

Student Road Trip On A Budget

It's road trip season! College campuses have emptied out and highways will fill up with students blowing off a year's worth of steam while road tripping to great vacation destinations. For many students, this might be the first time they've taken a vacation without parents to help plan (and pay for) it. For a newbie, it can be quite a challenge.

Worry not, road warrior! Here are a few ways you can save some green on your next four-wheeled adventure. Try these three savings tips!

1.) Budget beforehand

If there's one rule of financially savvy vacationing, it's this one: Make a budget before you hit the road. It can be easy to justify an ever-ballooning budget. A few dollars here and there can quickly turn into one big expense, and it's one you could be paying for long after the semester's over.

Instead, take control of your spending by giving yourself a realistic goal of how much you'll spend. If you end up a few dollars over, you can make up the difference much easier than if you were to later find out you massively overspent. Making a budget also gives you an idea of how much you need to save between now and the start of your grand adventure.

2.) Feed your future

Gas station food might be an attractive option after you've spent all day on the road, but it's not always the best plan. In addition to the cost, such food is generally fried and unhealthy. You probably don't want to spend the first few days of a great vacation sweating off a pound of fried cheese! Beyond the food, spending money on bottled beverages can do some quick damage to your budget.

As much as possible, prepare your snacks before leaving. Even if that means just putting snack-sized bags of chips together out of a big bag and filling a cooler jug with water, the cost savings are well worth the time. If you're feeling more on top of things, consider packing bread and sandwich fixings to save on roadside lunches. If you plan on stopping at restaurants for dinner, consider shopping ahead of time at a gift card exchange site where you can grab other people's Christmas rejects for a fraction of the price, or check Groupon for good restaurant deals in most cities across the US.

3.) Vet your vehicle

Nothing will influence the roadtrip experience more than your choice of vehicle. This is where you'll be for several hours a day, so you'll want to make sure it's as comfortable as possible. Beyond a thorough cleaning, consider what maintenance tasks you've been putting off. Get a tire rotation and an oil change before you leave to avoid having to pay for expensive repairs on the road.

Finally, you'll also want to make sure all the legalities are covered. Make sure your insurance is current and you know where your card is located. Call your insurance company to make sure you're covered if someone else is driving your car. Confirm that your plates are current and that you know where all your important documents are. Taking these steps can prevent an expensive and time-consuming ticket!