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Features Trips What's New Gear Columns Sports Subscriber Services About Us Home

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FEATURES

The New American Road Trip:
Trans-Americas Journey

SHOTGUN! How to be a Good Co-pilot

Writer Karen Catchpole and photographer Eric Mohl quit their jobs to embark on a more than 70,000-mile drive of a lifetime. Here the couple shares lessons from the road. Text by Karen Catchpole Photograph by Eric Mohl



Trans-Americas Journey drivers Karen Catchpole and Eric Mohl are now headed toward Calgary, Canada.

The first mistake most people make when they settle into the passenger seat during a road trip is assuming it's nap time. Wrong—that's what the back seat is for. The sooner you realize that the co-pilot is a crucial part of any successful road trip, the sooner you'll have a successful road trip—and by successful I mean you'll still be on speaking terms with the driver when you arrive at your destination. Here's how to co-pilot like a pro. [Back to Road Trips Main Page >>](#)

DJ DUTY **HOUSEWORK** **BARGAIN HUNTING FOR GAS**

DJ DUTY What is a road trip without road tunes? Mind numbing, that's what. And you can forget about tuning into commercial radio to ease the boredom. Most stations aren't worth listening to these days and you're just going to lose the signal behind the next bend anyway.

That brings us to **iPods** (www.apple.com/ipod), which are super fantastic. Unfortunately, most FM tuners are the polar opposite of super fantastic. Raise your hand if you're as sick as I am of constantly searching for a free frequency while the sound of static (not your beloved downloads) fills the car? I actually refuse to use an iPod in a moving vehicle that is not equipped with a **Harmon/Kardon Drive + Play** (www.harmonkardon.com) gizmo. The Drive + Play can be wired directly into some radios to essentially create a station for your iPod (like when you click your remote control from "TV" to "DVD" to create a channel to watch your Netflix on). Even if it can't be wired into your car radio, it has a hookup that connects directly in your car's antennae, then into your radio, which means the Harmon/Kardon iPod signal will only be out-

Did you know?

It is popularly believed that the phrase "riding shotgun" originated in 1963 from old west movies in which the person riding in the passenger seat of a wagon would use a shotgun to fend off potential attackers, leaving the driver's hands free to worry about the reins.

Trans-Americas Journey Dispatches:

[Being a Good Co-pilot](#)

[Finding Cheap Fuel Prices](#)

[Goof-Proof Navigation](#)

Up Next:

[Staying Connected](#)

shouted by an incredibly strong radio signal.

Another big plus the device even comes with an interface that mimics an iPod, so no learning curve. Ahhhh.

But if it's variety you want, you can't rely solely on your iPod (no, not even the 60 gigabyte versions). Thankfully, satellite radio has made the musical duties of a co-pilot much easier by offering dozens of channels broadcasting everything from weather to jazz to pop hits. Our little road trip has involved over 250 hours of driving (and counting) and we have come to rely on our **XM Satellite Radio** (www.xmradio.com). It has a channel to suit every mood/time of day/type of scenery, plus weather reports and news (even the BBC). Where else are you going to hear Bob Dylan waxing poetic about marriage or prison during his Theme Time Radio Hour show on channel 40? And who else would name music channels after Lucy, Fred, and Ethel from "I Love Lucy?" Gotta love it.

On April 26, 2006, writer Karen Catchpole and photographer Eric Mohl left their home in New York City, jumped into a Chevy Silverado and embarked on a three year, 70,000 mile road trip through North, Central, and South America. Read more about their Trans-Americas Journey at www.trans-americas.com.

[Top ^](#)

HOUSEWORK You may be under the misguided impression that you will be leaving tiresome cleaning chores behind when you hit the road, but washing the windshield at every gas stop is critical, especially during night driving. Failure to do so may result in the driver shouting, "Don't you have a job to do?" as he/she fills 'er up. To make this most mundane of co-pilot tasks a bit easier, I highly recommend regular coatings of **Rain X** (www.rainx.com) on the windshield. The pre-soaked wipes (available at any good auto supply store) are easy to use, come in a container that actually keeps them moist, and they really do make water bead up and run off the windshield, reducing dirt's ability to stick.

Keeping the rest of the car clean is as simple as always having a trash bag on hand to collect all those zillions of little bits and pieces of litter that collect as the miles wear on (gas receipts, chewed gum, empties—just kidding, I was just making sure you were paying attention). Most official state welcome centers have ample trash cans and some (like a particularly well-appointed facility in Hurley, Wisconsin just over the Michigan border) offer a mind-boggling array of recycling bins as well.

[Top ^](#)

BARGAIN HUNTING FOR GAS Now, more than ever, a good co-pilot's eyes should be on passing gas station price boards in search of the lowest number possible. This is especially important when nearing state borders, since that's when price wars are most likely, as you cross from a state with high gas taxes into a state with lower gas taxes (prices at some state borders we've crossed, such as from Indiana into Ohio, have varied as much as .40 a gallon).

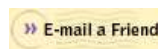
We've learned to pay particular attention to truck stops. **Flying J** (www.flyingj.com) is a great chain that's consistently cheaper than nearby non-truck stop stations (and usually less than neighboring truck stops as well). Truck stops also have cleaner, larger, safer bathrooms that are (listen up, ladies) rarely used by women since most truckers are men. Plus, it's amusing to hear "Shower 807 is now ready" being broadcast throughout the pump area to alert a lucky long-haul trucker that his number is up.

There's actually so much to say about the suddenly crucial art of finding the cheapest gas on the road that my next installment of road tips will be all about how to ensure you're getting the best possible price per gallon. Until then, keep an eye out for our big, black Chevy Silverado and honk if you love a road trip! See you out there.

[Top ^](#)

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[Back to Road Trips Main Page >>](#)



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