

Nostalgia-craving baby boomers driving tourism

By Jon Marcus, Boston Globe

ALBUQUERQUE – If there's a place that symbolizes pre-interstate America, it's Route 66, built to connect Chicago with Los Angeles, which John Steinbeck dubbed "the mother road."

From Depression-era migrants to returning GIs to family vacationers, motorists on Route 66 rolled past Vegas-style neon hovering over low-rise diners, motor courts, and gas stations in designs so distinctive they gave rise to the term "roadside architecture." They're also known as pueblo-deco, art nouveau lite, and, simply, kitsch.

Now these structures – many of them long vacant – are reopening as trendy hotels, restaurants, microbreweries, and bars along a part of Route 66 through Albuquerque called EDo, or East Downtown, that fill with patrons far too young to remember the onetime allure of the highway as a frontier of the freedom of the open road.

It's a small but significant example of the way nostalgia increasingly is driving travel, as visitors seek to recapture their own childhoods – or at least a world they recall as, or assume to have been, simpler, safer, and an escape from the conformity of modern-day chain hotels and restaurants.

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