

Travel



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In travel, transportation is by choice

Tips for choosing best rental car deal

LAST WEEK I told you about my experience while renting a car in Europe, where I did everything wrong. This week I would like to tell you how to do it right. I would also like to talk about alternative ways of getting around when you travel by land.

In Michigan we are so car-oriented that we often don't think about the many other methods of land transportation. A creative traveler considers everything: taking a train to Toronto, seeing Hawaii on a cruise ship, hiring a horse-and-buggy instead of a taxi to travel across a downtown area.

Of course there are times when the only logical way to travel is by car, and the only logical decision is to rent a car. I asked Denise Varber of Livonia, a supervisor in the World Travel department of the American Automobile Association, to give me her expert advice on renting a car.

SHE HAS rented cars several times herself, and has helped hundreds of AAA members to rent the cars that suited their needs. She suggests that you start at AAA, or your travel agent, where you can check the brochures of major car rental companies for any special rate program applicable during your travel time.

If you reserve your rental car before you leave home, you are guaranteed the rate if the rental company must give you a more expensive car. Automatic transmission is usually found only on a large, expensive car; even on a smaller car it costs more, so choose a stick shift to save money.

Before you choose a car, compare all costs: the per-day rental; the per-mile versus the per-week rental; per-mile costs versus unlimited mileage, when available; the cost of gasoline; insurance; drop-off charges; taxes.

Taxes can kill you. Most European countries have Value Added Tax (VAT)



1-of-a-kind traveler
Iris Jones
contributing travel editor

ranging from a low of four percent in Spain to a high of 33.3 percent in France. Ask about their gasoline policy; some companies will charge you to fill up before you leave and after you return the car.

ALL CARS come with basic insurance. Check to see if your car insurance covers a collision outside Michigan. Chances are it will cover it in the United States or Canada but not overseas.

Denise suggests that you consider a Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) if you want collision insurance but you don't want to pay a large deductible, which can range from five dollars to \$1,500. CDW costs about five dollars extra a day. If your health insurance covers medical costs away from home you may not want to buy Personal Accident Insurance.

Before you leave home, check on opening and closing times of the rental car offices, whether the office is at the airport or in town, whether they will pick you up at the airport or at your home.

Cars are rented on a 24-hour basis. Check the time of the day the car must be returned so you don't get charged for another 24 hours because you bring the car back an hour late.

Check drop-off charges if you plan to hire a car in one city and drop it off in another. In Europe you probably won't pay anywhere within the same country, sometimes not even between countries



If the car rental company has offices continent-wide. In the United States and Canada, you may be asked for a large drop-off charge, especially when you cross state or provincial lines.

I REMEMBER that when we rented a car in Calgary, Alberta, for example, they quoted us a \$150 drop-off charge if we delivered the car across the provincial line in Vancouver, B.C., rather than delivering it back to Calgary.

An International Driving Permit is a convenience overseas. If you are stopped, the patrolman can read your license in his own language, and if the permit is taken away from you for any reason, you still have your Michigan driver's license in hand.

Finally, some tips. Consider renting a car similar to the one you drive at home. If you are thinking of buying a car, rent one first. If you have trouble, return it to the nearest office for replacement.

Don't let anyone drive the car who doesn't meet the age requirements. As in all automobile situations, remove



keys and lock the car so you won't be held responsible for theft. And don't be afraid to ask the car rental company for a car seat, roof rack or travel directions.

SO NOW you know how to rent a car, but before you do it, ask yourself this: do you need a car or is there another way. Between cities, it is sometimes cheaper to take advantage of one of the

many available discount air fares or even to take a train.

Train service has slipped in the United States in recent years so we tend not to think of it as a travel alternative, but it is sometimes worth considering. It's a good way to get from Detroit to either Toronto or Chicago, for example, and both cities have good public transportation when you get there. You can go by train to New York via Toledo but

Traveling by car is often not only the best way, but the only way. A trip to area of Banff, Alberta, in the Canadian Rockies (left) can be enjoyed more fully if you travel through the region by car. In Chicago, savoring the city can be accomplished in a 100-year-old horse-drawn buggy.



PHOTOS/MICKY JONES

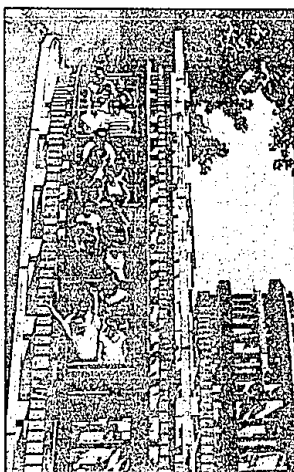
It will take you all day.

Other areas may have better service, however. Canada has good train service. Easterners travel by train. Most European countries offer fast trains between major cities as well as milk runs into small towns.

Transportation within a city depends on what is available at your destination. Don't assume that all cities are like Detroit, which has limited urban transportation. Cities like Toronto, Montreal, New York, London, Paris, all have excellent subway systems.

Check any good travel guide for the cost of taxis, which may be your most convenient and cost-effective way to get around. In New York City, for example, many people don't even own a car. Taxis are frequent and reasonable. You can get to and from the airport by sharing a cab with other travelers.

If your business is primarily sightseeing, consider a tour bus or a tour alternative. Explore Savannah by tour boat, on foot or on one of the wonderful horse-and-buggy tours.



Cedar Point will celebrate 100 years of American roller coaster and 20 years of the Blue Streak Coaster (above) on opening day May 12. In the last nine years, Cedar Point's roller coasters have given 69,333,653 rides.

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It's roller-coaster time

Cedar Point amusement park will celebrate two anniversaries this summer — the 100th anniversary of America's first roller coaster and the 20th anniversary of the park's popular Blue Streak coaster. The park, located at Sandusky, Ohio will pass out free cake to the first 1,000 persons to ride the Blue Streak on opening day, Saturday, May 12, starting at noon.

The cake, measuring more than five feet in length depicts the Blue Streak. The master of ceremonies will be Allen Ambrosini, editor of Roller Coaster magazine and member of American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE), a non-profit organization devoted to the enjoyment and preservation of roller coasters. The group has more than 1,000 members in the United States, Canada, Japan and Mexico.

Opening day has been designated Kidney Foundation Day. Cedar Point will donate \$1 of every Sunday admission sold to the Kidney Foundation. During the day, radio personalities from Cleveland and Toledo will compete in several contests throughout the park. Monday through Sunday, June 11-17, will be Coaster Centennial Week at Cedar Point. The first 1,000 guests each day to ride five of the park's adult coasters — Gemini, Blue Streak, Corkscrew, Wildcat and Cedar Creek Mine Ride — will receive a "Coaster Fun Pak" of prizes.

Cedar Point will be one leg of the "Coast-to-Coaster" tour sponsored by G.D. Searle and Co., makers of Dramamine motion-sickness remedy, on Wednesday, June 13. During the tour, a team of national coaster

experts will visit ten theme parks nationwide, incorporating the best features of each park's top coaster into the "Dramamine Dream Machine," a model of the ultimate coaster. The model will be on display near the Gemini racing coaster during the team's visit on June 13.

Other special events planned include "Ride for Rainbows" on Saturday, May 26, when Cedar Point will donate one cent for every coaster ride given that day to the Rainbow Babies' and Children's Hospital and Health Hill Hospital in Cleveland. Joyce Becker's Soap Opera Festival on Saturday and Sunday, June 23, when stars of ABC's daytime dramas "General Hospital," "All My Children" and "One Life to Live" will put on question-and-answer shows daily, and a fireworks display on the Fourth of July.

The Cedar Point Marina will be headquarters for the Great Lakes Offshore Powerboat Racing Association's (GLOPRA) Signature Classic (formerly Stroh Light Classic) on Saturday, Aug. 11, while the Hobie Cat District Finals (sailing competition) will be held near the Hotel Breakers beach on Saturday, Aug. 18. The Cedar Point 10K Race is scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 16.

Great Smokies celebrate

More than 100 events will be held this year in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The actual anniversary date will be celebrated on June 15 with ceremonies in both North Carolina and Tennessee, which share the 500,000-acre park.

Activities are scheduled throughout the year on the Cherokee Indian Reservation and in the 18 counties surrounding the park. They are being coordinated by the Golden Anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Inc., a non-profit group of tourism industry and government leaders.

Park activities will include a symphony orchestra performance Sept. 9. Events planned in area communities include a ramp festival, mountain music performances, arts and crafts festivals, Scottish games, antique

shows, county fairs, a festival honoring tobacco, ballet performances and other events.

In 1974 Interior Secretary Hubert Work visited the Smokies and formed a committee which recommended establishment of two national parks in the East — the Blue Ridge of Virginia and the Great Smokies.

Two years later, Congress passed a bill providing for establishment and development of the park. The next year Tennessee and North Carolina appropriated \$2 million each for land purchase.

By 1928, contributions from the John D. Rockefeller family foundation were credited with saving the Smokies as a wilderness preserve.

Funds were scarce during the Depression but in 1933 President Franklin Roosevelt announced an allotment of \$1.55 million to complete the project.

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