



AUTO ALLIANCE

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On The Road Again: A Look at How Consumers Take Road Trips

Washington, DC (August 28, 2014) – Who can forget the Griswold’s famous cross-country station wagon trip in “National Lampoon’s Vacation”? While the 31-year-old movie was made long before the days of in-car movies, and the only “portable electronics” available were cumbersome cassette players people carried around, it seems that – interestingly enough – some things have stayed the same.

The Auto Alliance’s latest Auto Index consumer survey found Americans still mostly pass the time on long road trips by looking out the window and taking in the scenery, much like they did in their childhood. In fact, 41 percent of respondents said that’s how they spent the road trips of their youth. Today, 40 percent of the public report watching the scenery as their favorite way to pass the time on car trips.

While in the past playing games and singing songs was the preferred method for whiling away the hours for one-third of passengers, that figure has dropped to 21 percent today, giving way to increasing use of in-vehicle entertainment systems and portable electronic devices (15 percent).

And what was the best part about that trip in the family truckster? As it turns out, it may be just like what Clark Griswold said decades ago: “Half the fun is getting there!” When asked to look back on family road trips, 40 percent of respondents said spending time with loved ones was their favorite part of the trip, while 35 percent cited stopping at roadside attractions.

“It seems the old fashioned road trip, with everyone piled into the car on the way to a summer destination, remains a memorable experience for the entire family,” said Mitch Bainwol, CEO of the Auto Alliance.

Turning to the decision on choosing their mode of transportation, 47 percent of respondents cited cost as their main factor – only 3 percent cited distance. In fact, one half of Americans said they’d be willing to travel up to 1,000 miles on vacation by car. Almost 20 percent of those in their 30s said they would “drive any distance.”

“Packing for fun seems to be a big priority for people traveling by car, with 70 percent of survey respondents stating it was important to be able to carry recreational gear like bikes, skis and golf clubs when headed out on vacation,” said Bainwol.

Other findings included:

- 20 percent of women said fighting with siblings was their favorite memory of family road trips.
- Men can't accuse women of over packing! Both men and women equally cite the ability to carry extra luggage as an important factor when deciding to fly or drive - 58 percent and 59 percent respectively.
- As fall approaches, Americans will continue to look forward to utilizing their vehicles for recreational activities. During the fall months, 43 percent of respondents said their favorite car activity was "tailgating" at events, 30 percent said hunting, and 12 percent said viewing fall foliage.

This survey was conducted July 21 – August 17, 2014, by Pulse Opinion Research among 4,660 adult vehicle owners in the United States. The survey has a margin of sampling error of +/- 3 percentage points with a 95 percent level of confidence.

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