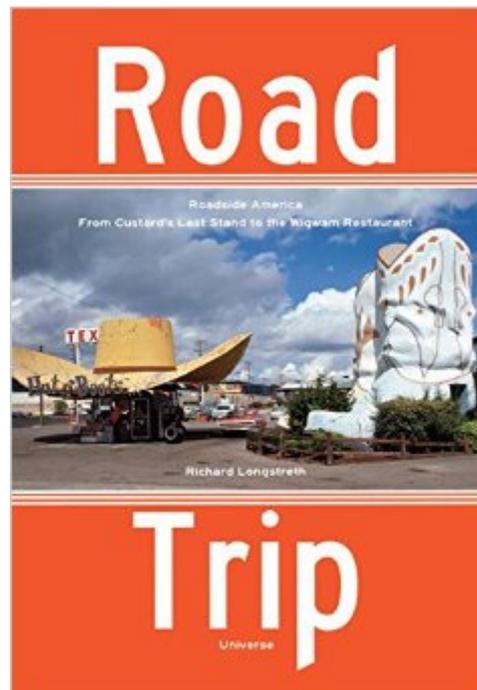


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# Road Trip: Roadside America, From Custard's Last Stand To The Wigwam Restaurant



## Synopsis

Unseen photographs of the late 1960s and early 1970s from the American road offer a compelling portrait of a fanciful landscape, now all but gone. Expectation, anticipation, discovery—each of these is a facet of an American institution, the road trip. With a focus on vernacular roadside architecture built between 1920 and the late 1960s, the golden age of the American road, *Road Trip* is a time capsule, a snapshot taken primarily in the early 1970s, of an extraordinary era and its roadside buildings, restaurants, gas stations, motels, and places of amusement, most of which are now long since gone. Built in an age of unbridled imagination, these structures speak to the fancies of their original owners and builders as much as to the purposes for which they were built: a gas station whose pumps are covered by a canopy in the form of a fully realized B-29 bomber; a hot dog stand named Frank Stein, whose diners are met by a colossal Frankenstein bearing in one hand a mustard-covered dog and in the other a mug of foaming beer. With more than 200 previously unpublished full-color photographs of the iconic imagery of the American highway and richly descriptive text, *Road Trip* will delight and engage both the armchair traveler, the enthusiast of Americana, the architectural enthusiast, and all those longing for the romance of the road.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book has its enjoyable moments, but is problematic in several areas. First, the font size in the text is extremely small, almost footnote sized. Second, for a book that looks like a fun read for the

casual historian, the writing is dense and academic, with references to people only fellow individuals (fellow researchers, I assume) in that specific discipline would know, and rather choppy writing more typical of a journal article than a popular book (in fact, the best writing is in the intro, when the author provides a bit of biographical information). On the plus side, the pictures are interesting. It's also neat to see the pictures organized by building use. The pictures are also fascinating in that they were mostly shot in the 70s, at the end of most these buildings' useful life (most have probably been abandoned or torn down, I would guess). It's more of an archive than a history, and if you go in knowing that, you may really like this book.

It could have been better if ALL of the photo pages had been numbered (as the text refers to the photos by page number). I had to keep counting from a numbered page. Also, inserting the photos closer to the corresponding text would have made the book much more readable. Moving past that, I enjoyed the pictures and the commentary on neat and unusual buildings. A better layout would have gotten 4 stars. Keeping the author's journey in mind, if the book had more pictures from during the stores working lives I would have given it 5 stars.

The American highway has provided a treasure trove of images for photographers over the decades, it could be amateurishly made structures promoting a local enterprise or a franchise that has spread across the country. Richard Longstreth focuses on restaurants, gas stations, motels, stores and drive-ins rather than non-commercial vernacular buildings that could be found away from the Interstates. His photos, taken from the late sixties and the seventies, are an interesting record because so many of these places have disappeared, even Art Lacey's bomber gas station in Milwaukee, Oregon is no more (after sixty-seven years, too). The chapter on stores is unusual for a commonplace photo book, large buildings that don't quite fit in the frame like a gas station, restaurant or motel, the thirty-two here are well worth including, some of which show a certain amount of streamline flair reminiscent of Arraswirth's Greyhound Terminals. Wonderful though all these photos are the book really doesn't present them in the best light. Probably not the author's fault but Universe (part of art publisher Rizzoli) should have known better because they have made this an upright book when the majority of the photos are landscape. There are fifty-eight pages with a photo in the middle of the page and a slab of light grey above and below, combined these equal the depth of the photo, white page numbers on the light grey don't read too well either. If the book was landscape there would have been no problem. Fortunately there are plenty of pages with two landscape photos, one above the other and they fit perfectly. In the tradition of travel books Road

trip's cover and pages have rounded corners and a silk book mark so that the armchair traveller doesn't lose their place.

If you are old enough to remember these sights, than this is a really nice slice of long gone americana for you. Nice photos, I would have purchased this as a hard bound book if it had been available.

The photos are great! When I received this, I had to look at every page before putting it aside to actually read later. What a wonderful compendium of unique roadside architecture. Sad to think that those days are over.

Disappointed. The small paperback format does not do justice to the photos. Vague descriptions and information at best captioning the photos. I expected this to be a fun coffee table type book to give as a gift. I should have paid more attention to the physical size and format, so that's my fault, but the contents are lackluster.

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