



**Located on historical Route 66, Cuba offers natural wonders and a mural-worthy past.**

By Lori Schueler

**Left: The Meramec River is near Cuba and is a great place for canoeing, rafting, tubing and more.** Missouri Tourism photo

**Above: One of the murals on display in town relates the region's Civil War history.** Viva Cuba Inc./Alise O'Brien photo

Other murals coloring the town include a depiction of Amelia Earhart with her plane that was forced to land outside Cuba in 1928, a tribute to Cuba's Gold Star Boys from World War II aboard the Blue Bonnet Frisco Train, and an illustration representing the importance and beauty of the rivers surrounding Cuba. Some businesses tied into the mural project and have smaller murals outside or inside their buildings.

After viewing the murals, visitors will find activities, offbeat attractions, eateries and lodging options in and around Cuba.

### **MAKE A SPLASH AND SADDLE UP**

On a sizzling day, the perfect way to cool down is to take a dip in a refreshing river. The Meramec, Courtois and Huzzah rivers are near Cuba, and several river outfitters offer canoeing, rafting, kayaking and tubing. Not into water? Stay on land and go horseback riding at Huzzah Valley Resort or Bass' River

Resort, both in Steelville, about 15 miles south of Cuba.

Take an adventure underground at Onondaga Cave State Park located approximately eight miles east of Cuba in Leasburg. See stalagmites, stalactites, active flowstones and other natural wonders.

Look for a landmark four miles west of Cuba in Fanning, where the world's largest rocking chair is 42 feet tall. This gigantic rocker, certified as the world's largest by Guinness, was established in April 2008 next to Fanning 66 Outpost and General Store, on Route 66 (5957 state Highway ZZ). The store has souvenirs, snacks, soda, fishing and hunting supplies, but almost everyone comes by to see the chair. Poke your head around back and check out the archery range.

### **EAT FROM SUNRISE TO SUNSET**

Rise and shine with a hot cup of coffee and nibble on a warm muffin or curl up on a comfy couch and get lost in a thrilling mystery at Java.Net Books & Gifts, 418 N. Franklin. This award-winning coffee shop has computers and free wireless Internet. The shop is open

# Picture Perfect

When a canvas is richly colored in history, the paint is mixed with a splash of community pride and brush strokes are done with enthusiasm and creativity, the final results are one-of-a-kind murals found in Cuba, Mo. Whether passing through on historical Route 66 or visiting for the weekend, the dozen larger-than-life paintings pop out on the sides of buildings, snatching the eye and sparking interest.

Located in Crawford County, Cuba began its mural project in 2001. The first mural was created by Peoples Bank to commemorate its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and depicted the first cashier and long-time president, A.J. Barnett. Because people responded positively to the mural, Viva Cuba—a community beautification group—decided to add 11 murals along Route 66 to celebrate the town's heritage. Since then, the Missouri legislature has named Cuba "Route 66 Mural City."

"People see the murals and are amazed," said Jane Reed, mural project media coordinator for Viva Cuba.



Monday–Saturday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For an appetizing afternoon meal, stop by Back in the Day Café at 615 N.W. Main St., in the historical district of Cuba. The building is more than 100 years old and the character and charm of the structure is just as impressive as the food. Try a scoop of hand-dipped, homemade ice cream or a piece of blackberry cobbler. Look for the mural painted behind the bakery. Hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday–Monday.

Stop in for supper at Frisco's Grill, 121 S. Smith St., where Cuba's history as a railroad town is highlighted in the train décor in the restaurant. Try the grilled chicken breast sandwich.

To learn about cowboy ranch trips and trail rides at RS Ranch near Cuba, click on [www.AAA.com/Traveler](http://www.AAA.com/Traveler).

Another great place to eat is the Missouri Hick Bar-B-Q, which is located on Route 66 at 913 W. Washington. Using

red cedar rustic construction, the building went up in 2002. The inside is decorated with furniture that was handcrafted by the owner. A waterwheel churns outside. Try one of their five barbecue sauces: original, smoky, sweet and smoky, spicy and sweet mustard.

## A PLACE TO LAY YOUR HEAD

For campers, the Cuba area has a selection of places to put up a tent or hook up a recreational vehicle (RV). Ozark Outdoors Riverfront Resort in Leasburg has camping year-round and also has log cabins, two motels and RV sites.

Camping and a variety of lodging also are available at Huzzah Valley Resort, Bass' River Resort and Blue Springs Ranch. Camping is available at Onondaga Cave State Park.

Motels in Cuba include the Super 8 and Best Western Cuba Inn, both AAA two Diamond properties with discounts for mem-

bers. A Holiday Inn Express also is in Cuba. Whether you are on a Route 66 sojourn or enjoying the nearby rivers, Cuba is an interesting town and worth exploring. ●

*Lori Schueler is a contributor from Columbia, Ill.*

## BEFORE YOU GO

For details about Cuba's murals, visit [www.crawfordco.com/murals](http://www.crawfordco.com/murals). For visitor information, contact the chamber of commerce at (877) 212-8429 or click on [www.cubamochamber.com](http://www.cubamochamber.com).

To visit Cuba, first stop by your nearest AAA service office for maps, reservations, TripTiks® and TourBook® guides. A list of offices to serve you is on page 5 or visit [www.AAA.com](http://www.AAA.com).

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