

Tips For Offbeat Road Trips - Adventures of a Lifetime

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(NAPSI) - Few things seem to beat the allure of hitting the open road with close friends or family. Singing at the top of your lungs with your favorite diva; stopping anywhere you want to; enjoying the scenery--these are all benefits of the classic road trip.

Those who drive to their destinations have more freedom--not only in their traveling conditions and locations, but in their adventures along the way. For this reason, Americans are driving more often than flying to reach their destination--despite the ever-fluctuating gas prices. In fact, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, for every one mile Americans fly, they drive 452 miles. Travelers just can't seem to pass up an exciting road trip.

Those looking for fresh or offbeat road trips may be interested in Hampton Hotels' "Lost Landmarks" (www.hamptonlandmarks.com), an interactive Web site that calls on self-proclaimed sleuths to help investigate some of today's most mysterious pop-culture disappearances. Any road trip can be given a splash of excitement by exploring the disappearances of famous artifacts along the way. Travelers can tap into their inner Sherlock Holmes by searching for Lost Landmarks from the U.S., Canada and Latin America--things such as Dorothy's ruby slippers and Marilyn Monroe's white dress--that have seemingly vanished into thin air. Those who enjoy a good "chase" can submit clues on the site.

However, if an investigation doesn't fit into your itinerary, there are always other ways to spice up your next road trip. Following are a few tips:

1. Feed Your Fixation--Whether you're obsessed with rock 'n' roll music, children's literature or baseball, create a themed road trip dedicated to your own personal passion or interest. Hampton DriveAbouts, also found at www.hamptonlandmarks.com, offers conveniently mapped-out, themed road trips all over the country. On the site, you'll find trip ideas that'll take you past multiple landmarks on a single tank of gas--and give you directions from point A to B.
2. Validate by Volunteering--Leave the city you visit a little better than it was when you found it. Do a bit of research to find some of the needs of your destination location--whether it's painting the fence of a friendly neighbor or serving in a soup kitchen--and do some volunteer work before you leave. Dedicating even a few hours out of your next vacation to volunteer work can make a huge difference not only to you, but to the community you are serving.
3. Highlight Historical Hot Spots--Have fun and learn something along the way by taking a detour to a local museum or historical landmark. Locations such as the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., the Freedom Trail in Boston or even a local library can offer a pleasant and informative break from the long road.
4. Go Green--Feel the thrill of driving a "new" car--and save on gallons of gas--by renting a hybrid car. Even a generic road trip will look and feel more exciting by simply switching the vehicle, and with the increased awareness of environmentally friendly technology, many car rental companies are offering great deals for hybrid and fuel-efficient cars.
5. Picture Perfect--Take unforgettable photos in front of some of the quirkiest landmarks across the country, such as the World's Largest Shoe House in Hallam, Pa., or The Big Duck in Flanders, N.Y. More ideas of where to go during your next road trip can be found with exact addresses, as well as more than 1,000 other hidden and lesser-known pop-culture landmarks, on the Lost Landmarks Web site.

To learn more about Lost Landmarks, DriveAbouts and Hidden Landmarks, visit www.hamptonlandmarks.com.

Volunteers paint the World's Largest Buffalo in Jamestown, N.D. It's the 31st landmark to be refurbished by the Save-A-Landmark program.