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The Way of American Genius, Highway 36, Missouri

A 9 day exploration of Missouri's legends

Starts St Louis – finish Kansas City



The name is grand, but don't worry, Missouri lives up to it.

Missouri Highway 36 has sparked some of the world's great innovations and innovators, and the people and ideas continue to make their mark. There are so many great things along this stretch of Missouri road that you might think it's impossible to see them all.

Day 1: Fly to St Louis

Manage the jetlag and grab yourself some St Louis BBQ.

St Louis

Spend the day exploring this fascinating city.

You can't visit St. Louis without seeing the **Gateway Arch**—it's the tallest monument in the U.S. and a symbol of America's westward expansion. Ride the tram to the top for stunning views of the city and the Mississippi River or explore the **Museum at the Gateway Arch** below to learn about the pioneers who shaped the nation.

Whether you're snapping photos from the park or catching a riverboat cruise nearby, the Arch is a must-see highlight of any St. Louis stop.

Scott Joplin House State Historic Site

Tour the modest flat at the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site in St. Louis where the composer wrote his famous ragtime classics "The Entertainer" and "Easy Winners". The apartment, lit by gaslight, contains furnishings from 1902. An antique player piano fills the home with the King of Ragtime's music.

Anheuser Busch Brewery

Step into history at the flagship **Anheuser-Busch Brewery**, founded in the 1850s and still thriving in its grand red-brick buildings. Take a guided tour—from seed to glass—exploring brewing innovation and even tasting beer straight from the finishing cellars.

Make sure you check out the famous Clydesdale horses while you're there and end your visit at the Biergarten, wrapping up the tour with a complimentary cold one and a chance to unwind in true St. Louis style.



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St. Louis also offers vibrant neighbourhoods, world-class BBQ, and beautiful green spaces like **Forest Park**, home to the **St. Louis Art Museum**, **Zoo**, and **Science Center**—all with **free admission**!

St. Louis Blues

You'll know you're in **St. Louis** the moment the music hits you — it's in the air, the streets, and even the name of the hockey team: the **St. Louis Blues**! This city gave birth to a genre that shaped American music and still pulses through its heart today.

Day 2: Explore St. Louis

Start your day at the **National Blues Museum**, where you'll dive into the roots of the blues and see how it influenced jazz, rock, and soul. Then, let the rhythm lead you to local favourites like **Hammerstones** or **Broadway Oyster Bar**, where live music spills out onto the sidewalks and the vibe is pure, unfiltered St. Louis. Whether you're tapping your foot or dancing in your seat, this is a city that plays its soul loud and proud.

Overnight: St Louis for two nights

Day 3: Head north to Hannibal (116 miles)

Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum

Ever wonder how a kid from a small Mississippi River town grew up to become one of the world's most beloved authors? That's the story of **Mark Twain**, born **Samuel Clemens** in **Hannibal, Missouri**. You can actually walk through his childhood world at the **Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum**. The site includes six historic buildings and two interactive museums, packed with Twain artifacts and even **15 original Norman Rockwell paintings**. It's a great way to step into the world that inspired classics like *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

Don't miss the **Mark Twain Cave Complex** where visitors can travel the steps of Mark Twain and his adventure through the cave and see his signature on the wall. It's been verified as his and preserved. Also available in the complex is a winery, jeep rides/tours and the riverboat tours.

Overnight: Hannibal

Day 4: Drive to Marceline (92 miles)

Walt Disney Hometown Museum

If you're a Disney fan, you've got to check out the **Walt Disney Hometown Museum** in **Marceline, Missouri**. Walt only lived there for a few years, but the town left a big impression—so much so that **Main Street, U.S.A.** in Disneyland and Disney World was inspired by Marceline's own downtown. The museum is inside a beautifully restored **1913 Santa Fe Railway Station** and features over **10,000 square feet** of gallery space. You'll find tons of Disney family artifacts and stories that show how this small town helped shape a legend.

Visit the **Disney Family Farm** and see the **Dreaming Tree** where young Walt sketched his ideas that would become the epicentre of his earliest artist exploration.

Overnight: Marceline



Day 5: head to Hamilton but not without a stop in *Chillicothe* (total 65 miles)

You've heard the phrase "the greatest thing since sliced bread," right? Well, that sliced bread started in **Chillicothe, Missouri**.

Back in 1928, a local bakery was struggling, so the owner teamed up with inventor Otto Rohwedder and gave his bread-slicing machine a shot. On **July 7, 1928**, the first pre-sliced loaves hit store shelves—and people loved it. Sales soared, and history was made.

Today, Chillicothe proudly celebrates its claim to fame with murals, the Sliced Bread Innovation Center the **Grand River Museum**, where you can see one of the original bread slicers. ***It's literally the home of sliced bread!***

Hamilton

Did you know J.C. Penney—the guy behind the department store empire—actually got his start in a little Missouri town called Hamilton? He worked his first retail job there at a dry-goods store. But at 21, he packed up and headed west, chasing better health and bigger dreams.

Fast forward 30 years, and Penney returned to Hamilton—not just for a visit, but to open his 500th store right where it all began. Talk about full circle!

He wasn't just a retail mogul, either. Penney was ahead of his time—he called his employees "associates" and introduced ideas like profit sharing and employee ownership. Even though he spent most of his life outside Missouri, his legacy is firmly rooted there. You can even visit the J.C. Penney Museum in Hamilton to learn more about him.

Overnight: Hamilton

Day 6: make your way to St Joseph (48 miles)

Pony Express National Museum – St. Joseph, MO

Ever wonder how mail got across the country before planes and email? At the **Pony Express National Museum** in **St. Joseph, Missouri**, you can dive into the story of the brave riders who galloped through wild terrain to deliver letters.

Back in the 1860s, the **Pony Express** could get mail from Missouri to California in just **10 days**—a huge improvement over the 20 to 60 days it took by stagecoach. It's a fascinating slice of history, and the museum brings it to life.

Not to be missed is the **Patee House Museum**, once the bustling headquarters of the legendary **Pony Express**. It's a fascinating glimpse into the days when mail was delivered on horseback across the American frontier.

Just behind the museum, you'll find the **Jesse James Home Museum** — the very house where the infamous outlaw met his end, shot by a member of his own gang. It's a small but powerful stop that brings the drama of the Old West to life.

Glore Psychiatric Museum – St. Joseph, MO

Could you swallow a nail? One patient here swallowed **453**—just one of the jaw-dropping stories at the **Glore Psychiatric Museum**. Housed in the former surgery building of the old State Lunatic Asylum No. 2, this museum offers a fascinating (and sometimes chilling) look at the history of mental health care.



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Recognized as one of the most unusual museums in the U.S., it features historic treatments, patient artwork, early therapy tools, and full-size replicas of 17th–19th century devices created by founder George Glore. A non-traditional must-see for curious minds and history buffs alike.

Overnight: St Joseph

Day 7 & 8: make your way to Kansas City (55 miles)

Steamboat Arabia Museum – Kansas City, MO

Step back in time at the **Steamboat Arabia Museum**, where a real 1856 steamboat—and its entire cargo—was pulled from the mud of the Missouri River over a century after it sank. It's like a time capsule of frontier life, packed with thousands of perfectly preserved items from boots to bottled pickles. Located in Kansas City's historic **River Market**, this museum is a hidden gem for history lovers and curious minds alike. It's a fascinating look at 19th-century life on the American frontier.

National WWI Museum and Memorial – Kansas City, MO

History comes to life at the **National WWI Museum and Memorial**, one of the most comprehensive museums in the world dedicated to the Great War. Start your visit by walking across a glass bridge suspended over a field of poppies—each one representing 1,000 lives lost. Inside, you'll find powerful exhibits, original artifacts, and immersive displays that tell the global story of World War I. Don't miss the chance to head up the **Liberty Memorial Tower** for panoramic views of Kansas City. It's moving, educational, and unforgettable.

Kansas City Jazz Scene – Kansas City, MO

If you love live music, Kansas City's jazz scene is a must. This city was the heartbeat of jazz in the 1930s, and that rhythm still pulses through places like the **American Jazz Museum** in the historic **18th & Vine District**. Catch a live set at **The Blue Room**, where legends once played and new talent keeps the tradition alive. Whether you're a jazz aficionado or just love a good vibe, KC's jazz scene is soulful, rich, and unforgettable.

Overnight: Kansas City for two nights.

Day 9: Fly home



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