

DOWN HOME: A terrific ride for a good, long talk

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If our family vacation had a theme this year, it would have been “riding.”

We rode the family sedan out past West Texas, across New Mexico and up into the Colorado mountains. When we got there, we rode the rapids in a raft, rode over a pass in a train and rode through mountain meadows on the backs of horses. When the time came to leave, we rode our car back down out of the mountains, west across the mesas and plains of New Mexico, south through the Texas Panhandle and, deep into the night, back to our home near Dallas.

Except for the time we paid about \$3.50 per gallon to fill our gas tank, we had a terrific trip.

Some people prefer to fly when they go to the mountains or the beach. I freely acknowledge they have a point: Both peaks and waves are a long, long way from here. In theory, flying is best. Except for three facts:

- **Driving is cheaper.** Even at \$3.50 per gallon, it's still the most economical way to go. I heard this on the radio. A reporter priced plane, train, bus and car for the same trip. The car won, by a mile full of dollars.

- **Expectations are more reasonable.** When you fly, you expect to get there quickly. Not so, Buck Rogers. I've been on way too many planes (for my taste, at least) this spring and summer. And almost every time, I've been disappointed. "Delayed" seems to be the operative word on airport departure-and-arrival signs. Once, we finally got to our hotel at 2:15 a.m. That'll ruin your trip. Cars may take longer, but at least you can stop to get some sleep and eat when and where you want.

- **Car time is family time.** Ever since our daughters, Lindsay and Molly, got past the toddler stage, I've loved family road trips with Joanna and the girls. Where else can you get so much focused family time?

Lindsay's grown and gone, and Molly's halfway through college. But we took our vacation this year (sandwiched between two Baptist conventions, yuck) the one week when Molly could go with us. Don't tell R.J., the rafting guide, Mike, the train conductor, and Sue, the horse trainer, but I enjoyed riding in the car with Joanna and Molly the most.

I reveled in hours and hours of conversation. We talked about religion and politics and books and movies and music and food and friends. We oohed and aahed at the scenery. We listened to music and occasionally sang along. We played our favorite, "The People Guessing Game" (aka "Twenty Questions") and, as is our longstanding custom, "Mr. Brent" was the first correct answer. We relived the past and speculated about the future. Try that on a plane, and everyone in a five-row radius will be ready to throw you overboard.

So, I thank God for car vacations. We always come home in that quasi-state of tired-but-rested. And, best of all, caught up on conversation.

-Marv Knox

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