

World's first motel turns 100, but only ruins remain

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Dhaka: A century ago, the modern motel was born with a simple idea that changed American travel forever. In 1925, architect Arthur Heineman opened the world's first "motor hotel"—or "motel"—in San Luis Obispo, California.

Called the Milestone Mo-Tel, it offered weary road-trippers a low-cost place to rest, complete with attached garages for their cars—all for just USD 1.25 per night. The concept was a response to the rise of automobile travel, combining convenience, affordability, and comfort.

Located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the Milestone Mo-Tel featured hot showers, indoor carpeting, and Spanish mission-style architecture — a nod to the area's heritage. It was later renamed the Motel Inn, and its model quickly spread across the US, shaping the culture of the American road trip.

Despite its historical significance, the original motel closed in 1991 and now lies in ruins. While the structure may have faded, Heineman's vision continues to influence travel—with motels still serving as a symbol of roadside independence and affordability, 100 years later.

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