



An American Tour: 121



Memphis's *Memphis-Arkansas Bridge*

The Memphis & Arkansas Bridge is a cantilevered through truss bridge carrying Interstate 55 across the Mississippi River between West Memphis, AR, and Memphis, TN. Memphians refer to this bridge as the "Old Bridge" to distinguish it from the "New Bridge", or Hernando de Soto Bridge, upstream.

Having been built before the introduction of the Interstate Highway System, the span was not built to Interstate Highway standards, lacking the concrete barrier between the different directions of traffic which was added later. It was also built with a sidewalk on either side of the roadway, positioned just outside the steel truss girders. The sidewalks, now also separated from the traffic lanes by concrete barriers, are accessible from Memphis city sidewalks on the Tennessee side, but give way to grassy slopes on the shoulders of I-55 on the Arkansas side. The sidewalk and bridge are listed as part of the Mississippi River Trail. However, travel is not recommended across the sidewalk and is prohibited on the vehicle traffic lanes of the bridge, being an Interstate highway crossing. In 2016, a pedestrian/bicycle path on the neighboring Harahan Bridge made crossing the river safer and eliminated the need to use the I-55 bridge.

