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## The mother of all road trips

**Karen Catchpole, our former senior editor, is probably behind the wheel of her Chevy Silverado right now. It's a pretty safe bet, since she and her husband, Eric, left in April for a three-year, 70,000-mile expedition. Their trip, the Trans-Americas Journey, will take them to local festivals, lots of state and national parks and cool, out-of-the-way places throughout North, Central and South America. Karen took some time out to tell me about their plans. To follow their progress (and give suggestions of where they should stop along the way), hit up [trans-americas.com](#).**

### **A: How did all of this start?**

K: We have itchy feet [laughs]. After our three-year trip backpacking in Asia, we came back and we were working and happy. But then 9/11 happened and George Bush got elected again, and we kind of looked around and said, "Where do I live? I have no idea where this country called America is and what it's about, and it doesn't really feel like my country anymore," and so we started thinking along those lines. And then we started thinking, "Why just America, why not the whole land mass? Why not all of the Americas?" And then we thought, "Road trip!"

### **A: So, how much financial planning did you have to do?**

K: We came back from Asia in the summer of '99 and started working like crazy and not spending very much. It becomes your priority. You don't buy a lot of stuff, which is ironic for a shopping magazine editor [Karen was deputy editor of *Shop Etc.* for a year]. Hopefully, one of the things that we're going to be able to do in the North American portion of this trip is rely, to a certain extent, on E85. It's a flex-fuel truck, which means it will run on E85--85 percent corn-based ethanol, 15 percent gasoline. There are about 600 E85 stations in North America. But the problem is that not all of them are for the public; some are industry-only. So we are also working with the Go Yellow, Live Green initiative, which is part of GM.

### **A: What are some of the goals of the trip?**

K: We want to go out and be able to do things like raft, kayak, hike, climb, explore, scuba dive, ski, snowshoe and all those outdoors activities. It's

- [Return to Media Coverage »](#)
- [Go to Previous Article »](#)
- [Go to Next Article »](#)



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embarrassing that there are so many national parks in America that I've never been to. That's not okay with me.

**A: What are some of the techniques that you guys use to not kill each other?**

K: Well, I hope the Facts and Figures page on the Web site is going to be a fight-o-meter. Like, how many fights we've had so far, because it's going to happen.

**A: I'd hate to see this end in divorce.**

K: It's not going to end in divorce. It may, for five days out of three years, end in tears, perhaps a slammed door, and that's okay. I think one of the key things is to not pretend it's okay if it's not. But also, to not just do or say whatever comes into your head in the heat of the moment. Is that really going to get us out of a mudslide, or is that just going to mean that we're going to stand in a mudslide and yell at each other? So you don't say, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard." It may well be the dumbest thing that you have ever heard, but perhaps you should not say it at that very moment. Eventually you should say it, but hours later, when it's all resolved. And over a margarita.

**--Annemarie Conte**

