

## ROAD TRIP

### Keeping the kids amused on the road

Whoever said "getting there is half the fun," wasn't traveling with children. But with family travel season upon us, zillions of Americans will boldly load their mini-vans, only to be greeted by "Are we there yet?" before they reach the on-ramp to the interstate.

Today's children demand entertainment on the road. As a mother of three pre-teens who last year drove Interstate 95 between South Florida and southern Virginia three times, I can say without reservation your sanity demands you provide it.

The most obvious solution is a stack of audiobooks and a hearty selection of electronic anesthesia. I worry less about my kids missing the American heartland (especially when it's I-95 we're traversing) than I do about their brains turning to mush after the third consecutive viewing of *Happy Feet*.

My friend Michelle says my anxiety is misplaced: I worry about how long the movie is. You want to get the longest movies possible."

Through trial and error, I have learned the best choice is a portable DVD player with headsets for EACH child since sharing can lead to squabbling when one kid is intent on watching *Barbie Fairytopia* (again) and the other two are hatching a plot to accidentally leave all the Barbie DVDs at the rest stop in South Carolina.

But even if you choose the video coma route, remember: Batteries die (Pack extras. You'll be a hero when the GameBoy fails one hour into an eight-hour ride), and equipment breaks. My friend Teri's plan to entertain her little ones with sing-along tapes ended when she slotted the cassette into the machine. It wouldn't play. It wouldn't eject. Years later, it's still there.

The moral of Teri's story: Have an old-fashioned backup plan.

#### BACKUP PLANS

Here are a few backups, no batteries required:

An innovative card game can be played with Go Fish decks (Birdcage Press, \$9.95, ages 5 to 10), featuring animal, sea creature and reptile facts in English and Spanish. The color photographs are worth browsing, if the road is too curvy for card-playing.

