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87% of Leisure Travelers 45-Plus Have Taken A Road Trip in the Past Year

New AARP Travel survey tells why; Check out AARP's 5 key tips to rev up your upcoming road trip

WASHINGTON, D.C.—There's something about the road trip that really speaks to many Americans. It gives them the freedom to travel the country's highways and back roads to explore new places and familiar destinations. It allows them to taste local food and experience local culture—on their own timeline. And it's a cost-conscious way to have a truly memorable vacation.

It's only natural, then, that many people think road trips are the best way to travel. A brand-new survey from AARP Travel (<http://travel.aarp.org>), a valuable resource for America's 76 million baby boomers who spend over \$120 billion annually in leisure travel, finds that more than 7 in 10 people 45-plus say that road trips are their favorite way to travel.

"Our research shows that the 45-plus leisure travel audience has clearly embraced this way of travel, with 87% having taken at least one road trip in the past year," said Stephanie Miles, VP, Products & Platforms, AARP. "Road trips offer a set of unique benefits versus other means of travel, such as the ability to visit local attractions on the way, experience local food and culture and enjoy scenic routes on the drive. With the vast majority of these road trips being five hours or less, many just find them to be more economical and fun too."

Planning is key to taking advantage of the best of what road trips can offer. Make use of these five key tips from AARP Travel to enjoy your road trips this summer at www.aarp.org/roadtriptips.

- **Go local.** One of the great benefits of road tripping is that it allows travelers to experience local culture along the way—everything from local attractions to local restaurants. Around 3 in 10 travelers 45-plus have driven more than 5 miles out of their way to stop at a specific location for food. And local restaurants are more popular food stops than national chains or fast food.
- **Get your car in gear.** A road trip is impossible to make without a vehicle—one that's in good, safe working order. Before your trip, check your vehicle's tire pressure, change the oil if needed, and conduct some routine maintenance.
- **Stock up on snacks.** Well-fed road trippers are happy road trippers. Six in ten of those surveyed say that food and snacks are a must-have in their vehicle during a trip. What's the most popular road trip snack? Nuts! Nearly half of road trippers say it's their favorite in-car snack.
- **Bring maps.** A GPS—either a portable system or a smartphone app—is the most popular type of map, though a sizable minority still relies on traditional maps for their road trips.
- **Download helpful travel apps.** Other than map-related apps, only four in ten road trippers say they've used a road-related smartphone app. However, a real-time traffic app like Waze can save you from sitting in a major traffic jam.

The online survey, conducted May 5-13, 2015 among males and females 45 and older who had taken at least one road trip in the previous year, provides insight into all aspects of road trips—how travelers prepare, what they bring, where they go, and what they do along the way. May through October is the most popular time to take road trips, and Florida, California, Pennsylvania, New York and Michigan are the top five most popular destination states.

Top road trip destinations include:

- A city or town (39%)
- A friend or family's home (29%)
- The beach (12%)

But for many Americans, a road trip is about more than just the destination. Around two-thirds of road trippers make pre-planned stops (beyond the basic rest stop) on their way to or from their final destination, to visit a park or beach, to explore a city, or enjoy some local culture.

Among the most popular reasons why travelers choose road trips include :

- They will have a vehicle at their destination (58%)

- Flexibility (46%)
- Cost (35%)
- Scenery (28%)

Most people who do take road trips love them and a third state they have no difficulties in planning at all, for those who do encounter road trip challenges, they are:

- Deciding what to pack (27%)
- Choosing the date (21%)
- Preparing the car (11%)
- Identifying stops (10%)

And once travelers are on the road, there are a number of situations that can become trip-ruiners. More than three-quarters of travelers say that traffic jams ruin a road trip, while 69 percent say the same of bad weather and 67 percent say it of road construction.

But have no fear: adequate planning helps to make a great road trip possible. About half of all road trippers say they used online resources like Google Maps to plan their most recent road trip. And getting ready for a road trip means getting your vehicle ready, too. Most road trippers say they did some vehicle preparation prior to their most recent road trip, such as checking tire pressure. However, only 43 percent had an emergency kit on board.

The vast majority of road trippers take navigation tools with them. Nearly three-quarters of travelers use GPS. Smartphone apps are also becoming increasingly popular navigators. But for some road trippers, nothing beats an old-fashioned paper map: 18 percent say they still use a traditional map on their road trips.

For road-tripping travelers, the drive is just not complete without a few “must-have” items. The favorite non-tech items to have on the drive are water (63 percent gave this response), sunglasses and food/snacks (60 percent each). Top tech items include cell phone coverage (62 percent), iPad/tablet (40 percent), and a digital camera (39 percent).

The survey findings reveal a generation gap between Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers in the way their road trips look. Among the differences:

- Gen-Xers are more likely to use technology to assist them on their road trip than are Boomers. 70 percent of Gen-Xers used the Internet to plan their most recent road trip, compared to just 47 percent of Boomers.
- A friend/family’s home is a more popular destination for Boomers (31 percent) than it is for Gen-Xers (22 percent).
- Boomers are more likely than Gen-Xers to do some routine maintenance on their vehicle prior to their trip.
- Boomers are more likely to use a car on their road trip, while Gen-Xers are more likely to drive an SUV.

The survey can be found at www.aarp.org/roadtripresearch. Here’s a tweet if you would like to share the new survey with your friends and family planning a road trip: **New AARP Travel Survey Offers Five Tips to Rev Up Your Upcoming Road Trip** <http://bit.ly/1LgRu7T> #travel #July4

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About AARP AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. We advocate for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world's largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP en Español, a Spanish-language website addressing the interests and needs of Hispanics. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.

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