



PARENT TRUST
FOR WASHINGTON CHILDREN

Road Trips

Tips for road trips with children:

Travel Goodies:

Give each child a travel bag of goodies with each item in the bag individually gift-wrapped. Include things like a small box of crayons with coloring book, plastic toys, rubber stamps, etc. For older kids you can include puzzles, magazines, crazy sunglasses or hats, or cassettes/CDs. They can open a new gift each time they reach selected destinations.

Geography Lessons:

Give the kids maps (laminated if possible – try looking for one at a book store). They can mark destinations, drawing a line between each destination. Have them look for road signs of towns or points of interest indicating where they are on the map. Older kids can be assigned to be navigators if this is something they can do. Talk to them about where you're going, giving them interesting facts about some of the landmarks and towns.

Sleepy Time:

If you leave early in the morning, let the kids go to the car in their pajamas where they can continue to sleep. They can change later at a rest stop or when you stop for breakfast. Have pillows and blankets in the car – it's so great when they fall asleep on a road trip – that's your quiet time. Wake sleeping children about ten minutes before you stop for a break. By the time you get there, they'll have their shoes on and won't be so groggy.

Breaks:

Take regular breaks from driving. How often you take breaks depends on the ages of your children. Bring a Frisbee, jump rope, a ball, etc. – have them burn off some energy for at least 15 minutes during breaks. Have



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picnics instead of stopping at a restaurant. The kids can be as loud and as jumpy as they want to be outdoors. End your driving time early enough for the kids to get a little playtime in before retiring for the night. Go to a shopping mall, take a walk or check out the swimming pool. This should help the kids sleep well in the evenings.

I Need Space:

Make sure your vehicle isn't overly crowded with people or stuff. You may have to decide to leave grandma and grandpa home for this trip. When there's plenty of room, kids can stretch out more. You don't have to hear, "Mom, he touched me!"

Keep it Simple:

Try not to over extend yourself with too many destinations or too many planned activities. Be realistic about your travel plans. Remember, vacations are for quiet, restful activities too. When you're tired, you can't enjoy yourself.

One Mom's Road Trip Story:

I love taking road trips -- driving to new destinations, stopping at tacky tourist attractions, having leisurely lunches at funky, roadside cafés, buying stuff at gift stores you would never consider buying other than on vacations, and just watching the view go by at 70 miles an hour. It's the best way to take a vacation!

*However, it's been said there are two ways to travel. There's traveling first class and then there's traveling with children. Taking a road trip with kids is an experience like no other experience. Everyone, together in a small, confined space for extended periods of time is, well let's just say, beyond words and definitely not first class. You're lucky if you can actually look out the window to enjoy the view. But it's doable and it can be a positive, fun experience, **if you prepare.***

I'll never forget a road trip my husband and I took to Disneyland with our two kids, ages 11 and 13, and the grandparents. To make things worse, we were in a sedan. I don't remember exactly who caused the most



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*trouble. It was a toss up between the grandparents and the kids. Either way, it was not well planned trip and we all paid for it – big time! It was “Summer Vacation with the **Bickersons**”. It was a nightmare! I know better now – but at this point I can’t convince anyone to take a road trip with me anymore. I don’t know why? Perhaps I’ll get a chance to hit the road again with my future grandchildren some day and I will certainly do things differently.*

Have fun!!

By Thelma Dirkes

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