

Road Tripping with Kids

Episode 44



Power of Moms
A Gathering Place for Deliberate Mothers

As Saren travels across the continental United States for a road trip with her kids, she and April share some tips and tricks for making road tripping with kids an amazing experience.

Saren's family enjoys road trips and usually goes for a week-long road trip for spring break. But this phenomenal road trip takes them from Utah to New York, with stops in Chicago and Boston.. Saren takes what they have learned from their previous road trip experiences and creates a strategy that is flexible enough to work for any family.

Keep it interesting.

Get the kids involved with the trip. Use that smart phone to do research and learn about the sites when there's no time to stop. For example, Saren's kids looked up the history of Fort Bridger and the continental divide. Keep an eye out for points of interest.

Come up with random statistics. Find things to count and let kids decide. In Wyoming, Saren's kids counted the cars on trains to see how many had more than 79; in Iowa, they counted windmills. They also counted license plates from different states.

Create a point system.

Saren blogs about this point system. It stems from the idea of keeping the trip productive as well as fun. Her kids brought books, journals, and workbooks to work on for the duration of the trip. They earn one point for reading 10 pages, one for writing one full page in their journals, and one for doing three pages in their math, Spanish, language arts workbooks. For suggestions, talk to your kids' teachers or ask the clerks at an education supply store (we recommend Lakeshore Learning Store). Once they earn five points, they can cash them in for treats, such as 30 minutes on the tablet, sitting in front seat, or a favorite candy bar next time they stop.

What about movie time?

Saren's screen broke last year, but up until that point they did have movie time as a motivation.

Listening to music is also a good motivation. Saren wanted her kids to do something productive and not just eat and watch movies, but having the movie as an incentive works to pass the time.

What about toddlers or younger kids?

Have older kids be in charge of playing with younger kids while the others get to do their activities. Use a sticker chart to document the hours passed for a nice visual. Provide goody bags with dollar toys, or candy, to deliver at certain points throughout the trip.

Is it all fun and games?

Nope. There is plenty of fighting in the car – squabbles about seating, feet on the chairs, noise while reading, the need for a bathroom with no exit in sight, snapping under stress, and other typical kid “fights”. In preparation for the hard moments it is good to have a system in place like the points system or a seating chart.

Plan expectations for the trip.

Plan the number of hours per day and let the kids know. Be aware of limitations and expectations. Have kids bring their own bags and own stuff so they have their own toys and can keep themselves entertained. Tell stories from the past. Enact a puppet show. Sing. Create a special road trip playlist. Find something that fits all age groups, which may include taking turns on games or having groups do different things. It doesn't have to be all or nothing: If one child wants to play a game and others don't, the others can read or play that game then pick another game. Have a balance of down time; not every second has to be planned. Figure out what works for your family.

Prepare for the road trip mentally.

Begin with the thought, “We're just going to be happy.” Prepare for the hard as well as the fun. Adjust the trip accordingly. Sometimes you'll hit heavy traffic or construction or you'll miss an exit and have to double back, but keep it light and apologize and explain when things don't go as planned.

April once took a road trip with her dad and two of her siblings. They drove the perimeter of the United States, going all around Texas, across to Florida, up to Maine, then all the way back around. This trip holds some of her favorite memories despite her spending a lot of time in the car. She really came back with thinking, “What do we want to do when we get back? How can we improve our family? What can we do to use our lives well?”

Be deliberate about your road trip.

Understand that the process is part of the fun. Ultimately, road tripping can be a great experience. It's not always easy, not always pretty, you may find some bumps in the road and construction, but it can be a really fun opportunity and a learning experience.

Sometimes we all need a do-over.

Start over. Sometimes we just need a do-over. Pick up the pieces and decide what you can do to make this better. What's the problem? How can we fix it? How do I get that energy out? Run around *a lot*. Make kids run around the car or restaurant, make it a race. Find hotels with swimming pools. And most importantly enjoy the time with your kids!

Other sources:

Tried and True Road Trip Tips. Found at: <http://powerofmoms.com/2012/06/tried-and-true-road-trip-tips/>

Transcription by Rosie Liljenquist.