIGHT CAFÉ**, which was established in 1946, back when driving Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles was a rite of passage. (806) 374-9237; [goldenlightcafe.com](http://goldenlightcafe.com).

**3 P.M.** Spend a couple hours wandering the **PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM**, which tells the story of the Panhandle region from the Cambrian period to present day. (806) 651-2244; [panhandleplains.org](http://panhandleplains.org).

**6 P.M.** If you've got a Texas-size appetite, eat dinner at the **BIG TEXAN**, with a steak-side serenade. You might even catch someone taking the "Steak Challenge" of trying to eat a 72-ounce cut—and a whole lot more—in under an hour. (806) 372-6000; [bigtexan.com](http://bigtexan.com).

**9 P.M.** Wind down at **ESQUIRE JAZZ CLUB**, the first and only jazz bar in the area. Then stroll downtown and bask in the glowing marquee light, just the way Amarillo visitors have for decades. (806) 350-4299; [esquirejazzclub.com](http://esquirejazzclub.com).



**SUNSET SPECTACULAR** For something completely different, drive 25 miles southeast to **Palo Duro Canyon State Park** in time for the sunset. Painter Georgia O'Keeffe called this area her "spiritual home." Sunlight dances off the burnt-orange, cream, and brick-red ribbons on the rock formations, which flare out and earn the name "Spanish Skirts." (806) 488-2227; [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov). In summer, catch a production of **Texas Outdoor Musical**. (806) 655-2181; [texas-show.com](http://texas-show.com).

## FROM A.M. TO P.M.

