

TIPS ON TRIPS

Five Tips For Affordable Family Road Trips

(NAPSA)—The kids playing patty-cake in the backseat, dad pointing out the largest ball of twine, mom singing songs and telling stories—for many, the road trip is the quintessential family vacation.

The trips are when parents and children spend countless hours together creating memories. But this year, many are wondering: Will a great family adventure be affordable? Gas prices are soaring to about 60 cents more a gallon this summer compared to last, according to the federal Energy Information Administration.

Still, experts say a road trip is the best bet for many families' budgets.

"Despite high prices at the pump, gassing up the car and hitting the road is still the cheapest option for a family vacation," says Best Western International's travel expert, Amy Graff. This summer, Graff plans to drive Route 66 with her two kids and husband on a budget of \$250 a day and chronicle her journey on www.bestwestern.com/tripplanner. She offers these tips for saving gas and money on the road.

1) Lighten the load. Extra weight cuts fuel economy, so try to pack light. Carrying 100 pounds in the trunk reduces a typical car's fuel efficiency by up to 2 percent. If you do have cargo to haul, use the trunk instead of a roof rack or carrier, as using these can decrease mileage by as much as 5 percent, based on a study from AAA, the American Automobile Association.

2) Inflate your tires. Under-inflated tires are a safety hazard and can decrease fuel economy by



With a little planning, a road trip opens your eyes, not your wallet.

as much as 2 percent per pound of pressure below AAA's recommended level.

3) Invest in a cooler. Skip the fast food drive-thru, where the cost of burgers and fries can add up. Instead, pack a picnic blanket and cooler filled with drinks, sandwiches and snacks, and dine at a park or rest stop. Also, bring refillable water bottles. A family of four can easily spend \$20 a day buying water.

4) Go for hotel freebies. Bed down at places that offer great value: a breakfast option, high-speed Internet access, and parking. For example, you'll receive free high-speed Internet access at all Best Western hotels (www.bestwestern.com).

5) Enjoy free entertainment and make the most of your time together. You can spend lots of money on fancy car games, but "I Spy," "20 Questions" and "Name That Tune" require no props. Another option is to borrow books on tape from your public library.