

## Summer road trip?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Are we almost there yet?

If you ever went on a summer road trip as a kid, I can pretty much guarantee you used that phrase at least a few times.

I know I did.

When you're a kid, being in the back seat of a car for a long trip can be agonizing. It's like you're trapped in this little room with no escape, and for some reason watching the scenery just isn't going to cut it.

Time seems to go a lot slower when you're smaller.

It's possible that the pain of being a backseat rider may have been eased over the last few years since many vehicles now come with in-vehicle screens that can play movies or games. Also, a kid can play a game on a laptop for hours without realizing they just travelled 500 miles.

With summer approaching, I'm sure many people are already planning a vacation.

I'm on the road a lot but usually just day trips so my scope of travel throughout the year is usually within three hours ? maybe longer if there is something special going on.

It's been a few years since I took a really long car trip but I'm starting to get that feeling that it's time to hit the open road.

The question is ? is it east or west? I guess I could do both but that's getting a little pricey to do in a relatively short summer span.

I started researching a trip to Prince Edward Island with side trips to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and up into the Gaspé Peninsula.

I've been to Gaspé, many years ago, and recall driving through New Brunswick but we were only passing through.

I'd like to visit P.E.I., just because it's there and I would like to drive across the Confederation Bridge.

A quick check reveals it's 1755 km from my place to Charlottetown ? a total of 17 hours and 50 minutes driving time, according to Mapquest.com, not including stops for gas and something to eat along the way.

I did a calculation based on a vehicle using 8.5 litres of fuel for every 100 km, and found that a return trip would cost around \$462 to go directly there and back. Adding on side trips would add another \$100 or more, so that's almost \$600 in fuel by today's prices. Although I'm not sure my calculations are 100 per cent accurate.

I then tried to find the average hotel room price, along the route. I wouldn't be staying at the Ritz and wearing a tuxedo in the dining room for dinner, so a reasonably priced place along the highway would do fine. Most places are around \$110 to \$149, depending on the room, which isn't bad.

But this trip is starting to add up in costs, especially when I haven't figured in the extras like meals, and paying for other stuff along the way like the \$50 toll to cross the Northumberland Strait.

I started rethinking my options because that stretch of highway between Toronto and Montreal is pretty straight and boring.

Maybe taking an RV and camping along the way would be fun, but I'm not sure I would be into that lifestyle. A quick check on RV rentals shows it wouldn't be any less expensive. In fact, depending on the unit you rent, it can be double the price of a hotel if you rent by the day, then there's gas on top of that.

So now I'm considering the third option ? flying.

I could eliminate the boring part of the trip which would be 15 hours of driving a straight highway by flying over it all in the comfort of an airliner, while sipping a bourbon and coke.

I could fly to the east coast, rent a car, and start the road trip from there.

It seems airlines had a rough time during time during the pandemic and are now offering seats at reduced prices. It would cost less to fly to P.E.I. in three hours than it would to drive to Montreal and back - if you choose the right airline.

Maybe this is the right combination to expedite a road trip by eliminating the part where the seat is getting hot because you've been driving eight straight hours and have only seen pavement and the occasional off-ramp.

The summer road trip is both a tradition and enjoyable even if the kids keep asking, ?Are we there yet??