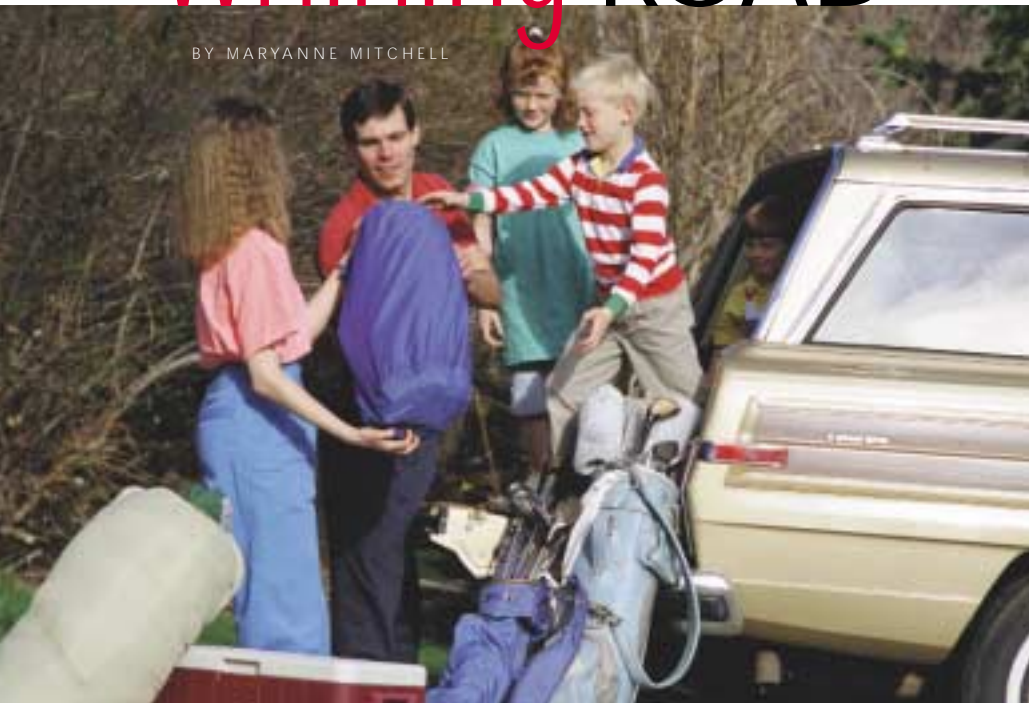


# THE long AND whining ROAD

BY MARYANNE MITCHELL



The car is packed, the dog and cat are at the kennels and you've made arrangements for the mail and newspaper to be stopped. The house is secure and someone is coming to look after the lawn. Everyone takes their place in the car and it's off to the cottage or grandma's or maybe the coast. Vacation time at last!

You've been driving for maybe an hour or so and it begins. From the back seat comes the first sounds of discontent. "He's on my side," "She's pushing me," "I'm tired

and have to pee," "He's breathing my air," or simply "Are we there yet?"

As anyone who has ever travelled with children knows, this is a familiar chorus. Whether you're going to be on the road for two hours or 10, it's hard to keep the members of the peanut gallery from getting bored, restless and, yes, whiny.

My husband and I began long distance travelling with our children 10 years ago, when they were eight and six. We had made a number of short trips north on previous

## Tips for successful trips by car

### with children from tots to teens.



vacations to visit cottages or campsites, and we decided we were ready for the trip to Nova Scotia we had always wanted to take.

As parents, we realized that to give our kids the appreciation of what Canada has to offer in terms of geography, culture and history, we had only a few good years of travel time available to us. All too soon summer jobs, sports and other commitments would make family vacations difficult. So we planned our route, packed our bags and took off to experience the joys of family vacationing by car.

Since then we have logged tens of thou-

sands of kilometers. We've enjoyed the sights and sounds of Canada from L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland to Tofino in British Columbia – and countless places in between. And we've learned a thing or two about how to travel with kids – and partners for that matter – without having to resort to military schools or divorce.

The following collection of tips and hints can help to take some bumps out of the road. While most are presented with kids in mind, moms and dads will benefit from these suggestions as well. After all, several hours in a car can be hard on everyone.

#### TRAVEL SANITY-SAVERS

- Pack a game bag with games for the car. Lots of popular board games are available in travel size and can be found at stores like Zellers.
- Books of puzzles, connect-the-dots and such, help time pass.
- Make up travel loot bags stocked with treats of candy, games and puzzles. Pass these out when everyone needs something new to do. Don't overdo these! One bag every day or two is fine. They also can be used as a reward for good behaviour.
- Take a trip to the library and get some story tapes and sing-along music for the whole family.
- Read aloud in the car. Chapter books or short stories will capture everyone's attention.
- Encourage kids to make a record of their trip by keeping a diary. Even young kids can do this by drawing pictures of what they see and do. They can be updated either on the road or each evening.
- Give kids their own cameras and let them take pictures of the places and things they want. This way they have their own record of the trip from their point of view.
- Personal CD or tape players with headphones allow kids to listen to their own music while the adults enjoy theirs on the car stereo.
- Let teens call home to friends, and more importantly, arrange to call boyfriends or girlfriends. We've found that life on the road is hard for lovesick teens, so we arrange in advance for calls to that special someone.
- Avoid a lot of fuss and whining for treats and souvenirs by putting the kids on a budget for the trip.

Help them decide how much they can spend each day and then let them buy what they want.

We've found that kids quickly become pretty savvy about where to spend their daily allowance if they know they have to make their money last.

- Get kids to help with the planning and let them pick activities or sights they want to see.
- Take along small travel pillows for in-car naps.
- Sunshades for side and back windows help keep kids cool, especially for the unlucky child on the sunny side of the car on a hot day. Inexpensive, battery-operated mini fans also can help.
- Get kids to send postcards to friends, family and neighbours. Make sure they have all the addresses they need before leaving home.



### TIPS FOR HEALTHY TRAVELLING

- Keep a cooler in the car for healthy snacks, fresh fruit and drinks.
- Everyone needs to get out of the car and stretch those cramped muscles. If you're in a town or city, look for a park where kids can run and burn off some pent-up energy. Most highway service centres have picnic areas where the family can have a good stretch as well.
- To keep the whole family healthy and regular while on the road, limit the number of sweet drinks, and drink water instead. It's much better for you than pop or juice.
- Eating well is important for everyone when travelling, so try to stay away from the fast food. It's not only generally loaded with fat and salt but after a while it gets very boring. A quick stop at a grocery store each morning will let you stock up on crisp veggies and fresh fruit to munch on through the day. 🌿