

Take advantage of car time on road trips

By Melissa Erickson
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The all-American road trip is as popular as ever, with nearly eight in 10 leisure trips taken by car in 2013, according to the U.S. Travel Association.

If you're hitting the road to celebrate Thanksgiving or the holidays, getting there might not be half the fun if you're traveling with kids who grow more tired and restless as the miles fly by.

Sure, you can let them plug in and tune out, but do you really want that? Ben Halpert, founder and president of Savvy Cyber Kids, an organization that teaches kids safety before they go online, said you've got more options than electronics for happy young travellers.

Halpert spends his days as an information security practitioner for a Fortune 500 company and his nights as a champion for children in cyberspace. Cyber Savvy Kids includes a book series with titles such as "Adventures Beyond the Screen," which "is full of ideas of activities to do without gazing like a zombie into a glowing screen," Halpert said.

Plan activities

Travel is a great eye-opener for all ages and offers plenty of educational opportunities.

"Prior to going on the trip, the family could sit down together with a map of their route and discuss and historical or cultural landmarks that may be along the way. As a group, they can agree on one or two that seem the most interesting to visit," Halpert said. "This would help break up a long road trip and provide an educational opportunity

and potentially some interesting photo opportunities depending on the sites selected."

As your family moves through cities and towns along the way, Halpert suggested "brainstorming ideas on how to help others in the community. The family can make a list of activities they can participate in. One example: volunteering at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. Another example is volunteering at a local charity run as a family perhaps handing out water to ever-thankful and thirsty runners — what a great bonding

experience for the family to look back on!"

More fun

Of course, there are more traditional ways to pass the time:

Tune in: Share your musical tastes during the journey and let everyone pick a few songs — just be nice and listen and then change the tune when it's somebody else's turn to pick. Or listen to an audiobook. Cracker Barrel restaurants offer a service that allows travelers to purchase an audiobook at one location and return

it to another Cracker Barrel anywhere in the U.S. Customers will receive a full refund less an exchange fee of \$3.49 for every week they kept the book.

Maps: Kids will love colorful maps that are bought or printed at home. They can chart the course, follow the route along the way and learn geography.

Travel games: From car bingo to Eye Spy to travel size Blokus and magnetic hangman or playing cards, a collection of travel games and containers to keep them (so you don't lose the pieces) are wise investments.

Books and journals: If your kids can read in the car, consider it a gift and encourage them to read whatever they like. One suggestion: The new "Spin the Globe" series by Edward Moldenhauer, which feature "The Incredible Adventures of Frederick von Wigglebottom" and his visits to Scandinavia, Australia and more.

Travel journals are also great ways to remember the trip. Include journal entries of what you did, sketches of what you saw and souvenirs you found along the way.



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