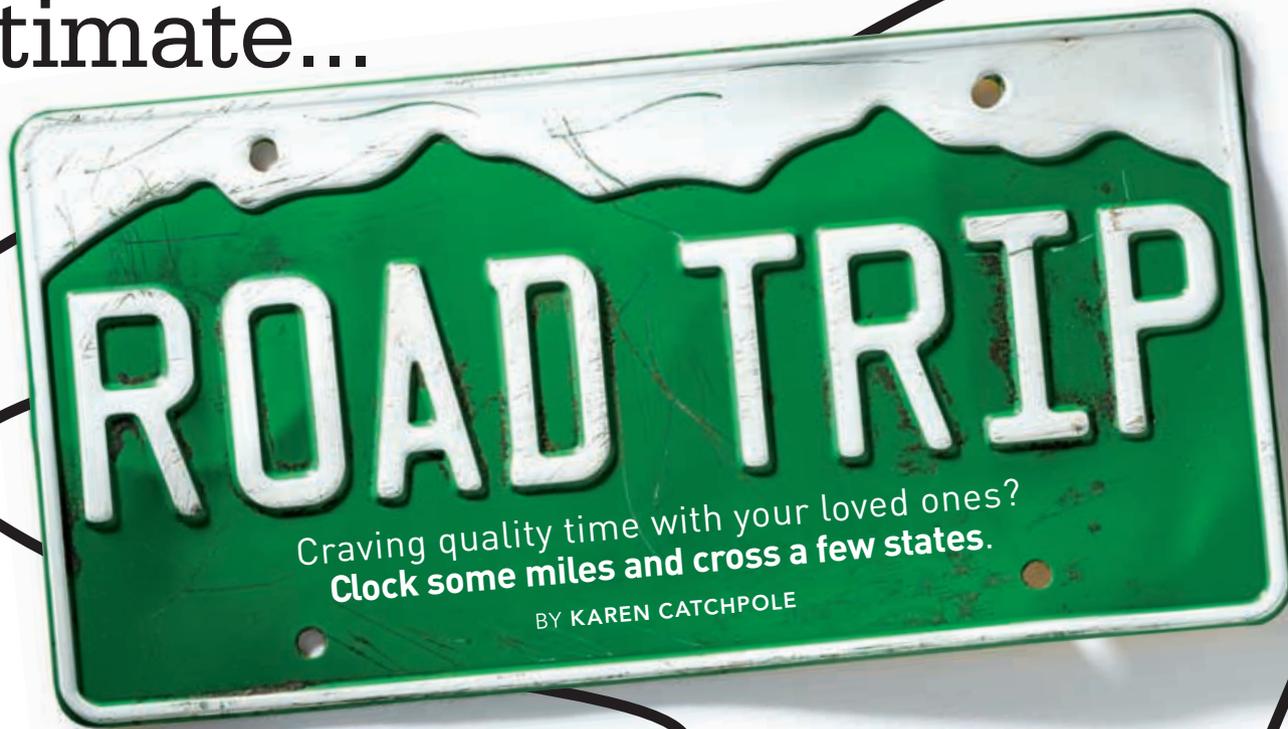


plan the ultimate...



Before You Go

do your homework Customize a road-trip route on **Rand McNally's TripMaker Beta** (*tripmaker.randmcnally.com*). You can set parameters like trip start date and duration. The tool will map out the best route and list lodgings and attractions along the way. Then you can print your customized itinerary.

pack light Everything should fit inside the car. Strapping cargo on the roof creates drag, which dramatically saps gas mileage.

crash a pad Look into staying on someone's couch, or in her plush guesthouse, by joining couchsurfing.com. You'll gain access to profiles and ratings of thousands of generous hosts from coast to coast. (Community members vouch for others in the network, so you know it's safe.) Best of all, it's free.

In the Car

get organized Invest in the **Mountainsmith Modular Hauler system** (*mountainsmith.com*; from \$59), roomy, washable nylon cubes with clear plastic sleeves for labeling (snacks, toys, guidebooks and maps, etc.). The packed cubes are easy to move, stack and retrieve from your trunk.

drink up Share laughs, not germs. Bring one water bottle per traveler, all in different colors.

ditch your handbag Treat the glove compartment like a big metal purse. Stock it with **Ginger Hand Lotion** (*origins.com*; \$15) to ward off dry skin and soothe motion sickness, and a bottle of misting moisturizer, such as **Vitamin C Energizing Face Spritz** (*thebodyshop-usa.com*; \$18), to keep your face dewy even if you decide to take the scenic route through the Mojave.

Along the Way

save cash State welcome centers and city tourism offices stock coupon packets full of discounts on local attractions. Pick up a variety to cross-reference: One booklet might offer a better deal for the exact same motel.

collect Hunting for specific souvenirs adds a wacky challenge and sense of purpose to all those miles. Try bumper stickers, diner coffee mugs or retro-inspired postcards.

film it A road trip is one big, moving party, so a video camera is your best tool for capturing the action. We like the tiny **Flip Ultra SD** (*theflip.com*; from \$150), which holds two hours of video. It's easy to use—you'll download movies onto your computer in no time.

STREET CRED

Our writer, Karen Catchpole, has been driving through North America for almost three years straight. Track her progress at trans-americas.com.

travel101

3 must- drive routes



road
trip of a
lifetime

3
days

For Beach Lovers

THE ROUTE U.S. Highway 101 from Astoria, Oregon, to Eureka, California
DISTANCE 450 miles; 12 hours driving time

WHAT YOU'LL SEE This stretch of the famous winding two-lane road clings to the coast as it ambles through two states, past lighthouses, inviting beaches and majestic redwoods. It's a short but sweet taste of all that makes the Pacific coast so spectacular.

BRAKE FOR Chowder from **Mo's Seafood** in Cannon Beach (195 Warren Way, Tolvana Park, OR; \$3), one of six Oregon locations. Get the fresh-made soup to go, claim a piece of driftwood, and savor your lunch while gazing at the famous Haystack Rock and the sea beyond.

4
days

For Music Lovers

THE ROUTE U.S. Interstate 10 from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, Louisiana; U.S. 61 through Natchez, Mississippi, to Memphis

DISTANCE 460 miles; 11 hours driving time

WHAT YOU'LL SEE Follow the roiling Mississippi River through three states, past vast cotton fields and dusty, tin-roofed towns full of Southern hospitality and food. You'll go from the birthplace of jazz to the birthplace of blues, through the crossroads of routes 61 and 49, where guitar great Robert Johnson is said to have sold his soul to the devil in exchange for his talent.

BRAKE FOR The **Shack Up Inn** (001 Commissary Circle, Clarksdale, MS, shackupinn.com; doubles from \$60), where you'll sleep in a comfortable—if not luxurious—music-themed room in either a former cotton gin building or renovated sharecropper shack.

5
days

For Nature Lovers

THE ROUTE The Dalton Highway from Fairbanks, Alaska, to Deadhorse, Alaska, and back

DISTANCE 1,000 miles; 35 hours driving time

WHAT YOU'LL SEE The Dalton Highway is actually a well-maintained dirt road that runs past the Arctic Circle, through the snowcapped Brooks Range, to the top of the nearly 5,000-foot Atigun Pass and down the other side. You'll feel like you're driving through a wildlife park, dotted with caribou, arctic foxes, snowy owls and even grizzlies. **GoNorth Car Rental** (gonorth-alaska.com; \$100 per day for a small SUV) provides sturdy vehicles with hard-core tires that are approved to drive even the gravel highways.

BRAKE FOR The **Boreal Lodge** (1 Timberwolf Trail, Wiseman Village, boreallodge.com; doubles from \$90), which marks the halfway point of the trip. Once you reach Deadhorse, book a tour of the oil fields (arcticcaribouinn.com; prices vary)—it's the only way to reach the Arctic Ocean.



you are here

Bring along a **SPOT GPS Satellite Messenger** (findmespot.com; \$169, annual service charge from \$100) to track your route and automatically map and upload your location onto a Web share page. You can also use your SPOT as a safety device—just push a button and emergency services are alerted to your exact location.

* Don't Leave Home Without It!

500 Things to Eat Before It's Too Late (\$20, Houghton Mifflin), the latest book from Jane and Michael Stern, a couple who have spent years on the road in search of the best foods around the country.

pack snacks

Skip the bruised bananas in favor of these easy **homemade road-trip snacks**.



japanese popcorn

plain popcorn tossed with sesame oil and soy sauce, mixed with rice crackers and wasabi peas



apple pie trail mix

dried apples, graham cracker pieces, yogurt-covered raisins and granola