

FIELD GUIDE

TO THE AMERICAN ROAD TRIP



Produced by the Los Angeles Urban Rangers for
Interstate: the American Road Trip (2006)

DEAR INTERSTATE TRAVELER,

In light of the ever-increasing standardization of the American landscape (the Interstate Highway System – begun in 1956 and characterized by consistent speeds, straightened corridors, limited access points, and repetitive models of urban development and architectural design – is emblematic), the Los Angeles Urban Rangers believe sharpened observational skills are necessary for reading 21st century roadside geographies and the local embedded within the seemingly homogenous.

Our customizable *Interstate Road Trip Specialist Field Kit*, including this *Field Guide to the American Road Trip*, is intended to facilitate meaningful explorations of the space between the beginning and ending points of your journey and to provide basic observational tools with which to dissect the landscape along the way. Drawing upon the tradition of early topographic expeditions as well as longstanding geographic field practices, it includes devices for orientation, measurement, collection, framing, and documentation. The carefully designed series of workbook activities aids budding Interstate Road Trip Specialists in transforming their cars into mobile viewpoints, building journey-based archives, and passing late-night hours on the road.

When initiated precisely half a century ago, the Interstate Highway System was heralded as the greatest public works project the world had ever seen – an expansive network of automotive veins that would literally unite the forty-eight contiguous states. We encourage you to use these tools to draw your own conclusions about this broad and influential infrastructure and its effect on our understanding of space throughout the mythic road trip.

We hope to cross paths with you someday on the Interstate Trail!

Rangers Sara Daleiden and Emily Scott

"Together, the united forces of our communication and transportation systems are dynamic elements in the very name we bear – United States. Without them, we would be a mere alliance of many separate parts."

– President Dwight D. Eisenhower, February 22, 1955

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MAPS

INSTRUCTIONS: Maps are visual representations of space, usually translating the three-dimensional into a two-dimensional surface for the purpose of navigation, orientation and/or acquisition. The following maps are provided to supplement your road atlas (with its specific and limited layers of information) in order to give you a broader sense of *where you are*.

“Maps work by serving interests. Because these interests select what from the vast storehouse of knowledge about the earth the map will represent, these interests are embodied in the map as presences and absences. Every map shows *this*... but not *that*, and every map shows what it shows in this *way*... but not *the other*. Not only is this inescapable but it is precisely because of this interested selectivity – the choice of a word or sign or aspect of the world to *make a point* – that the map is enabled to work.”

– Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (1992)



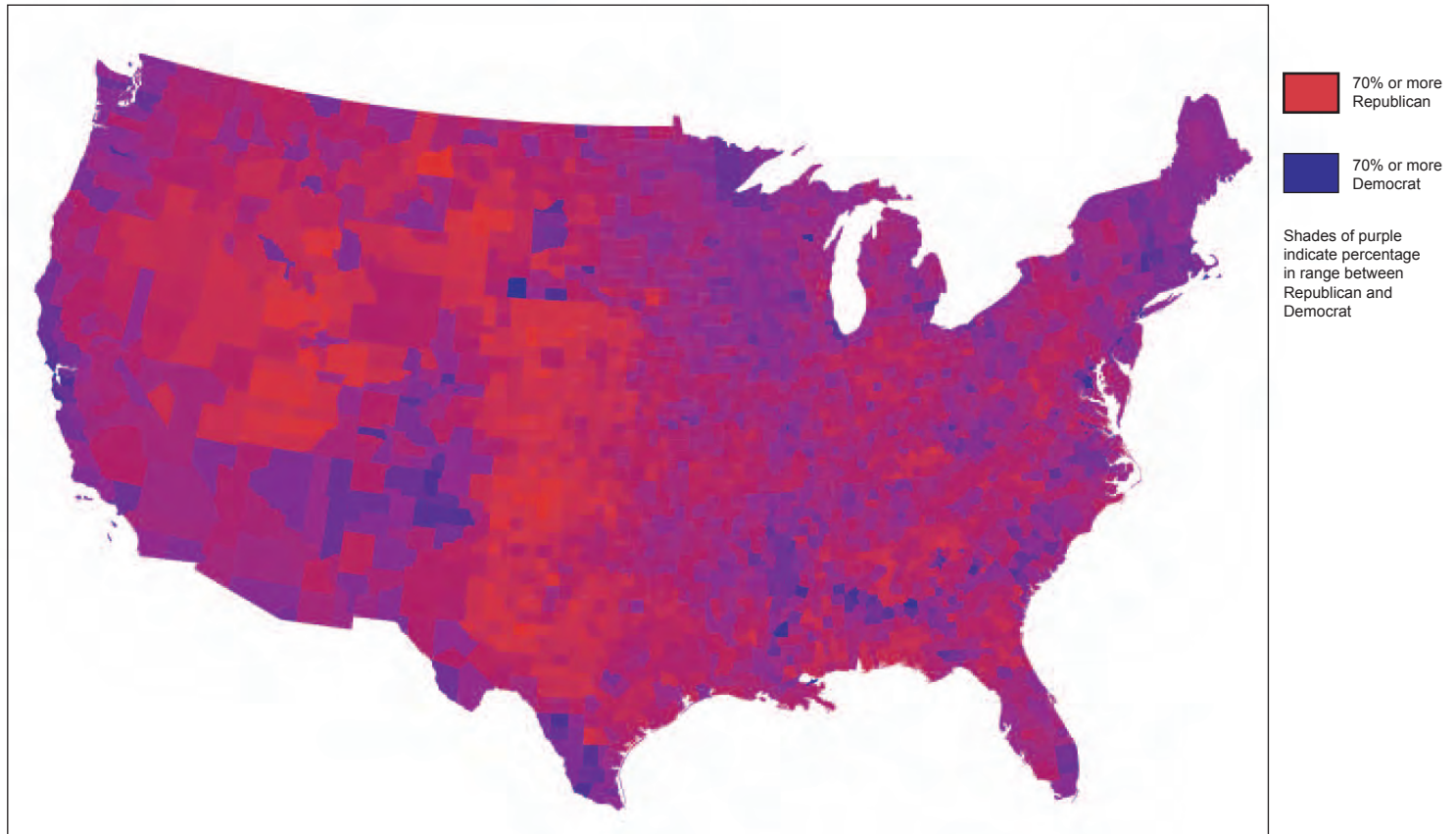
SATELLITE COMPOSITE OF LANDFORMS

Source: National Atlas of the United States of America



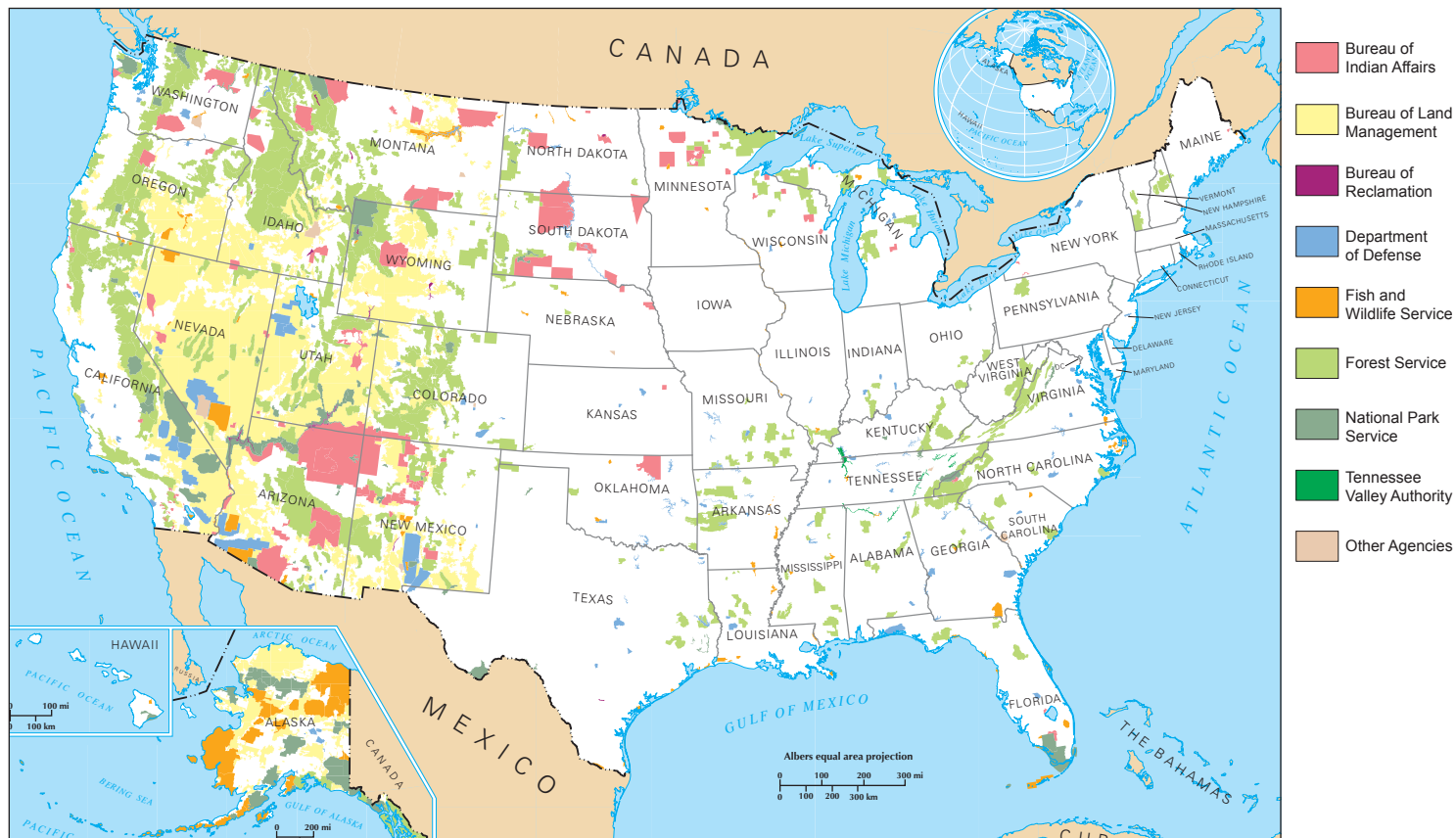
SATELLITE COMPOSITE OF NIGHT LIGHTS

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



COUNTY BY COUNTY ELECTION RESULTS (2004)

Source: Michael Gastner, Cosma Shalizi and
Mark Newman, University of Michigan



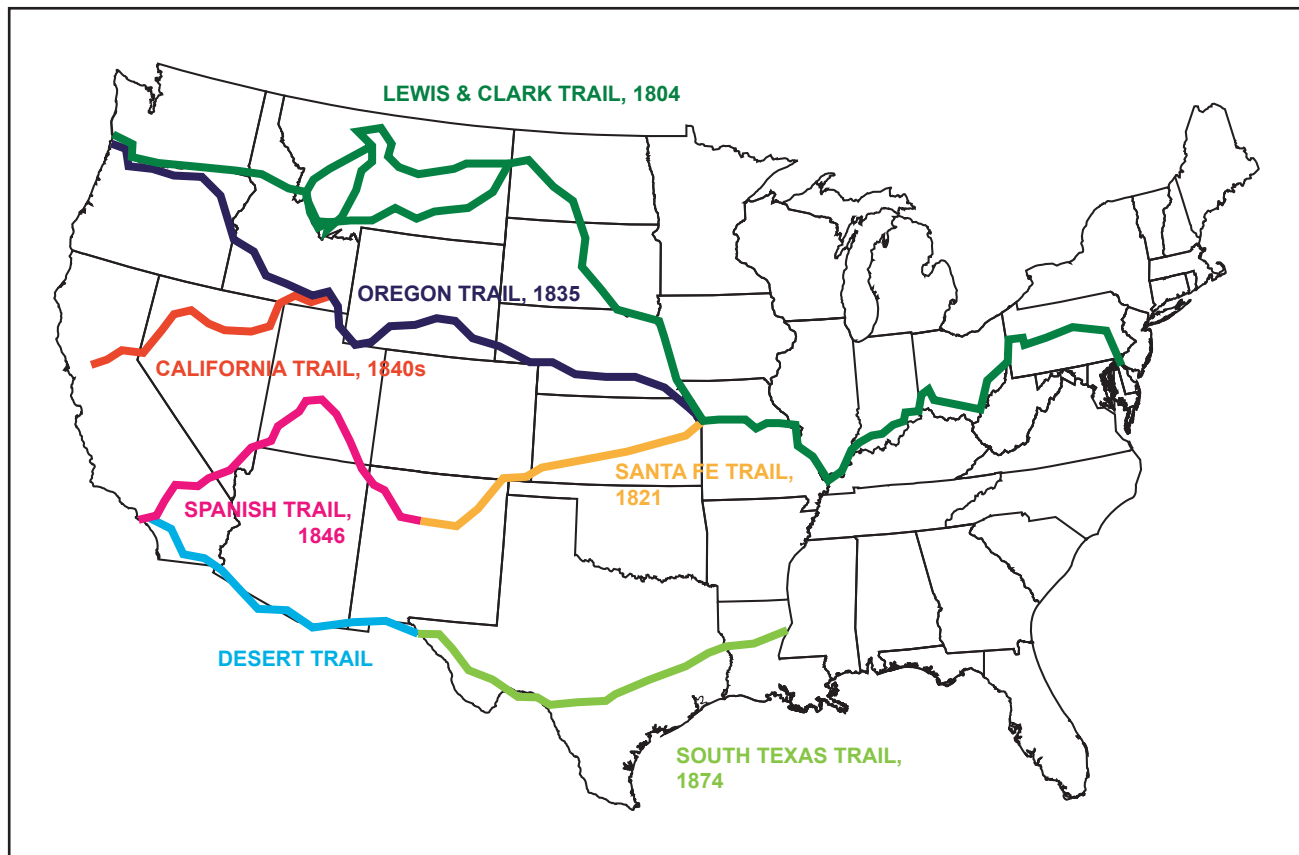
7 FEDERAL LANDS AND INDIAN RESERVATIONS

Source: National Atlas of the United States of America



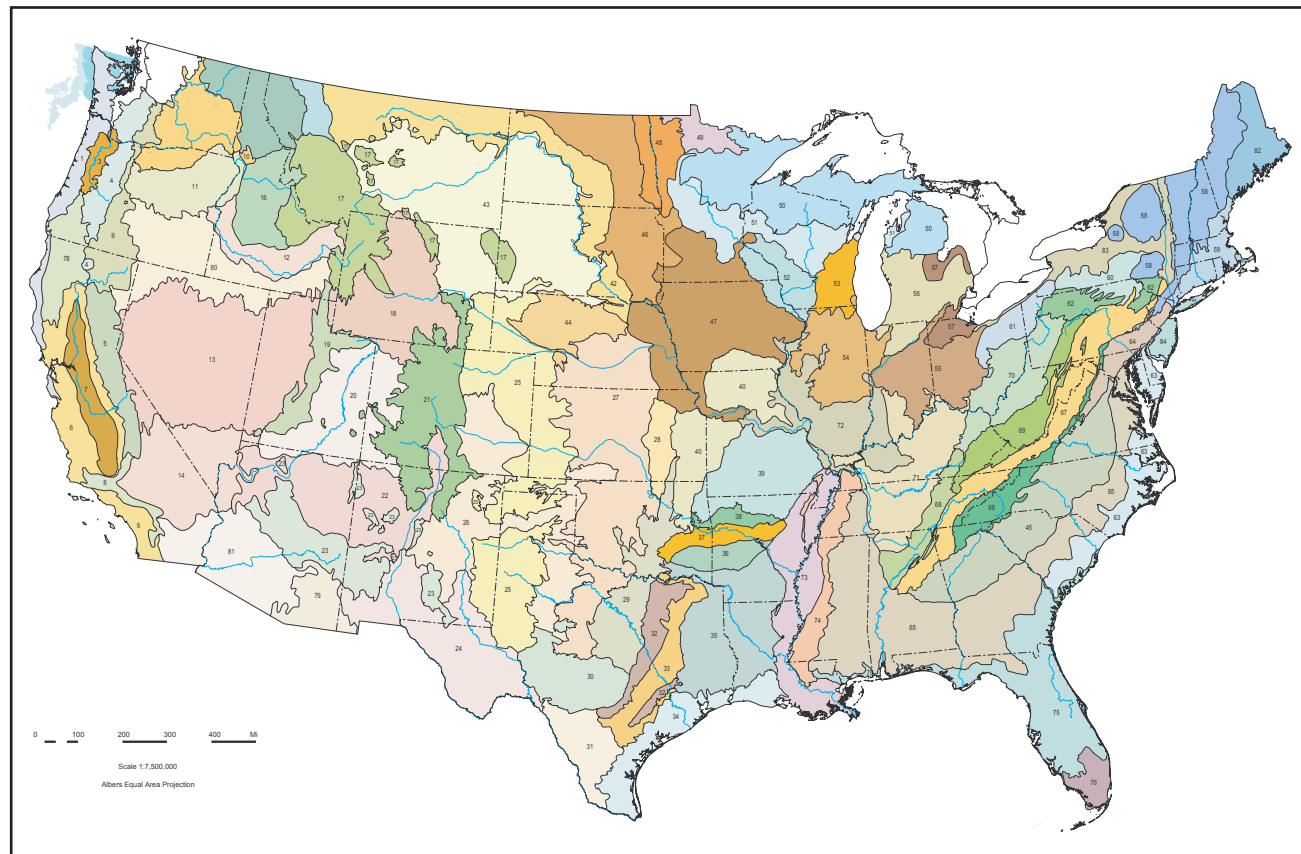
TERRITORIAL ACQUISITIONS

Source: National Atlas of the United States of America



WESTWARD MIGRATION AND PIONEER TRAILS

Source: AAG International Research,
Professional Genealogists and Family Historians



ECOREGIONS

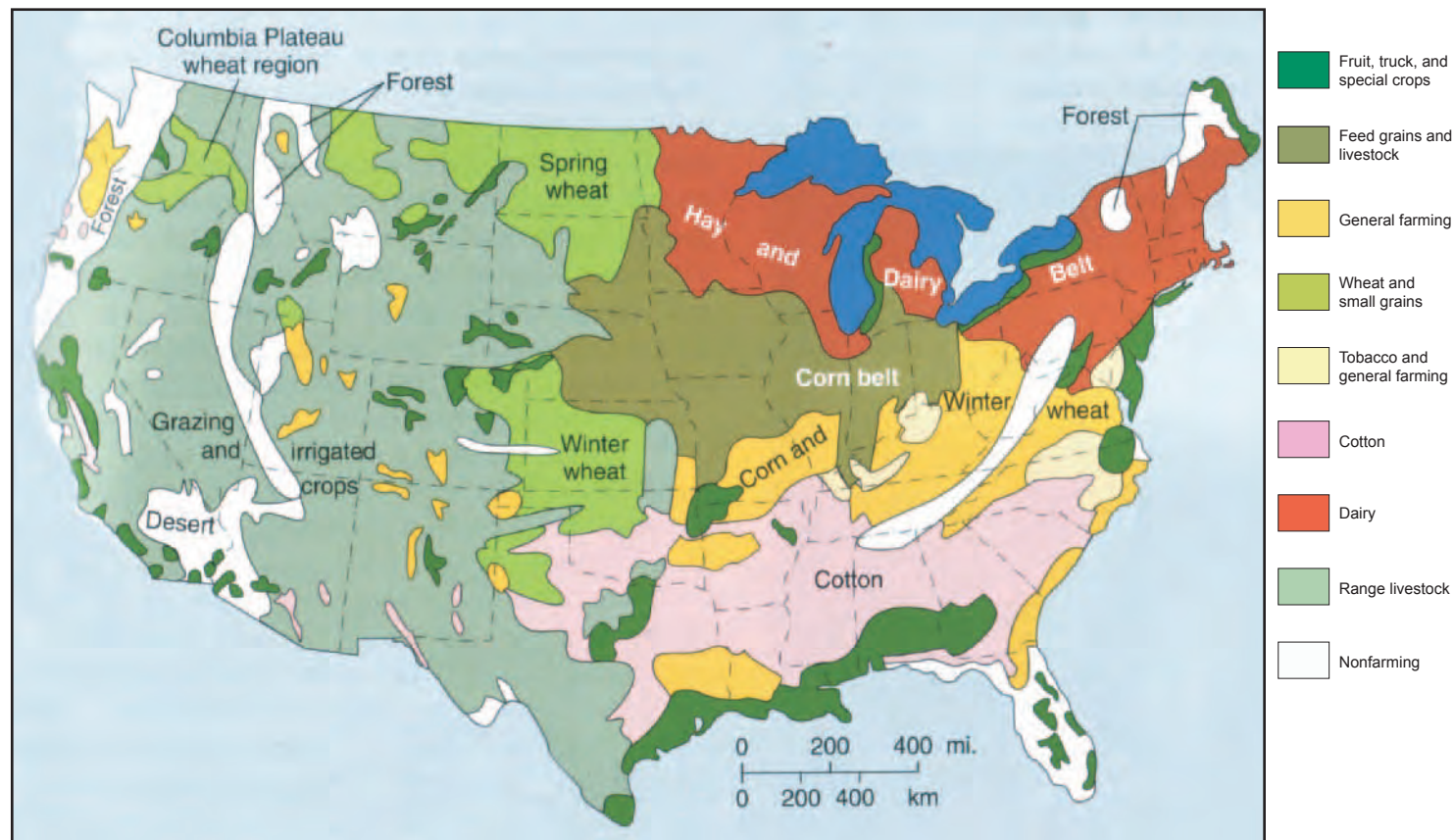
Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

1. Coast Range	29. Cross Timbers	59. Northeastern Coastal Zone
2. Puget Lowland	30. Edwards Plateau	60. Northern Appalachian Plateau and Uplands
3. Willamette Valley	31. Southern Texas Plains	61. Erie Drift Plain
4. Cascades	32. Texas Blackland Prairies	62. North Central Appalachians
5. Sierra Nevada	33. East Central Texas Plains	63. Middle Atlantic Coastal Plain
6. Southern and Central California Chaparral and Oak Woodlands	34. Western Gulf Coastal Plain	64. Northern Piedmont
7. Central California Valley	35. South Central Plains	65. Southeastern Plains
8. Southern California Mountains	36. Ouachita Mountains	66. Blue Ridge
9. Eastern Cascades Slopes and Foothills	37. Arkansas Valley	67. Ridge and Valley
10. Columbia Plateau	38. Boston Mountains	68. Southwestern Appalachians
11. Blue Mountains	39. Ozark Highlands	69. Central Appalachians
12. Snake River Plain	40. Central Irregular Plains	70. Western Allegheny Plateau
13. Central Basin and Range	41. Canadian Rockies	71. Interior Plateau
14. Mojave Basin and Range	42. Northwestern Glaciated Plains	72. Interior River Valleys and Hills
15. Northern Rockies	43. Northwestern Great Plains	73. Mississippi Alluvial Plain
16. Idaho Batholith	44. Nebraska Sand Hills	74. Mississippi Valley Loess Plains
17. Middle Rockies	45. Piedmont	75. Southern Coastal Plain
18. Wyoming Basin	46. Northern Glaciated Plains	76. Southern Florida Coastal Plain
19. Wasatch and Uinta Mountains	47. Western Corn Belt Plains	77. North Cascades
20. Colorado Plateaus	48. Lake Agassiz Plain	78. Klamath Mountains
21. Southern Rockies	49. Northern Minnesota Wetlands	79. Madrean Archipelago
22. Arizona/New Mexico Plateau	50. Northern Lakes and Forests	80. Northern Basin and Range
23. Arizona/New Mexico Mountains	51. North Central Hardwood Forests	81. Sonoran Basin and Range
24. Chihuahuan Deserts	52. Driftless Area	82. Laurentian Plains and Hills
25. High Plains	53. Southeastern Wisconsin Till Plains	83. Eastern Great Lakes and Hudson Lowlands
26. Southwestern Tablelands	54. Central Corn Belt Plains	84. Atlantic Coastal Pine Barrens
27. Central Great Plains	55. Eastern Corn Belt Plains	
28. Flint Hills	56. Southern Michigan/Northern Indiana Drift Plains	
	57. Huron/Erie Lake Plains	
	58. Northeastern Highlands	



ECOREGIONS LEGEND

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



CROP LANDS

Source: Daniel B. Botkin and Edward A. Keller, *Environmental Science: Earth as a Living Planet*





RIVERS AND LAKES

Source: National Atlas of the United States of America



STATE BOUNDARIES

Source: National Atlas of the United States of America

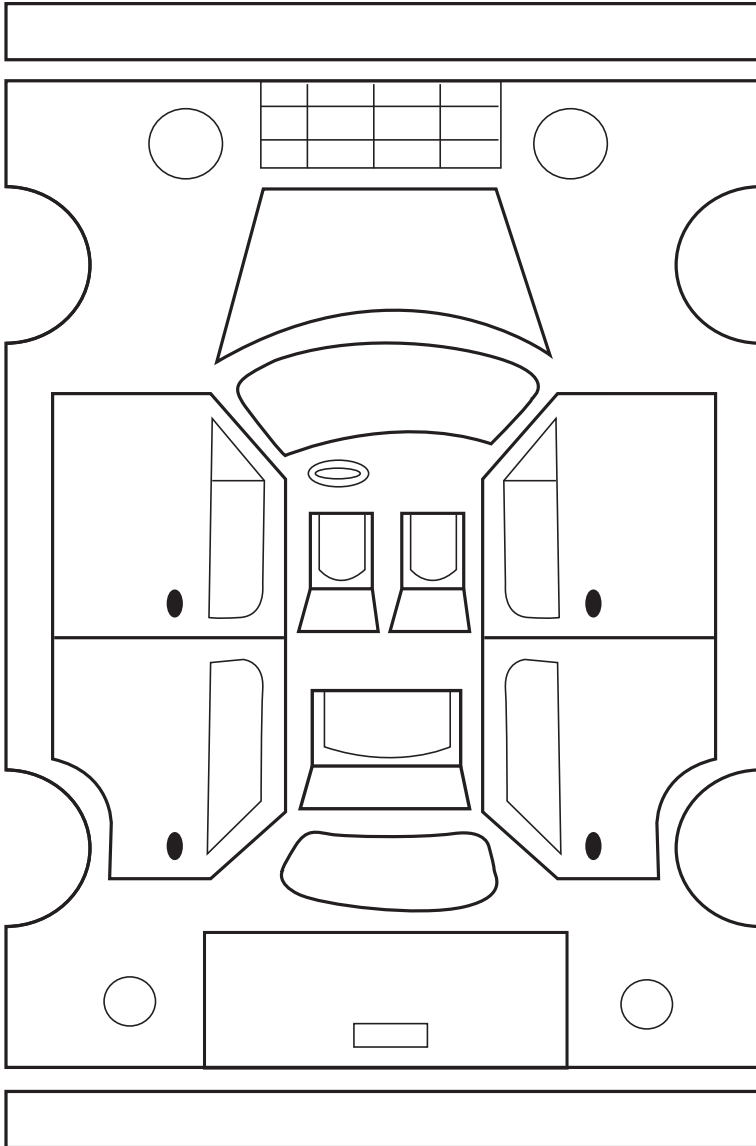
CREATE YOUR OWN MAPS

INSTRUCTIONS: Now use the outline of the U.S. below to generate your own maps as you go!



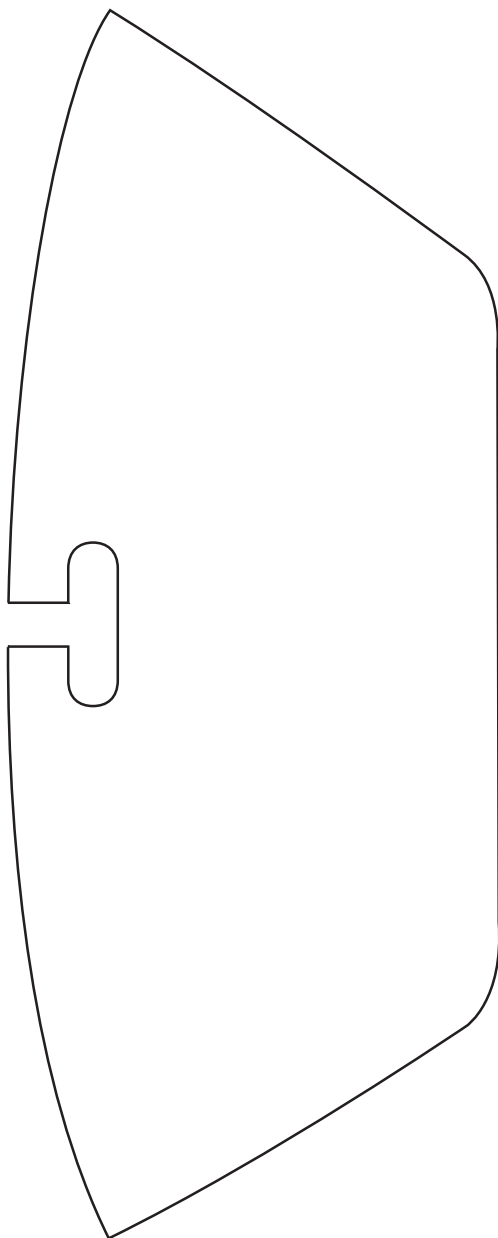
CAR MAPPING

INSTRUCTIONS: Map the intricacies of your car (trusty steed, partner in crime, home on wheels, techno exo-skeleton, mobile viewpoint, jumbo suitcase) as it traverses the Interstate Trail. How does your knowledge of its anatomy and character change as you sink further into the saddle?



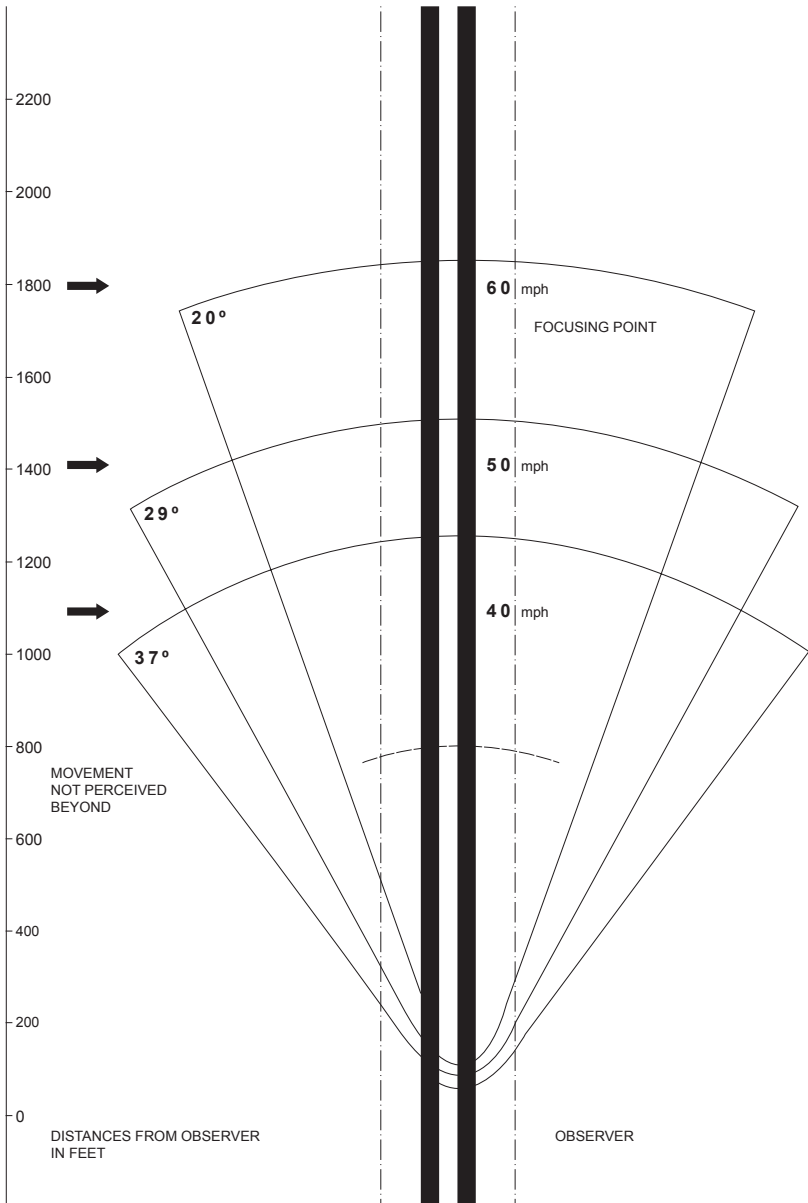
WINDSHIELD COMPOSITIONS

INSTRUCTIONS: Capture the view outside within the frame of your windshield. And remember to keep your portable windshield handy for out-of-car exploration and composition making!



WINDSHIELD: DIAGRAM 1

Relationship between focusing distance, angle of vision and distance of foreground detail at speeds of 40 mph, 50 mph and 60 mph.

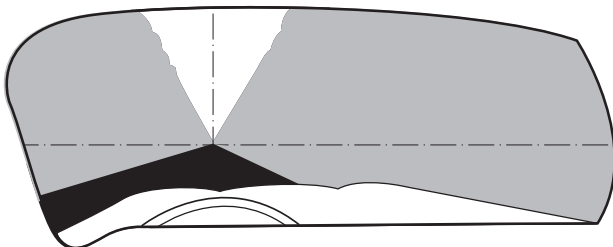


WINDSHIELD: DIAGRAM 2

Relationship between windshield, visual field and speed.

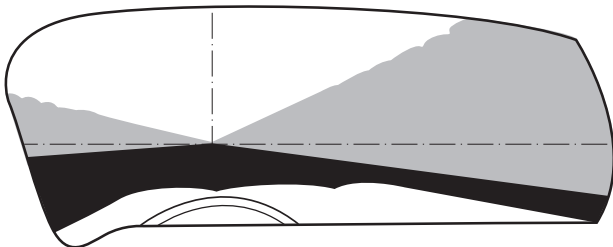
TWO-LANE ROAD:

SKY	10%
ROADSIDE	82%
ROADBED	8%



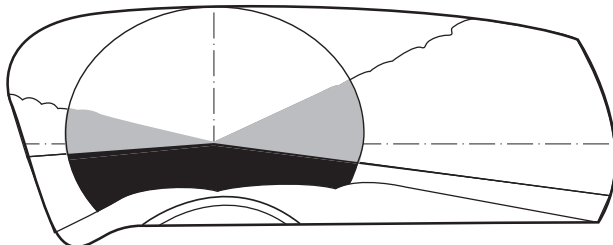
SIX-LANE FREEWAY

SKY	40%
ROADSIDE	40%
ROADBED	20%



If we reduce the visual field of the freeway to 45 degrees, which corresponds to a speed of 60 miles an hour, the proportions change as follows.

SKY	55%
ROADSIDE	17%
ROADBED	28%

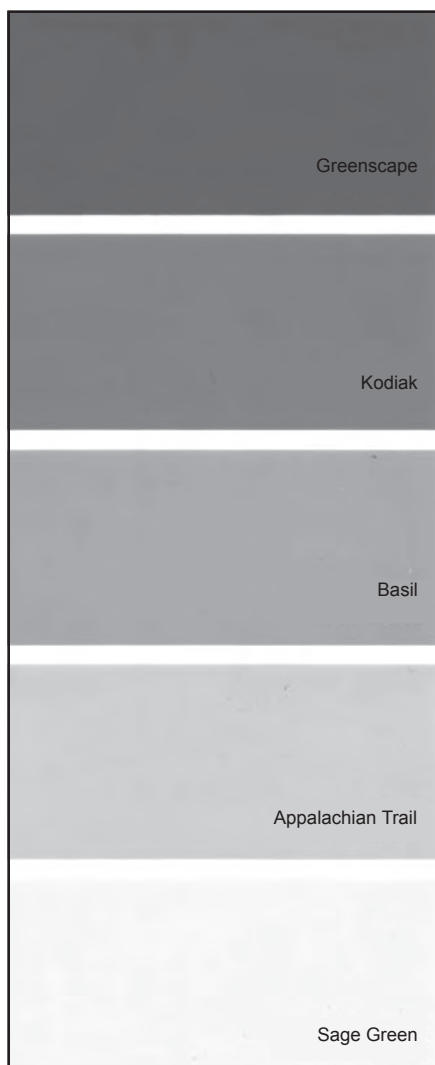


Source: Christopher Tunnard and Bemis Pushkarer,
Man Made America: Chaos or Control? (1963)

COLOR MATCH

THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

INSTRUCTIONS: Is the mountain you're looking at Rosemary, Tennessee Haze, or Woodland Mystery? How about the shade of the afternoon clouds or the suburban rooftops beyond the roadside retaining wall? Use your color swatch of the American landscape to identify the hues within your field of view and expand your color vocabulary.



FIELD OBSERVATION LOG

INSTRUCTIONS: Activate your inner geographer and record field observations on this customizable grid. Question sets are provided to suggest possible focus points – mix and match or create your own categories. Write selected questions in left column and label diagonals across the top with your designated breakdowns (time slots, states, driving v. stopping, days of week). Translate the rambling details of your road trip into an idiosyncratic archive!

ROAD

Number of lanes
Speed limit
Actual speed
Traffic density
Frequency police cars
Distance between exits
Median type(s)
Roadside barriers
Roadside landscaping
Electric lines
Billboards (#, size, distance from road)
Favorite/least favorite billboard
Art (sculpture, mural, graffiti)

BODY

Foods consumed
Foods craved
Frequency food consumption
Liquid intake
Trash generated
Hours of sleep
Fatigue (scale 1-10)
Awareness night/day
Modes of exercise
Time spent exercising
Bathroom breaks (#, location)
Clothing worn
Posture in car

CULTURE

Place names
Radio stations (#, type)
Architectural style(s)
Development patterns
Cultural/historical themes
Cars (local v. non-local)
Car types
Gas prices
Motel prices

Towns

Distance from road
"Authenticity" (scale 1-10)
Local attractions
Local dress
Body types
Accents
Ethnic groups (#, type)
Significant architecture
Availability wireless internet

ENVIRONMENT

Temperature
Weather
Wind
Topography
Vistas
Public lands (#, type)
Ecoregion(s)
Vegetation types
Animals: dead
Animals: alive
Windshield bugs (#, type)
Landscape colors (use color swatch)
Building colors (use color swatch)
Horizon colors (use color swatch)

[illegible]

PHOTOGRAPHIC SCAVENGER HUNTS

INSTRUCTIONS: Cruise past tourist traps and wayside photo points for these hunts. Instead, use your camera to document thresholds, spatial sensations, and stereotypic landscapes. Capture the intangible and elusive...explode the scenic viewpoint!

THRESHOLDS (between)

city & non-city	one landscape & next
west & east	roadside & non-roadside
one state & next	population & vacancy

SPATIAL SENSATIONS

sublime	iconic	claustrophobic
nostalgic	authentic	futuristic
expansive	melancholic	spectacular

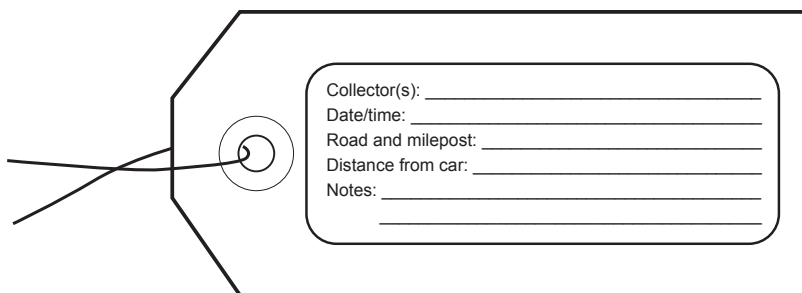
STEREOTYPIC LANDSCAPES

west coast	cowboy & indian desert
enchanted forest	blue grass hills
rolling prairie	midwestern cornfield
southern bayou	rugged mountains

SPECIMEN COLLECTION

INSTRUCTIONS: A seductive array of containers and tools (envelopes, ziplocs, vials, test tubes, jars, eye dropper, tweezers) as well as a customizable labeling system are provided for the collection and study of field samples (ground-based nature specimen, plastic gas station paraphernalia, relic from favorite childhood monument). Such souvenirs, or pieces of place, not only hold the potential to spark storytelling down the road, but also to function as a material record of your cross-country expedition.

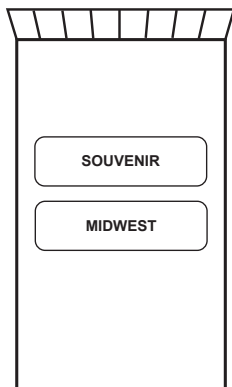
LABEL SET #1: FILL IN THE BLANKS



A specimen label template with a hole and a string. The label is rectangular with a pointed left side and a circular hole. A string is threaded through the hole. The label contains the following fields:

- Collector(s): _____
- Date/time: _____
- Road and milepost: _____
- Distance from car: _____
- Notes: _____

LABEL SET #2: SELECT FROM WORD SET



A specimen label template with a slot and two word buttons. The label is rectangular with a slot at the top. The label contains the following word buttons:

- SOUVENIR
- MIDWEST

ROADSIDE INTERVIEWS

INSTRUCTIONS: Tired of predictable roadside exchanges, the same old “so, where ya from”? Want to tune in to local and tourist cultures? Use these interview questions to learn more about fellow Americans and road travelers alike, transforming rest areas and truck stops into havens for cultural exchange!

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWER

- Where are you?
- Time of day?
- Are there many people around?
- Who looks easiest to talk to?
- Is it easy to identify an interview target?
- How did you pick them out of the crowd?
- Would you describe the people around you as looking like you do?
- Are you comfortable here?

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWEE

Tourists

- How far from here do you live?
- Have you ever been here before?
- Do you road trip often? If so, why?
- What is your most memorable road trip and why?
- Do you prefer to travel by interstate or other roadways, and why?
- When en route, what is your focus and what tends to pass by?
- Do you miss home?
- What are your favorite ways to pass time in the car?
- What did you just eat?
- If older than 60: Do you remember travel in the US before the Interstate system was built? If so, how do you think it has changed the nature of road travel?

Locals

- Have you lived here for long?
- What do you think is unique about this area?
- In ___ amount of time, what do you think I should see here?
- How close are we to the main part of town?
- Where are the majority of travelers you meet here visiting from? Do most stay overnight or pass through?
- Where do most locals vacation?
- Do you like to take road trips? If so, where do you like to go?
- If older than 60: Did you live here before the Interstate was built? If so, do you think the place changed as a result of its construction?

ROAD LIBS

INSTRUCTIONS: Pass the hours with this medley of road libs. Have your partner, unknowing of the excerpt at hand, supply a series of words to fill in the blanks. Read aloud and have a hearty laugh!

ROAD LIB 1: Dwight D. Eisenhower, remarks from Cadillac Square, Michigan (October 29, 1954)

We are pushing ahead with a great _____ program, a
1. NOUN
_____ program that will take this Nation out of its
2. NOUN
_____ shackles of secondary roads all over this country
3. ADJECTIVE
and give us the types of highways that we need for this great
mass of _____. It will be a nation of great
4. NOUN
_____, but will be more than that: it will be a nation that is
5. NOUN
going ahead every day. With Americans being _____ to
6. VERB
us — with our population increasing at five every minute, the
expanding horizon is one that staggers the _____.
7. NOUN

ORIGINAL TEXT
1. ROAD 2. ROAD 3. ANTICQUATED 4. MOTOR VEHICLES 5. PROSPERITY
6. BORN 7. IMAGINATION

ROAD LIBS

ROAD LIB 2: Meriwether Lewis, journal entry from Lewis & Clark Expedition (September 17, 1804)

The shortness and verdure of _____ gave the plain the
1. NOUN

appearance throughout it's whole extent of _____
2. ADJECTIVE

bowling-green in fine order. [...] this scenery already

_____ was still farther heightened by
3. THREE ADJECTIVES

immense herds of _____
4. THREE ANIMALS

which we saw in every direction feeding on the hills and plains.

[...] I think I can safely _____ the assertion that the
5. VERB

_____ of this _____
6. ADJECTIVE 7. REPEAT ONE ANIMAL

is equal if not superior to that of the finest blooded

_____.
8. NOUN

1. GRASS 2. BEAUTIFUL 3. RICH, PLEASANT AND BEAUTIFUL
4. BUFFALO, DEER ELK AND ANTELOPES 5. VENTURE
6. SPEED 7. ANIMAL 8. COURSE

ORIGINAL TEXT

ROAD LIBS

ROAD LIB 3: Katharine L. Bates, *America, the Beautiful!* (1913)

O _____ for spacious skies,

1. ADJECTIVE

For _____ waves of grain,

2. COLOR

For _____ mountain majesties

3. SECOND COLOR

Above the _____ plain!

4. ADJECTIVE

America! America! God shed his grace on thee

And crown thy _____ with brotherhood

5. NOUN

From _____ to shining

6. PLACE NAME

_____!

7. PLACE NAME

O beautiful for pilgrim _____

8. BODY PART

Whose _____, impassioned stress

9. ADJECTIVE

A thoroughfare for freedom beat

Across the wilderness! America! America!

God mend thine every _____,

10. NOUN

Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law!

ORIGINAL TEXT
1. BEAUTIFUL 2. AMBER 3. PURPLE 4. FRUITED 5. GOOD
6. SEA 7. SEA 8. FEET 9. STERN 10. FLAW

ROAD LIBS

ROAD LIB 4: E.A. Brininstool, *Autumn on the Range*, Trail Dust of a Maverick (1914)

Off across the wide _____ sweeps

1. RIVER FEATURE

the breezes of the fall,

Where the haze of _____ summer

2. CULTURAL GROUP

sort o' lingers over all;

Ev'ry bronco is _____ in the

3. VERB

_____ autumn air,

4. ADJECTIVE

And the yippin' of their riders is resoundin' everywhere. [...]

There's a smell of fryin' _____ as it

5. FOOD ITEM

sizzles in the pan,

And the boys'll soon be lined up at the mess-box to a man;

And the _____ 'll be a-clatter, for the

6. KITCHEN ITEM

_____ 's b'ilin' hot,

7. DRINK

While the slapjacks that are _____

8. VERB

are a-going to hit the spot.

1. ARROYO 2. INJUN 3. CAVORTIN' 4. CHILLY 5. BACON
6. CUPS 7. COFFEE 8. BAKIN'

ORIGINAL TEXT

ROAD LIBS

ROAD LIB 5: Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)

So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old
broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over
_____ and sense all that raw land that rolls
1. AMERICAN STATE
in one unbelievable huge bulge over the _____,
2. LANDFORM
and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the
immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must
be crying in the land where they let the children cry, and at
night the _____ 'll be out, and don't you know
3. NOUN
that God is _____ ? The evening star must
4. CARTOON CHARACTER
be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie,
which is just before the coming of _____
5. ADJECTIVE
night that blesses the earth, darkens all rivers, cups the
peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody
knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the
forlorn rags of growing old, I think of _____
6. NAME OF LOVED ONE
I even think of Old _____ the father we
7. REPEAT NAME OF LOVED ONE
never found, I think of _____
8. REPEAT NAME OF LOVED ONE

1. NEW JERSEY 2. WEST COAST 3. STARS 4. POOH BEAR
5. COMPLETE 6-8. DEAN MORIARTY

ORIGINAL TEXT

INTERSTATE TRIVIA QUIZ

INSTRUCTIONS: Test your Interstate know-how and discover fun new facts!

1. Which US president is credited with establishing the Interstate Highway System?
2. When was the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, also known as Federal Aid Highway Act of _____, passed?
3. The U.S. Interstate Highway System was modeled after which European road system?
4. How many tons of concrete make up an average mile of Interstate?
5. What three colors are represented on the shield-shaped Interstate sign?
6. North-South Interstates are denoted by even or odd numbers? How about East-West?
7. Do the numbers of North-South Interstates increase or decrease as one moves from the West to East Coast?
8. Do the numbers of East-West Interstates increase or decrease as one moves from north to south?
9. Interstates comprise what percentage of our nation's roads?
10. What percentage of national road travel is carried out on Interstates?
11. What percentage of total truck miles is traveled on Interstates?
12. What is the longest Interstate and what is its stretch?
13. What is the shortest Interstate and what is its stretch?
14. Which state has the most Interstate miles and how many?
15. Which state has the largest number of Interstate routes and how many?
16. Which Interstate was the most expensive to build and how much did it cost?
17. Which Interstate goes through the most states and how many states?
18. Which five state capitals are not served by the Interstate system?
19. Approximately how many rest areas exist along the Interstate system?
20. What is the oldest Interstate segment?
21. How many bridges are part of the US Interstate Highway System?
22. How many miles did Americans travel on the Interstate system in 2000?

1. Dwight D. Eisenhower 2. 1956 3. German autobahn 4. 3 million 5. Red, white, and blue 6. North-South routes are even numbered, while East-West routes have even numbers 7. Numbers increase as one moves eastward 8. Numbers decrease as one heads southward 9. Less than 1% 10. More than 24% 11. 41% 12. I-90, spans 3,020.54 miles from Seattle, WA to Boston, MA 13. I-73, spans 12.27 miles in North Carolina 14. Texas, 3,233.45 miles 15. New York, 29 16. I-95, \$8 billion 17. I-95, 16 18. Juneau, AK; Dover, DE; Jefferson City, MO; Carson City, NV; and Pierre, SD 19. There were 1,214 when last counted in 1972; the current number is not expected to differ significantly 20. Grand Central Parkway in New York; opened 1936 and incorporated into the Interstate System as I-278 21. Over 55,000 22. 667 billion

ANSWER

Source: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Department of Transportation

ROAD TRIP GLOSSARY

AAA

In 1902, 23,000 cars and 17 million horses were in operation in the United States. Yet, fifty small auto clubs had been formed by motoring enthusiasts across the country. Nine banded together to create a national motoring organization and founded the American Automobile Association (AAA) in March of 1902. For over a century, AAA has dedicated itself to “the future of vehicle motor transportation through support of adequate highways and elimination of burdensome taxes and restrictions” and to providing member services to make “car ownership and travel a more pleasurable experience.”

ARCHIVE

Noun: A collection of documents such as letters, official papers, photographs, or recorded material, kept for their historical interest; Verb: To store a document in an archive.

ATLAS

1) A Titan who for his part in the Titans' revolt against the gods is forced by Zeus to support the heavens on his shoulders; 2) One who bears a heavy burden; 3) A bound collection of maps often including illustrations, informative tables, or textual matter.

BIOGEOGRAPHY

The study of the geographical distribution of plants and animals.

BIOME

A division of the world's vegetation that corresponds to a particular climate and is characterized by certain types of plants and animals. There are seventeen major biomes worldwide. Terrestrial biomes in the contiguous United States include temperate shrub lands, desert, temperate grassland, temperate forest, and boreal forest.

CONCRETE

A generic term for paving on modern highways, concrete is composed of tiny stones bound by an agent – either cement or something petroleum based. There are two major subtypes: Portland Cement Concrete (PCC) and Asphaltic Concrete (AC). Portland Cement Concrete is the white, durable substance, made from gypsum, that is commonly known as just “concrete.” This form of cement originated in Portland, England. Of the two types, Portland Cement is the more durable, but it is also far more expensive. Asphaltic Concrete is the black substance based on either macadam or a petroleum based substance - it is also known as “tarmac” (tar macadam).

ROAD TRIP GLOSSARY

CONCRETE SLABS

Sections of highway are made of parallel slabs of concrete that usually correspond with the lanes on the road. Concrete is divided into square or rectangular segments to accommodate its expansion and contraction due to changes in weather. This prevents cracking and potholes. From the driver's point of view, a two lane concrete road has one line down the middle, which delineates the two slabs.

DAYLIGHTING

Early state highways in California were built to conform to the terrain, a construction method that both reduced the highway grade and cut costs. Unfortunately, the result was dangerous blind hairpin turns. By the early 1920s, road-building technology advanced to the point where the need for such substandard designs was eliminated, yet many older highways still had them. Daylighting was the process of taking away enough of a hillside to add visibility to sharp turns, making them safe.

ECOREGION

A large area of land or water that contains a geographically distinct assemblage of natural communities that (a) share a large majority of their species and ecological dynamics; (b) share similar environmental conditions, and; (c) interact ecologically in ways that are critical for their long-term persistence.

GEOGRAPHY

Literally = "earth" + "writing"; 1) The study of all the physical features of the earth's surface, including its climate and the distribution of plant, animal, and human life; 2) The physical features of a place or region; 3) The arrangement of the different parts of a building, city, or other place; 4) The way that something is arranged and the relationships between its different elements.

INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

The largest single public works project in history, this system was conceived to overcome the shortcomings of the U.S. Highway System, and was first proposed in 1947 as a 40,000 mile system of highways. While most of the present highways were designated in 1947, it was not until 1956, with the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 that they received a funding mechanism. (Previously, federal highways had been funded by a 50/50 funding mechanism; the states were required to match federal spending dollar for dollar. This new mechanism called for the federal government to pay for 90% of the construction costs, with the states matching only 10%.) President Eisenhower championed this system, hence their title as the "Eisenhower Interstate Highway System." It is said that Eisenhower was so impressed by the German autobahns that he wanted a similar system of highways in the United States that would allow for better military mobilization and promote better interstate commerce. He listed five problems, in particular,

ROAD TRIP GLOSSARY

INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM (continued)

that the Interstate Highway System was intended to improve/overcome: the annual death and injury toll, the waste of billions of dollars in detours and traffic jams, the clogging of the nations courts with highway related suits, the inefficiency in the transportation of goods, and the appalling inadequacies to meet the demands of catastrophe or defense should an atomic war come.

HIGHWAY TYPES

- Conventional Highway: Varying in width from two lanes to eight, conventional highways generally top out at four. They look and feel like a normal street, complete with stop signs, signals, and full access from businesses and residences.
- * Expressway: On the East Coast, an expressway is the catchall term for a grade separated limited access highway. In California, an expressway is simply a limited access highway; essentially a freeway with grade intersections, but divided and built to freeway standards. Many current freeways were originally constructed as expressways in the 1940s and early 1950s and had grade separated interchanges added later.
- * Freeway: Generally, a freeway is a grade separated divided highway designed for high speeds. Contrary to popular belief, a freeway is not a highway “free” from tolls. “Free”-way instead refers to a legislative definition passed by the California Legislature in 1939, which provided for a highway that would be free of encroaching properties and has controlled access. At the time, this was very controversial since property owners next to the road could have no rights of direct access.
- * Interstate Highway: Interstates are highways that go through more than one state. This term is most often associated with the Interstate Highway System, but they are not the only interstate highways. An interstate highway also refers to the US highways and state highways that maintain a route number through more than one state. The earliest interstate highways include the National Road and Lincoln Highway, both of which traversed many states. In short, interstate highways are highways that go through more than one state; the Interstate Highway System is just one set of highways that matches this definition (denoted by a red, white, and blue shield and with limited access points).
- Turnpike: A road for the use of which tolls are collected. The first engineered and planned road in the United States was the Lancaster Turnpike, a privately constructed toll road built between 1793 and 1795. Connecting Philadelphia and Lancaster in Pennsylvania, its 62-mile length had a maximum grade of 7 percent and was surfaced with broken stone and gravel.

ROAD TRIP GLOSSARY

JERSEY CURB

The piece of concrete that separates traffic lanes and acts as a bridge rail. Originally developed in New Jersey along the Turnpike in the late 1950s and 1960s, the value of such a barrier for preventing accidents was immediately obvious and the present form appeared in the mid-1960s. By the end of the 1970s, it was used for all bridge rails and for dividing urban freeways. Efforts have been made to soften its stark appearance with decorations ranging from a groove on the outside part of the bridge rail to elaborate designs, some of which hark back to the days of the “mission style” concrete guardrails.

LANDFORM

A natural physical feature of the earth's surface, for example, a gorge, butte, or plain; the form or shape of the land.

LOCAL

Adjective: 1) Relating to, situated in, or providing a service for a particular area; 2) Typical of, or only found in, a particular area; 3) Not covering a wide area or the whole country; Noun: Somebody who lives in a particular area, was born there, or has lived there for a long time.

MEDIAN STRIP

A paved or planted strip dividing a highway into lanes according to direction of travel.

MILEPOST

A post indicating the distance in miles from or to a given point, and/or a post placed a mile from a similar post. All Interstate routes are mile-posted beginning at the most westerly or southerly point. The beginning point is milepost 0. If the first interchange on the route is located between milepost 4.0 and 5.0, it is numbered as Interchange #4. The next interchange, if located at milepost 8.7, would be numbered as Interchange #8, etc. With this system the motorist can easily determine the location and distance to a desired interchange.

NATIONAL ROAD

This was the first federally funded road built in the United States. At its peak it went from Cumberland, MD to Vandalia, IL – a distance of 591 miles. Construction had started in the late 1700s but by the early to mid-1800s interest waned in favor of the railroads. During its time, it proved that people over vast distances could be united and was a model upon which later highways were based. Today, it is part of US 40 and many of its structures, especially stone bridges, remain in use.

ROAD TRIP GLOSSARY

PIONEER

1) A person or group that is the first to do something or that is a forerunner in creating or developing something new; 2) Somebody who goes into previously uncharted or unclaimed territory with the purpose of exploring it and possibly colonizing and settling it; 3) A foot soldier whose duties include going ahead of the main company to pave the way for them by building roads, ditches, bridges, and other constructions; 4) The first species of plant or animal to begin living in a previously unoccupied site.

SOUVENIR

Something bought or kept as a reminder of a particular place or occasion.

TOPOGRAPHY

1) The study and mapping of the features on the surface of the land, including natural features such as mountains and constructed features such as highways and railroads; 2) The features on the surface of a particular area of land; 3) A study or detailed description of the various features of any object or entity and the relationships between them.

U.S. HIGHWAY SYSTEM

This refers to the system of highways that preceded the Interstate Highway System and that is marked by black and white shields. It was established in 1925 and was the world's first countrywide system of uniformly numbered highways.

Sources:

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Merriam-Webster Dictionary
U.S. Highways website by Casey Cooper
World Wildlife Fund

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