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Summer ending, road trips aren't

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Amidst all the political goings-on, the constant back-and-forth in varying schools of thought and all the present tribulations to be found in this world, there is still room for an age-old tradition: the road trip.

Having participated in two thus far this summer, with a third and possibly fourth coming soon, I would like to discuss a few points that I have found essential to road trips — feel free to agree or disagree as you choose. After all, if done right, no two road trips will ever be identical!

With gas prices shooting sky-high, gas maintenance can be an art. First, you need to guess whether to gas up a day early or begin your trip with a partial tank and fill up an hour into the trip. Be careful, however, that in your excitement for whatever trip, you don't get on the road intending to gas up a little ways in and then forget — unless you plan on an impromptu hike as part of the trip.

Road trips equal adventure. While getting from point A to point B is the overall point of a trip, half the fun of the trip is the adventures you have en route. Missing an exit may lead to a much more scenic route. Stopping to ask directions back to your route may allow you to meet interesting people. The extra time spent in the vehicle planning your route allows extra time to be spent with your travel buddies.

Confirm overnight plans. It's no fun to spend a day at your destination and then, upon locating the hotel you booked earlier, discovering it to be a dark, boarded-up and abandoned wreck.

Watch your time zones. If your trip takes you far enough in one direction or the other, you're going to lose or gain an hour. Factor that into arrival and departure times, or you might find yourself running an extra hour late or arriving with an extra hour's wait.

A cooler with fruit, lunchmeat, bagels and beverages can be cheaper and much more satisfying than scoring a drink here or there at gas stations or drive-thrus. And just because a McDonald's seems to be at every exit doesn't mean you need to get all your travel food there.

Travel can get old fast with no one to share the experience with, so don't forget your travel buddies who can also play the role of "navigator" should you get lost, and of course, they get to interpret directions for you, so you can focus on driving. (They also come in handy for opening pop cans or M&M bags for you.)

If you carry a cell phone, a car-charger can come in handy, particularly when your phone battery dies seeking a signal and you have to call someone for directions (such as when you are meeting someone at your destination).

Whether these apply to you or not, the most important part of any road trip is to have fun! Even if the trip isn't made completely by choice, going the distance in stride and finding the adventure within can turn things into a lasting, positive memory!

Walt Kneeland is a graduate student in Library and Information Science. Contact him at wkneelan@kent.edu, especially for road trip invitations.

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