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Rand McNally's 10 Travel Tips to Get Your Family "Road Ready"

What to take, what to do, how to prepare to make the trip the "best ever"

Skokie, Ill., May 16, 2013 – As we approach the traditional kick-off of the summer travel season, Rand McNally's editors have compiled a list of Top 10 travel tips to keep the "Are We There Yet?"s at bay. These easy-to-implement suggestions will help keep families and friends road-ready instead of road-weary.

At Home

#1: Engage everyone in the planning. If you already have an endpoint in mind, have the family fill in the blanks. Ensure something from each person's list makes it onto the itinerary – from a particular food stop to a funky festival, or an unusual place to take a break.

#2: Scope out something new along the way. Tap into websites – such as Rand McNally's bestoftheroad.com – as well as magazines, guide books, friends and family to find interesting places to visit. Even the non-readers of the group can get involved with helping you select – simply cite the kid-friendly amenities at each of the possibilities, and note what excites them the most.

#3: Map out the trip. Get out the [Road Atlas](#) (also available in handy iPad and eBook formats), use a GPS, or pull up a mapping site on the computer, and begin plotting your journey. Encourage youngsters to hone their map-reading skills by finding places and attractions and highlighting routes between locations. Bonus for those math and map inclined in the family: Ask the kids to figure out the distance and direction between various points using the map keys.

#4: Gear up the car. Take your vehicle in for a once-over, ensuring that all necessary repairs and maintenance are done – and maybe a fresh wash and vacuum for good measure. Gather the essentials you need for both your car and the people in it, including a first-aid kit; a tool kit and work gloves; jumper cables; tire jack; rain ponchos; road-side emergency gear; and extra blankets, food (energy bars are great for this), and water.

#5: Shore up things at home. Set timers for lighting, and arrange for mail pickup, lawn mowing and pet care. Clear the refrigerator of all perishable foods and take out the garbage. Do not leave a house key hidden outside your home. Adjust the thermostat, unplug small appliances so they don't drain energy unnecessarily while you're away, and turn off computers and other electronics susceptible to power surges. Share your itinerary with family or a trusted neighbor – but never post these details on a social networking site!

En Route

#6: Delegate road-trip tasks. Give everyone a job while on the road: navigator, treasurer, keeper of the spare keys, fun-and-games maestro, photographer, historian/documentarian, snack server. Alternate roles throughout the trip.

#7: Keep everyone engaged. Digital devices are great for keeping kids distracted, but, every so often, have everyone look up and around – connecting with each other and the journey is a benefit of being together in a vehicle for hours. See how many different state license plates each person can spot. Play 20 Questions with answers related to the trip. Watch road signs looking for towns beginning with a specific letter. Name the state capitals, or mottos as you are passing through them.

#8: Keep things interesting. Surprises – a new toy, game, or app to share or special snacks – help with those “can't-keep-it-together” moments. Be sure to allow time for unplanned stops at festivals, historical markers, produce stands, quirky attractions, or other interesting road-side finds.

#9: Stay happy and healthy. This means eating healthfully, stopping when you first feel hungry rather than waiting till everyone's ravenous and cranky. It also means hydrating – preferably with water as well as juice and other nutritious beverages. And, finally, it means resisting the

urge to simply press on. Don't hesitate to stop whenever you need to reorganize, regroup, rest or relax.

#10: *Share the journey*. At day's end, have everybody share their favorite sights and experiences. Vote on the best photos taken that day. At the end of the trip, select the best overall picture and sight or experience.

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