

Road Trip...

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It was a good idea in theory. Fall break was approaching, I was long overdue for a vacation and the kids would be out of school. The only negative was my husband couldn't take time off work, or so he said. With one phone call to my oldest sister we decided to caravan with our kids (her 17 year old son, my 10 and 5 year old boys) on what was sure to be a memorable family vacation. We were so excited... and headed for a ravine.



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Plans were set to visit my younger, childless sister in Florida. She found the perfect place on the beach. Perfect because it was big enough for three adults and three kids and also perfect because it wasn't her house.

The week before we left I wrapped up a few things at work and scoured the summer sale racks at Gap. No long sleeves needed. We were headed to a section of America that rarely sees temperatures below 80 degrees. In Tennessee I had already felt the chill of 60 degree mornings for at least 5 days so obviously I was ready to escape from this frozen tundra!

We decided to drive. I know, I know. GREAT IDEA! Just me, my sister, 2 kids, 1 teenager-with a cell phone surgically attached to his hand- and one minivan with all the latest releases Red Box had to offer. We set out in the morning and before we left the city limits my 5 year old said, "How long until we get to the beach, mom?" This gave us the warning that flying strapped to the wing of a plane would have been easier than this drive is going to be.

We arrived relatively unscathed. Less than six hours after arriving, the tension between our younger sister and the children was palpable. Several times she would look at me and say, "They are so selfish! All they care about is themselves!" And later she would look at our older sister and say, "Do you know he was sleeping with his cell phone in his hand when I walked into his room this morning? Does he ever talk on that phone or does he just text? That's ridiculous!"

She was amazed at how much our kids ate, wrestled, talked and yelled. She was more amazed that their behavior didn't faze her sisters. By the last day of the trip everything was back to normal. I couldn't help but notice how excited and happy she seemed as we were driving away headed back to Tennessee. I think I saw her doing the Roger Rabbit in my rearview mirror.

A trip that normally takes 11 hours took 16. Over two hours spent in Atlanta traffic and my kids desire to see the interior of every McDonald's restroom was to blame for the additional time. One thing was clear. I needed a vacation to recover from this trip.

On our last stop the kids were talking and playing and teasing each other while my sister and I were stretching to keep from losing feeling in our derrières. Before pulling away from the gas station my oldest child shouted, "What are we doing tomorrow?" I turned to my sister and said, "Christy's right! They are selfish!"

We all learned a valuable lesson on this trip. One, I will NEVER take another trip with the kids

and without my husband. Two, someone who doesn't have children knows more about raising them. And finally, never underestimate the power of a Nintendo DS on a long road trip.

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