



Step Back in Time on a Doo Wop Architectural Tour

The Wildwoods, NJ – The country's largest concentration of mid-century commercial architecture is found in the Wildwoods, the southernmost island off the coast of New Jersey. Visitors are invited to celebrate the "Fabulous Fifties" with a visit to the Doo Wop Experience Museum and a Doo Wop "Back to the '50s Neon Night Tour" every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the summer months.

Mid-century themed motels sprung up in the Wildwoods during the '50s when the "American Vacation" was born. Household income and leisure time were at an all-time high, and most American families owned an automobile for the first time. A new interstate highway system made driving easier, and World War II had just ended, leading to a newfound optimism throughout the country. Rock 'n Roll, automobiles with fins and futuristic features, the Space Age and plastics also became part of the American experience in this "Rat Pack" era.

The mood of the nation was also reflected in an architectural style called "googie," "populux," or "doo wop." Plastic palm trees towered over kidney shaped pools, and whimsical names and flamboyant themes gave similarly styled buildings individual character. Vivid imagery and vibrant aqua, oranges and pinks bombarded the eye of the motoring public, as neon signs beckoned to travelers, each blatantly attempting to outdo their neighbor.

Local business owners in the Wildwoods gazed at their dated surroundings in a whole new light when Disney "imagineers" visited the Wildwoods for ideas to complete their beach-and-Boardwalk themed hotel in the '90s. The Doo Wop Preservation League soon embarked on its mission to "foster awareness, appreciation and education of the popular culture and imagery of the 1950s in an effort to promote preservation and unique renovations to the 220+ circa 1950s (doo wop) buildings in the Wildwoods." Steve Izenour, world-renowned architect of Venturi Scott Brown and Associates, headed a study that revealed the Wildwoods to have the largest collection of flamboyant circa 1950s architecture in the nation, now labeled "Doo Wop."

Brimming with cool artifacts, fun memories, fascinating history and bright neon lights, the Wildwoods' Doo Wop Experience and Neon Sign Garden offers the visitors a chance to learn more about the "doo-wop" era of American culture. The museum is a celebration of architecture, design, music, pop culture and everything else that made the Wildwoods famous in its heyday of the 1950s and 1960s.

The museum remains a work in progress, with much more to come in the way of interior exhibits and artifacts. Outside, a "neon garden" is taking shape that exhibits restored neon signs that were rescued from old Wildwood landmarks whose fate was a date with the wrecking ball. When completed, the entire complex will glow with as much exuberance and optimism as the property's original Surfside Restaurant was intended to exude in its day... only this time, it's signaling in a whole new era of appreciation for Doo Wop in the Wildwoods!

The Doo Wop Experience Museum also hosts a Doo Wop Bus Tour that runs every Tuesday and Thursday night throughout the summer. For a small fee, guests can hop on the bus and take a step back in time while taking in a guided tour of the largest concentration of Doo Wop architecture in the country. Tour goers will learn about the shapes, images and symbols of the '50s architecture, along with the fractured geography and Space Age infatuation of the time during this award-winning tour.

For additional details please visit the Doo Wop Preservation League website at www.doowopusa.org.