

8 Great Classic Rock Song Destinations Worth a Visit

Let these tunes guide you during your annual summer road trip



Immerse yourself in classic rock songs on a summer road trip to the places made famous in the songs. A trip to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame could be a good starting point.

COURTESY ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME

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As summer [road trips](#) begin in the U.S., the radio dials and streaming devices in many cars will be tuned in to classic rock stations, particularly among music fans 50 and over. The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, a museum and exhibition center for all things classic rock, says the average age of its visitors this year is 53.

As you sing along, consider cranking your road trip up to 11 by visiting some of the destinations highlighted in famous classic rock songs. You could make a pilgrimage, say, to the location of the tune you've been humming since the summer of '72, joining the Eagles in "standin' on a corner in Winslow, Arizona," and deciding whether indeed it is "such a fine sight to see."

"I've always been a believer that X marks the spot," says classic rock YouTuber Robert Reid of *Robert's Record Corner*, "so to go to places where things happened, things that have some importance to you, only can add to an appreciation of whatever thing that is. It can be history. But it can also be rock."

While the definition of Classic Rock is a topic of debate, for the purposes of this story, it spans the era from the mid-1960s to the early '90s. “My personal definition of ‘classic rock’ is anything that has gotten me up and out of my chair anytime before the release of the first [major label debut] Green Day album [in 1994],” says Rich Cohen, *Rolling Stone* magazine writer and author of the book *The Sun & the Moon & the Rolling Stones*. For him, classic rock is more about a state of mind than a requisite number of power chords. “Classic rock is whatever you were listening to before you became an adult,” Cohen says.

So with nostalgia for the fun times of youth — whether your wildest rockin’ days were 1963 or 1993 — here is a greatest-hits compilation of classic rock destinations worth a visit.

Route 66, USA

“Well it winds from Chicago to L.A. / More than 2,000 miles all the way / Get your kicks on Route 66.” — “Route 66,” Bobby Troup, 1946



Travel along Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles. You can make a stop in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Mike Simons/Tulsa World/AP Photo

Many artists have covered this classic road trip song for the ages, from Nat King Cole’s popular 1940s version to Perry Como in the 1950s, Chuck Berry and the Rolling Stones in the 1960s, Tom Petty in the 1970s and Depeche Mode in the 1980s. More than a dozen museums and historic sites along the route commemorate the history of the famous highway, from the [Route 66 Association Hall of Fame & Museum](#) in Pontiac, Illinois, to the Route 66 Mother Road Museum in Barstow, California.

For a one-stop shop to experience many of the artists who performed the song, fans should check out the [Rock & Roll Hall of Fame](#). “We have a really great Chuck Berry exhibit in our Pioneers Gallery,” says Andy Leach, the organization’s senior director of museum and archival collections. “It explores his relationship with St. Louis [Berry’s hometown and one of the cities highlighted in Route 66].”

Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms, California

*“Desert sky, dream beneath a desert sky.” —“In God’s Country,” from *The Joshua Tree*, U2, 1987*



This is a legendary location in the classic rock world. The Doors’ Jim Morrison shot films there, and classic rock pioneer Gram Parsons died and was cremated near the [National Park](#). However, Joshua Tree is perhaps most famous in the classic rock world for U2’s *The Joshua Tree* album.



The back of the album cover shows the band standing in front of one of the eponymous gnarled trees. While that tree has since collapsed, the area has plenty of band tributes. The park itself boasts vast, undisturbed and otherworldly vistas in which to enjoy a classic rock soundtrack, either playing in your car or on your headphones during a hike.

Winslow, Arizona

“Well, I’m standin’ on a corner in Winslow, Arizona / And such a fine sight to see.” —“Take It Easy,” Eagles, 1972



Winslow, Arizona, pays homage to the Eagles song “Take It Easy” with Standin' on the Corner Park. Alamy

The Eagles’ hit song “Take It Easy” features the memorable line highlighting a moment now frozen in time on a street corner in Winslow, Arizona. The city, situated along the historical heart of Route 66, actually has a street-corner park to commemorate the song.

Opened in 1999, Standin’ on the Corner Park features a statue of an anonymous musician with a guitar, standing on the corner. From a wall mural, the girl “in a flatbed Ford” slows down to take a look at him. A statue of the Eagles’ Glenn Frey also stands in the park, with the singer-guitarist leaning against a street post, examining the scene.

Winslow has a music festival every September where fans enjoy food, music and the atmosphere, and celebrate the song.

Graceland, Memphis, Tennessee

“I am following the river down the highway through the cradle of the Civil War / I’m going to Graceland, Graceland, Memphis, Tennessee.” —“Graceland,” Paul Simon, 1986



Paul Simon sang about traveling to Elvis Presley’s Graceland. Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

[Paul Simon](#)’s song describes traveling to visit [Elvis Presley’s Graceland Mansion](#) while on a road trip through the Mississippi Delta, the source of rock ’n’ roll. Like all good road trips, Simon’s song is more about the journey than the arrival. But those who want to visit Graceland can go to Memphis and tour the home and grounds of the “King of Rock and Roll.”

A comprehensive visit to the Graceland Entertainment Complex includes Elvis Presley’s Memphis, a massive museum and exhibit center; the Presley Motors Automobile Museum; the Elvis: The Entertainer Career Museum; and an array of exhibits, plus a look at the singer’s private airplanes. It’s an experience as big and flashy as Elvis in one of his ’70s sequined suits.

Rockaway Beach, Queens, New York

"It's not hard, not far to reach / We can hitch a ride to Rockaway Beach." —"Rockaway Beach," The Ramones, 1977



The Ramones sang about Rockaway Beach in Queens, New York. Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

The Ramones' punk-era salute to a surf song is filled with lyrics celebrating the historic and popular Rockaway Beach in Queens, New York. Dee Dee Ramone used to escape there as a teenager growing up in the city; the Vanderbilt family also used to summer there in the late 1800s.

After Rockaway's shorefront and beaches were severely damaged in Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the song was featured in advertisements for the rebuilding fund. Now refurbished, Rockaway Beach's 5-mile boardwalk is fun for people-watching, walking and biking, with adjacent food and drink stops, while the beach is for swimming, [sunbathing](#) and volleyball.

And yes, you can actually [surf](#) at Rockaway Beach, New York City's only legal surfing area.

Kent State, Kent, Ohio

“Tin soldiers and Nixon’s coming / We’re finally on our own / This summer I hear the drummin’ / Four dead in Ohio.” —“Ohio,” Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, 1970



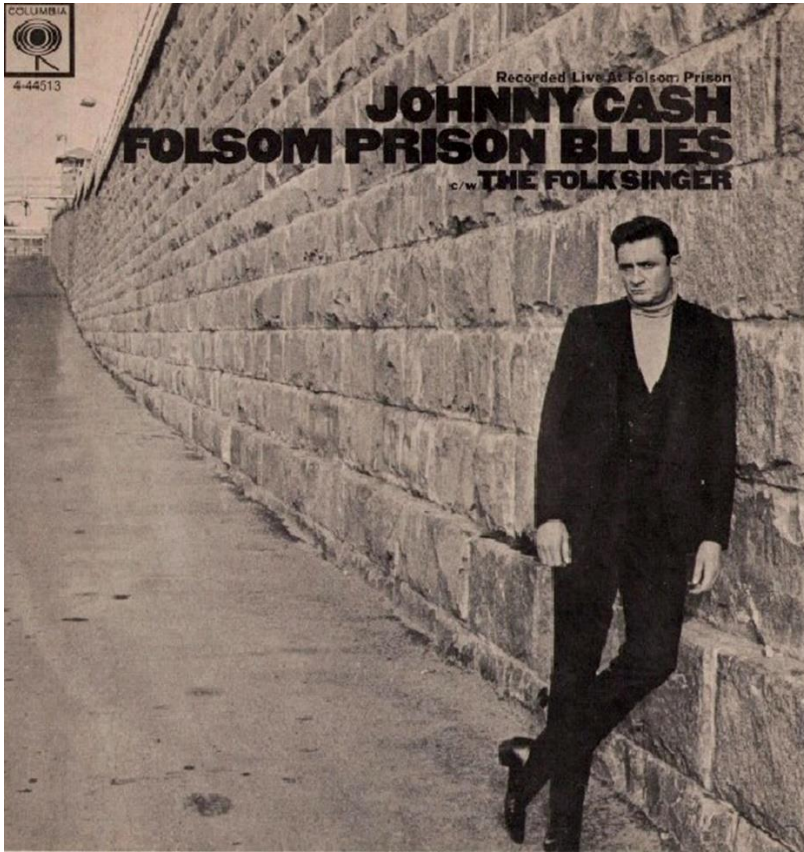
(From left) David Crosby, Graham Nash, and Stephen Stills perform their song “Ohio” at Kent State University. STR New/Reuters/Redux

This is the famous 1970 protest song about the National Guard shooting and killing four students at a demonstration on the Kent State University campus. Neil Young wrote the song after seeing images of the killings. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young recorded the single 17 days after the shooting. The song reached No. 14 on the *Billboard* charts and has since been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

Kent State commemorated the victims and the impact of the event with its May 4 Memorial, on display in a 2½-acre park overlooking the campus. Four pillars represent the four students killed, while 58,175 daffodils surrounding the sculptures signify the number of U.S. troops killed in Vietnam, the conflict the students were protesting. Visitors can sit on benches at the memorial and “inquire, learn, reflect,” as the words carved into the threshold suggest one do.

Folsom Prison, Represa, California

"I'm stuck in Folsom Prison, and time keeps draggin' on." —"Folsom Prison Blues," Johnny Cash, 1955 and 1968



*Johnny Cash's live album featuring "Folsom Prison Blues" rose to No. 1 on the *Billboard* country charts.* Donaldson Collection/Getty Images

Johnny Cash famously played this song, which sympathizes with the plight of a prisoner, during a concert for prisoners within the walls of Folsom Prison in 1968. His live album featuring the 1955 song reached No. 1 on the *Billboard* country charts.

Folsom Prison is still a fully operating prison, so there are no tours inside, and guards become cranky if you get too close to the walls, as I can attest. But visitors can pose at a distance in front of the gates, and tour the prison museum (safely outside its walls) to see century-old prison items, memorabilia from [Cash's concert there](#), and even a Rick James exhibit covering his stint at Folsom. You can also bike or walk the Johnny Cash Trail that stretches from the prison to the town of Folsom and see sculptures and art installations related to the Man in Black.

Muscle Shoals, Alabama

“Now Muscle Shoals has got the Swampers / And they’ve been known to pick a song or two.” “Sweet Home Alabama,” Lynyrd Skynyrd, 1974



Lynyrd Skynyrd mentioned the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in its megahit “Sweet Home Alabama.” Alamy

Southern rockers Lynyrd Skynyrd’s ballad celebrating the South includes a reference to the Muscle Shoals studio in Alabama, where the band recorded early on, with a shout-out to “The Swampers,” a group of studio musicians who played there. Visitors can tour the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio near Florence, Alabama, where many artists, including the Rolling Stones, Cat Stevens and [Willie Nelson](#), recorded. The refurbished studio features vintage instruments and recording equipment, as well as walls decorated with dozens of famous albums recorded there. You can dine at the Swampers Bar and Grille in Florence, listen to live music, and admire classic rock memorabilia from Lynyrd Skynyrd and others.

Bill Fink is an award-winning travel writer covering global adventures for BBC, Lonely Planet, Thrillist and many other outlets. Follow him [@finktravels](#).