

GOING PLACES

Heading South In the Chevy Venture

Family reunions can be like firecrackers -- you never know if there is a dud, bang or explosion in store for you. My father's side of the family, which reunites every two years, settled on the predictably sedate surroundings of Dalton, Ga. -- home to several Mitchell descendants and hub of the carpet industry -- as host site for this year's family gathering. Suspecting this reunion could be a potential dud, my husband and I decided to round out the lengthy trip from Detroit, Mich. by making a pit stop or two. Our first sightseeing spot would be Memphis, Tenn., an historically rich southern

cloth-covered seats made the 11-hour drive, even for my 6'2 husband Greg Robinson, who slept in the rear seat while I drove. Electronic controls allow the driver to select the perfect height, position and incline necessary to make a long trip bearable. The van's responsive handling and a CD player which effortlessly cranked out clear sound put me in just the right vacation mood. This was cool.

Sweltering Memphis heat greeted our arrival Saturday afternoon. At first glance, Memphis appears rather plain and ordinary, but when we probed deeper, we found the city's many fine historical points-of-interest, such as *Roots*' author Alex Haley's childhood home, which still stands on the outskirts of town.

The Civil Rights Museum, formerly the Lorraine Motel where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was fatally shot,

houses a painful, but triumphant story of our fight for freedom and justice. A favorite exhibit there included handmade quilts with an extensive display of color, a testimony to our rich heritage handed down through many generations. Not far from the museum, past Main Street with its trolley cars, is the legendary Beale Street, which was the starting ground for many blues and jazz greats.

After our cultural adventure, we returned to the Venture's air-conditioned comfort and cruised toward the Mississippi River, in pursuit of some 'toddler' fun. Pass-



ing the many restaurants that dot the waterfront, we stopped to ride the monorail to Mud Island, a pleasant recreation area for child's play and water fun. Away from the downtown area is the Memphis Zoo, full of interesting attractions and rides for energetic, inquisitive children.

We discovered one thing about Memphis: There is more to see for a family of three than two days will allow. As we said good-bye to Memphis and headed toward our next destination, Chattanooga, Tenn., I felt this would be an unforgettable road trip. Although our expectations were high, both Memphis and GM's Venture put the bang in our family trip.

For more information about Memphis tourism, contact the Chamber of Commerce at (901) 543-3500.

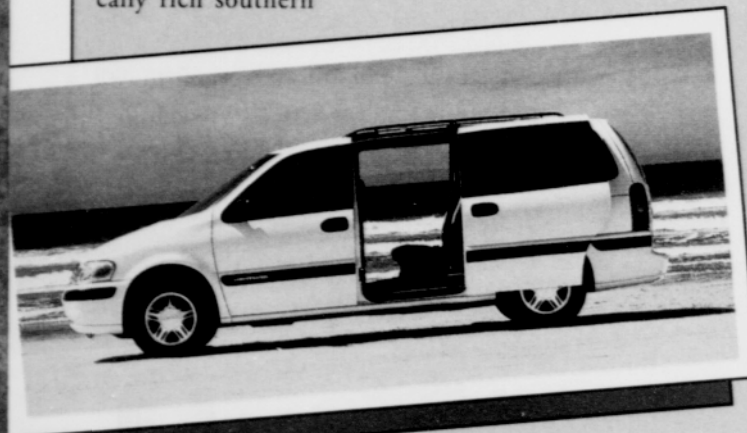
By Jacqueline Mitchell



town poised on the banks of the Mississippi River. We chose Chevrolet's all-new Venture minivan (AAOW's 1997 Urban Pick winner for Best Minivan) as our transportation. I wanted to see how General Motors' latest entry in the highly competitive minivan segment would hold up on a marathon trek through blistering heat, hauling an active three-year-old.

Expectations were high for Memphis and the Venture. As an experienced minivan owner, I noticed immediately the convenience of the additional fourth door when packing our belongings, which the cream-colored Venture graciously accommodated. This also included daughter Maya's exclusive club of various Disney and Warner Bros "friends."

As we began our trip late Friday heading south on I-75 from Detroit through Ohio, we noticed how remarkably comfortable the



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