

## Stretch dollars on your next road trip

In an era of escalated airline ticket prices and extra travel expenses, road trips have emerged once more as a popular and cost-conscious mode of vacationing for individuals and families.

Nearly 80 percent of leisure trips in 2012 were made by car, says the U.S. Travel Association. Various trips exist that can take you through urban or rural areas.

Those making road trips may be concerned about keeping costs down, particularly if saving money is the catalyst behind the road trip vacation.

The following are a few tips to stretch dollars that much further on your next road trip.

- **Dine out sparingly.** Road stops and drive-thru food expenditures can quickly add up during the course of a road trip. Therefore, pack the majority of the food you will eat in a cooler. Not only will this save money, it will mean food is at the ready when hunger strikes.

- **Food need not be all cold snacks, like sandwiches.** Frozen burgers or refrigerated frankfurters can be cooked on a camp stove or tossed on a grill at a park's picnic area. Save restaurant dining as a special treat during the vacation.

- **Look for inexpensive lodging.** While on a road trip you may need to compromise some of the comforts of home to save some money. Motel rates are another trip budget-buster. But by mixing overnights at motels with less expensive options you may be able to mitigate costs.

- **Camp out at a safe campsite and purchase a shower ticket** so you can enjoy a cheap, hot shower the next day. Spend a few nights under the stars; just be sure you have the right gear.

Some also like to plan road trip routes between where relatives live and make pit stops at a friend or family member's home. When seeking motels, try to bargain and see if you're eligible for any rebates or coupons due to age or military status.

- **Map out cheaper gas stations.** Today's smartphones have apps that enable you to find nearby gas stations. Such apps may even shed light on which filling stations offer the best prices on gasoline.

- **Dont speed.** In addition to being illegal, speeding wastes gas. Stick to the speed limit to avoid potentially costly tickets and improve fuel efficiency.

- **Bring friends along.** Friends will not only make the trip more fun, but they also can take turns driving and sharing the costs of the excursion.

- **Join a roadside assistance club.** Vehicle problems are inevitable if you are a frequent road-tripper who's driving an older car.

- **Avoid potentially costly towing costs** by joining a roadside assistance club that will pay for your vehicle to be towed if necessary.

- **Have the proper paperwork.** Keep a current copy of your car registration, license and proof of insurance with you on a road trip. This makes it much easier to deal with traffic stops along the way. Individuals and their passengers planning on visiting another country should have their passports available and follow the laws regarding bringing food or goods over the border to avoid fines.

- **Road trips can be enjoyable excursions** that cost far less than other vacations. Road-trippers can stretch funds even further with some handy tips. —Metro

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## Prevent bugs, sap from ruining a vehicle

Keeping vehicles looking pristine requires care and diligent cleaning. So many day-to-day activities and environmental materials have the potential to damage the finish on cars and trucks.

Spring and summer are prime seasons for sap, birds and insects. These times of year tend to see an uptick in road work as well, and such projects can contribute to damage caused by loose asphalt, gravel and tar.

Addressing problems resulting from tree sap, insect and bird droppings and tar may not be something to look forward to, but it is necessary to keep cars looking pristine.

### Tree sap

Although tree sap won't cause immediate damage to vehicle paint, it should not be ignored. Over time, sap can become more difficult to remove, etch through the clear

coat on the vehicle and cause discoloration. When the temperature is hot, damage from sap can accelerate.

On windows and windshields, drivers may be able to gently remove dried sap with a razor blade. However, use cleaning products on more delicate paint. Automotive stores sell speciality sap and tar cleaners. Otherwise, you can try rubbing alcohol. It may take a few attempts to remove sap entirely.

### Insects & bird droppings

Splattered bugs and avian surprises dropped from above can be a messy, unsightly nuisance. Their acidic composition also may cause them to damage paint over time. Bugs and droppings can be sticky, so you will need to work with something that will remove the splatter without removing the paint in the process. Always test any product you use in an inconspicuous spot first to make sure it doesn't damage or discolor your paint.

Insects or droppings that are fresh may come off relatively easily with a good washing or hosing off of the car. Retailers also sell specialty insect sponges to remove bugs and other debris.

### Tar

Soap and water will do little to remove tar and other petroleum-based products from vehicles. Commercial tar removal products use a strong solvent or detergent to loosen the tar. This may include kerosene, mineral spirits or another item mixed with lubricants. Go slowly and use caution so that you remove the tar and not the paint.

Drivers who are hesitant to clean their vehicles of common residue can have their cars or trucks professionally detailed, leaving the work in the hands of experts. —Metro

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