

## The Best Ways to Save on Gas for Summer Road Trips

**Fluctuating prices mean you could pay more at the pump. But we've got the best tips to get you on the road and minimize the expense.**

By Marcy Black



If you've gone to the pumps lately, then you know that gas prices aren't dropping. And according to AAA, no one knows just where they're headed. But today, holding fast at \$3.69 per gallon, gas is still anything but cheap, especially if you're planning on hitting the road this summer. To save more at the pumps, try these tips.

**1. Prepare yourself.** Before you go, keep a close eye on gas prices at home, along your route, and at your final destination. AAA offers an online [Fuel Gauge Report](http://fuelgaugereport.opisnet.com/index.asp) (<http://fuelgaugereport.opisnet.com/index.asp>) that lets you track gas prices across the country. By plugging in your vehicle's model and year, and your start point and destination, the [Fuel Cost Calculator](http://www.fuelcostcalculator.com/) (<http://www.fuelcostcalculator.com/>) tallies up how much gas will cost you before you turn the key in the ignition.

**2. Drive a car that gets more miles per gallon.** An SUV may hold an entire T-ball team, but it can be a gas hog. A small sedan, on the other hand, is far more fuel-efficient, seats five, and can hold more in its trunk than you might think possible. Small grandkids won't mind the back seat, and older ones might chant a few choruses of "He's touching me!" but you'll all arrive at your destination with a few more dollars in your wallet.

**3. Stay somewhere that pays for gas.** When booking your trip, consider one of these family-friendly packages that come with a gas rebate, which typically ranges from \$20-\$30 per night, though some resorts even offer credits of \$50 or \$100. [Kalahari](http://www.kalahariresorts.com/wisconsin/specials/rooms-specials-packages/may/fuel-for-fun/) (<http://www.kalahariresorts.com/wisconsin/specials/rooms-specials-packages/may/fuel-for-fun/>) Resorts (<http://www.kalahariresorts.com/ohio/specials/rooms-specials-packages/may/fuel-for-fun/>), for example, is offering a \$40 gas card. Making a reservations elsewhere? Ask about available promotions.

**4. Drive conservatively.** You'll get better gas mileage when you drive at a steady, moderate speed, and start and stop smoothly. Cruise control can help you sustain an even rate on flat highways. Don't race a cold engine or idle for lengthy periods.

**5. Look for low prices.** [Gasbuddy.com \(http://www.gasbuddy.com/\)](http://www.gasbuddy.com/) can help you find the cheapest gas by zip code before you leave home. And if you have a smartphone, consider downloading one of these apps before you hit the road:

- [AAA TripTIK \(http://routemaster.aaa.com/iphone/triptik/support/\)](http://routemaster.aaa.com/iphone/triptik/support/) will tell you where the nearest gas stations are and current prices.
- [Gasbuddy's mobile app \(http://gasbuddy.com/GasBuddyMobileApps.aspx\)](http://gasbuddy.com/GasBuddyMobileApps.aspx) can also tell you where to find the cheapest gas.
- [Gascubby \(http://appcubby.com/gas-cubby/\)](http://appcubby.com/gas-cubby/) tips you off to possible problems with your car by analyzing its fuel economy. Enter a few numbers at each fill up: the odometer reading, the number of gallons pumped and the price per gallon, and it will keep track for your fuel-economy.

**6. Check your tires.** Low-rolling-resistance tires will improve your gas mileage one or two miles per gallon, according to *Consumer Reports*. Once you've got the right tires, make sure they're properly inflated. The car experts at [Edmunds \(http://www.edmunds.com/\)](http://www.edmunds.com/) recently found that corporate travelers under-inflated their own tires an average 7 percent. That was costing them an estimated \$112 a year in reduced mileage.

**7. Drive less.** If you've always spent a week at the seashore, consider a lakefront resort closer to home. Instead of driving all the way to see your grandchildren, ask your kids to drive halfway and meet you in the middle.

**8. Consider RVing.** This may seem counterintuitive to tip No. 2 (take your most fuel-efficient car), but it could pay off overall. Calculate how much more you might pay in gas for a recreational vehicle against your possible savings in food and lodging. Campground fees are generally less than staying at a hotel. And an RV gives you the option of cooking less expensive meals rather than eating out every day.

**9. Plan your route!** Avoid sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic with these online and smartphone apps:

- [MapQuest app \(http://wireless.mapquest.com/\)](http://wireless.mapquest.com/) gives drivers the option to see traffic conditions on their planned routes. The routes are highlighted in green, yellow or red, depending on how bad the congestion is. If the route is black, it means the road is closed.
- [Route4me \(http://route4me.com\)](http://route4me.com) specializes in mapping out routes for multiple stops. So if you want to check out several garage sales or open houses in an unfamiliar neighborhood, Route4Me can map out a game plan so you don't waste gas.
- [Waze app \(http://www.waze.com/\)](http://www.waze.com/) collects traffic information through its users. The app gauges driving current conditions by measuring how far users have recently traveled on routes within set times.